ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT
OF THE SHINING WATERS REGIONAL COUNCIL EXECUTIVE

Our Regional Council Meeting theme for this year is **"Being Transformed: by the Renewing of our Minds"**. Staff and volunteers have worked countless hours preparing, changing, experimenting, and succeeding in continuing as Church in new and creative ways. As an Executive, we have heard stories of sacrifice, perseverance, hope, success, and also, deep fatigue. We have heard stories of worry, stress, frustration, and struggle. As a region and as community, we give thanks; we continue to be on a long journey together and we celebrate the resilience of our churches and the expression of the Gospel. As an Executive, we look forward to seeing you in-person and/or online at our Regional Council Meeting. Our regional council supports Ministry from the shores of Lake Ontario to north of Parry Sound. Our ministry context is so very different, and also, similar, from community to community. To learn more about our Regional Council, please see: https://shiningwatersregionalcouncil.ca/about/about-us/

The region has hosted townhall meetings for both Ministry Personnel and Lay Leaders for support, updates, and education. Our website continues to be a key tool for communication. Many local networks, regional networks, and local groups have met to connect, learn, challenge, listen, and work together.

As a regional council, distance and traffic congestion can be a barrier to meeting in-person. The region's primary tool for connecting continues to be online gatherings, for both Ministry Personnel and Lay Leaders. Our website/newsletter ***"Currents"*** continues to be a key tool for communication within our regional council. Email Donna Rutz to subscribe at SWRC Communications at: drutz@united-church.ca

The Executive also celebrates the significant work of the regional council Commissions, Committees, networks/clusters, informal gatherings, UCC folks/community members, and active UCW groups across the region. Consider connecting with the greater United Church through subscribing to Essentials, The United Church of Canada newsletter. The link below describes several opportunities for learning and wonderful resources: https://united-church.ca/e-newsletters

A resource for connecting regularly in the regional council is "Let's Connect Lay Leader Resources." The regional council offers these events several times a year with a variety of foci. Often we partner with other Regions, with a recent April 2026 gathering have 269 participants (5 Region event), including many from SWRC! The website offers recorded copies of events as a resource: https://shiningwatersregionalcouncil.ca/communities-of-faith/lets-connect-lay-leader-resources/

Festival of Faith 2025:

In June, Shining Waters Regional Council, in partnership with the Canadian Shield Regional Council, joined together to mutually plan another Festival of Faith for June 13-15, 2025 in Sudbury, Ontario. The event was an opportunity for folks to gather in Sudbury for a time to pray, reflect, grow, and learn. This event is open to people beyond our regional council. The event offered workshops, connecting, learning, worship, and friendship. Highlights included participation and leadership by Moderator The Very Reverend Dr. Carmen R. Lansdowne, along with keynote dynamic leadership of speaker Rev. John Bell, Scottish hymn writer and speaker.

Many participants highlighted singing (and dancing!) to the music of Uganda Martyrs United Church's musicians, from SWRC!

Future Festival of Faith:

Shining Waters and Canadian Shield Regional Councils celebrate the connection and partnership in 2025. However, the Canadian Shield Regional Council has decided to continue with future Festival of Faiths but will focus specifically on the Canadian Shield Regional Council and local connections. The Shining Waters Regional Council has decided to host in-person Regional Council Meetings for the next three years, to promote regional connection and community.

The Work of The Regional Executive:

Our Regional Council Executive meets monthly (except for the summer) and does the work of the regional council when our region is not meeting (The Manual 2026 - C.3.1.1). Often, the Executive has a very full agenda which includes oversight of the regional Commissions, regional finances, regional policy, the annual regional council meeting, emerging work, and the Executive Minister and staff.

In 2025/26, the Executive spent a significant amount of time considering our ministry now and in the future. One of the primary foci has been discussing how we supported regional council ministry and strategic planning within the regional council in 2025. An outcome of that work has been the creation of an Ad Hoc Strategic Planning Committee, which has started work as an outcome of the direction and advice of the regional council.

The themes and work of the Shining Waters Regional Council (SWRC) Strategic Plan is similar to the Toward 2035 work of General Council. The United Church of Canada (UCC) Strategic Plan, *Deep Spirituality, Bold Discipleship, and Daring Justice* and the SWRC's Strategic Plan work together to focus on how to support communities of faith, ministry personnel, and also, how to support each other as a regional council. The Executive continues this work, in partnership with Commissions and the UCC, especially the UCC Growth Unit. The Executive gives deep thanks for the work of the Commissions, Committees, and Ad Hoc Committees within the SWRC.

In August 2025, on behalf of the Executive and the regional council, following General Council 2025 in Calgary (GC45), President Rev. Eric Nyarko and Executive member Allyce Mutungi and David Leyton-Brown, along with Peter Hartmans, participated in a meeting specifically designed to discuss The United Church of Canada strategic plan Toward 2035. One of the primary goals of the strategic plan is to support communities of faith now and in the future. More importantly, to work towards creating a foundation for our Church locally and denominationally and to support regional councils as they support communities of faith. To learn more information around the United Church Strategic Plan, please visit: https://united-church.ca/toward2035

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. Through the partnership of the United Church, together we offer training, learning opportunities, and discussion groups as part of a strategy of becoming an anti-racist Church. The United Church offers a wide variety of resources, videos, workshops, and printed materials, which provide key support for our Anti-

Racism and Equity work of the regional council. Our Commissions and Committees also support Anti-Racism and Equity work through both policy and education.

Shining Waters Regional Council has celebrated becoming an Affirming Region, with The United Church of Canada making a formal statement of apology to the 2SLGBTQIA+ Community at the 45 General Council, with a designated worship service focusing on the apology. The apology recording can be viewed online at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGyyOYaAYak

United Church of Canada Statement Regarding the Apology:
https://united-church.ca/news/apology-offered-today-united-church-2s-and-lgbtqia-communities

We also continue our journey towards living into Right Relations. The regional council continues to partner with the United Church who offers training, learning opportunities, and discussion groups as part of a strategy of becoming an anti-racist Church. The United Church offers a wide variety of resources, videos, workshops and printed materials to support our work.
See: https://united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/anti-racism

As part of our shared call to Reconciliation, Shining Waters allocated $60,000 of the SW Right Relations and Reconciliation budget line accordingly:
Gibimishkaadimin canoe trip (2nd of 3-year commitment) $20 000
Toronto Urban Native Ministry $10 000
Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre (1st of a 3-year escalating commitment) $30 000

2026 SW Regional Council Meeting Equity Team:
The Regional Council Meeting Planning Team for 2026 has also included a Regional Council Equity Team to support our regional council gathering through learning, feedback, and a vibrant and safe gathering through community engagement.

Work and Support of Ministry within The Regional Council:
The Regional Council Executive, Commissions, Committees, and working group are involved in a wide variety of ministry focusing on justice work, support to communities of faith, Ministry Personnel, granting, and youth.

Shining Waters Regional Council, through its Commissions, are involved in a wide variety of ministries focusing on support to communities of faith and Ministry Personnel. The Pastoral Relations Commission, Intercultural and Diversity Commission, Social and Ecological Justice Commission, and Communities of Faith Commission focus on supporting communities of faith, congregational identity, social and ecological justice and advocacy, transition of Ministry Personnel, and partnering with communities of faith through strategic planning and amalgamations. Also, there are two new committees that fall under the Communities of Faith Commission - the Intergenerational Ministry Committee and the Affirming Ministries Committee – which are currently recruiting now and have their mandates on the Communities of Faith Commission webpage.

Sometimes communities of faith are sharing buildings with more than one United Church or many faith communities, along with the sale of Church property. The Commissions, Committees and Ad Hoc Committees are an invaluable extension of the work of the Executive and the Shining Waters

Regional Council. We continue to work with the UCC Growth Department, focusing on supporting partnership, innovation, support to communities of faith, and emerging communities of faith.
To learn more, see: **https://united-church.ca/toward2035**

Youth Ministry and Incorporated Ministry:

We celebrate a significant youth event this summer called Collective 2026, from August 12–15, 2026, where over 500 youth, young adults, and leaders came together to participate in a joyous, spirit-filled gathering at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario. A joint Presbyterian Church in Canada and The United Church of Canada youth initiative, Collective is a space to grow in faith, build community, and reflect on shared experiences. General Secretary Rev. Michael Blair and Moderator The Right Rev. Dr. Kimberly Heath attended throughout the week.

Through our Incorporated Ministry, we celebrate the important ministry of our camps within SWRC, in partnership with the Toronto United Church Council (TUCC). Our camps play an important role in connecting and supporting Youth Ministry. Along with camps, our Incorporated Ministries and local outreach ministry support housing, address the challenges for the unhoused, underhoused, food instability, advocacy, justice, community support, and ministry outreach. These local groups and Incorporated Ministries are key leaders within the regional council who expand the ministry of the United Church with many volunteer and staff hours. Their ministry is vital.

Giving Thanks:

We celebrate the resilience of our communities of faith and outreach ministries across our regional council and express deep appreciation for their resilience, innovation, and Deep, Bold and Daring discipleship across Shining Waters Regional Council. We give thanks for the work of the General Council and the General Council Office (GCO).

As an Executive, we would also like to take time to give thanks for our Regional Council Staff, beginning with Melody Duncanson-Hales, who was called to serve the General Council full-time this year, with her primary responsibility being the Canadian Shield Regional Council, after serving Shining Waters Regional Council for a number of years.

We also give deep thanks for the ministry of:
Peter Hartmans – Former Executive Minister for SWRC And CSRC;
Jody Maltby - Staff Lead, Finance and Property Minister;
Diane Matheson-Jimenez – Currently Interim Executive Minister for SWRC and CSRC, Congregational Support and Pastoral Relations;
Susan Whitehead, Executive Assistant and Administrative Support;
Robert Smith, Communities of Faith support and Pastoral Relations Minister (now CSRC);
Shawn Redden, Minister, Justice and Faith Formation;
Kim Uyede-Kai - Intercultural Diversity, Anit Racism and Right Relations Minister (who also supports the Right Relations Resource Team in CSRC);
Eun-Joo Park - Communities of Faith and Pastoral Relations Minister;
Andrea Allan - Communities of Faith and Pastoral Relations Minister;
Mastard Sakala - Communities of Faith and Pastoral Relations Minister;
Celio de Andrade Santos Jr. - Administrative Support;
Kathleen Jones - Administrative Support;
Donna Rutz - Communications and Administrative Support;
Meranda MacKenzie – Bookkeeper.

From the General Council Office: Calin Lau - Growth Animator; Erin McIntyre - Vocation Minister for Accountability and Standards; YunJung Kim - Vocation Minister for Ministry Pathways; and Kyle Pugh - Ontario Regional Councils Archivist.

We give thanks for the work of the Regional Council, outreach ministries, camps (including our Incorporated Ministries), our many communities of faith and its many volunteers such as: ministry personnel, music teams, administrative staff, custodians, and treasurers, just to name just a few. May God continue to bless our ministry in 2026 and beyond.

In September of 2026, we said goodbye and thank to you Executive Minister, Rev. Peter Hartmans who was called away from Shining Waters and Canadian Shield to serve as Executive Minister for United Church of Canada Identity and Governance with the General Council. Since we became a Regional Council, Peter has served us with great faith, good humour, thoughtfulness, and curiosity. Peter was integral in creating space to carve out a unique identity and sense of call for Shining Waters Regional Council and we will deeply miss his wisdom.
The search for a permanent Executive Minister is likely to commence at the end of 2026/beginning of 2027. Until a permanent EM is named, Diane Matheson-Jimenez has been appointed Interim Executive Minister for Canadian Shield and Shining Waters Regional Council. Diane looks forward to serving with you, and appreciates all prayers for the staff team in this time of transition!

In December of 2026, more changes will come to the staff team. Rev. Rob Smith will be leaving Regional Council work to return to congregational ministry. We thank Rob for his compassionate leadership and pray for his future discernment. Additionally, Rev. Shawn Redden has been called away from regional work to serve as Director of the United Church of Canada Formation Program at Atlantic School of Theology. We are grateful for Shawn's foundational work and pray her new ministry offers her new challenges and much affirmation.
Hiring is currently underway to fill vacancies.

With Gratitude and Prayer,

The Shining Waters Regional Council Executive:
Eric Nyarko, President
Tina Conlon, Past President
Diane Matheson-Jimenez, Interim Executive Minister
Jody Maltby, Staff Lead
Susan Whitehead, Executive Administrative Assistant
Lynella Reid-James
Bri-anne Swan
Paul Shepherd
Sarah Lough
Jan Breuls-Dorang
William Houghton
Richard Gardner
Peter Hartmans, Outgoing Executive Minister