

June 15, 2021

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

**Minutes of a meeting of the  
Social and Ecological Justice Commission  
Tuesday, June 15, 2021**

The Social and Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council met on June 15, 2021 by video conference. The meeting began at 1:00 p.m.

**Members Present**

Susan Eagle (Chairperson), Lois Brown, Tina Conlon, Elizabeth Cunningham, Eleanor Scarlett, Cameron Watts

Staff: Bri-anne Swan

Guest: Robin Wardlaw

Regrets: Moon-Ja Park

Absent: Donna Lang

**Welcome, check in and prayer**

The chairperson welcomed everyone. Elizabeth Cunningham opened with prayer, 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.

There was a time of check-in.

**Agenda**

**MOTION** by Cameron Watts/Tina Conlon that the agenda be approved as circulated

**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 May 18, 2021 be adopted as circulated.

**MOTION**

**CARRIED**

## **PalNet (Palestine Network)**

Robin Wardlaw shared the ongoing work of Palnet within the Regional Council.

Robin shared his story of how he became involved in issues related to Palestine and Israel as well as UNJPPI's transition to becoming *Palestine Network - Shining Waters (PalNet)*. Currently, they are exploring how we might arrive at a place of peace and justice in that part of the world. Their mission is to advocate for peace and offer opportunities for education, as well as generating support across the Region for human rights advocacy in Palestine/Israel. The group is very passionate about the work they are doing.

One of the theories is that if enough people around the world say we don't wish to own shares in companies that operate in the disputed territories, those advocating for the rights of Palestinians will eventually get the attention of countries like Canada, and encourage courage in speaking up. Can the United Church become more clearly identified with the divestment campaign? That is tricky, as there is sensitivity around appearing anti-Semitic. However, there are links being made to different kinds of colonial oppression around the world and PalNet is very mindful that there is a distinction between being critical of Israel's policies and practices, and being anti-Judaic.

PalNet has two proposals they are presenting to the Regional Council for consideration at the Regional Meeting this fall. One of the proposals is about education and the other about the divestment campaign. Robin described submitting the proposals to the Shining Waters as a "litmus test" prior to the General Council gathering in 2022. The former Toronto Conference held a leadership role in issues regarding Palestine and Israel prior to the structural change of the United Church.

PalNet is making a request for Shining Waters Regional Council (via this Commission) to recognize PalNet and the work they are doing. In addition, PalNet is requesting an introduction to Communities of Faith within the Regional Council.

Currently, PalNet is very centred in Toronto, but they are eager to expand their network across the Region.

**MOTION** by Eleanor Scarlett/Lois Brown that the Social & Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council recognize Palnet — Shining Waters as a partner in education and advocacy to promote justice and peace between Palestine & Israel.

**MOTION**

**CARRIED**

*Robin Wardlaw left the meeting.*

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## **Business Arising**

### Priorities Funding meeting

At the last funding meeting, there was a commitment to report back to each Commission. Two questions emerge:

1. Multi-year funding. We have ministries that have ongoing connections to communities and there is recognition that it is not fair to make them (or those they minister with) to apply for funding every year.
2. Whether or not there should be deep or wide funding. No answer yet, except to acknowledge that where there are ministries we really want to affirm, we need to take care of those before we widen the base. There was also a feeling that we need to be open to where the Spirit may be moving us.

All of this is in the context of there being limited resources. We may not have looked at all the places the resources may be for funding. The interest of this commission is the community ministries, but there are other ministries involved that come through that channel: camping, chaplaincy, etc.

Question: are we adequately resourcing the ministries we feel are important? Are we really looking for those resources? Or, are we being negative, “Well, there is only limited funding...?” Do we need to put some energy into being less fatalistic?

### Right Relations

There was a question about whether the Regional Council could be included in the ceremony (referenced in a letter from Peter Hartmans to Michael Blair) acknowledging the repair of the apology cairn. We need to be a visible presence. This has come up between the Right Relations meeting.

It was acknowledged that we're at a place where we are talking about action while the aboriginal church and other racialized people are saying, “This is not the time for that kind of action. This is the time for us as a church, as a country, as a people, to sit in the pain, to hold it, to lament, and to journey, to walk side by side until every single one of those children’s bodies are found.” We need to see what colonization has done to the people. Only after that can we engage in action.

Eleanor Scarlett was asked if she would prepare a proposal regarding the need for lament to be presented at the Regional meeting this fall.

## **Annual Meeting planning request**

There is interest in this Commission's participation in the Regional meeting for next spring.

For the annual meeting in the fall, *A Time for Every Purpose* is the theme. The content of the meeting will be entirely focused on proposals.

Next spring may be an in-person gathering and the hope is that this Commission would be invited into the planning.

## **Proposals**

There is hope that we are intentional about doing our work, and everything we do, through an anti-racist lens, and that moving forward, the staff reflects who we are as a people, and the work we're trying to do. There was a question about whether this "hope" requires a proposal to be presented at the Regional meeting. If so, should we also include being affirming and intercultural?

Bri-anne Swan gave a brief overview of the format and timelines for proposals. There are two deadlines to submit proposals: September 24th and October 22nd. There will also be at least two town hall meetings to discuss the proposals ahead of the Regional meeting in November.

Questions arose about whether justice issues that were voted on in the former Toronto Conference, are automatically transferred into the Regional Council. The answer is, not necessarily (i.e. voting again to be an Affirming Regional Council). The thought was to move forward understanding the intent that any justice stances previously voted on would be carried forward. If, in the future, anything is challenged, the Regional Council can vote to reaffirm the position.

In the next few weeks, subgroups are asked to think about what proposals could be coming forward to the Fall Regional meeting.

## **Nominations Request**

The Commission needs to put forward a proposal about continuing as a Commission of the Regional Council. Susan Eagle has spoken to Peter Hartmans, and Peter has spoken to the Executive. They would like a proposal that outlines the work the Commission has done. Susan will do some work on this.

The Commission also needs Nominations to recommend some additional members for the Commission. Part of the proposal for the continuation of this commission would be that the current members of the commission continue with some members extending their term another year, some three years, and then set those starting with the Commission to a three-year term.

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## Deferred Items

- Bradford Bypass Action
- Regional Council and General Council Proposals  
Proposals to go forward; Timelines, format, Town Hall conversations
- Budget for 2021  
Lawn signs for GLI campaign

The national Guaranteed Livable Income group is looking for each Regional Council to commit to purchasing lawn signs that would be available this fall ahead of a potential federal election. They asked if our Regional Council would agree to 20 lawn signs that we would purchase out of our budget.

**MOTION** by Lois Brown/Tina Conlon that the Social and Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council commit to purchasing 20 lawn signs for the General Council Guaranteed Livable Income campaign in the fall with funds coming from the Social and Ecological Justice Commission budget.

**MOTION**

**CARRIED**

## Reports

- Report from Bri-anne Swan

Bri-anne gave a very brief overview of what she's been working on. Bri-anne and Kim Uyede-Kai have been very busy engaging with many different groups after the identification of unmarked graves in Kamploops. Much of what Bri-anne has been doing is explaining to those outside of the United Church what steps the UCC has already taken towards reconciliation and that we are not starting right from zero (i.e. the UCC provided copies of all of its archive material years ago, etc.).

Jeffrey Dale and Bri-anne worked on a video re: the 50th Anniversary of the War on Drugs.

Bri-anne has also been involved with nominations, and encouraging a diverse slate of commissioners for General Council 44 next year.

Bri-anne and Susan Eagle drafted a statement re: the killing of the Afzaal family in London that was sent out to the Regional Council.

- Homelessness - no report.
- Poverty/Income Inequality - no report.
- Anti-Racism - no report.
- Right Relations - no report.
- Update from Right Relations Circle - no report.
- Environment - no report.
- Israel/Palestine - no report.

### **Closing**

A closing prayer was offered and the meeting adjourned at 3:15pm

**Next Meeting:** September 14th, 2021 at 1:00pm via Zoom, with communication re: proposals happening via email before the meeting.