

ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT OF THE SHINING WATERS REGIONAL COUNCIL

Regional Council:

Our regional meeting theme for this year is “Sanctuary: Towards a Kingdom of Peace, Justice and Reconciliation.” This regional meeting is a wonderful opportunity to gather together in-person and online across our regional council. We join together as United Church to celebrate our Ministry together as communities of faith, seek encouragement from each other, as we share the gospel and most of all worship and give thanks! As a regional council, as communities of faith, as outreach ministry, we have returned to a more normal routine following lockdowns. Returning to a new normal has been slow for many communities of faith with the disruption of the pandemic challenging the foundation of many within our regional council. We hold each other in prayer.

As a region, as community, as individuals, we give thanks as we continue to be on a journey together; we celebrate the resilience of our churches and the expression of the Gospel in many new and creative ways.

Connecting within our Regional Council:

Although this past year many of our communities of faith, outreach ministries, and camps have struggled figuring out our new normal, we have continued a ministry of caring and support in new and creative ways. Volunteers, music leaders, ministry personnel, camp staff, outreach staff, and congregational support staff have all worked tirelessly. Along with weekly worship in-person, many communities of faith continue to offer ministry through online worship and gathering for meetings virtually - a new and creative offering which was limited across the regional council, pre-pandemic.

As a regional council, the region’s primary tool for connecting continues to be online gatherings, for both Ministry Personnel and Lay Leaders for support, updates, and education. Our website/newsletter “Currents” continues to be a key tool for communication within our regional council. Many local and a few regional networks and local groups have also met to connect, learn, challenge, listen, and work together. The Executive also celebrates the significant work of the regional council Commissions, Committees, networks/clusters, and informal gatherings of UCC folks and community members.

The Regional Council met together in-person May 26-28, 2023 and online September 19, 2023 to honour our mutual ministry together and complete our administrative duties for the year.

Festival of Faith:

This past year, Spring 2023, the Canadian Shield Regional Council invited Shining Waters Regional Council and many other guests from outside the region, to gather together in mutual ministry at the Festival of Faith in North Bay. This was an opportunity for folks from across the regions and Ontario to join together as community to listen, learn, laugh, cry, and grow together in our mutual ministry. We put aside our administrative ministry and gathering together focusing on fellowship and learning from across the region and including guests from across Ontario and Canada.

New in 2025, both the Shining Waters Regional Council and The Canadian Shield Regional Council will join together, mutually planning a Festival of Faith for June 7-9, 2025 in Sudbury Ontario. More details are to come! See our regional council website for updates, following our spring Regional Council Meeting (RCM). Both regional councils will not be meeting together in-person as individual regional councils, for our Administration roles in 2025, but rather online.

Work of the Regional Executive:

Our Executive meets monthly (with the exception of the summer) and does the work of the regional council when our region is not meeting (C.3.1.1). Often the Executive has a very full agenda which includes oversight of the regional commissions, regional finances, regional policy, regional meeting, emerging work, and the Executive Minister and staff.

The draft 2025 budget will be presented at our RCM. This past year's spending reflects an unusual year following Covid travel restrictions. Staff travel was up in 2023, as staff re-connect in-person. We continue with a 5-year budget projection, a requirement of our bylaws, to be updated yearly.

Part of our work as a regional council is to development more dependable income to support the work of the regional council and the work of granting by the region. In 2020, we joined in on a formal partnership with Kindred Works (formally The UCC Property Corporation), to develop rather than sell property. The property would create housing (including affordable housing), regular income, and some regional community space for the regional council. Our first project broke ground late spring 2023 in Orillia, with other projects progressing in the months and years to come.

Monthly Work of the Regional Council Executive:

If you are interested in a detailed account and overview of the work of the regional council Executive, please see the Digest of Actions, which will be received for information at our RCM. The digest offers an itemized account of the Regional Council Executive since our last RCM. It also gives you an idea of the monthly variety and work of our Executive. We have also added a [link to our webpage](#) which offers a close look at our finances, including audited statements as they are completed by the auditors, in one location.

Working towards Right Relations, Anti-Racism and Equity:

The United Church of Canada is working towards becoming an anti-racist institution. For the United Church, it means encouraging the General Council Office, regional council offices, communities of faith, and even Canadian society to pause and reflect. The United Church has allocated staffing and resources for both General Council staff, regional staff and Ministry Personnel. The United Church is offering training, learning opportunities, and discussion groups as part of a strategy of becoming an anti-racist Church. Practically, the Canadian Shield Regional Council and Shining Waters Regional Council staff have joined together for reflecting, learning, re-learning history, theological reflection, and discussion working towards becoming an anti-racist Church and also working towards right relationship.

Both regional councils have encouraged equity conversations at the Executive, Commission and Committee levels of the church. The regional council continues to lift up our commitment to equity across our work. We are beginning to live into our new pattern of equity being named by each commission.

We continue to work and celebrate Shining Waters Regional Council as a Affirming regional council and support community of faith conversations too!

Staffing:

In 2023/2024, we saw more transition of staff in our regional council. Rachael Howes transitioned into Retirement at the end of May 2023. Dale Hildebrand transitioned to part-time in 2022 and fully retired in early 2024. Jeffery Dale also finished his work at the regional council and transitioned to local community of faith ministry in 2023. We also said goodbye to Susie Henderson at the very end of 2022. We deeply appreciated their work with the regional council and they will be missed. We welcome Eun-Joo Park to Shining Waters Regional Council, as a Support to Communities of Faith and Pastoral Relations Minister. She can be reached at epark@united-church.ca. We welcomed Shawn Redden as a Justice and Faith Formation Minister, sredden@united-church.ca, who works part-time for the Shining Waters and Canadian Shield Regional Councils.

In 2023/2024 we started a more intentional transition to shared staff between regional councils. Rob Smith transitioned from full time in CSRC, to part-time, now supporting Ministry Personnel in Shining Waters Regional Council, replacing part of Dale's time. Diane Matheson-Jimenez also works part-time in SWRC for limited hours. All four administrative staff (Susan Whitehead, Donna Rutz, Kathleen Wolfe, and Celio de Andrade Santos Jr.) have now officially transitioned to serving both regional councils to increase our support to program staff, with Susan Whitehead serving as the Executive Minister's Executive Administrative Assistant.

We continue to deeply appreciate working with Jody, Todd, Kim, Diane, Rob, Melody, Shawn, Celio, Donna, Kathleen, Susan, and Peter. We are blessed with incredible staff who have worked tirelessly over the past year. Thank you! We are also grateful for our Past Chair David Leyton-Brown and current Chair Tina Conlon, who have provided attentive leadership throughout this year. Thank you both!

UCC Strategic Plan:

2023 marks the start and implementation of the The United Church of Canada Strategic Plan (2023-2025). We welcome Calin Lau, General Council Growth Animator, supporting the Canadian Shield Regional Council and Shining Waters Regional Council. clau@united-church.ca 1-800-268-3781 ex. 2047

Sharing the introduction of the UCC strategic plan (found on the UCC website) it states:

“In partnership with regions and the Indigenous Church, the national ministry will dedicate focus, energy, and resources to revitalizing the church towards a vibrant future. We will renew by strengthening existing communities of faith towards transformation. We will create by encouraging the development and sustainability of 100 new communities of faith, with a particular focus on churches that serve migrant communities. And we will invite by investing in sharing our unique witness with neighbours across the country and encouraging participation in our ministries, communities, and campaigns. This passion for growth will be enabled by leadership development, supported by denomination wide strengths, fostered by justice campaigns and climate

initiatives, and realized alongside Indigenous pathways.

Our priority plan pulls key activities in each of these strategic objectives into service towards dynamic growth.

Daring Justice. This is our Call, grounded in our statements of faith, right relations commitment, and core values, but articulated anew for this time. Along with our Call is a Vision to become “a bold, connected, and evolving church” as disciples of Jesus in this place.” (The United Church of Canada Strategic plan 2023-2025 document, post on the UCC website)

The strategic plan has much more detail. See [The United Church of Canada website](#) for the most up to date details.

100 Years!

2024 marks the beginning of the 100th year celebration of The United Church of Canada with an online/in-person hybrid service, hosted by The United Church of Canada, at Metropolitan United Church in Toronto. Let’s give thanks together for our mutual ministry for many years. [Click here for more details.](#)

Thanks

We give thanks for the work of the regional council, outreach ministry and communities of faith, its many volunteers, Ministry Personnel, music teams, administrative staff, custodians, and treasurers to name just a few. May God continue to bless our ministry in 2024/2025.

With Gratitude and Prayer:

The Shining Waters Regional Council Executive

Tina Conlon, Chair

David Leyton Brown, Acting Chair

Peter Hartmans, Executive Minister

Allyce Mutungi

Bri-anne Swan

Daniel Reed

Isaac Kamta

Allan Holditch

Jingle Ayupan

Lynn Mooney