

November 6, 2019

**THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA
SHINING WATERS REGIONAL COUNCIL**

**Minutes of a meeting of the
Social and Ecological Justice Commission
Wednesday, November 6, 2019**

The Social and Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council met on Wednesday, November 6, 2019 by video conference. The meeting began at 10:30 a.m.

Members Present

Susan Eagle (Chairperson), Lois Brown, Tina Conlon, Donna Lang, Alana Martin, Moon-Ja Park, Cameron Watts

Staff: Jody Maltby

Regrets: Susie Henderson, Ren Ito, Eleanor Scarlett

Welcome, check in and prayer

The chairperson welcomed everyone, and opened with Keri Wehlander's poem Micah's Invitation. She acknowledged that we are all on holy land.

The chairperson constituted the meeting in the name of Jesus Christ. There was a time of check-in.

Agenda

The commission agreed by consensus that the agenda be approved as circulated.

Minutes

MOTION by Cameron Watt/Tina Conlon that the Minutes of the meeting of the Shining Waters Social and Ecological Justice Commission held October 9, 2019 be adopted as circulated.

MOTION

CARRIED

Correspondence

- Request from Brian McIntosh regarding regional representation with partners. This request came through Ren Ito and relates specifically to Brian's involvement with the TRC Legacy Project that he has participated in on behalf of the Living Into Right Relations Circle. We will defer this to the next meeting when it is hoped Ren can speak to it, but we acknowledge that this is one piece of a larger conversation about how the region will be represented and connected with partners, both those that exist currently and those that may emerge at a grassroots level.

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The commission brainstormed some of the current partners with whom we may want to be connected, noting that others may arise as well:

- Ontario Health Coalition
- Kairos
- ISARC (Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition)
- Faith and the Common Good
- Faith in the City
- SJNOR (Social Justice Network of Ontario Regions)
- UNJPPI (United Network for Justice & Peace in Palestine & Israel)

- Funding requests - Compassionate Justice Speakers
- Walking Together, Sharing the Land

The commission has received the above two grant requests but does not yet have a plan for funding projects. There was good discussion about the role of the commission and whether it is in our mandate to be a funding body or whether we might refer requests to the Grants Review Committee. The time and energy it takes to consider grant requests might take away from other important work of this commission. At the same time, it is important that our granting process is aligned with areas where we want to give priority. Donna Lang is developing a list of criteria that could be used to assess grant requests. Jody Maltby shared that the Grants Review Committee will be looking for wisdom from the wider region to help determine granting priorities.

The commission deferred this conversation to a future meeting, but there was strong support for partnering with the Grants Review Committee.

- Email from the Executive regarding the Covenant Proposal with the Social Justice Network of Ontario Regions (SJNOR)

This will be considered by the commission at our next meeting.

Business Arising

- Survey of Communities of Faith
The commission discussed the draft survey that was circulated by Cameron Watts. The survey is intended to be completed easily and can be completed by more than one person in each congregation. It will be sent out by email with a covering letter reminding people that this is intended as a snap shot of what is happening in congregations so the commission can get a sense of what issues are important across the region.

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In the survey, congregations will be asked to identify a contact person with contact information. In the body of the email, they will be invited to include names of other committee members if appropriate.

Susan Eagle and Cameron will do a final edit of the survey and it will be sent out to communities of faith through the regional office. We may want to hire a contract staff person to do follow up and to create a mail chimp list including these contacts and the group that gathered in the spring at Richmond Hill. This will be part of our budget request to the Executive.

- Identifying lenses for the work of the commission
The commission identified key lenses for our work: anti-racism, being an intercultural church, lived poverty, greening and ecological lens, sense of future and younger generation who have to bear the burden.

How will we use these lenses in an intentional way in doing our work? They could inform the evaluative questions we ask ourselves each time we meet.

- Short-term budget

The commission reviewed the justice budget items that had been identified by the former presbyteries in 2018. It was noted that much of their budgets went to support the work of partners, some doing advocacy and some for local projects.

The commission hopes to focus energy on providing tools for communities of faith to help energize, revitalize and animate their justice work. This could include workshops, resources and programming. The survey of communities of faith will help us to identify the areas where tools might be helpful. We might want to focus on a particular theme area and develop a program that runs over several years building capacity in our congregations. We might want to have an annual regional justice gathering, possibly connected to the celebration of ministries service on May 23rd or at the October Regional Meeting.

As the work of the commission becomes clearer, it will be easier to create a budget in the fall for the next year. At this time, the commission is still very new and is in the process of identifying priorities.

The commission will advise the Executive that we hope to engage someone to do some contract work around the survey, conduct a face-to-face meeting and plan a spring event. We will ask to bring them a budget request as this work becomes clearer. The Executive also wants to hear about the staffing needs of the commission. It will then be the work of the Executive Minister to determine if and how those needs can be met.

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Core Work and Structure of the Commission

The commission will wait for information from survey to inform this conversation. Commission members will also be asked to complete the survey and identify personal priorities.

Staff Report

Susie Henderson's report was received for information. The chair explained that we want to make it a standard practice for program staff to provide accountability reports to the commission.

When referencing congregations it is helpful to include the name of the community where they are located. We can help to feed information to staff when we know what work they are doing. We need to show leadership as a commission in prioritizing our tasks and then we can see how it fits with staff work.

The commission asked to see the position descriptions of the staff.

What voices have been missing in the conversation that should be included?

- As we identify our partners, perhaps we could invite them to have time on our agenda to share their work. Ask them to provide written background information ahead so they don't have to spend time introducing themselves
- As we work with congregations around being an Intercultural ministry, it will be helpful to know what resources they are using and perhaps to recommend resources. This is for Sunday School, youth programs and adult education. If we say this is a priority, how will we encourage congregations to be active in this work?
- The how is important after we know the who and the what.

Closing

The Chairperson closed the meeting with a prayer and the meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, December 3, 2019, 2 – 3:30 p.m. via Zoom. Tina Conlon will open with a prayer or reflection.