

# PROPOSAL TO SHINING WATERS REGIONAL COUNCIL SW2023-01

## A VISION FOR THE POST-PANDEMIC CHURCH FROM A COMMUNITY MINISTRIES PERSPECTIVE

Origin: Shining Waters Regional Council – Community Ministries Working Group

*“‘We are called to be the church’  
Where there is solidarity with the poor and oppressed,  
there is the heart of the church.  
From that position, Community Ministries have a special calling  
to witness to the integration of faith and justice in the world  
... and give leadership in developing a new way of being the church.”*  
~from the Community Ministry Standards and Best Practices, UCC 2007

### 1. What is the issue?

For some, the church’s future looks bleak. It has been said that The United Church of Canada is closing a building per week, and yet we know that the need for spiritual nourishment and community has never been greater.

Community ministry offers spiritual nourishment through a variety of intentional engagements that build relationships beyond the boundaries of how we have often enacted ministry. Community ministry allows the church to be the presence of Christ while being in relationship with those who most need the church’s support. Since its formation, and even before, members of The United Church of Canada have been committed to community ministry in a variety of capacities, and yet now, in this time, it seems as though this way of operating is imperative as we work to connect with future generations.

In a post-pandemic church, we are challenged by The United Church of Canada’s new strategic plan which calls us to be “deep, daring, and bold.” This strategic plan only strengthens our commitment to seek justice as we embrace the intersectionality of spirituality and justice through liturgy, advocacy, pastoral care and justice-making. Creative and inclusive tools and supports will help engage us “to do justice, mercy, kindness and walk humbly with our God,” (Micah 6:8), putting into practice what faith looks like within the church and out in the world.

Community ministry with its emphasis on how we are to do what we believe, closely aligns us with a world in which truth must be experienced first hand. When myths and misinformation abound in the media, community ministry is the church’s opportunity to bear witness to the realities facing those we are called to serve, that move across boundaries of urban/rural, gender identities, sexual orientations, racial identities, and economic realities. Therefore, community ministry, with its emphasis on doing what Christ taught, is vital to every member and community of faith across Shining Waters Regional Council.

### 2. Why is this important?

In this time, we as the church are called to engage across the regional council with those seeking purpose and meaning. Those who are committed to community and justice. Those alienated from both. Through this engagement, we may find ourselves pursuing spirituality, outside of traditional methods (i.e. singing hymns or reciting pre-written prayers), to find and experience Jesus through poverty relief and social justice, jointly engaged in the struggle against systemic racism and economic injustice.

It is here that community ministry, having done this work for decades, is uniquely positioned to help the church move from inside church walls to meaningful engagement alongside those who struggle outside.

### **3. How does this proposal help the church live into our commitments on equity?**

If the church takes seriously its commitment to inclusion, equity and the common good, community ministry would be the praxis for being the church in the world, an ally for those who are the least heard in society, and an active partner in the making of Christ's beloved community.

### **4. How might the regional council respond to the issue?**

That Shining Waters Regional Council:

1. Identify and celebrate communities of faith that have been working in local community ministry engagement.
2. Engage a working group to identify, prepare, and develop learning tools, led by currently existing Community Minister, to prepare educational opportunities for lay and clergy membership across the region. Working with platforms like Church X for delivery of such opportunities is suggested.
3. Provide opportunities for community of faith ministry personnel to learn and share best practices, stories of experiences (failures, successes, and learnings) in community ministry engagement.
4. Identify models of learning and engagement within community development and work towards grassroots up learning models. Connect with those teaching community development in theological programs across the country to support the identification of the many modalities possible.
5. Provide resource support (monetarily and staff) to ensure that the former four points are enacted upon.

# PROPOSAL TO SHINING WATERS REGIONAL COUNCIL SW2023-02

## FUNDING COMMUNITY MINISTRY AS A PRIORITY FOR THE CHURCH

Origin: Shining Waters Regional Council – Community Ministries Working Group

### 1. What is the issue?

Community ministry is the pastoral, priestly, and prophetic presence that provides community development, organizing, and advocacy within the wider neighbourhood. Attending to the needs and challenges of a given community, community ministry is a partnership between the church and its representatives, often a Community Minister, as they journey with those who live, play, and work in spaces that society often negates - particularly people who experience systemic racism and economic oppression.

For the past 40 years, intentional community ministry practices have been part of the boundaries now represented within Shining Waters Regional Council. Most recently, these intentional community ministries have taken shape in the form of Jane Finch Community Ministry, Davenport Perth Community Ministry, and Regent Park Community Ministry. Each of those three community ministries have built relationships with people who live in precarious places, engaging in the important relational community with people who experience poverty, community violence, immigration issues, substance use, and living rough.

In 2022, a task group was formed, at the request of Shining Waters Regional Council, to consider the financial realities facing the three community ministries, particularly in regards to continued funding into the future. The hope was that through this task group, the creation of a sustainability plan would be presented at the 2023 regional council meeting. We recognize that if a plan is not being formalized for funding considerations by December 2023, these three ministries will need to work towards the ending of their ministry, as a year is needed for this transition to occur.

Since the task group was formed, we have examined the purpose of community ministry within Shining Waters Regional Council and The United Church of Canada. We have engaged in the practical and financial realities facing these three community ministries and the communities they serve. We have contemplated the financial futures and what it means to widen the base of financial support for community ministry within Shining Waters Regional Council. We have considered the financial support possibilities for community ministry and where funding sources may be found.

We have learned that, while the three intentional Shining Waters Regional Council Community Ministries are often engaged in financial support campaigns independently, it is difficult to engage the entire region within the financial outreach efforts. In reality, congregational appeals cannot be the sole pillar of a capital campaign without congregational awareness of the community ministries, their work, and its importance as we move forward.

By embracing community ministries as a priority for the region it is not merely about supporting these three community ministries but also a call to fully engage how we enact community ministry within our region. Studies have shown that flourishing congregations are engaged in their local

community, and if properly funded, these three community ministries may be a resource in assisting congregations in community engagement.

## **2. Why is this important?**

[Jane Finch Community Ministry](#), [Davenport Perth Community Ministry](#), and [Regent Park Community Ministry](#) are situated in low income, racially diverse communities.

The Jane Finch community has a population of just over 80,000 people. 60% of the community is deemed to have inadequate income. Predominantly black, Jane Finch neighbourhood represents over 100 nationalities with 70 different languages and dialects. A vibrant ministry in the centre of these diverse communities offers the church opportunities to learn and grow while also serving people in need. The ministry, in conjunction with the community, strives to eradicate challenges created by systemic racialized poverty, including gun violence.

The Davenport Perth community is made up of over 100,000 people and 76% are first (45.1%) and second (30.9%) generation in Canada, with 40% of the community making below a living wage. The community often struggles with precarious housing and food insecurity. Davenport Perth is currently experiencing gentrification. Those that the ministry serves are often living in rooming houses. Some are experiencing ‘renoviction’ with no alternative but to live rough. This community is home to three Toronto Community Housing spaces and is also home to Davenport-Perth United Church. The ministry, in conjunction with the community, has responded to the needs of the community through a variety of modalities from direct food security-based action, to political advocacy, and artistic exploration.

The Regent Park community has experienced extensive gentrification since the re-development where Phase 2 was completed in 2018 and Phase 3, 4, 5 continue. It is difficult to know the current population of Regent Park, considering that the last census took place before the 2018 re-development was completed. However, there is somewhere between 10,000 – 12,000 people who live in Regent Park’s mixed housing. About 25% of the community makes below a living wage. 51% of people who live in Regent Park are also a visible minority. Here the community ministry strives to serve both those who live within this fluctuating community as well as those who serve the community through the Christian Resource Centre.

Through all of this work, the community ministries are living out God’s purpose for ministry, that we connect the realities of the gospel call to our deep sense of justice through acting faithfully, offering hope, space to be heard, and finding ways to make connections and companionship.

## **3. How does the proposal help the church live into our commitments on equity?**

By embracing these three community ministries as an integral part of the Shining Waters Regional Council ministry purpose, we are continuing to work towards being an intercultural church. It is in understanding of the need for the church to be present in places and spaces where diverse ethno-cultural communities are working towards being an anti-racist and equitable church.

#### **4. How might Shining Waters Regional Council respond to the issue?**

Plan for consistent core funding that could include:

1. Establishing a working relationship with the Toronto United Church Council to support fundraising efforts and financial contributions.
2. Revisiting the distribution of assets policy with respect to disbanding or amalgamating communities of faith to include funding for community ministries.
3. Creating a policy and process for financial appeals to communities of faith.
4. Initiating a capital campaign with the goal of 10 million dollars to sustain the existing community ministries while also providing seed funding for potential future community ministry in Shining Waters Regional Council.
5. Hiring a fundraiser to support in the efforts listed above (funding through: application to the Seeds of Hope Grant (Fall 2023) - \$20,000 request, community ministries - \$15,000 matching, Shining Waters Regional Council - \$15,000).

# PROPOSAL TO SHINING WATERS REGIONAL COUNCIL SW2023-03

## PROCESS FOR ELECTION OF PRESIDENT-ELECT

**Origin: Shining Waters Regional Council – Nominations Committee**

### 1. What is the issue?

The regional council needs to establish a process for the election of a President-Elect. The current process for nominations in Shining Waters Regional Council is to present a slate of officers for consideration at the regional council meeting that includes one candidate for the position of President-Elect. In some years, there is only one candidate for the position. The Nominations Committee is seeking direction on an appropriate process in a year when more than one candidate has put their name forward for consideration. The question is whether multiple names should be presented to the regional council for a vote, or whether Nominations Committee (or Executive) should determine one name only to be presented.

### 2. Why is this issue important?

The current process (presenting only one name) as compared to an election process has not been discussed and approved by the regional council. There is a range of views on what the most appropriate process would be.

There are pros and cons to both approaches, as follows: Presenting only one name to the regional council for consideration implies that the Nominations Committee will discern with all candidates how each person's gifts and skills match the requirements of the role. The committee can also consider how a person's qualifications and profile balance with other members of the Executive. Each candidate has the opportunity to ask questions in order to fully understand the responsibilities of the role before agreeing to let their name stand. The process ensures that candidates do not find themselves in a public competition for the role and may be less likely to feel embarrassed or discouraged by an unsuccessful application.

The risk is that presenting only one candidate may give the appearance that the process is not transparent and that candidates are chosen by staff or well-connected volunteers. This may prevent candidates from applying.

A different process, such as an election during the meeting allows for a fully open process in which anyone can stand for election with no implication of interference by staff or well-connected volunteers.

The risk is that someone without appropriate qualifications, time and understanding of the role could be elected. Those who are not successful may be discouraged from participating in other ways in the life of the regional council.

An election process allows members to be guided by the presence of the Holy Spirit moving in the discussion during the meeting of the regional council.

### **3. How does this proposal help us to live into our church's commitments on equity?**

The Nominations Committee is responsible for reviewing nominations and submitting to the regional council, its Executive, or the Executive Minister, as appropriate, recommendations for appointment to this and other roles. The Nominations Committee is dedicated to ensuring that the appointment process is transparent, accessible and equitable.

In carrying out this responsibility, the committee will

- reflect theologically on the basis for appointed member participation in the church
- discern who is equipped to serve
- develop and test processes for selecting individuals and developing effective groups
- to the best of the committee's ability, strive to meet the region's commitments to its mission, including the equity policy
  - becoming an intercultural church
  - the full inclusion of people with disabilities
  - developing new and young leadership
  - the Caretakers of Our Indigenous Circle Calls to the Church
  - any future commitments regarding the appointed leadership of the United Church

*(from the Regional Council Executive: Nominations Committee Policy)*

To date, the committee has engaged in discernment with candidates in an effort to meet the region's commitments to equity while also recommending a candidate with gifts for the role. The committee recommends the candidate that they believe best fits these criteria.

Does this make the nominations process more or less accessible for people who are part of equity-seeking groups?

### **4. How might the regional council respond to the issue?**

- a. The regional council could affirm the current process for selecting a President-Elect;  
or
- b. The regional council could affirm a process for an election during the regional meeting that involves all candidates;  
or
- c. The regional council could affirm a different process for selecting a President-Elect;  
or
- d. The regional council could offer feedback on the process for selecting a President-Elect and refer this back to the Nominations Committee.

# PROPOSAL TO SHINING WATERS REGIONAL COUNCIL SW2023-04

## WORKING FOR A GUARANTEED LIVABLE INCOME FOR ALL CANADIANS

Origin: Shining Waters Regional Council - Social and Ecological Justice Commission

### 1. What is the issue?

**Background:** A basic income is an unconditional cash transfer from governments to individuals to enable everyone to meet their basic needs, participate in society and live with dignity – regardless of work status. A federally-funded, income-targeted basic income could help alleviate pressures on municipalities to address poverty, manage services, and support people to invest in their local economy and community.

**Action Needed:** Advocacy to encourage the Federal Government to implement a Guaranteed Livable Income for all Canadians.

### 2. Why is this issue important?

When people do not have enough to live on, their lives are affected not only by lack of food and housing but also by loss of quality of life, health consequences and marginalization.

When people do not have enough to live on, social services are stretched, charitable programs are stressed, and municipalities are tasked with using limited revenue streams such as property taxes to try to fill the gap.

A federally-funded basic income could help alleviate the pressures municipalities face in providing crucial social supports and would allow municipalities to provide more effective, affordable and high-quality services that work in tandem with those provided under provincial, territorial, and federal programs.

Evidence suggests that a federally-funded basic income is not only feasible in Canada, but could bring significant benefits at the municipal level.

Citizens and municipalities can find common ground in urging that adequate income programs be provided by federal and provincial levels of government.

### 3. How does this proposal help us to live into our church's commitment on equity?

Since the 1970s, The United Church of Canada has called for a universal Guaranteed Livable Income that is non-discriminatory and accessible, particularly for Indigenous peoples. With the cost of living skyrocketing, a Guaranteed Livable Income is urgently needed.

Justice, equity, compassion and care for neighbour are at the heart of the Christian gospels and Christian theology. For too long we have offered the charity model of “helping the poor,” without equal passion and energy for addressing the root causes of poverty: unfair distribution of wealth,



discriminatory labour laws, insufficient wages, and stigmatizing and isolating of those who are vulnerable and impoverished.

We add further harm when we provide a “social safety net” that is woefully inadequate to meet basic need, and so complicated with barriers, it penalizes those who seek to become participants in the economy.

By inviting his disciples to act from the perspective that “whatever you do to the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you do to me,” Jesus called for Christian discipleship that models compassionate justice and equitable inclusion for all people.

United Church members and communities of faith have already successfully appealed to municipal councils in Victoria BC, Sooke BC, Halifax NS, Moncton NB, St. John NB, Fredericton NB and St. John’s NL.

#### **4. How might Shining Waters Regional Council respond to this issue?**

Shining Waters Regional Council might undertake an initiative to encourage and assist its communities of faith to engage with their local municipal councils to pass resolutions calling on the federal government to implement a Guaranteed Livable Basic Income.

Communities of faith within Shining Waters Regional Council might use any or all of the following whereas clauses and resolution in approaching their local municipal council:

*“Whereas, Municipalities represent an important voice in social policy discussions at all levels and are often on the front lines, working to ensure that residents and communities lead happy, healthy, sustainable and productive lives; and*

*“Whereas, Municipalities are struggling to keep up with the downloaded responsibility of providing essential public and social support services; and*

*“Whereas, basic income can alleviate pressures on municipalities to address poverty and help municipal services remain sustainable and affordable for everyone; and*

*“Whereas, basic income as an income security program would work in concert with necessary social services to better support low-income individuals while helping municipalities to do the same; and*

*“Whereas, basic income can help remove barriers to active community engagement, enabling individuals to participate more meaningfully in society; and*

*“Whereas, a permanent basic income could stimulate economies, boost consumer spending and encourage individuals to shop locally; and*

*“Whereas, improved financial stability makes it easier for residents to participate, contribute and invest in their local economies and communities; and*

*“Whereas, basic income might help address what is often a major driver of demand for housing, food security, mental health and other programs;*

*“Therefore, be it resolved that the Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_ calls on the Government of Canada to implement a Guaranteed Livable Basic Income, ensuring everyone has sufficient income to meet their needs, which would go a long way towards eradicating poverty and homelessness and alleviating the pressure on municipalities to use their limited resources to fill gaps in our failing social safety net,*

*“And be it further resolved that the Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_ endorse this Resolution, and forward the same to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM).”*