



**The United Church
of Canada
General Council**

GC45 Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council Report for Summer 2025

True Document Date: June 22, 2025

Origin: Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council

Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council (WOWRC) stretches from Grand Bend and Glen Morris in the South to Tobermory and Wyevalle in the north and forms part of a Tri-Regional Council sharing staff and resources with Antler River Watershed and Horseshoe Falls Regional Councils in South Western Ontario. Since the last meeting of General Council, we undertook an evaluation of the effectiveness of our Tri-Regional Councils Governance and Staffing Models. Together, as a Regional Council we took time to engage with this evaluation in order to strengthen the work of the Regional Council in our stated purpose of “Supporting, Connecting, and Transforming”.

In its formation, WOWRC incorporated three Conferences and four Presbyteries which meant we had the advantage of truly being able to start fresh and define ourselves as a Regional Council blending the best that each of the original organizations had to offer. However, it also meant that we didn’t know each other as well as some of the other Regional Councils might have. The evaluation revealed many had been feeling the loss of the connections Presbyteries offered exacerbated by the divides of the Pandemic. So, the theme of the past two years became “We Are One” with a focus on helping members of the Regional Council to feel more deeply a sense of community—the love, joy, support and comfort that comes from truly connecting with one another within the Region.

Part of that connection is ensuring that everyone has a place at the table where their voice can be heard. So, at our Fall Meeting in 2023 we engaged in a process of “Going Deeper” into the evaluation. The wisdom gathered was then shared widely with each of the commissions and the staff so that it could inform the work of the Regional Council going forward. In the

Spring Meeting of 2024 we revisited this work to evaluate what had been accomplished and what was still ours to do.

One significant piece of work that came out of this process was the formation of cluster groupings throughout the regional council in order to encourage and support connections between neighbouring Communities of Faith and United Church ministries. Although some areas were unable to come together, other cluster groupings continue to meet and work together to enliven one another's ministries of daring justice, bold discipleship and deep spirituality and to join together for 100th anniversary celebrations.

The results of this intentional strengthening of connections with the Regional Council has been multifaceted. One benefit is that our three commissions, Congregational Support, Discipleship & Justice and Pastoral Relations (formerly Human Resources), have all seen increased membership and a revival of energy for the work of their workgroups and networks.

We were also able to smoothly navigate through changes in staffing and welcome a new Executive Minister in Mark Laird and a new Executive Assistant in Max Watkinson.

We discerned the need in our Regional Council for intentional expansion of our Property Fund Policy so we might better provide ongoing support and resources to Communities of Faith and for new church development with the proceeds received when congregations disband and sell their property. We wanted to honour the legacy of those who have paved the way before us, and to be able to continue to help serve active communities of faith. This led to the creation of three new funds Communities of Faith can access in order to strengthen their ministries and create hope for the future.

We engaged more fully in the work of the wider church, naming a full slate of commissioners to General Council with alternates and bringing forward proposals to the General Council around membership of Adherents on Governing Bodies in Communities of Faith and around Sacramental Privileges for Retired Diaconal Ministers.

With renewed vitality we entered this Centennial Year for the United Church of Canada and dreamed up an Anniversary Puzzle Project inviting each Community of Faith and Ministry within WOW to create a piece of a puzzle that represents their ministry that we will be assembling into a beautiful mosaic at our Spring Meeting. In this way we will have a symbol of our diversity and our unity as a Regional Council. It promises to be spectacular.

It is a joy to be living out our faith in these times alongside the other Regional Councils and we look forward to continuing to support the work of the General Council in fulfilling our call to deep spirituality, bold discipleship and daring justice.

Submitted by Jennifer Irving,

President of Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council 2023-2025

Document Type: [Report](#)

General Council: [GC45](#)

Originating Body: [Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council](#)