

The United Church of Canada
Shining Waters Regional Council

**Minutes of a meeting of the
Social and Ecological Justice Commission
Tuesday, February 21, 2023**

The Social and Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council met on February 21, 2023 via Zoom. The meeting began at 1:00 p.m.

Members Present

Susan Eagle (Chairperson), Lois Brown, Esther Collier, Jennifer Gordon, Irene Green, Brian McIntosh,

Staff: Jeffrey Dale, Celio de Andrade Santos, Susan Whitehead, Kim Uyede-Kai

Guest: George Moore

Regrets: Tina Conlon, Don Ford, Won Hur, Bruce Sweet

Welcome, check in and prayer

The chairperson opened the meeting, and welcomed everyone. As an opening, Susan gave an Ash Wednesday reading by Debra Lang, and offered an opening prayer. She 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, and confirmed quorum. She acknowledged there have been two resignations from the Commission, Bruce Sweet and Tina Conlon.

MOTION by Brian McIntosh / Lois Brown that the Social and Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council accept the resignations of Tina Conlon and Bruce Sweet from the commission and give thanks for the contribution that they have made to the Commission, and that this information be forwarded to the Nominations Committee.

MOTION

CARRIED

There was a brief time of check-in.

Agenda

MOTION by Brian McIntosh / Esther Collier that the agenda be approved as circulated.

MOTION

CARRIED

Minutes

MOTION by Lois Brown / Irene Green that the Minutes of the meeting of the Shining Waters Social and Ecological Justice Commission held January 17, 2023 be adopted as circulated.

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MOTION

CARRIED

Business Arising

Follow up on response to Bill 23

There has still been no response from the Government on our submission on Bill 23.

Update re: funding policy – Susan Eagle / Jeffrey Dale

Susan had shared some email correspondence between Peter Hartmans, Executive Minister, and Robin Wardlaw of PalNet around some of the efforts that are being made regarding funding. It appears that the region is suggesting that because of budget restraints, they don't see a likelihood of funding these types of things and are suggesting groups look elsewhere or look to commission budgets.

This item will be covered more fully under the Palestine/Israel subcommittee request of the Budget agenda item.

Budget Requests

Palestine/Israel sub-committee request – Brian McIntosh

A proposal was received and circulated from this sub-committee that requested up to \$4,000 of the 2023 Social and Ecological Justice Commission budget be made available to the sub-committee for the following purposes;

- up to \$750 for each of up to four candidates from within Shining Waters for the exposure tour being promoted by Palestine Network for this fall.
- up to \$1000 for the planning and implementing of one or more educational events within the Region in 2023.

Commission members asked questions and had discussion around the request. There was discussion around some amendments to the proposal:

- that there be accountability of those that go on the exposure tour;
- that funding goes to first-time travellers to the area;
- with regards to the educational event, that it be for an event in 2023 and be paid out upon receiving receipts/invoices.

There was also discussion about creating a page on the Shining Waters website where people can apply for a grant for the exposure tour which will include the criteria for applicants. The applications would be gathered from the website and sent to the Palestine/Israel sub-committee for review and to make their recommendations to come back to this Commission for final decision.

MOTION by Brian McIntosh / Lois Brown that the Social and Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council approve the request of the Palestine/Israel sub-committee for funding up to \$4,000 with the amendments discussed.

MOTION

CARRIED

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Social Justice Network of Ontario Regions (SJNOR)

A letter was received and circulated from Charles Barrett, Chair of the Social Justice Network of Ontario Regional Councils (SJNOR). It gave a report on the network's achievements in 2022, outlined their plans for 2023, and proposed an assessment of \$1,000 from each of the regional councils that make up the network.

Susan also reported that Tina Conlon was this commission's representative to the SJNOR and since Tina has resigned, Brian McIntosh will now be our representative.

MOTION by Brian McIntosh / Lois Brown that the Social and Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council pay the requested \$1,000 assessment to the Social Justice Network of Ontario Regional Councils (SJNOR).

MOTION

CARRIED

Delegation - Bill 23 Protest

Rev. George Moore joined the meeting and spoke about his initiative to organize a rally to protest the opening of the Greenbelt in Ontario and seek the rescinding of Bill 23. It is hoped that it will take place around Earth Day, April 22nd. He outlined other people and organizations that have been approached to take part. He is looking for people with whom he can brainstorm and strategize, and can help organize a large event.

It was suggested that this commission can get word out about the rally to the regional council and if there is an advocacy action around it too, the commission can share that as well with the regional council.

There was good discussion and commission members were able to share some contacts, ideas and strategies, and George shared his contact information.

George Moore was thanked and left the meeting.

Kim Uyede-Kai joined the meeting.

Regional Meeting - Report from planning meeting (*Susan Eagle / Esther Collier*)

- Esther reported from the planning meeting; SEJC climate change will be the third event at the meeting so as to incorporate the ideas of equity and community ministry that are the other two events, into what we do with the environment at the meeting; perhaps a summing-up concept.
- what is coming out is that we would like to hear and speak of the value of deeper networking with many different voices, so are looking at trying to get voices from around the world.
- there is a video on the Greenbelt that would be a good thing to play at the regional meeting.
- the idea would be trying to get main goals of; people leaving understanding the urgency of the situation, recognizing the value of community networking and accessing human resources, recognizing equity and environmental racism, understanding our meetings

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and what we are planning in the future and leave with a plan to establish community networking on climate and bio-diversity justice in their own communities.

- There is also space on the regional council meeting agenda to deal with proposals and this commission usually has some things we want to address, partly because it helps to do consciousness-raising and it helps to keep things in front of people.
- Because the meeting is in-person, there is an opportunity for us to have on-site resources; talking about having a space and time where there would be a visual arts or meditative space for contemplation. Perhaps this commission could convene a time that there could be conversations with people who are concerned about issues.

Reports from sub-committees

Ecological Sub-committee (*Esther, Don, Won, Jennifer, Susan*)

- Esther spoke about the March 20 event: *Near Net Zero by 2030? Retrofitting Church Buildings with Minimal Resources*; they have been able to get Stephen Collette who is the Building Audit Manager at Faith & the Common Good and works with the Faithful Footprints grants. He knows a lot about environmental retro-fitting for buildings so will be able to answer the questions that people have.
- She would like to have youth be leaders at the upcoming events so they get to see the adults in the community working. They don't need to be in a leadership role but it gives them that ability to develop leadership skills. It was suggested to put it out on social media and see the response. Also suggested to start with one youth and build it from there. There was the idea to host a forum just for youth and put it out to every community of faith.
- Esther also spoke about data collection; to start with making the document in which we are collecting data open to people adding to it on their own and we reach out to people.

Homelessness (*Susan, Brian*)

- Brian reported that there was a very successful workshop locally; trying to animate a local Etobicoke response to the housing affordability crisis in Toronto; there are some follow-up actions to take place; will happily link from that immediate area with other larger efforts to do something around Bill 23 and the follow-up.
- No specific report to efforts in the region.

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

- Susan reported that there has been a Poverty Advocates meeting with approximately 15 people from the various communities of faith; it was an initial meeting to bring people together; it is clear that there certainly are some Toronto-based issues that advocates would want to address and some feeling that this commission could be proactive around Toronto issues as well as other municipal issues in addition to ones that affect the whole region. There is a wide diversity of people's engagement around poverty issues depending on where they are in the region and the congregation that is involved so there was a commitment to meet again. Part of the idea is to get a pulse of where congregations are at, and know how to share information and how to collect

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information from congregations about concerns that they have. So, it will take some building to make that happen.

- ISARC – Susan did provide the submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs regarding the 2023 Pre-Budget Consultations Hearing. She encouraged the commission members to make use of it or in their networks. ISARC will be following-up with meetings with MPPs and policy people.
- Guaranteed Liveable Income National Group – *Irene, Esther, Susan*
Susan reported that Esther and Irene have agreed to participate in the national group. The big push right now is around getting municipal councils to endorse the guaranteed liveable income; so we might want to look at what municipalities in our region we might approach to see if we can get such an endorsement.

Staff Reports - Jeffrey Dale and Kim Uyede-Kai

Kim shared a link on Calls to Action 71 to 76 around missing children and burial information; <https://activehistory.ca/2021/07/calls-to-action-71-to-76-missing-children-and-burial-information/> and a link for the February 21st press conference of the Tseshah First Nations release on its initial findings of a ground search on the former Port Alberni residential institution, run by the United Church 1925-1969.
<https://www.facebook.com/Tseshah>

Jeffrey reported:

- Community Ministries update;
Copies of the proposals to the regional council annual meeting will come to this commission's April meeting; one proposal regarding funding and sustainability for the three specific community ministries in our region, and one proposal around the exploration of community ministry as engagement within the wider regional council and The United Church of Canada's context. These will be sent out earlier in March so there will be time before the meeting for commission members to come with their suggestions and considerations. They will also be sent to the Communities of Faith Commission and the Executive so there are three different bodies looking at them before they go to the regional council meeting. A big topic of the group's conversation is trying to get the church to understand the reality that core funding is needed as opposed to the notion that all their funding can come from other streams, and what core funding looks like. Another piece within all of that is trying to figure out how to connect this to a larger story that's happening in The United Church of Canada. As church property is being re-developed, there is a piece in the re-development that will see a large area in each of the buildings that will be dedicated to ministry purposes and what will that look like going forward? what are the ways in which we engage worship in a new way, in a different way, in a way that also reflects the time we live in?
- Harm Reduction
Jeffrey has been talking to the new CHURCHx program at Toronto United Church Council (TUCC) and are going to be creating the videos that will go out from our

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regional council to the whole country; trying to figure out who they will engage; there are a lot of people that want help with it and Jeffrey needs the time to be able to do it.

The question was asked if there is more that we, as the United Church, can and should be doing around advocacy around safe consumption sites and if there is a way in which local congregations could be doing and saying more. It's felt that more pressure can be placed on the government by showing up at the MPP offices.

New Business

Correspondence

The PalNet Annual Report from Robin Wardlaw was received for information.

Deferred items

Bees for Peace - agenda, late spring

Prison ministry and criminal justice

HIV/AIDS

TUCC connection

Closing

Lois Brown offered a closing prayer and the meeting closed at 3:10 p.m.

Next Meeting

Tuesday, March 21, 2023 at 1:00 p.m. Brian McIntosh will provide the opening reflection.

