**Minutes of a meeting of the**

**Social and Ecological Justice Commission**

**Tuesday, September 17, 2024**

The Social and Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council met on September 17, 2024 via Zoom at 10:30 a.m. for two presentations. The meeting was constituted at 11:40 a.m. following the presentations, once there was quorum.

**Members Present**

Susan Eagle (Chairperson), Lois Brown, Alexa Gilmour, Jennifer (Jay) Gordon, Don Ford

Staff: Shawn Redden, Celio de Andrade Santos

Regrets: Esther Collier, Irene Green, Kim Uyede-Kai (on sabbatical).

**Welcome**

The chairperson welcomed those who were on-line (Lois, Susan, Shawn and Celio) and our first presenter, Adele Halliday, Antiracism and Equity Lead at the General Council Office.

**Addressing Gun Violence and Systemic Injustices** *(Adele Halliday)*

Adele raised the question whether the commission may want to consider making a response or statement or call to action around the shootings or killings of mostly young black men in Toronto recently. Although it’s a long-standing issue there has been a recent flash of gun violence over the long weekend. Because these incidents involve a disproportionate number of young black men, there is an element of anti-racism. This raises the question of how the Church might respond, whether it be a statement of concern or call to action.

The commission discussed the potential creation of a statement and call to action in response to systemic injustices, with the possibility of involving the Intercultural Diversity Commission and other faith groups. Adele would be available in Kim’s absence to work with a few people to draft wording. The conversation ended with the understanding that the statement and call to action should be both strong and actionable, with a focus on tangible actions communities of faith can take.

A decision will be made later in the meeting whether or not to proceed with something at this time. The chairperson thanked Adele Halliday for her time.

Don Ford joined the meeting.

**Speaker (via Zoom) Jeffrey Schlemmer, Executive Director, Community Legal Clinic of York Region**

The chairperson welcomed Jeffrey Schlemmer, Executive Director of the York Region Legal Clinic, at 11:00 a.m. He provided an overview of the clinic's history, operations, and the current housing and social assistance landscape in Ontario. Jeffrey criticized the government's recent housing policies and emphasized the difficulties their legal team faces in defending eviction cases. He discussed the potential of tiny homes as a solution to homelessness, citing a successful initiative in Peterborough.

Jeffrey also spoke to the superior court decision released last year that prohibited Waterloo Region, under Article 7 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, from evicting homeless people from an encampment. The municipality was prohibited from dismantling an encampment unless it could provide accessible housing to meet the needs of the people being evicted.

This ruling affects all municipalities across Ontario. Both the province and some municipalities are considering a court challenge, although Waterloo has made the decision not to challenge it.

The discussion concluded with a focus on the need for increased welfare benefits and the financial challenges of maintaining these communities. The chairperson thanked Jeffrey Schlemmer for his presentation and his time.

Jennifer (Jay) Gordon joined the meeting.

**Quorum**

At 11:40 a.m. the chairperson constituted the meeting and noted there was now quorum.

Jennifer (Jay) Gordon offered an opening reflection, and gave an acknowledgement of the land. Susan Eagle acknowledged our commitment to being a safe place for all people to gather and participate in our region.

A time of check-in was deferred until Alexa joins and we have time for some discussion.

**Agenda**

**MOTION** by Jennifer Gordon / Don Ford **SW-SEJC-2024-09-17-01**

that the agenda be approved in principle as circulated, noting there will be some adaptations to accommodate commission members.

**MOTION CARRIED**

**Minutes**

**MOTION** by Lois Brown / Jennifer Gordon **SW-SEJC-2024-06-18-02**

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Shining Waters Social and Ecological Justice Commission held June 18, 2024 be adopted as circulated.

**MOTION CARRIED**

**Closure of Supervised Consumption Sites Letter to the Premier and Minister of Health** *(letter attached APPENDIX 1)*

**MOTION** by Don Ford / Jennifer Gordon **SW-SEJC-2024-09-17-03**

that the SEJC confirm the action of the commission (carried out by email poll vote) on August 22 in its request to have Tina Conlon, President, sign a letter to Ontario Premier Doug Ford and Sylvia Jones, Minister of Health asked the government to reverse its decision on the closing of safe consumption sites.

**MOTION CARRIED**

**Faith Leaders Statement** *(statement attached APPENDIX 2)*

Action on this item will be deferred until Alexa Gilmour is able to join the meeting.

**Business Arising from Minutes and Updates**

* **Microgrants – report from Irene Green** *(Application and report APPENDIX 3)*

**Request from Temperanceville United Church**

Susan and Irene reviewed a proposal from Temperanceville and concluded that it did not meet the Social Justice requirements, so they are not recommending it for a grant. The group agreed that the feedback Irene prepared should be provided to the applicant, with the suggestion they revise the proposal to focus more on an ecological justice perspective and resubmit it to the commission.

* **Leading from the Heart** *(Jay Gordon)*

Jay reported that there are no new applications for leading from the heart project. The team also debated continuing advertising leading from the heart program after no applications, despite substantial views of ad and website. Agreement to try another round and to consider the optimum time for students. Jay suggested Thanksgiving or reading week for this budget year.

The meeting recessed for lunch and reconvened at 12:30 p.m.

Alexa Gilmour joined the meeting.

**Faith Leaders Statement** *(statement attached APPENDIX 2)*

**Motion** by Alexa Gilmour/ Don Ford **SW-SEJC-2024-09-17-04**

that the SEJC confirm the action of the commission (carried out by email poll vote) on August 29 that the Social and Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council endorse the attached Faith Leaders Statement and ask that our president sign it on behalf of our Regional Council.

**MOTION CARRIED**

**Business Arising from Minutes and Updates** *(continued)*

* **Community Ministry**

**Capital Campaign - correspondence from Jody Maltby** *(Email letter APPENDIX 4)*

Irene Green was appointed by the commission to represent its members in discussions on the Capital Campaign, but she has not provided any updates to Susan. Susan received correspondence from Jody, who provided some background on the situation *(see Appendix 4)*. Overall, there are no significant updates at this time. Received for information.

**Community Ministries Workshop follow-up**

Susan will be in touch with Angie Hocking from the Community Ministries staff about next steps following the workshop last May.

* **Budget Update** *(circulated by email; APPENDIX 9)*

Shawn received a budget from Janet MacDonald. No questions. Received for information.

**Other Business**

1. **Priorities for work for the fall**

The group briefly discussed their priorities for the fall regarding Social Justice and their personal goals. The Commission discussed the effectiveness of church clusters and the need for improved organization and communication within their faith communities. They explored the creation of a database or geographical map to track social and ecological justice events in the Shining Waters region, as well as the idea of online profiles for church members. While cost was a concern, they agreed that reliable systems could be valuable resources.

They also addressed social justice priorities, affirming the current themes of the subcommittees and emphasizing sustainability and the need to engage more people in the work of the subcommittees.

The team decided to draft a plan for future meetings and base their response to the ad hoc committee on this discussion.

1. **Ad hoc committee request from Jody Maltby** *(APPENDIX 5)*

In response to a request from Jody Maltby regarding the work of a recently created Ad Hoc committee to conduct a region-wide consultation about regional ministry and funding priorities, Susan highlighted one of the current priorities: building and energizing the justice network across the regional council to animate the work of communities of faith.

She emphasized that the commission should focus not only on specific issues but also on fostering and nurturing the communities of faith through communication, resources and education.

Susan noted that our current priorities are reflected in our sub-committees. In addition, one of the priorities around the work of those sub-committees is the building and animation of justice networks so we can move ahead on those priorities.

Susan will send a response to the Ad Hoc Committee based on the discussion.

**Staff Report and Update on Daring Justice Newsletter: Shawn Redden** *(APPENDIX 10)*

Received for information.

**Reports from sub-committees:**

1. **Israel/Palestine** *(Lois, Alexa)*

A funding request submitted by Robin Wardlaw was received from PalNet-SW *(APPENDIX 6)*. PalNet-SW is seeking $1,500 to support the UNJPPI conference, “Faith in a Time of Genocide”. Susan clarified who from the commission should be our liaison since Brian left the commission; neither Lois nor Alexa want to be a SEJC sub-committee. Consensus is that PalNet-SW can correspond directly with the Social and Ecological Justice Commission, unless someone decides to act as a liaison.

**MOTION** by Alexa Gilmour/ Lois Brown **SW-SEJC-2024-09-17-05**

that the SEJC will grant 1500 dollars to Palestine Network Shining Waters Region (PalNet) in support of the United Network for Justice and Peace in Palestine/Israel (UNJPPI) event “Faith in a Time of Genocide,” a cross-Canada gathering being held November 1-2, 2024, in Toronto.

**MOTION CARRIED**

1. **Homelessness & Poverty/Income Inequality** *(Susan, Irene, Alexa)*.

* **GLI Update** *(from Irene Green following National GLI meeting)*

Susan reported that Irene is representing the commission at the GLI national gathering, and Irene sent the following update printed on the agenda: The GLI House bill C-223 is going to a vote to send to committee for further study when parliament resumes in the week of September 16, likely September 19.  Please contact your MP and encourage them to vote in favour. From my understanding it is to have it acknowledge as being worth discussing by a committee Most people at today’s meeting were not very optimistic and primarily because it is a private member's bill. Apparently, it will be the last on the agenda and therefore may not even be heard. None the less that was the direction that all are urging us to support. P.E.I. purposed program is the best model for us to be supporting.

The consensus was to include something about GLI and Lois Wilson’s advocacy for GLI in the September issue of Daring Justice, in preparation for the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, October 17. Links to those resources can be provided in the article. Susan will work on writing this item.

* **Homelessness**

Susan identified two key issues related to homelessness. First, she mentioned the homelessness proposal that was approved at the regional meeting but expressed uncertainty about its current status. She reviewed the June minutes and couldn’t confirm if the letter related to the proposal was sent or if the Executive followed up. She reached out to Peter for clarification, but he mistakenly thought she was inquiring about safe consumption sites. Susan acknowledged the need to follow up and clarify what happened with the proposal and letter.

Second, Susan discussed the upcoming Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness Conference in Ottawa at the end of October. Susan has been monitoring the event, as they do important work. She considered attending online but found the online content limited to pre-recorded sessions. The in-person registration fee is $870 plus taxes, and Susan is conflicted about asking the commission to fund part of the registration, feeling uncomfortable since she serves as the chair.

Susan Eagle vacated the chair and left the meeting. Alexa Gilmour assumed the chair while the Commission discussed whether to support the payment of Susan’s registration to attend the conference and represent the Commission.

**MOTION** by Jennifer (Jay) Gordon / Don Ford **SW-SEJC-2024-09-17-06**

The SEJC will cover the registration cost for Susan Eagle to attend in-person the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness Conference in person on behalf of the commission from October 29 to 31, 2024, in the amount of $1,000.50 plus HST. The commission requests a report from her after the conference.

**MOTION CARRIED**

Susan Eagle returned to the meeting and assumed the chair.

* **Refugee update** *(Alexa)*

No report.

* **Poverty**

The Maytree Report, **Interpreting the data: Key takeaways from Welfare in Canada, 2023** *(released Sept 10, 2024)* was circulated by email for information.

1. **Ecological Subcommittee** (*Esther, Don, Won, Jennifer, Susan)*

The near net-zero webinar on November 6 is confirmed, with Don and Jay as lead. Celio and Shawn will include the registration link in the "Daring Justice" newsletter. This subcommittee will meet next week to finalize plans.

1. **Right Relations Subcommittee** *(Lois)*

**Grassy Narrows mailing** *(APPENDIX 7)*

A mailing was sent to the Region about the Grassy Narrows River Solidarity Run as the event is scheduled on September 18. Requested actions are summarized in the Appendix.

**Correspondence from Brian McIntosh** *(APPENDIX 8)*

Brian requested that the Indigenous Legacy Gathering event he sent via email be promoted. It was agreed that this be included it in the 'Daring Justice' newsletter.

1. **Anti-Racism Subcommittee** *(Lois)*

Inquiry about gun violence – Adele Halliday

The group received the guest Adele Halliday earlier in the meeting, and the Chair summarized that they discussed gun violence in Toronto, with Adele raising concerns about the Church's response. They considered creating a statement and call to action addressing systemic injustices, possibly involving the Intercultural Diversity Commission and other faith groups. The team agreed that the statement should be impactful and focus on concrete actions faith communities can take. Adele would be available to work with a small group developing a statement. Shawn will approach the Intercultural Diversity Commission meeting tonight to see whether they are interested in participating. Alexa offered to work on a statement with the small group and Adele, but requested a link to the recording with Adele’s presentation. A draft statement will be circulated to members for feedback.

**New Business**

**Representative to SJNORC**

Brian MacIntosh was our representative. Susan mentioned that she is currently attending the SJNORC meetings on behalf of ISARC, and can be our designated representative for the time being. She emphasized that these meetings provide an opportunity for networking with other regions. She also expressed hope that Shawn is receiving notifications about the meetings, which are intended for both volunteers and staff from each region. Shawn advised she is not receiving notifications and will contact SJNORC. Although there is no date set for the next meeting, Susan will ensure this information is communicated. She remains open to including others who may be interested in participating, offering to provide more details if needed.

**Next Meetings**

Celio advised the Commission that there is a staff retreat October 9-11. He requested that all materials and reports for the October meeting be sent to him before October 8, as he will need to forward materials to the commission before October 9.

**Tuesday, October 15, 2024** (post meeting this date was **changed to Oct 22, 2024** to accommodate the Memorial Service for Lois Wilson)

*Volunteer for Opening Prayer/Reflection: needed*

**Tuesday, November 19, 2024**

*Volunteer for Opening Prayer/Reflection: nedded*

**MOTION** by Don Ford/Alexa Gilmour **SW-SEJC-2024-09-17-07**

The SEJC meeting is adjourned.

**MOTION CARRIED**

**Closing Prayer and Adjournment**

Susan offered a closing prayer and the meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

**Appendix 1 - Supervised Consumption Site Letter**

Social Ecological Justice Commission

Shining Waters Regional Council, United Church of Canada

August 23, 2024

Premier Doug Ford

Legislative Building

Queen's Park

Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Minister Sylvia Jones

Ministry of Health

5th Floor, 777 Bay Street

Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Dear Premier Ford and Minister Jones,

Re: Urgent Appeal to Reverse the Decision on Safe Consumption Sites

On behalf of the Shining Waters Region of the United Church of Canada, which represents 157 congregations in Toronto and municipalities as far north as Parry Sound, I write to express our deep concern over the recent changes to the funding and operation of safe consumption sites (CTS) across Ontario. While we appreciate your government’s recent efforts to increase funding for treatment beds—a critical component in addressing the opioid crisis—we urge you to consider the importance of maintaining and expanding harm reduction services, particularly safe consumption sites.

The United Church of Canada, alongside many other faith communities, is committed to supporting harm reduction initiatives. Across Ontario, congregations have actively engaged in this work by hosting CTS facilities, providing meals to clients, and offering pastoral care to those affected by substance use. This commitment is rooted in our belief in the inherent dignity of every individual and the urgent need to save lives amidst an ongoing public health crisis.

We acknowledge the critical role that treatment beds play in the recovery process, and we support your efforts to expand this capacity. However, we strongly believe that treatment beds alone are not sufficient. Harm reduction services, particularly safe consumption sites, are essential in preventing overdose deaths and providing a pathway to treatment for those who are not yet ready or able to enter into more intensive care.

Data from Toronto’s safe consumption sites illustrate the life-saving impact of these services. In the year following the opening of these sites, overdose deaths in the immediate vicinity (within 500 meters) dropped by 67%, with reductions in mortality rates observed as far as 5 kilometers away. Your own government reports that these statistics reflect the effectiveness of safe consumption sites in reducing harm and saving

lives. To close or reduce these services is to ignore the overwhelming evidence of their necessity and effectiveness.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the Ontario government’s own commissioned reports both recommended keeping these sites open and even expanding harm reduction services. Despite these recommendations, recent decisions by the Ministry of Health have moved in the opposite direction, risking an increase in preventable deaths and suffering across our communities. The closure of these sites would not only result in a loss of life but would also further strain our healthcare system as rising cases of Hepatitis, HIV, and overdose complications are expected.

The Social Ecological Justice Commission respectfully urges you to reverse the decision on safe consumption sites and instead focus on expanding these essential services alongside your current investments in treatment beds. This dual approach—combining harm reduction with treatment—offers the best chance to address the opioid crisis comprehensively and compassionately.

As followers of Christ, we are called to care for the most vulnerable among us. Scripture reminds us in Matthew 25:40, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." We believe that preserving and expanding harm reduction services is a reflection of this call, ensuring that we do everything possible to protect and uplift those in our communities who are struggling.

We stand ready to support your government in these efforts and would welcome the opportunity to discuss how faith communities across Ontario can continue to partner in this life-saving work.

We note that a recent freedom-of-information request by The Trillium, a news outlet focused on Queen’s Park, discovered that the province’s “unofficial estimate” for homelessness is about 234,000 people.

We are also aware that at the meeting of the Association of Municipalities this week, the Association (which represents 444 municipal councils across Ontario) urged the province to appoint a minister responsible for housing needs, mental health and addictions who would tackle homelessness as AMO leaders sound the alarm on the growing housing, mental health and addictions needs of their communities. Defunding and closing safe consumption sites only exacerbates an already critical issue.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We hope that you will consider the voices of those directly impacted by these policies and take action that reflects the values of compassion, justice, and care for the most vulnerable in our society.

Sincerely,

Rev. Tina Conlon

President

Shining Waters Region, United Church of Canada

**Appendix 2 - Faith Leaders Statement**

August 29, 2024

“Whoever saves one life, saves the whole world.”

-- Mishnah Sanhedrin, Chapter 4, Paragraph 5

As faith leaders in Ontario, we are deeply distressed by the decision of the provincial government to close 10 of the 17 safe consumption/overdose prevention sites in Ontario, and to create legislation which will prevent any new sites from opening.

Ontario is currently in the midst of a deadly overdose crises that claims one life every 8 hours. These safe consumption/overdose prevention sites are at the front-lines of this crisis, having reversed 21,000 overdoses since 2020. Without these sites, thousands of people will die entirely preventable and unnecessary deaths. These people will be our friends, our relatives, members of our faith communities. They are precious and irreplaceable lives. They are beloved human beings who deserve to live, not to die in a park or a doorway or a public washroom.

We know that these sites are a lifesaving medical service. We also know that they provide not only overdose reversal, but connections to community, mental health care, addiction counselling, and recovery resources. Some of us have seen at first-hand how workers at these sites meet people where they are, build trust, and help them to move towards health and stability. The 10 sites slated for closure to refer approximately 131 people a day to other health and recovery services, as well as, in some cases, providing these services in-house, as some of the sites are part of multi-service agencies.

The sites are located in the areas of greatest need, and embedded in their communities, where they need to be. In most cases, they are such well-managed and peaceful presences that they can hardly be noticed. We understand that neighbourhoods with high rates of overdose deaths are usually areas of deprivation and difficulty, but closing the sites will lead to more discarded needles in the streets, more public drug use, and, in all probability, higher rates of crime.

*Your statement quotes figures, claiming that rates of crime are higher near safe consumption and overdose prevention sites, but without stating your sources, although this has been requested by the media. Furthermore, it fails to compare these rates to the same neighbourhoods before the sites opened, or to examine trends over time in major cities. Meanwhile, a well-documented study in The Lancet has demonstrated that overdose deaths dropped significantly in key areas of Toronto after safe consumption/ overdose prevention sites were opened.*

It is now known that two expert studies commissioned by your government to examine the safe consumption site at the South Riverdale Community Health Centre in Toronto, did not recommend closure, and in fact recommended an expansion of safe consumption sites around the city.

The statement includes a promise that $378 million will be put towards “19 new Homelessness and Addiction Recovery Treatment (HART) Hubs.” This is potentially welcome news, given that there is currently a very lengthy wait for substance use disorder treatment. However, these hubs are not replacements for safe consumption and overdose prevention sites. You cannot bring a dead person to recovery.

We are also deeply troubled that these hubs will be barred not only from providing supervised consumption, but also from providing sterile injection equipment, an extremely well-established and proven public health measure which has been in place for decades, and is known to be a crucial tool in preventing the spread of blood-borne disease and infectious and bacterial complications. Nor is it clear that the sites will use the accepted and evidence-based treatment methods recommended by experts. There are concerning signs that the intention of the provincial government is to roll back harms reduction entirely, which would result in an unimaginable number of illnesses and deaths, and a massively increased burden on first responders and the health system.

We urge Premier Ford and Minister Jones to reverse this decision, and to follow the advice of the expert reports which they themselves commissioned.

Rev. Maria Christina (Tina) Conlon

President, Shining Waters Regional Council

Rev. Nancy Ferguson

Chairperson, Canadian Shield Regional Council

Jennifer Irving

President, Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council

Lennox Scarlett

President, Horseshoe Falls Regional Council

Cheryl Bolton

President, Antler River Watershed Regional Council

Steven Coles

Speaker, East Central Ontario Regional Council

Rev. Susan Dehaan

President, East Ontario Outaouais Regional Council

**APPENDIX 3 – Social Justice Microgrant Application**

**Name: Sue Herron, Music Director**

**Community of Faith: Temperanceville United Church**

**Email:** [**sherro5859@rogers.com**](mailto:sherro5859@rogers.com) **(905) 392-6523**

**Project Description: (request for $400)**

Several years ago we at Temperanceville United in Richmond Hill began our journey to deepen our connection with creation by using our lovely church grounds to the fullest. We grow fruits and vegetables, make maple syrup, tend beehives and harvest honey, walk the labyrinth and share our shaded green space with the surrounding community. We feel that by caring for our small grassy lot, garden and trees we can learn to better care for the planet as a whole.   
  
Our worship services are filled with hymns and messages that express our gratitude and concern for the environment. We are striving to learn about plants and how they communicate with each other and with humans. We have also learned the amazing power of gratitude. We are hoping to create greater understanding and curiosity within the congregation and the wider community by exploring communication skills of plants and the effect of human expression of gratitude on the plants in our care. We've researched some of the technology that allows humans to listen to plants. One such product is called Plantwave. This device can be hooked up to plants translating the electrical signals generated by the biological activity within into soothing sounds. If we were to become the recipients of the microgrant from the Social and Ecological Justice Commission we would use the funds to purchase this device. The price of the device is $400 plus tax.   
  
If we were able to purchase it we could hold demonstrations for church members and community members of plant-produced sounds under varying conditions. First, the sounds a well-watered garden vegetable plant like a bean plant makes. Then we could listen to the sound that it produces when ripe beans are picked AND the sounds that are produced when beans are picked AFTER we say a blessing expressing gratitude. From what we have read we expect a difference! Another use for the device would be listening to the sounds indoor plants make and incorporating them into a meditative part of a worship service.  
  
The growing of food has a significant impact on neighbours who come to chat and on the children and adults who are involved hands on. There is a significant impact on the quality of life in the neighbourhood through the friendships that form with neighbours who come to enjoy the grounds and may go home with some fresh picked harvest. Temperanceville has received a Seeds of Hope Grant to expand the ministry of making food freely available in the neighbourhood and supporting neighbourhood community connections, while also raising ecological awareness and appreciation of God's good creation.  
   
Children and adults in the congregation and neighbours who become friends are expressing growing fascination with plant-human communication.   
  
Research indicates that plants respond with distress to the distress of other life forms. Research indicates that when life forms are prepared for eating, plants exhibit distress. However, when humans seek their permission, or express appreciation, or gratitude, plants do not respond with distress. Many indigenous cultures teach that plants are conscious and practice appreciation and gratitude. Gratitude and praying over food are also significant Christian spiritual disciplines and Biblical teachings. The Plantwave device will help to raise awareness about plant consciousness and the power of treating plants with respect and gratitude.

**APPENDIX 3** *(continued)*

**Recommended Response from sub-committee** (Irene Green)

Dear Sue

A thumbs up on the use of the land surrounding your church.  From the information you provided it sounds like your larger community benefits from you using your church property to provide a variety of produce as well as a space for quiet and reflection.

The concept of using a "Plantwave" to discern how plants communicate  sounds like a fascinating experiment. However, we do not consider this to be instrumental in addressing the ecological justice issues faced by our planet and so many people of our time. We therefore regretfully inform you that you have not been awarded the grant for this purchase.

Irene Green

**APPENDIX 4 – Email from Jody Maltby - Community Ministries Fund Proposal**

August 16, 2024

Good morning, Susan,

I hope all is well with you and you are enjoying these final days of summer.  I have heard from Shawn that the SEJC would appreciate an update on the Community Ministries Fund proposal.  I am writing this on behalf of the Communities of Faith Commission.  Please share this email with the members of SEJC.

As you know, two proposals were approved at the regional meeting in 2023.  Proposal SW2023-01: A Vision for the Post Pandemic Church was referred by the Executive to SEJC.  I understand that you have been working on learning opportunities to engage communities of faith in community ministry.  Proposal SW2023-02: Funding Community Ministry as a Priority for the Church was referred to the Communities of Faith Commission in consultation with the Grants and Mission Support Committee.  The mandate for the CFC’s work comes from the proposal, just as your mandate comes from the proposal referred to you.

CFC has been working on a number of pieces of the proposal including development of a policy and process for financial appeals; conversations with the Community Ministries and the Grants and Mission Support Committee about where the fund should be housed and how it should be accessed; and recommendations for revisions to the Regional Property Policy related to distribution of assets.  This last piece of work will of course now be paused pending the region-wide review of priorities and finances.

However, a key piece of work that the commission is able to move forward is working with a fundraising consultant to initiate a capital campaign.  A working group has selected a consultant after reviewing proposals from a number of candidates.  The commission identified broad geographic representation as a key priority to help the campaign be relevant to communities of faith and existing community ministries outside the GTA.  We are grateful that Irene accepted our invitation to join the working group for the campaign as she is both a member of SEJC and from a community of faith in the northern part of the region.  We are in the early stages of working with the consultant but excited by the possibilities.

I’m grateful for the interest shown by SEJC in this important piece of work.  The proposals referred to the two commissions are closely aligned and it makes sense that we keep one another informed.  I am sure that the CFC would welcome an update from you on your work related to education as well.

Thanks,

Jody

Jody Maltby (Rev.)  *she/her*

Regional Staff Lead and Communities of Faith Minister

Shining Waters Regional Council, The United Church of Canada

416-231-7680 or toll free: 1-800-268-3781, ext 6226

**APPENDIX 5 – Email from Jody Maltby Re. Ad Hoc Committee**

Sept 5, 2024

Hello Susan,

You may remember from the regional meeting this past spring that the following motion was approved to create an Ad Hoc Committee to do a region-wide consultation about regional ministry and funding priorities:

*That the Shining Waters Regional Council direct the Regional Council Executive to create an ad hoc committee, with the support and advice from all four Commissions, Grants & Mission Support Committee and the regional council Finance Committee, to do a region-wide consultation about regional ministry and funding priorities.  The review would include input from all four regional Commissions, all communities of faith and Shining Waters Regional Council grant recipients, PTCC and TUCC and a review of current regional council granting priorities and available financial resources.  The Committee will report back to the Executive with recommendations, no later than June 30, 2025 and to the regional council with recommendations, no later than the 2025 Regional Council Meeting on October 24/25, 2025.  The committee to be created will provide a schedule of milestones to accomplish their work to the Regional Council Executive no later than October 31, 2024 and thereafter, provide quarterly updates as to progress. Such reports to be posted promptly with the minutes of Regional Council Executive.*

The Ad Hoc Committee has begun working on the review process.  The first step is to create a consultation document that names possible priorities drawn from a variety of sources.  The committee is seeking input for this document.   SEJC is invited to respond to the following questions:

* **What priority setting have you done as a commission or committee?**
* **What are your current priorities?**
* **How is work progressing on those priorities?**
* **Are there other priorities that could be considered by the regional council?**

As you are aware, there is a tight timeline for this process so we hope you will find time for this on the agenda of your September meeting.  We would ask you to provide your feedback by **Monday, September 30th**.  Please send your response by return email to me.

Once the consultation document is prepared, it will be sent out broadly across the regional council – including to every community of faith and grant recipient, to commissions and committees and to PTCC and TUCC.  Your commission/committee will have another opportunity to offer feedback at that time.

If you have any questions, please feel free to be in touch and thanks for your participation.

Thanks,

Jody

**APPENDIX 6 – Email Request from PalNet SW**

August 26, 2024

The Rev. Susan Eagle

Chairperson

Social and Ecological Justice Commission

Shining Waters Region

The United Church of Canada

The Rev. Dr. Shawn Redden

Minister of Justice and Faith Formation

Canadian Shield and Shining Waters Regional Councils

The United Church of Canada

Subject: $1500 Funding Request from Palestine Network Shining Waters Region (PalNet SW)

Dear Rev. Eagle and Dr. Redden,

I hope you have had both had good summers and Shawn, I look forward to your work and relationships in Canadian Shield and especially Shining Waters Region. I am writing on behalf of Palestine Network – Shining Waters (PalNet SW) with a funding request of the Social and Ecological Justice Commission. This is in support of the United Network for Justice and Peace in Palestine/Israel (UNJPPI) event “Faith in a Time of Genocide,” a cross-Canada gathering being held November 1-2, 2024, in Toronto.

Background:

Since 2012 UNJPPI has been a network mobilizing United Church members and allies to educate and advocate within the church for a just peace in Palestine/Israel and an end to the occupation. As you know, PalNet SW is a regional network affiliated with UNJPPI. It acts within Shining Waters with the same goals. PalNet is pleased to make this request for funding on behalf of UNJPPI.

The horrendous events in Gaza have awakened the world to the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Our General Secretary Michael Blair has written to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau urging the government of Canada to suspend relations with the State of Israel until it has complied with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), issued on July 19, 2024. The United Church website urges members to “Act today: the international churches cannot remain quiet in the face of atrocities in Gaza” (<https://united-church.ca/social-action/act-now/support-justice-and-peace-palestine-and-israel>). Just this past spring Shining Waters launched a resource created by PalNet, Raising our Voices for Human Rights in Palestine and Israel (<https://shiningwatersregionalcouncil.ca/justice/raising-our-voices>) to help congregations identify and divest from companies from companies doing business in the illegal settlements. The Palestinian churches speak out strongly asking for the support of Western churches, and Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac has just completed a speaking tour in the U.S. pleading for the support of American Christians.

Now is the moment for UNJPPI to bring people together in person to strengthen, encourage, inspire and learn from one another about ways forward to justice. Our hope is for participants to catch the spark and imagine what they might do in their corner of the world. Many PalNet members will be present, and we will be encouraging participation by other members of Shining Waters not yet part of PalNet.

Before restructuring, presbyteries and conferences offered financial support to UNJPPI for their gatherings, and in previous years the national church was able to grant twice the money available now. This year’s budget necessitates funding from both the national church and the regions. So far in 2024 three Regional Councils (Antler River, Horseshoe Falls, and Western Ontario Waterways) have each granted $1500 to this event, and requests are being made to Pacific Mountain Region. PalNet is asking Shining Waters, through the Commission, to grant $1500. Given that the gathering is happening in Toronto, UNJPPI is hoping that many people in Toronto and southern Ontario will find this event accessible and be inspired to attend. A budget for the event is attached.

Event:

Thursday, Oct. 31, 2024, Trinity St. Paul’s Church, Toronto: A pre-conference Palestine Land Exercise (PLE) event will take place in the morning. Patterned on the Blanket Exercise, this experiential learning opportunity will build connections for people between settler colonialism in Canada and in Palestine. In the afternoon participants will be trained on how to host the PLE in their home communities.

Friday, Nov. 1 and Saturday, Nov. 2, Hilton Garden Inn, Toronto Airport: Workshop and presentations facilitated by the following leaders:

* Shadia Qubti (Palestinian theologian from Nazareth
* Tariq Zoubi – Palestinian from Wi’am Conflict Resolution Centre in Bethlehem
* David Guiliano - chaplain for the event
* Rabbi David Mivasair – activist and member of Independent Jewish Voices
* Dr. Ilan Pappé -Israeli historian and author (via Zoom)
* George Bartlett – retired lawyer speaking about international law

PalNet SW believes that this event has the potential to create a significant and positive impact on the skills and motivation to act for justice in Palestine/Israel for United Church participants both in Shining Waters and from across Canada. We very much appreciate your consideration of our funding request. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or need further information.

Sincerely,

(signed)

Rev. Dr. Robin Wardlaw

Chair, Palestine Network Shining Waters

robin@wardlaw.ca

h 416-840-3211

c 647-473-3671

c. Judi McCallum, Secretary, PalNet SW

**UNJPPI National Gathering 2024, Toronto, ON Budget to August 22, 2024**

**Revenue**

Registration Fees $28,000 (80 people @ $350 each)

General Council Grant $ 5,000

Seeds of Hope Grant $ 5,000

3 Regional Council Grants $ 4,500 (pledged)

UNJPPI contribution $ 5000

Total Revenues $47,500

Funding requests $3,000 (two regional councils $1500 SW, $1500 PMR)

Total $50,500

**Expenses**

Conference Space & Meals $25,400

Tech $500

Leadership costs $6000 (flights, registration, PLE)

Travel pool $14,000 (46 subsidies)

Admin $600

Promotion $ 400

Honouraria $600

Friday night Event $2500

Miscellaneous $ 500

Total $50,500

**Cost to Participants:**

$350 Registration

$169 Daily hotel cost

Travel to Toronto

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **APPENDIX 7 – Copy of Mailing to Region Re. Grassy Narrows River Run**  ***Update from the Social and Ecological Justice Commission***  ***Shining Waters Regional Council***  **Action Requested:** United Church communities of faith are being asked by General Council this year to give special consideration to the land rights struggle at Grassy Narrows.   Please see the link below for material provided by The United Church of Canada, which includes   * a prayer for use in worship on Sunday, September 15, * bell ringing at 1 pm on Wednesday, September 18, * and a Rally and walk to Queen's Park in Toronto on September 18.   *Find information at:* [*https://united-church.ca/news/river-run-2024-walk-grassy-narrows-mercury-justice*](https://region10.us19.list-manage.com/track/click?u=7d85e7f4b07a283cd04585aed&id=2d920c1890&e=dcf2d38804)***Background*** *In the 1960’s and 1970’s, the Dryden Paper Mill dumped about 9,000 kilograms of mercury into rivers around Grassy Narrows, contaminating its fish supply and leaving much of its population suffering health impacts from mercury poisoning. Grassy Narrows recently served Ontario with a notice of application asking the Ontario Superior Court to mandate individuals and companies to consult with the First Nation before seeking mining claims.* | | |

**APPENDIX 8 – Email from Brian MacIntosh**

Friends in Shining Waters RC -

At the end of September an historic event of incredible province-wide significance is taking place.

**The Annual Legacy Gathering is happening down at Nathan Phillips Square** **Sept. 27th to 30th, culminating in the incredible Spirit Garden ceremonial opening on Monday Sept. 30th, National Truth and Reconciliation Day, also known as Orange Shirt Day.**

The Spirit Garden fulfills TRC Call to Action # 82, and is an installation to honour and remember the victims and survivors of Residential Schools.  Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre, with whom I've worked for 16 years, has worked on this project since 2016, raising millions and, in the process, forming a relationship with the City of Toronto that is excellent.

Attached to this e-mail is a Save the Date poster for the entire Legacy Gathering, and I believe that the Region's leadership and the SEJC, as well as the Circle of course, will want to take note of this important opportunity to show solidarity in right relations building.  Please share this link as you are able, and I'll send a more specific poster and an outline of events for that entire weekend when I have received it.

The SWRC's predecessor, Toronto Conference, contributed one of the first large gifts of $100,000 for this multi-million-dollar project, the costs of which grew substantially after COVID, and Faith Groups have raised close to $1,000,000 thus far.  I've represented the United Church for many years on the Restoring Relations Working Group of Council Fire, and will be withdrawing from this work after Sept. 30th, though Hazel Boyle and Ronny Yaron, having been recruited by me and interested, have been attending in the last two years.  It would be good to have some connection from the RRWG to the SWRC, either from the Circle or the Commission, and if anyone would like to know what I've been doing, I'd be happy to have a chat with them.

Thanks in advance for promoting this as widely as possible and as soon as possible, as Sept. 30th, not to mention the entire Legacy Gathering, will be a great opportunity for us to show solidarity in right relations building with Council Fire.  Special invitations to some leaders may go out, because of our previous gift, but the list is not in my control, and while seating for the inner circle of the ceremony on Sept. 30th is limited, all who care about right relations are invited to attend this historic unveiling of an incredible installation.

If you need to speak with me about any of this, please feel free to do so - 416-817-2606.

Brian McIntosh

**APPENDIX 9 – Budget Update to September 15, 2024**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Social Justice** |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  | **Budget** | **YTD 15 Sept** |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Climate/ecological Justice events | 4300 |  |  |
| Climate/ecological Justice microgrants | 2700 | $400 |  |
| Socail Justice events | 4300 | 950 |  |
| Social Justice microgrants | 2700 | 30.17 | *publicity materials Regional AGM* |
| Youth Microgrants | 3000 | 1135.98 | includes 135.98 facebook publicity |
| Network memberships | 3000 | 1500 | *SJNOR $1000 /Black Clergy network $500* |
| Meetings | 5000 | 570.34 |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  | 25000 | 4586.49 |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Ecological Justice Microgrants** |  |  |  |
| Beach United Eco Fair $400 (April) |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Youth Microgrants** |  |  |  |
| St Matthews UC $500 (Jan) |  |  |  |
| Hui Huang Hoe $500 (Feb) |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Social Justice Events - 2** |  |  |  |
| Making Connections Webinar Honorariums (March) | $450 |  |  |
| *Nehal Ai-Tarhuni $150* |  |  |  |
| *Jess Notwell $300* |  |  |  |
| Bloordale UC $500 (May) (Brian) 3 Faiths Event | $500 |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Meetings** |  |  |  |
| GLI Forum Ottawa May 23 registration: Irene Green | $75 |  |  |
| Travel for SEJC meetings | $65 |  |  |
| Food (April Meeting) | $399.95 |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**APPENDIX 10 – Staff Report**

**Submitted by Shawn Redden September 17, 2024**

Grassy Narrows River Walk – September 18th at Noon. The UCC participants will meet at Grange Park. If you are interested in participating and want more of the information about where to meet, please let me know. As far as I’m aware 6 churches from GTA are registered to participate and likely other individuals.

Indigenous Legacy Gathering and ceremonial opening of the Spirit Gathering on September 30th: Brian MacIntosh has forward information which will be published in Daring Justice news.

Disability and Accessibility Network: a gathering is being organized nationally on October 9th. This will be in Daring Justice news and will be distributed to those who participated in the Disability Justice webinars last February.

UNJPPI “Faith in a Time of Genocide” Conference Nov 1 & 2. Palestinian Land Exercise and training on October 31. The hope is to have teams of three to offer the PLE locally. I do not have a list of registrants, but I’ve been told that there are some people in the GTA who have registered. I will be attending as well and will try and connect with participants from our Regions.

Climate Motivators: This past summer, we ran a summer series spotlighting our student interns. I connected with and did interviews and Celio prepared the videos and the mailing. We had three Climate Motivators from our two Regions: 1) Eren Yun lives in Barrie and has been a member of Knox United in Scarborough; her project was on Invasive Species of Ontario. 2) Blessing Tiriwepi is from Thunder Bay and focused his project on Greening Buildings. 3) Lachlan Duncanson-Hales is from Sudbury and collaborated with community partners on an event for Climate Emergency Day in July. There will be a link to their interviews in Daring Justice news.

The Daring Justice Newsletter will be distributed earlier than this month because IDC is meeting earlier, and we want to ensure information for Indigenous Justice and Right Relations (Orange Shirt Day / National Day for Truth & Reconciliation) is distributed as soon as possible. Preparing that, as well as Commission minutes, will be our staff focus for the remainder of the week.

The September issue will include articles on all the things I have mentioned as well as a few more:

* Orange Shirt Day & National Day for Truth & Reconciliation
* Indigenous Legacy Gathering – Opening of the Spirit Garden
* Perhaps a follow-up on the Grassy Narrows River Walk
* Disability Justice Network gathering (national)
* Faith in a Time of Genocide Conference Nov 1 & 2; Palestinian Land Exercise
* Safe Consumption Site letters and actions by SEJC. Is Susan interested in preparing an article?
* Ecological Justice – Near Net Zero webinar November 6
* Story about the Climate Motivators
* Announcement about the Forum for Intercultural Leadership & Learning

Is everyone receiving the Daring Justice newsletter? If you regularly receive other Shining Waters Regional news by email, you are automatically subscribed. If you only want Daring Justice, please send your request to Celio and he can add your name. There is no auto subscribe button because it was causing problems on the website with bots.