

April 29, 2020

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

**Minutes of a meeting of the
Social and Ecological Justice Commission
Wednesday, April 29, 2020**

The Social and Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council met on April 29, 2020 by video conference. The meeting began at 12:00 noon.

Members Present

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

Staff: Jody Maltby, Ren Ito, Bri-anne Swan, Susie Henderson

Welcome, check in and prayer

The chairperson welcomed everyone, opened with a poem prayer by Walter Brueggemann, *Waiting for Bread ... and for God's Future*, a reflection on his reading of Micah. Members shared some of the struggles of this unique and difficult time. Susan Eagle gave an acknowledgement of the land, and acknowledged our commitment to being a safe place for all people to gather and participate in our Region.

The chairperson constituted the meeting in the name of Jesus Christ.

The commission welcomed Bri-anne Swan, Regional Minister for Social and Ecological Justice and support to Networks.

Agenda

The commission agreed that the agenda be approved as amended.

Minutes

MOTION by Tina Conlon/Moon-Ja Park that the Minutes of the meeting of the Shining Waters Social and Ecological Justice Commission held February 27, 2020 be adopted as circulated.

MOTION

CARRIED

Business Arising

- Update on survey follow-up

At the February meeting, the commission agreed to ask Edge to follow up with congregations that did not participate in the survey. Susie Henderson reported challenges connecting with Edge, possibly due to the pandemic. Staff are considering other options. We will try to be in contact with all congregations by the end of May. Donna Rutz will provide a mail chimp list from social justice gatherings that pre-dated the commission.

- Finances:

Jody Maltby reaffirmed that the commission can provide a budget to the Executive for consideration when ready. If there are specific projects the commission wants to pursue in the meantime, they can make individual requests for funds as we did with the survey follow-up.

- Review of Grant Criteria

Jody Maltby indicated that the regional discussion of funding priorities has been put on hold during the pandemic but we hope to get back to that conversation and the commission will be an important voice in that conversation.

- Workshop – May 2020

The commission discussed possibilities for program during the pandemic. It was agreed that we will still offer a workshop, preferably in early June. The workshop will be an online, well-facilitated conversation, likely an hour in length. We will use it as input to survey conversation rather than relying on survey to shape workshop.

Susan Eagle, Cam Watts and Bri-anne Swan will take the lead on developing the workshop.

Correspondence

The commission discussed how to communicate between meetings to respond to time-sensitive requests for action. We don't always feel knowledgeable to respond, and rely on conversation with wider group to make an informed decision. It is important to be accountable in making these decisions so that the President can sign with confidence.

Jody Maltby, Susie Henderson and Bri-anne Swan will work on criteria to assist the commission to make decisions quickly between meetings. Criteria will include:

- Does the request come from a recognized UCC partner such as Kairos or ISARC?
- Does the request fall within an identified justice priority for the Shining Waters Region?
- Does the request fit with national UCC theology and areas of work?

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- ISARC request

Susan Eagle reported that she did not feel it was appropriate for the commission to respond at the time because we did not get enough feedback when the request was circulated. No further action is needed as the provincial government did take action on the matter.

- Campaign 2000 request

Friday, May 16th is deadline for groups to endorse this letter. Campaign 2000 is a good UCC partner who has been working with faith communities for some time now. Jody Maltby will send this request out for an email vote after the meeting. Members of the commission will review the background documents and respond by Friday noon. If the majority of the members are comfortable with the documentation, we will ask the President to sign on behalf of the region.

- Letter to John Tory

After some discussion it was determined that this request did not come from the congregations that originated the letter and they have not indicated if they want regional support for this project. The commission will take no action at this time but will let it be known that if there are things we can do to support or endorse responses to Covid-19 we will do so.

Cam Watts reported on some City of Toronto updates around popup food banks, extra washrooms, shelters and Ontario Works benefits to assist people who are homeless and are being affected by Covid-19. The city is trying to address needs for social distancing for those living in shelters or on the streets as the rate of infection is high.

Faith in the City was asked to engage faith communities to donate food, time, and money to assist in providing food for people living in poverty. The greatest concern is pockets of the city where people don't have access to food banks. They are looking for popup sites to collect and create food hampers and have them delivered to this vulnerable population.

The commission acknowledged that Shining Waters Region is a large section of Ontario and there are people living in poverty throughout the region. As a commission for the region, we need to look at the broader context. While we may at times lend our support to a particular issue in a particular area, in general our work is policy based rather than local fundraising and activities.

Staff Reports – Ren Ito

- Relationship with General Council

At the February meeting, Ren reported that he was following up with Michael Blair, Executive Minister for Church and Mission, regarding the relationship with justice staff at the General Council. Plans for a conversation with staff have been temporarily placed on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic. One topic of conversation will be finding ways to make the justice work of the General Council more accessible to the wider church.

- Wet'suwet'en letter

Our regional letter was completed in consultation with some members of the Living Into Right Relations (LIRR) Circle and was sent to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Indigenous Justice. It was not circulated to the region until recently due to the volume of information that needed to be shared in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. There has been one dissenting response to the letter. It will be shared with the commission for response. The LIRR Circle is considering further action.

- Justice, Faith and Theology course

The seminar series for people in Shining Waters Region will offer two sessions and each has 10 -11 people registered. The focus of the conversation will be connecting our faith to our justice initiatives, considering such questions as “What does it mean to be an ally?” The intent is not to take positions or draw conclusions about specific issues.

The commission requested that emerging issues be shared to support the work of the commission. We will continue to work on a model for justice programs in the region.

Visioning

The commission agreed to defer this to a future meeting.

Closing

Tina Conlon offered a prayer for groups written by Pdraig O Tuama. The Chairperson closed the meeting at 2:46 p.m.

Next meeting:

Staff will send a doodle poll looking at a Wednesday meeting in the next month.