

## EQUITY COMMITTEE REPORT

A sub-committee of the Shining Waters Executive  
November 2021

### Achievements

In the last year we celebrate the following achievements on equity, diversity and inclusion.

#### Affirming Region and Celebration

Becoming an Affirming Region was a significant achievement in the past year. Shining Waters Regional Council fulfilled the requirements identified by Affirm United and we celebrated our commitment on March 14, 2021. This day was meaningful as it is also marked by Affirm United as PIE Day, a time to be public, intentional and explicit about our commitment to 2SLGBTQIA+ justice. Rev. Michael Blair, The General Secretary of The United Church of Canada offered the reflection at our service. A unique original prayer was written for the occasion by Rev. Sarah Chapman and Rev. Lauren Hodgson. Regional rainbow flags were blessed to be shared with communities of faith to express our commitment.

There are thirty-six Affirming Ministries in Shining Waters Regional Council and approximately six communities of faith in the process with Affirm United.

#### Intercultural Diversity Commission

In February 2021 the Regional Council Executive approved the Intercultural Diversity Commission Policy which creates the basis for a fourth Commission with the purpose to encourage and engage Shining Waters Regional Council, its Executive and Commissions, and its Communities of Faith in honouring and living into intercultural mission and ministry. The membership has been named and the work is ongoing. See the policy on the website for the full description.

#### Equity Leads

The Equity Committee goal to identify, support and train leaders to help grow and care for a culture of belonging across the region will be implemented through a change in our governance model

#### A Prayer for Our Affirming Region

Loving God,  
what a gift to be together this day.

Gathered in celebration and commitment  
we thank you for this region  
of Shining Waters,  
for each and every person who  
makes this body what it is,  
unique, human, beloved.

God today we have joined together in  
covenant to live out your abounding and  
radical love for all, and especially for  
those of us who identify as  
LGBTQ2SIA+.

May you strengthen our commitment to  
truly live into this promise  
to be bold and brave as we seek to  
practice this inclusion  
and prophetic love.

We pray for Shining Waters region  
to continue to be a beacon for  
hope and justice.

We pray for our region's leaders who  
embody this region's affirming love  
within the wider church and the world.

And we pray for each and every one  
of us God.

May the commitment and covenant that  
we make today be a sign to future  
generations, our children, and our  
children's children of your love O God,  
that knows no boundaries and stops at  
nothing to offer healing  
and hope for all. Amen.

By Rev. Sarah Chapman and  
Rev. Lauren Hodgson

whereby the Equity Committee will evolve from a sub-committee of the Executive to a team of Equity Leads. The Nominations Committee will work with each Commission/Committee to identify an Equity Lead. The role of the lead will be to:

- Learn about equity related practice
- Give leadership to equity goals as they relate to their Committee or Commission;
- Help to uphold equity best practices in ongoing work;
- Collaborate with other Equity Leads and staff on shared reporting and accountability.
- Equity leads will gather at least once a year to develop goals and staff will support their implementation on an ongoing basis.

## **Regional Summary**

The work identified here is not intended to reflect direction by the Equity Committee, but is listed here to provide a wider picture of equity work as a shared regional priority.

### **Pastoral Relations Commission Equity Project**

The Pastoral Relations Commission has completed their report that collected data on the pastoral relations process from entry point to the end of the first year to identify how unconscious racist/sexist/ableist bias hinders or creates barriers for ministers in the congregational settings. The Pastoral Relations Commission has begun the practical work of digging into all 50 recommendations of the Equity Report to determine how the Regional Council can take action to make a difference.

### **Community of Faith Commission**

The Community of Faith Commission set out to incorporate a wise equity speaker in their regular meetings, with the first session including Jordanna Wright as the resource person. A plan to create a roster of resource people did not get completed, but the Commission will revisit this idea as they frame their equity goals for the upcoming year. Both the property policy and the grants review policies were adapted to incorporate an equity lens.

### **Intercultural Diversity Commission**

In the past year there has been support for the statement on Anti-Asian hate, racism and violence and a national event that gathered Asian women for support and solidarity during Asian heritage month. The Intercultural Diversity Commission has now been populated this year and their establishment reflects a regional commitment to equity.

### **Social and Ecological Justice Commission**

The Commission's agenda intersects with multiple equity related issues. In the last year there has been action on the following: Inequality in the Toronto budget (January 2021); advocacy for safe consumption sites and decriminalization of illicit substances (February 2021); action in support of

resources for homeless population (February 2021); Ontario Disability Support Program (March 2021); Paid Sick Days (April 2021); Guaranteed Livable Income (April 2021); support for Asian Women and lifting up Asian voices.

## Operational Plan

<b>Equity Operational Plan 2020</b>	<b>Progress as of November 2021</b>
1. Display visible signs of welcome in regional offices, on the website, letterhead, and at events by December 31, 2020, including the Affirm logo, rainbow flags, the forward movement (accessibility), and signs in the languages used across the region	Regional offices display signs of welcome. Website has been updated with Affirm logo. 67 Rainbow flags have been distributed (free upon request) to communities of faith. The forward movement logo requires follow up.
2. Review the Violence and Harassment policy and procedures and ensure they are sufficient and accessible. (November 2020)	The national policy has been updated and there will be a workshop planned for early in the new year 2022.
3. Build a knowledge bank of intercultural, anti-oppression facilitation practices in support of building competence in equity--based ways of working	There are resources on the website for anti-racism, intercultural ministry, right relations, Indigenous justice, Affirming ministries and disability (in progress).
4. Host a region-wide public service of celebration for Affirming commitment in 2021.	Held on March 14, 2021.
5. Regularly post, share and track, stories of diversity, inclusion, affirming ministries and action against injustice in the ongoing communication of the region.	176 Facebook posts; 13 Resources 6 Public Statements See Communication review below.
6. Create a public directory of Affirming Ministries, accessible buildings, and languages spoken in worship (December 2021)	There is a list of Affirming Ministries on the website. The directory of accessible buildings and languages spoken in worship has not been started.
7. Strengthen partnerships within the United Church and the wider community with equity based groups.	Staff are collaborating with national staff and networks related to equity, anti-racism, affirming ministries and disability.

## Communication Review

October 2020 – October 2021	Shining Waters Facebook	Resources/Articles created by SWRC	Public Statements/
<p>These issues were framed with an equity lens including the following topics: anti-racism, affirming, disability, anti-poverty, harm-reduction, exclusion related to removing barriers of oppression and discrimination.</p>	<p>176 posts (approximately)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Anti-Racism Workshop Video with HyeRan Kim-Cragg October 2020</li> <li>2. Intercultural Vision Video October 2020</li> <li>3. Affirming Prayer, March 2021</li> <li>4. SWRC Rainbow Flags March 2021</li> <li>5. The Pandemic of Racism, March 2021</li> <li>6. Asian in Canada Article by Maria Christina Conlon, March 2021</li> <li>7. Good Friday Resources on Homelessness, March 2021</li> <li>8. SEJC Little Library list, April 2021</li> <li>9. Prayer International Day Against Homophobia, May 2021</li> <li>10. Happy Pride Video, June 2021</li> <li>11. Prayer for Pride, June 2021</li> <li>12. Indigenous Reading and Viewing List, summer 2021</li> <li>13. Vision For Becoming an Intercultural Church, October 2021</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. January 2021, Letter on Inequality in the Toronto budget (January 2021);</li> <li>2. January 2021, Letter of concern about Canada Christian College</li> <li>3. February 2021, Letter to advocate for resources for homeless population</li> <li>4. March 31 Anti-Asian Racism, Hatred and Violence</li> <li>5. March 2021 Letter in support of Social Assistance Coalition Scarborough related to Ontario Disability Support Program</li> <li>6. Paid Sick Days Action (April 2021)</li> </ol>