

**Title:** Existing Social Justice Networks and the Comprehensive Review

**Originating Body:** Chignecto Presbytery

**Financial Implications if known:**

**Staffing Implications if known:** None

**Source of Funding if known:**

**That GC 42 strongly affirms the work of the United Network for a Just Peace in Palestine and Israel (UNJPPI) and the United for Mining Justice Network (UMJN) networks.**

**That these networks be directly and significantly involved in any future discussions surrounding Comprehensive Review and how networks can support the social justice ministry of the denomination under a new structure.**

**That a representative of each network be made an ex-officio member of the Permanent Committee – Programs for Mission and Ministry (PC-PMM) until a new structure evolves.**

**That GC 42 mandate the GCO staff assist with negotiations for appropriate Director's insurance for the networks so they can speak truthfully and bravely to the church and other power structures.**

## **Background**

1. Currently, UNJPPI and UMJN have no direct ties to the General Council. UNJPPI was incarnated by the GCO to help with the work mandated by GC 41 with respect to Palestine and Israel. UMJN has evolved out of United Church groups who had been working on the issue of Canadian mining interests being involved in human rights violations in foreign countries. Both networks play a significant role in these two key social justice issues within the denomination. Both provide thousands of volunteer hours. The leadership of these networks take seriously the Biblical call to proclaim social justice. These networks stand in solidarity with our international partners who have turned to the United Church of Canada seeking our support in their struggle to have their voices heard in our churches and beyond. To date, there has been no formal acknowledgement, affirmation or appreciation expressed for their ongoing work and commitment from either GCO or GC.
2. Currently, there has been no direct or indirect contact with UNJPPI or UMJN about the future of social justice work in the denomination even though the Comprehensive Review provides an appendix to the main report and notes the key role networks will play in animating the social justice ministry of the United Church of Canada. It would make sense for these networks who already understand the struggles and the blessings of their existing structure to provide direct input into how we might effectively embrace the concept of networks as we explore how to live out God's call to work for social justice.
3. Currently, the Permanent Committee (PC) - Programs for Mission and Ministry has not invited the networks to provide any input directly to the PC which could assist the PC in supporting the work mandated by the GC.

An ex-officio role on the PC would allow the networks to remain free and independent of the PC and the current power structure within the denomination while still being able to build relationships. PC-PMM and the networks would mutually benefit from a closer relationship through improved alignment regarding these key social justice issues.

4. The leadership of the networks face the prospect of vexatious lawsuits from those who hold power and privilege in Canadian society. Yet, the networks who work faithfully and diligently on behalf of the denomination are not afforded the same protection as officers of the courts of the church because under our present structure this is not possible. Ironically, the leadership of the networks often function in other roles in various courts of the church where they are covered by the insurance policy of the United Church.

In order to support the work of these networks and allow them to focus on the issues where they have expertise it makes sense to have the GCO staff with expertise in insurance help negotiate on behalf of the networks with the United Church of Canada insurance provider.

**Intermediate Court Action:**

Mary White / Sean Handcock moved that the 90<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of Maritime Conference transmit with concurrence Proposal #5 entitled “Existing Social Justice Networks and the Comprehensive Review” to the 42<sup>nd</sup> General Council of The United Church of Canada; and take no action on Proposal #14 entitled “United for Mining Justice Network” and #15 entitled “United Network for a Just Peace in Palestine and Israel” as they are covered in Proposal #5.

**MOTION CARRIED**