

The United Church of Canada
Shining Waters Regional Council

**Minutes of a meeting of the
Social and Ecological Justice Commission
Tuesday, October 18, 2022**

The Social and Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council met on October 18, 2022 via Zoom. The meeting began at 1:00 p.m.

Members Present

Susan Eagle (Chairperson), Lois Brown, Esther Collier, Tina Conlon, Don Ford, Jennifer Gordon, Irene Green, Won Hur, Brian McIntosh,

Staff: Jeffrey Dale

Regrets: Bruce Sweet, Kim Uyede-Kai,

Welcome, check in and prayer

The chairperson opened the meeting, welcomed everyone and constituted the meeting in the name of Jesus Christ. Jeffrey Dale offered an opening prayer. Each person at the meeting silently reflected on the land where they are situated and with gratitude acknowledged those who have come before them and who have offered stewardship of that land through many challenges. Susan Eagle acknowledged our commitment to being a safe place for all people to gather and participate in our region.

There was a time of check-in.

Agenda

MOTION by Tina Conlon / Brian McIntosh that the agenda be approved as circulated.

MOTION

CARRIED

Minutes

Amendment to the Minutes of September 20, 2022, on page 2, under *GC44 Proposals* to change the wording under *Environmental* to read: ‘passed by GC44 that The United Church of Canada has committed the whole church to the aspirational goal of an 80% decrease in carbon emissions by 2030.’

MOTION by Lois Brown / Tina Conlon that the Minutes of the meeting of the Shining Waters Social and Ecological Justice Commission held September 20, 2022 be adopted as amended.

MOTION

CARRIED

Report from UNJPPI event, May 5 – 8, 2022 – Tina, Lois, Jeffrey

Lois and Tina reported.

- it was a wonderful conference; amazing people spoke

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- a trip is being planned in the Spring to visit, and Lois expressed concern about safety and about whether this is the time to be travelling to Palestine
- Tina shared Robin Wardlaw's report on the event which is a good synopsis of what happened.
- Jeffery shared that on the day he was there, he had an enlightening conversation with Carlton university students that were at the event. Jeffrey has started going through a new book, *Advocating for Palestine in Canada*. The book seems to be at the most recent cutting edge of what we are doing in this country and how to do it, and he recommends it as a potential resource.
- Out of the event, is there any work for this Commission to do? One thing is to figure out how to relate to Pal Net and work along side them in the region.

Business Arising

- **Media communications**
Susan Eagle has had a conversation with Donna Rutz, the region's communications support; Donna questioned about how much attention is paid to print media and whether or not print media pay any attention to the church. She also raised a concern that the national church's print media contact list has not been kept up-to-date. Donna and Susan will spend some time trying to identify where some smaller, local media is. This will include social media as well as print media contacts. It was suggested that anyone that has their own local media lists, to share them with Jeffrey and Susan.
- **Request for poverty advocates from communities of faith**
Another follow-up request will be sent out next week to the region's communities of faith asking them to each name a poverty advocate so we can share regional actions and local initiatives.
- **Support of Homelessness letter to Barrie City Council – Susan Eagle**
This item did not get a mover and seconder at Barrie City Council, so the motion did not get made. It did go in the circulation list to the Councilors but was not acknowledged at the Council meeting. Susan did have some conversation with some councilors and senior City staff after the meeting. The letter will be sent to the next Council meeting.
- **Update from Ecological Subcommittee – Esther Collier**
Esther gave an update on the work for the upcoming information session on Monday, November 21, 7 p.m. via Zoom. Information/promotion will be going out next week to the regional council. It will be shared on social media as well. Esther and Jeffrey will work on a poster for the event. Esther has created a draft slide show which she has shared with the commission members; Jennifer has volunteered to add a few slides on food; Esther would like to have the draft slide show completed by October 31st to give time for another review of it. Esther suggested a practice session on November 7th from 7 to 9 p.m. for anyone presenting. Won Hur and Bruce Sweet are working on the theology to make it framed from a place of hope and the theological teachings. On the evening of the event, presenters will meet at 6 p.m. to make sure everything is working.

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There was also discussion about the aim of this workshop; are we aiming to see this as the beginning of a support network that is there to help people get to 80% in which case we are committing that we are going to having a background and have a centralized location where data can be accessed; or is it a gathering of minds to decide direction which means the people participating are part of what is going forward. It was decided to try to do both; after the event, be in touch with the participants to share information and follow-up.

Jennifer will check with Faithful Footprints and Greening Sacred Spaces to see if there is currently a centralized location where data can be accessed.

The group would like to have an ‘ask’ of participants – to hold a meeting in their church to which are invited the municipal, provincial and federal environmental leaders in their area and community, to gather them to say we know there is a crisis. and state the goal, and what can be done? By putting people together, it makes it feel that you are a voice in the community on this, and it is very effective.

It is felt this should be an ongoing series of workshops.

Budget

Susan gave an update of the Commission’s actual spending; have spent \$6,200 of the \$25,000 budget, which is made up of;

- \$1,000 – Affirm United membership
- \$2,239 – affirming work
- \$850 – honoraria for events
- \$1,255 – London UNJPPI event
- \$840 – harm reduction (Jeffrey’s work)

The Financial administrator indicated there might be more expenses being sent in. Susan asked about the SJNOR membership; the last time it was paid was 2020 and they did not require membership payments in 2021 but we will have to pay it going forward.

MOTION by Brian McIntosh / Lois Brown that the Social and Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council authorize the payment of \$1,500 to Social Justice Network of Ontario Regions (SJNOR) for Shining Waters 2022 membership.

MOTION

CARRIED

Allocation and priorities:

There was a brief discussion on ways to use remaining budget funds.

Staff Reports - Jeffrey Dale

Jeffrey reported that he found out the names of the people leading the climate conversation at the national level of The United Church of Canada. They are Erik Mathieson, Rosemary Lambie, and Peter Hartmans. There are other names on the committee that are not public.

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Harm Reduction

As Jeffrey mentioned last month, the Harm Reduction proposal passed at GC44. A lot of the work will have to come through this Commission. Work on the naloxone training piece is still ongoing, as the conversation is expanding with more people/groups being added.

Canadian Shield Manitou Intentional Learning Community (MILC)

Jeffrey told the Commission about this organization which is a group of lay people, and ministry personnel doing some amazing work around justice for the regional council. Jeffrey shared a link to their website and invited the commission members to look at it. He felt it might assist this Commission around how we frame our educational events and how to engage the community.

Canadian Shield Neurodivergence Working Group

Jeffrey had a conversation with a young person who worked on a neurodivergence piece this summer and how the church may engage in that. He had an event in Sudbury that had over 40 people participating. Canadian Shield has received some grant money to help him continue with this work throughout the upcoming year. This is going to be more in the forefront; young people are wanting to talk about it; there is a sharp increase in people being diagnosed with neurodivergence.

Bees for Peace

This is an organization started by a professor at the University of Toronto. She and her students worked on a program for the regional council's summer camps this year. We have applied for some grants through the national church for her to continue developing a program around that. She might be a good person for the environmental working group of this commission to connect with; it is nice to have this connection between faith and science.

Justice and Faith Formation, upcoming workshops

Some ministers have indicated an interest in having a liturgy-writing workshop; something where they can come together for a few days and have some experts help them in their crafting of liturgy. Jeffrey is starting to look at this for the spring. Jeffrey invited the commission members to let him know of any liturgy they have heard that speaks to them.

40 Days of Engagement for Anti-Racism is currently ongoing from the national church. Jeffrey shared the link for it.

Hong Kong Christians

The reason there are so many Hong Kong newcomers is the human rights situation in Hong Kong. Kim Uyede-Kai is asking this commission to keep this in the back of their mind as China exerts more pressure on Hong Kong where most of the social agencies, schools, daycares and medical facilities are historically run by Christian churches. Protestors are disappearing and fear is growing, hence the exodus of Hong Kong folks coming to Canada, many under student visas. Jeffrey shared a letter written by Rev. Calin Lau to ministers that are coming to Canada from Hong Kong.

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Regional Meeting

The next regional meeting is scheduled for May 26-28, 2023 to be held at North Bramalea United Church. The theme is, *So What? Faith in Action*.

Jeffrey indicated that it is hoped that community ministries becomes a big focus at the regional council meeting. Community ministries has been working on preparing a proposal for that meeting. It will come through both this Commission and the Communities of Faith Commission.

Jeffrey has started a preliminary conversation with Tina Conlon about some alternative ways to engage people at the regional council meeting. Is there a way we can engage with people in our region to create some sort of art that could be housed in a space that people can go through and engage with the work we are doing. Jeffrey and Tina will continue talking and bring something to the November meeting.

Correspondence

Correspondence was received from Barbara Lloyd requesting support for a PalNet event, *Palestine: Art as Resistance* which is a series of three webinars in November. Specifically, they are requesting \$450 to cover the honoraria for speakers.

MOTION by Brian McIntosh / Lois Brown that the Social and Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council provide \$450 in support of PalNet's November webinar series, *Palestine: Resistance Through Art*.

MOTION

CARRIED

Correspondence was received from Jim Keenan regarding an incident that happened at Sanctuary at Saint Luke's United Church where the police were called in and there was a violation of sacred space. Susan Eagle asked for further information and updates and has not heard back from Jim. Jeffrey has spoken with a Board member who gave a different version of what happened. It is unclear what action is expected of this Commission in this matter and at this point there is no concrete information or request. Saint Luke's is connected to Sanctuary but the regional council is not.

Deferred items

These items are from previous Minutes of this Commission:

- prison ministry and criminal justice
- HIV/AIDS
- TUCC connection

Is there a thread that we need to be continuing to identify on these? Susan invited the Commission to look at these items and be aware of them as we move to our next agenda.

Updates from sub-committees

These are the working groups that can get together between Commission meetings if they want to spend time in conversation on the topic or identifying some part of the work that should be brought forward to the Commission.

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Homelessness (*Susan, Brian*)

Poverty/Income Inequality (*Susan, Tina, Irene*)

Anti-Racism (*Lois*)

Right Relations (*Lois, Tina, Brian*)

Environment (*Esther, Don, Won, Jennifer, Bruce, Susan*)

Israel/Palestine (*Tina, Lois, Brian*)

Next meeting

November 15, 2022, 1 p.m. Lois Brown will provide an opening prayer.

Closing

Susan Eagle gave a closing prayer and the meeting closed at 3:05 p.m.

