

The United Church of Canada
Shining Waters Regional Council

**Minutes of a meeting of the
Social and Ecological Justice Commission
Tuesday, May 18, 2021**

The Social and Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council met on May 18, 2021 by video conference. The meeting began at 1:00 p.m.

Members Present

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

Staff: Bri-anne Swan, Jeffrey Dale

Regrets: Eleanor Scarlett

Absent: Donna Lang, Elizabeth Cunningham

Welcome, check in and prayer

The chairperson welcomed everyone. Cameron Watts opened with prayer, honoured the people who first inhabited the lands of the Regional Council, 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.

Agenda

MOTION by Lois Brown / Cameron Watts that the agenda, be approved as circulated, with the addition of the correspondence from Lawrence Park Community Church.

MOTION

CARRIED

Minutes

MOTION by Cameron Watts / Tina Conlon that the Minutes of the meeting of the Shining Waters Social and Ecological Justice Commission held April 20, 2021 be adopted as circulated.

MOTION

CARRIED

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Business Arising

Meeting with the Executive

re: Community Ministries

Susan Eagle and Cameron Watts attended the Executive meeting to speak about the Community Ministries. The participation in the meeting was brief. The President said the Executive appreciated the Commission's input but they would be following and trusting a process that was already in place. Susan raised the issue of nominations and that we need more members for the Commission, especially within the area of environmental justice.

The Executive was also provided copies of the Commission's minutes up to the end of December 2020. There were no questions and the minutes were received for information.

The impression was that Executive is operating from a different narrative about the process re: the Community Ministries than the Social & Ecological Justice Commission is. There is a general agreement that the Commission would like to be involved in the process.

Susan also reported that there will be a review and vote at the November regional council meeting about whether the Social & Ecological Justice Commission will continue as a commission. This review was written into the original proposal in 2019.

Bri-anne will check to see if there needs to be any proposal sent to the Executive in anticipation of the meeting.

Priorities Funding meeting

Susan Eagle was part of a priorities funding conversation which was primarily focused on the Grants Review Committee and what grants may be provided to various ministries. The conversation didn't encompass the whole process of how funding is allocated and provided. There were questions about whether this is regularly done by the Executive, or if there is a finance committee because the process seems unclear. At the moment, Janet MacDonald is providing quarterly updates to the Executive. The priorities funding group will be meeting again.

Paid Sick Days Follow-up

Faith in the City decided to wait until September to send their letter in order to attach it to the September date the government has proposed for ending the new policy of three paid sick days. There needs to be a permanent solution.

Shining Waters launched a website where individuals and communities of faith could customize a letter and submit it to relevant MPPs directly through the Shining Waters website. Other Ontario regions shared the campaign to their members as well. Two hundred people signed the original letter. Approximately 140 signed the follow up letter.

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Harm Reduction follow-up - Jeffrey Dale

Seven Regional Councils have supported the *Seeking to Reduce Harm* series. There have been 122 people that have registered and there were 68 people on the first call. Others who have registered will be able to watch the video afterwards.

Shining Waters Regional Council has signed a letter in support of a Supervised Consumption Site in Barrie. Grace United Church and Burton Avenue United Church are also signatories. The letter in support of a Supervised Consumption Site was sent by faith leaders throughout the Barrie area. It is the first instance of a letter being sent with signatures from communities other than the United Church congregations.

Request re: theme setting for Regional meeting

A theme has not yet been set for the regional annual meeting. This theme is normally set by the President in consultation with the Executive.

There was hope among the commission that the regional annual meeting not only be about institutional survival, as there may be a number of proposals in that theme, but rather about mission in the world and community. There was also a desire to have a place to celebrate the work Jeffrey Dale has done around harm reduction and to demonstrate that some very important work has been going on.

There was discussion about this Commission having some time on the agenda with break-out rooms, and to bring in a speaker who may be able to speak about mental health, homelessness, poverty, climate change, etc. Perhaps a young person from Fridays for the Future.

MOTION by Tina Conlon / Lois Brown that the Social & Ecological Justice Commission request from the Executive that there be a planning committee for the Regional Council annual meeting, with the Social & Ecological Justice Commission at the table as a participant.

MOTION

CARRIED

Deferred Items

Bradford Bypass Action

Bri-anne Swan reported that the Federal Government has intervened and will be conducting their own environmental assessment and further action was being deferred until that assessment was complete.

[In a follow up email Bri-anne has explained her mistake. It is the Hwy 413 project that will be assessed by the Federal Government, not the Bradford Bypass.]

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Regional Council and General Council Proposals

How should commission connect with groups like Palnet, and other justice-focused groups (such as Trinity St. Paul's re: Right Relations?) re: bringing proposals forward to either the Regional Council and/or General Council.

Would it be helpful for the Commission to host an evening re: How to write a proposal?

It may be good to coordinate proposals through SJNOR with other Regional Councils. Further discussion will take place at the June meeting to talk about what proposals could be brought forward at the Annual Meeting.

[at this point, the Commission was without quorum]

Budget for 2021

Deferred to next meeting.

Reports/updates from sub-committees (if applicable)

- Poverty/Income Inequality (Susan, Moon-Ja, Tina, Elizabeth)
Update of Guaranteed Livable Income Planning

There is a proposal to encourage communities of faith to identify October 17th as a Sunday to focus on Guaranteed Livable Income with some prepared liturgical materials, paired with the lectionary.

There was also a video that came out of the April 8th vigil day. Bri-anne Swan will place this video on the Commission's webpage.

- Right Relations (Lois, Cameron, Tina)
Update from Right Relations Circle

LIRR is working on revising the statement of their mission, re-imagining what Right Relations might look like. Lois Brown attended Trinity St. Paul's UC Indigenous Rights Solidary Group. Their letters are able to be used as templates for writing letters in solidarity with Indigenous communities.

- Environment (Moon-Ja, Donna)
North Toronto Churches Cluster Green Team

Susan Eagle attended a meeting of the North Toronto Churches Cluster Green Team as part of linking the work of the commission and the cluster.

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Report from Bri-anne Swan

Bri-anne has been busy working on the Paid Sick Days campaign, Nominations on encouraging as diverse a slate of GC 44 commissioners as possible, supporting Jeffrey in the Seeking to Reduce Harm campaign and materials for Asian Heritage month.

Correspondence

Nobleton United Church: forwarding response from Premier's office re: Paid Sick Days- Received. Shining Waters has not yet received a response.

Federal Government re: Basic Income - Received.

From Jim Keenan on behalf of Emergency Food Security Group in Toronto- re: appropriateness of seeking funding help from both the Federal and City levels. He asks "if what we are doing is against some United Church policy regarding the vulnerable and homeless sector" and if so to let him know.

Bri-anne Swan will communicate to Jim that there is no policy preventing him from seeking funding and support from outside the denomination and that the SEJC commends the group for all the wonderful work they are doing.

Lawrence Park Community Church

The Commission received for information, correspondence that Lawrence Park, along with Manor Road and Humbervale, will be erecting crosses on their lawn as a sign of lament over the loss of life related to COVID. Other congregations are invited to take part as well. A similar action was taken at Queen's Park in relation to poverty and homelessness.

Closing

A closing prayer was offered and the meeting adjourned at 2:30pm

Next Meeting: June 15, 2021, 1 p.m.