

**Council of Guiding Elders – Minutes June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023**  
**Edith Rankin Memorial United Church**

**In Attendance:** Bill Spencer, Peter Merkley, Ruth Pettis, Gordon Sinclair, Margaret Merkley, Andrew Robb, Ken Williams, Rev. Michelle Down

**Regrets:**

**Guests:**

1. **Call to order:** Bill called the meeting to order at 11:30 am.

**Mission Statement:** We seek to be a welcoming community, anchored in God’s love, challenged to sail on the winds of the spirit, sharing the Good News of Christ with each other and the world.

**Devotional:** Ruth offered the poem “A Thunderstorm” by Emily Dickenson reflecting on the beauty and power of a full life.

**Commendations, Regrets, Prayer Concerns:** A number of member’s names were offered up in prayer including several who had played significant roles in Edith Rankin’s church life.

**Correspondence:** Bill noted that Rev. Down had received a note from a lawyer at the Cunningham Swan Firm offering his help to members of the congregation. It was unclear if this would be a pro-bono situation and it was also noted that another young lawyer had just recently joined the ERMUC congregation who may also like to be involved. Council asked that Rev. Down contact both and ask that they put their heads together on how they might help. Council was particularly interested in how they might help with the evolving “Planned Giving” initiative.

Bill also brought forward the note from Paul Currie and the Media and Communication Team regarding the current problems with the computer systems. Several members also noted the problems with the phone system. Concern was that addressing these problems could easily get out of hand but there was also a need to move forward expeditiously. After considerable discussion the following motion was put forward:

- Motion: Moved by Peter Merkley; Seconded by Andrew Robb – that council ask Paul Currie to undertake a review, with the inclusion of the Tech Team, of our overall hardware, software and phone requirements of the church and to proceed with the acquisition up to a maximum of \$10,000. There is a possibility of some of the funding being already in individual budgets. Paul is to confirm with the Chair of Council when he has developed his initial understanding of the needs.

CARRIED

2. **Minutes of the Previous Meetings:**

**Motion:**

Moved by Ken Williams, seconded by Ruth Pettis to accept the minutes of the council meeting of May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023 by Video conf.

CARRIED

3. **Business Arising:** Rev. Down reminded Council of the approval we had given in May to reappoint Paul Currie as our Voluntary Associate Minister. This had been done in a virtual format. Formal paperwork has now been prepared and approved. Michelle will ensure it is forwarded to the appropriate head office location.

4. **New Business:**

1. **Reflections on the Role of Women in the Church:**

Several months ago Gordon had been asked by Council to write a piece on the role of women at Edith Rankin. After much thought he now felt ready to present his final version. Council felt it was indeed a well thought document and now needed to decide how best to move forward with it. Much of the document focused on the demise of the UCW (United Church Women) and the evolution to smaller more focused groups for women. Council felt this document needed wider circulation and suggested the website as a good first start. Also, there could be an initiative to reach out to women and encourage their joining with some of the smaller groups.

2. **Catering Team Motions:**

Rhonda Kerr, as Team lead for the Catering Team, provided Council with two motions passed at their April meeting. In those two motions the Catering Team was formally disbanded and their funds distributed as follows; \$500 donated to Martha's Table and the balance of approximately \$340 to the church operating fund.

3. **Reconciliation, Indigenous Restructuring:**

At the May 17<sup>th</sup> ERMUC Council meeting, we were presented with a proposal approved by the General Council of the United Church, establishing an Autonomous National Indigenous Organization within the overall framework of the United Church of Canada. Council was provided with the study material at the time to review and felt it was now in a position to vote. Fully understanding what autonomy meant and would look like will take discernment and time. It will form part of the overall reconciliation with Indigenous communities across Canada and will offer a welcoming approach by the UCC.

**Motion:**

Moved by Peter Merkley, seconded by Gordon Sinclair that Edith Rankin Memorial United Church Support Remit #1: Establishing an Autonomous National Indigenous Organization within the United Church of Canada.

CARRIED.

**4. Stewardship – Future of our Church:**

Stewardship and how to maintain a stable level of finances with an outlook of declining revenue has long been a focus and responsibility of Council. Good communication, brochures, pew cards, funeral or wedding gifts have all been suggested but Council now feels we need to go beyond that with some form of “Planned Giving” (e.g. endowments). Other churches have faced the same issues and have benefited from special meetings, led by skilled independent leaders (either from within the broader UCC framework or outside). Council agreed we should have such a special meeting set up for the fall. Bill will look in to possible leaders.

Marg Merkley reported on a recent Regional presentation she had attended which challenged the group to “think outside the box”. Ideas such as letting go, only on line, how to include different viewpoints, reaching out to the broader community. There still need to be goals but goals which can be measured.

**Reports:**

**1. Treasurers Report:**

Peter had previously circulated his report. He noted that he had been able to submit the needed Charitable Tax Forms to the CRA by the end of June as required. He feels we are in relatively good position at this time of year.

**2. Minister’s Reports:**

Rev. Down spoke about the changing role of volunteers. How volunteering had felt fulfilling to many over the years, but now there was less enthusiasm.

**Announcements:** none

**Closing Prayer:** Michelle closed with a prayer.

**Adjournment:** the meeting adjourned at 2:00 pm.

**Next Meeting:** The next regularly scheduled meeting of council will not be until Sept – Wednesday Sept 20<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 am.

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Bill Spencer, Chair

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Ken Williams, Secretary