

The United Church of Canada  
Shining Waters Regional Council

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

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

**Members Present**

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

Staff: Jeffrey Dale, Rachael Howes, Celio deAndrade Santos

**Welcome, check in and prayer**

The chairperson opened the meeting, and welcomed everyone. Brian McIntosh offered an opening prayer and gave an acknowledgement of the land. The chairperson 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.

There was a time of check-in.

**Agenda**

**MOTION** by Irene Green / Don Ford that the agenda be approved as circulated.

**MOTION**

**CARRIED**

**Minutes**

**MOTION** by Lois Brown / Esther Collier that the Minutes of the meeting of the Shining Waters Social and Ecological Justice Commission held February 21, 2022 be adopted as circulated.

**MOTION**

**CARRIED**

**Business Arising**

There has still been no response to our letter sent to the government of Ontario on Bill 23.

Rally against Bill 23

Further to George Moore's attendance at last month's meeting, he has decided not to proceed with organizing a United Church rally.

**Nominations**

There are three vacancies on this commission. Susan Eagle asked if the commission members had any recommendations or feedback for the Nominations Committee perhaps in the area of housing/homelessness/poverty. She had circulated the commission mandate and she encouraged the commission members to think of people that might be willing to

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serve on the commission. The focus on racial justice, ecological justice and economic inequality continues to be the three lenses that we use to do our work. There was a question of whether the mandate had been recently updated.

### **Budget**

#### Proposal for banners

Susan Eagle proposed that the Commission purchase a Shining Waters Regional Council banner to be used at events, rallies and meetings. She suggested two banners; one for the northern part of the region and one for the southern part.

**MOTION** by Don Ford / Lois Brown that the Social & Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council purchase two Shining Waters banners to be used at events.

**MOTION**

**CARRIED**

Susan Eagle will get quotes on the cost of the banners and bring them back to the next meeting.

### **Regional Meeting**

#### Report from planning team – Susan and Esther

The commission was polled to see how many would be attending the regional meeting to assist with the commission's presentation. There was also discussion about expenses to go to the regional council meeting.

**MOTION** by Don Ford / Irene Green that the Social & Ecological Justice Commission pay the travel and food costs for commission members to attend the regional council meeting in May 2023.

**MOTION**

**CARRIED**

#### Follow-up to 2022 proposal, Raising and Indexing Social Assistance Rates in Ontario

Susan Eagle had circulated to the commission the proposal that the commission submitted to the 2022 regional council meeting titled, *Raising and Indexing Social Assistance Rates in Ontario*. It included, in the section of how the regional council might respond:

*take steps, working with the Social and Ecological Justice Commission, to create, in consultation with other Ontario Regional Councils (through SJNOR (Social Justice Network of Ontario Regions) a social justice liaison position with the provincial government. This consultation might be expanded to include ecumenical and interfaith partners, with a report back to the next Regional Council meeting.*

To date, neither the executive of Shining Waters Regional Council nor the commission has taken any action on this. It is not clear who follows up on resolutions passed at regional council meetings. Susan will send it on to the Social Justice Network of Ontario Regions (SJNOR) and she feels there will be some interest in it. Susan also reported that action has been taken on other steps outlined in the proposal. Susan encouraged commission members

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to think of whether or not there are some things that should be going forward as a proposal to this year's regional council meeting.

**Staff Reports - Jeffrey Dale and Kim Uyede-Kai**

Jeffrey reported:

Community Ministries – the next meeting of the subcommittee is on April 17<sup>th</sup>. He invited anyone from this commission to attend a conversation on April 13<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. via Zoom to look at the proposals with him, and offer advice and feedback. He also suggested as an alternative that they could email him with any issues, advice or feedback. The proposals will be sent out to the commission prior to that date.

Harm Reduction – congregations have asked for training on Naloxone, so Jeffrey is creating resources to share.

**MOTION** by Don Ford / Won Hur that the Social and Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council pay \$500 towards training resources and videos on Naloxone.

**MOTION**

**CARRIED**

Kim reported:

- Ecumenical anti-racism gathering on March 30<sup>th</sup> at 2 p.m. on Zoom. Jeffrey Dale is one of the panelists talking about racism from a white male perspective. This is part of the Canadian Council of Churches work of anti-racism that has been ongoing for many years.
- Living Into Right Relations Circle, Thursday, March 23 hosts Rev. Dr. Alydia Smith speaking on the white church perspective from her experience as a Black person, and will be talking about Indigenous history and intersections with Black history in Canada.
- Toronto Urban Native Ministries (TUNM) board is still going through a visioning process. They are down to one staff person instead of three. The Board is trying to figure out what kind of staffing position is needed from the United Church perspective.
- Intercultural Diversity Commission update – the Korean translations of the search and selection process and ministry and personnel committee guidelines are almost ready to go but they are now working on a glossary of terms. The Commission will then move on to other Korean language translations that have been prioritized by the communities themselves.

Jennifer Gordon joined the meeting.

**Reports from sub-committees**

Ecological - Esther Collier

Esther reported that the workshop, *Near Net Zero by 2030? Retrofitting Church Buildings with Minimal Resources* held March 20<sup>th</sup> went well; attendance was 59 on Zoom; there was a lot of positive feedback about having the long time of networking within the meeting; it was good to see the modelling being picked up. She noted the real importance of keeping these meetings simple because if they are too big and over planned it is very stressful.

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Jennifer has agreed to present at the meeting in June and we want to continue the same kind of modelling, and each time we want to be asking local communities to also be doing this within their communities. These meetings are also modelling how churches and communities can bring their youth in to get the experience of leadership, to become aware of what is being done in their communities so they can talk about it with their peers, and also feel comforted by the idea that these are happening within their communities so they are not feeling anxious about the climate crises.

There are meetings planned for June and one for November, and perhaps doing this church building topic again in the spring of 2024.

Homelessness and Poverty/Income Inequality (*Susan, Brian, Irene*)

The members of these subcommittees have suggested that the Homelessness and the Poverty/Income Inequality subcommittees be combined.

- **Poverty Advocates**  
Since the meeting there have been people in touch with Susan following up to find ways to narrow down the broad perspective of the poverty issue and try to focus the advocates around a couple of projects that we might find consensus on.
- **ISARC–Housing/Homeless response**  
The Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition (ISARC) was approached by Association of Municipalities Ontario (AMO) to participate in a public statement that they wanted to make. It was circulated to the commission prior to the meeting. The statement was published in the Globe and Mail newspaper.
- **GLI (Guaranteed Liveable Income) National Group** (*Irene, Esther, Susan*)  
Irene and Esther have agreed to attend the GLI National Group meetings. Susan attends on behalf of ISARC. Esther attended the last meeting of the group and reported that there will be vigils held at municipal offices to target municipalities to recognize the GLI proposal. Our issue here is, how do we get these promoted, how do we encourage people to hold these vigils and campaigns. There are resources available about what to do and how to do it. For the people that have been doing this for a while, it's more a question of how we maintain the stamina to keep doing it.

It was suggested that maybe there could be an educational video produced around GLI for communities of faith to use.

There was also discussion around bringing a proposal to the regional council meeting around this issue.

It was suggested to contact the poverty advocates to see if there is some interest in approaching municipal councils around guaranteed liveable income.

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Israel/Palestine (Lois, Brian)

A request was received and circulated from this subcommittee for the use of the charitable status number of the regional council to make a submission to the United Church Foundation for funds for people to attend a 'come and see tour' this fall. Senior staff of the regional council and General Council were consulted and it appears that this will not be possible. The subcommittee is therefore withdrawing their request. Susan and Jeffrey will speak further with the Executive Minister on this.

There is a planning group in place to arrange for the hosting of the *Dispossessed but Defiant* international photo exhibition; they are working on finding a venue, volunteers, security, etc. It is being planned for the Fall. The exhibit makes connections between colonialism, Israel/Palestine as well as in our own country with regard to Indigenous people.

Anti-Racism (Lois) – no report

Right Relations (Lois, Brian) – no report

**New Business**

There was no new business or correspondence to come to the meeting.

**Deferred items**

Jeffrey reported:

- Bees for Peace – working with them to prepare a summer program for churches.
- Prison ministry and criminal justice – talked of hosting an event around this issue; the General Council youth interns were keenly interested in the topic. There has not been anything done on it yet. Lois expressed an interest in working on this with Jeffrey.
- HIV/AIDS – looking at doing some talks to recognize the 1987 book from the national church about HIV/AIDS, which was the first of its kind. There have been some conversations, but nothing has happened yet.
- TUCC: connect with Toronto United Church Council (TUCC) around property management and greening our churches – no updated information.

**Closing**

Susan Eagle gave a closing prayer and the meeting closed at 3:00 p.m.

Next Meeting: to be determined by Doodle poll.

