

SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE COMMISSION

The Social and Ecological Justice Commission carries out its work under the following mandate:

The Social and Ecological Justice Commission will encourage, support, and initiate social justice work within Shining Waters Regional Council, which encompasses but is not limited to anti-racism and becoming a critical intercultural church of justice.

During the past year, the commission, currently composed of seven members, met by Zoom monthly except during the summer, and worked in the following areas of concern:

- Monitoring Upper York Sewage issue;
- Continuing dialogue with partner networks: PalNet and Living into Right Relations Circle,
- Continuing work with national church and other regions to develop Guaranteed Livable Income strategy and resources;
- Harm reduction, substance use and safe consumption sites: co-operation with seven regional councils, in addition to United-in-Learning, to co-sponsor a series of workshops, *Seeking to Reduce Harm*, organized by Jeffrey Dale;
- Christian University degree granting capacity. Letter sent from Regional Council to provincial government. With much public pressure the Ontario government withdrew support;
- Open letter to Toronto city council addressing the need for more support for warming centres, more shelter beds and cooperation with those supporting residents in encampments;
- Development of an action response for communities of faith in GTA for follow-up on letter to Mayor Tory re: issue of homelessness and poverty in local neighbourhoods;
- In cooperation with a coalition of groups, a letter sent from Shining Waters Regional Council to the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) expressing concern regarding the cessation of benefits to Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program recipients by the Ontario government. The government backtracked on its proposal;
- Support for Davenport-Perth and Jane Finch Community ministries as effective and vital community ministries;
- Development of Good Friday worship materials on the theme of homelessness, which continue to be available on the Shining Waters website;
- Paid Sick Days advocacy with Ontario government including a letter from Regional Council, online petition and materials for communities of faith;
- Being responsive to requests for information about, or follow-up action on issues referred to the commission by communities of faith.

Recognizing that all communities of faith, as well as the commission, were constrained by pandemic restrictions during the past year, the commission has identified justice work that needs to be given high priority:

- Assisting and giving leadership in refocusing and clarifying the justice mission of faith communities;
- Identifying and working collaboratively on environmental issues that were “under the radar” because of public and media attention given to Covid concerns during the past year;
- Developing a more pro-active model of addressing issues of homelessness and the need for affordable housing;
- Continuing to use the named regional council priorities of **racial justice** and **ecological justice** as the lenses through which all justice work is approached;
- Continuing work begun on harm reduction as it moves through the church courts to General Council consideration.

Staffing

Our thanks to Bri-anne Swan, Jeffrey Dale, Kim Uyede-Kai and Jody Maltby for resource leadership and support during the past year. As well, our gratitude to Rachael Howes who manages our minutes and keep us on track with administrative responsibilities. We could not do our work without the strong support of the staff team.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Eagle, Chair

On behalf of Commission members: Lois Brown, Tina Conlon, Donna Lang, Moon-Ja Park, Eleanor Scarlett, Cameron Watt.