

# SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE COMMISSION

The Social and Ecological Justice Commission carries out its work under the following revised mandate:  
*The Social and Ecological Justice Commission will encourage, support, and initiate justice work within Shining Waters Regional Council, viewing and acting on issues through the lenses of racial, social, ecological justice and economic equality.*

The Commission, composed of nine members met monthly during the past year except for July, August and December. Meetings were via Zoom and occasionally in person. The following areas of concern were addressed:

## **Lead From the Heart: Youth Justice Opportunities**

The commission supported youth justice work through the provision of an animation fund that provided up to \$500 for youth justice and educational projects. It was made available to youth between the ages of 15-30. During the past year three projects were funded: Philippines human rights awareness, eco justice through green tech and an Arts in Theology youth trip.

## **Eco workshops**

During the past year the commission's Ecological Sub-committee chaired by Esther Collier has provided several online Zoom workshops under the overall theme of Near Net Zero by 2030?

Specific workshops have dealt with: Harnessing Community Resources, Green Design for a Sustainable Future, Greening Grounds and Greenbelts, and Heat Pumps and Geothermal Loops. Still to come in November 2024 is Financing and Grant Writing. The workshops are also available through YouTube.

## **Principles Based Justice Work**

The commission reviewed the General Council document, "Principles-Based Justice Work" produced by the Theology and InterChurch InterFaith (TICIF) Committee and then met with committee members Ariel Siagan and Andrew Mills for a conversation about the interface between evidence-based and principles-based interpretations of justice work. We look forward to further conversations.

## **Issues and Advocacy**

During the past year the commission addressed the urgent issues of refugees, homelessness, and Guaranteed Livable Income (GLI), with letters to elected government leaders and also encouragement to communities of faith to take local action through awareness, education and advocacy initiatives.

Specifically, the commission urged the Senate to support the passage of GLI Senate Bill S-233, provided funding to Uganda Martyrs Church to assist homeless refugees, signed a refugee appeal letter titled, "177 of Us," encouraged communities of faith to write to elected leaders and advocate for more supports for unhoused people and supported efforts to draw public attention to the environmental issue of the Greenbelt.

The commission also supported advocacy efforts in Barrie to challenge the municipal council's decision to prohibit anyone from providing "food, tarps, tents or water" to anyone on public land.

It urged communities of faith to follow up on the GLI proposal approved at the annual regional council meeting last year by encouraging local municipal councils to endorse Guaranteed Livable Income (materials available to assist with that project).

## **Partnerships**

During the past year the commission supported various community and in-church partnerships, providing publicity and promotion for the Ontario Health Coalition's Campaign against Hospital Privatization, funding support for ISARC (Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition) and the United Church SJNOR (Social Justice Network of Ontario Regions), and participating in the national church's Guaranteed Livable Income steering committee.

The commission also supported the Shining Waters network, PalNet which works on issues related to Palestine and Israel. The commission provided funding for speakers for several PalNet Zoom workshops in April and May 2024 as well as a photo exhibit held in the fall of 2023.

## **Microgrants**

With a view to providing more support for local education and advocacy by communities of faith, the commission is providing \$400 microgrants for communities of faith to host justice workshops and raise awareness of local issues. Application forms will be provided very soon.

## **Community Ministry**

The commission followed up on the community ministry proposal that was approved at the last Regional Council meeting (May 2023) by supporting a Community Ministry Working Group which hosted an educational Zoom workshop for communities of faith on May 13: **Love Your Neighbour: Making Connections in the Community.**

## **Proposals**

The commission is providing two proposals for consideration by the annual meeting this year: a proposal for better communication within Shining Waters Regional Council and a proposal related to the urgent need for adequate and affordable housing.

## **Banners and Lawn Signs**

United Church banners with the name of Shining Waters Regional Council are available for use at local gatherings as are lawn signs with a message of support for Guaranteed Livable Income. These can be obtained from the Regional Council office.

## **Acknowledgements**

We are grateful to staff, Jeffrey Dale (who was staff support until September 2024), Kim Uyede-Kai and Celio de Andrade Santos for resource leadership and administrative support. We have just recently welcomed Shawn Redden as staff resource and look forward to working with her in the coming year.

Our thanks, also, to Won Hur and Brian McIntosh, who have finished serving their time as members of the commission. We wish them well as they move to national church work and retirement respectively. Our continuing members of the commission are: Lois Brown, Esther Collier, Don Ford, Jennifer Gordon, Irene Green and Alexa Gilmour.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rev. Susan Eagle, Chair  
Social and Ecological Justice Commission