

## DIVISION OF REGIONAL SERVICES AND SUPPORT

The mandate of this division is to provide oversight, leadership and guidance to Communities of Faith within the Region.

The membership of the division committee is:

Chair, Donnie Morrison

Secretary, Mike Henderson

Communications Chair, Kevin Cox

Faith Formation and Leadership Development Chair, Kim Curlett

Justice, Mission and Outreach Chair, Anne Hoganson

Stewardship Chair, Shauna MacDonald

Children, Youth and Young Adult Chair, Paige Fraser

Regional Council Annual Meeting Planning Chair, VACANT

Association of Ministers Chair, Ross Bartlett

The Executive Minister, Faith March-MacCuish is our Staff Support.

Since we reported to the last Region 15 Annual Meeting, the Division has met by teleconference on May 15, 2020, October 8, 2020, Nov. 26, 2020 and February 17, 2021. A teleconference meeting is planned for April 28.

After a change to the Governance structure of the Region last year, the Association of Ministers Committee has been added to this division, giving us a total of seven committees. In the course of the year, we were sorry to accept Mat Whynot's resignation as chair of the Children, Youth and Young Adult Committee and welcomed Paige Fraser in that capacity.

We are very thankful for the support and encouragement of the Executive Minister to the Division as our Staff Support. Not only is Faith the Staff Support for the Division, she is Staff Support for the Communications and Annual Meeting Planning Committees.

We are also thankful for the dedication of the Support Staff who work with other Division committees: David Hewitt (FFLD & AMC), Catherine Stuart (CYaYA), Laura Hunter (JMO) and Roger Janes (Stewardship).

As the Division Chair, I offer my gratitude to our Secretary, Mike Henderson, and to the many individuals who share their gifts and passion with Region 15 through the Division committees. Their examples of discipleship are humbling.

Unfortunately, this quote from my report for AGM 2020 still holds true: "While travel and gathering restrictions are in place due to COVID 19, some of our plans have been put on hold or adjusted, but the Division carries on planning and adjusting."

The **Communications Committee** expects to release soon the first edition of a regional newsletter. The Chair has 10 articles ready to be published. The Newsletter will contain stories and articles on diverse topics such as congregations, books and poetry.

The **Annual Meeting Planning Committee** is without a Chair as we plan for the 2021 Annual Meeting. Nevertheless, the committee, building on their experience from our first-ever virtual meeting last year, has developed a plan for this year that will be more comprehensive and just as well-organized. The theme will be Beacon of Hope.

Submitted by Donnie Morrison, Chair

### **Association of Ministers Committee Report for Annual Meeting**

As an Association of Ministers within Region 15 we affirm the following: Ministry is a Gift, Calling, Profession, and a Job. In the past year the Association of Ministers Committee (AMC) has continued to work to build a foundation for an organization that will promote those crucial values. The AMC is made up of Lori Crocker DM, Bill Drysdale DLM, Rev. Linda Yates (secretary); Rev. Ross Bartlett (chair). In addition, a volunteer advisory team has been working on this project.

In the past year we have:

- Identified four key pillars for the Association's work
  - Community; Advocacy; Renewal; and Education
- Supported ministry personnel through a widely utilized Facebook page
- Engaged with the General Council office to clarify the status of clergy in relation to matters of human rights
- Launched a website
- Begun a membership drive
- Contracted with Jeff Chant to help advance our objectives
- Explored the implications of incorporation
- Created a new logo and title "The Association of United Church Clergy" (aUCC)
- Held our first annual Education and Renewal event with special resource people Janice MacLean and Kevin Parks
- Began to consult clergy on issues that are pressing for them
- Created some written resources to help clergy understand how the polity of the UCC works when a person is disciplined.

Membership in the Association is open to: Diaconal, Designated Lay, and Ordained ministers (active, retired and retained on the roll) and candidates currently serving in appointments. In the past year we have seen continued evidence of isolation and new pressure on ministry personnel, exacerbated in part by the elimination of Presbytery as a regular form for interaction, support, and unity. The absence in our polity of a voice or advocacy for clergy is increasingly evident. So, we remain convinced of the need for an Association within the United Church.

We continue to encourage collegial support amongst clergy and are eager to work with any ministers who are seeking to build community with peers. We have deliberately structured our organizational model to adapt to wider membership when other Regions begin to experience a desire for an Association.

The aUCC would like to express our sincere appreciation to all ministers for their work in this time. You are creative, caring, innovative, and solid. Our church is blessed by your service.

Yours in ministry together  
Rev Dr Ross Bartlett  
Chair Region 15, Association of Ministers Committee

### **Justice, Mission and Outreach (JMO) Committee Report, April 2021**

JMO is a committee of the Division of Regional Services and Support, which in turn is a division of the Region. Committee membership includes the chairs of the working groups and members at large. JMO's mandate is "to seek to live, not just as individuals but as community. We are called by Christ to love and serve others, to seek justice, to live with respect in creation, to work with faith communities to act with compassion in a timely manner in our neighbourhoods and in the world."

### **Ecological Justice Working Group**

This a new JMOC Working Group with members from both Region 15 and the Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Region. Our mandate is to take a lead in education, action and policy development with an emphasis on climate justice and extractive resources. We hosted a summer 2020 online book study Climate Church, Climate World, by Jim Antal, which received a very positive response. From those who attended, a "network" has emerged who Laura Hunter keeps informed. We continue to urge churches to support Faithful Footprints, the energy-saving project housed in NS with the Ecology Action Centre. We have been encouraging local churches to participate in Faithful Climate Conversations, sponsored by For the Love of Creation, a faith-based initiative for climate justice. EJWG is sponsoring one of these conversations, to take place on Earth Day, April 22nd, designed for people who have rarely talked about climate change and its relationship to faith in a group setting and are seeking an encouraging first step. We spread the word through Region 15 of a worldwide Green Faith inter-faith initiative, Sacred People, Sacred Earth on March 11th. Several churches shared their positive experiences in a follow-up Zoom call. Gail Wylie represents EJWG in opposing the development of Small Modular Nuclear Reactors, possibly in New Brunswick and also liaising with the United Church nationally re the National Level re nuclear arms issues. In addition, we work with the United Church nationally for more than a decade on the establishment of an Ombudsperson for Mining Justice with investigative powers. The office of a Canadian Ombudsperson for Mining Justice has been established, but very sadly has been given no powers. We are delighted that Rev. Elisabeth Bachem is replacing Kathryn Anderson as Co-Chair, representing Region 15. We welcome new members and, if this is your passion, please be in touch with Elisabeth at [eli.bachem@gmail.com](mailto:eli.bachem@gmail.com).

### **Just Peace for Palestine and Israel Working Group**

Throughout the past year, Just Peace members have been engaged in many campaigns, actions, solidarity and educational opportunities. See Appendix A for details.

### **Refugee Working Group**

Group convenor Lenora Timmons reported that the Covid pandemic has resulted in a backlog of applications and resettlements. Two families are in the settlement phase in her area. Her community will sponsor a fourth family. As of November 2020, all agents were

working from home and only accepting digital applications. With the current backlog of unsubmitted applications, it was unknown if new applications would be the list for 2021 or 2022. There are now delays because of COVID. A lot of refugees are in countries that are not open to immigration to Canada causing a backlog for refugees who were granted permanent residency months ago. Lenora plans to take another 10-week course on refugees.

### **Indigenous Concerns and Relations**

JMO offers support to Indigenous fishers, particularly last fall as they faced violence and challenges to their treaty rights. A statement of support was crafted for the Regions. A call went out to invite people to explore how to support the Indigenous Fishers. Over half of the people who showed up were from faith groups. Out of that, a small group went to show support as an interfaith delegation. Justice staff person Laura Hunter and JMO chair Anne Hoganson were part of the delegation.

### **Guaranteed Income Network**

This network is growing as local clusters and individual communities of faith engage in the United Church's guaranteed livable income campaign, including writing to and/or meeting with government representatives, engaging through worship and prayer, holding vigils, and sharing on social media.

### **Anti-Racism Network**

The Anti-Racism network facilitated an online book study in summer 2020 using the book "White Fragility", and is currently planning to prepare a short book study for Pastoral Leaders regarding "micro-aggressions", another book study with a wider lens, and a film/movie study process through which people could watch a movie and then come together for discussion. Members have participated in a variety of local actions and campaigns.

### **Podcast – "Making Hope Visible"** *(on your favourite app, including Spotify, Apple and Google podcasts)*

Conversations about justice, faith, and action. Host, Laura Hunter, sees acting for social change as a spiritual practice. She talks to people who are working for justice, love, and peace in their neighbourhoods and around the world. Together they make sense and meaning of what we do in and through and around communities of faith. This podcast is created primarily for and with those interested in the Justice, Mission and Outreach networks of the Atlantic Regions of the United Church of Canada. But more importantly as a way for connecting people, community, good works, and good ideas. If these things are important to you join Laura and her guests as they reflect on the spiritual journey of Making Hope Visible.

### **Partnerships:**

JMO contributes \$300 annually toward our partner group Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence (BTS) Network's Topacio Reynoso Youth Award. *This award was created to honor the memory and resistance of Topacio Reynoso Pacheco. At 16 years old, Topacio was an artist, activist, and human rights defender in Mataquescuintla, Jalapa, Guatemala.*

*She was a co-founder of the Mataquescuintla youth movement to resist the Escobal mine, a Canadian mining project. As a leader of the resistance, Topacio used art, music, and poetry to organize a community of youth passionate about the protection of their community and territory.*

The Justice, Mission, and Outreach Committee of Regional Council 15 believes that God is calling us to be aware of what is possible for our world and for the people in it, and to participate in building just and peaceful communities, local and global. If you feel the Spirit nudging you toward the work of justice, you are warmly invited to visit the website (<https://ucceast.ca/justice-mission-outreach-2/>), or contact Anne Hoganson ([annehoganson@gmail.com](mailto:annehoganson@gmail.com)) or Laura Hunter at the Regional office to learn how you can become involved.

Submitted by Anne Hoganson, Chair

## Appendix A

### **Just Peace for Palestine and Israel Working Group:**

#### **I. Campaign for Palestinian children's human rights**

1. There was a very active, cross Canada fall 2020 campaign, sponsored by The United Network for Justice and Peace for Palestine and Israel (UNJPPI), working to protect Palestinian children's human rights. A Parliamentary e-petition, sponsored by MP Paul Manley, was promoted widely throughout the country and through churches in Region 15. Many of us were among the 2,454 citizens who signed Parliamentary e-petition 2667 which called on the Government of Canada "to ensure the human rights of Palestinian children are protected by instructing a Special Envoy to promote, monitor and report on the human rights situation of Palestinian children living in the occupied Palestinian Territory and Gaza". The petition was presented to the House of Commons by MP Paul Manly on November 20th, International Children's Day.
2. The proposal to Region 15 at the fall Recall meeting re "Protecting the Human Rights of Palestinian Children" asked that Region 15 prepare and send resources for worship, education and advocacy for the human rights of Palestinian children and that member churches be encouraged to celebrate "Children's Sunday" on a Sunday close to International Children's Day focused on the Palestinian children's rights. Resources were prepared and sent to member churches and to other regions and churches as well. Many churches did celebrate Children's Sunday and made use of the resources to raise awareness of the situation of Palestinian children and their need for protection and rights.
3. Members of the Working Group, Doug Rigby and Linda Scherzinger created a zoom workshop about the Palestinian Children and their need for protection and human rights. The workshop was presented twice and was well received and promoted further by some who attended.
4. The Government's response to Petition e-2667 was tabled in the House of Commons late January 2021. You can see it together with the full Petition e-2667 on the House of Commons website at <https://petitions.ourcommons.ca/en/Petition/Details?Petition=e-2667>
5. We are continuing our Canada, Stand Up for Children's Rights Campaign because we strongly believe that the Government's response does not relate in a direct, knowledgeable, concerned way to what we know to be documented: daily, extreme abuses of the Palestinian

children's human rights. Nor has the remedy the petition proposed of a Special Envoy been adequately addressed.

## **II. Visit/presentation by Daoud Nassar, Tent of Nations**

Daoud Nassar, Palestinian Christian and director of the Tent of Nations environmental and peace farm, was originally to visit our area in person. Since that was not possible, he presented a very informative and inspiring brief program by zoom on November 7th. Steve Berube and Linda Scherzinger were on the planning team and still plan that he will come to visit in our region as soon as such travel is permitted.

## **III. Advent and Christmas**

1. Many churches in our region promote and sell Advent Peace boxes and Zatoun olive oil, soap and za'atar herbs especially at pre-Christmas sales. That was not possible because of covid-19 restrictions. Zatoun responded to the situation by sending items directly to homes or churches. Sales remained strong from many loyal supporters. We also learned that because of covid-19 travel restrictions there were no international volunteers helping to protect the farmers and their families and their trees. Attacks by settlers were much worse during the fall harvest season for that reason. The farmers count on our support and solidarity especially at such times.
2. Anne Hoganson is now the representative for Canada on the International Coordination Committee for Global Kairos for Justice (Kairos Palestine global partners). In the lead up to Advent, Anne shared: Kairos Palestine Christmas Alert 2020 urging Christians to spread the good news of peace and to see God's image in all of humanity.
3. Christmas messages by Palestinian Christian leaders were made available by Canadian Friends of Sabeel and shared with Region 15.

## **IV. Easter**

1. Last Easter, our partners at Friends of Sabeel North America (FOSNA) offered us the opportunity to tune in virtually to a Holy Saturday service in Palestine. This year, FOSNA once again hosted a virtual Easter service alongside Palestinian Christians at 12:PM EST on Saturday, April 3, 2021. We promoted this opportunity and members of Region 15 participated in this inspiring service.
2. Anne Hoganson shared the Kairos Palestine Easter Alert 2021 inviting us to join in their prayers and meditations of the season.

## **V. Ongoing opportunities to learn and to advocate for justice and peace**

1. All of the 'justice' issues are related. We are invited to be alert to make connections. Kairos Halifax hosted a zoom by Christian Peacemaker Teams, "Settler Colonialism: from Turtle Island to Palestine" to highlight and learn more of the similarities in both examples. There are certainly issues of racism in what is happening in Israel / Palestine and serious issues and injustices related to impacts of climate change and environmental racism.
2. Every Tuesday at 12 noon Atlantic Time Palestinian Christians host a zoom webinar focused on a different issue/topic each week. The name of this campaign is Kumi Now, based on the New Testament scripture story of Jesus healing the daughter of Jairus. Others told Jairus that the situation was hopeless and futile since the child was already declared dead. Jesus went to see and to heal her anyway. He spoke to the girl in Aramaic, the ordinary language of the day as he said to her, "Talitha, Kumi" which means, "Little girl, rise up." And she got up and began to walk. Despite the apparently hopeless situation of Palestinians in our day, it is time for liberation – time to awaken and to take action. We are

encouraged to sign up, to learn from this series of webinars and to take action in solidarity with Palestinians who may appear to have no hope for a new life of justice and peace.  
– Linda Scherzinger, co-chair Just Peace for Palestine and Israel Working Group

### **Faith Formation & Leadership Development Committee**

The Faith Formation and Leadership Development (FFLD) committee met virtually in June, September, October, November, January, February, March, and April 2020/21. On many occasions we were joined by the division Chair (Donnie Morrison) and the Regional Minister (David Hewitt). The team was grateful for their presence with us.

### **Committee Terms**

Currently our members are:

Chair (1 yr 2020-2021 did not reoffer) **Kim Curlett** (2nd term), [kimcurlett@gmail.com](mailto:kimcurlett@gmail.com)

Vice-Chair (2 yr 2019-2021 TBD): **Kevin Parks** [joyfulnoise@saintandrewshfx.ca](mailto:joyfulnoise@saintandrewshfx.ca)

Secretary (3 yr 2019- 2022: **Heather Ferrier** [hferrier@outlook.com](mailto:hferrier@outlook.com)

Member (3 yr 2019-2022): **Carolina Tucker** [carolina\\_tucker@hotmail.com](mailto:carolina_tucker@hotmail.com)

Member (3 yr 2019-2022): **Karen Crowley** [karencrowley26@eastlink.ca](mailto:karencrowley26@eastlink.ca)

Member (2 yr 2020-2023): **Sharon Lohnes** [revsharonbeacon@eastlink.ca](mailto:revsharonbeacon@eastlink.ca)

Additional Members for next year welcome with 3-year commitments. Members and officers may re-offer when their term is complete. Terms start and end based on the date of Regional annual meeting.

This year we were limited on what and how we could offer, but we did accomplish a number of significant actions. Like many committees (we expect), our conversations were lead by the pandemic that we are currently living under.

### **Survey**

We finalized a survey and reviewed the results in June and these results helped us to consider what is expected of us going forward.

### **Facebook Page**

This page has been active as it develops. Thanks to Heather Ferrier for her work to keep this page alive.

### **Events Offered**

In January 2021, Sharon Lohnes offered a successful Two-Part Lenten Planning workshop to 18 participants from all four Atlantic Regions. This is an event that will take place again. Kim Curlett provided technical support for this ZOOM meeting.

Dave Hewitt offered well attended M&P workshops for the region and Catherine Stuart will be offering training in future for youth lay leadership.

### **Upcoming Events**

- Carolina Tucker is working on developing/researching programming for lay leadership in the Region.

- Sharon Lohnes is developing another planning session, this time using the Narrative Lectionary.
- Heather Ferrier and Carolina Tucker is offering a Zoom Eastertide book study starting on April 11, 2021.
- Carolina Tucker working on the “Keeping Connected” newsletter with the communications team.
- Kevin Parks continues to be our “go to” connections to music leadership in the church. Kevin and Sharon Lohnes have been in conversation about what might be offered via this committee.

### **Finally**

I (Kim Curlett), will be leaving this committee following my term at the end of May and moving to another committee as a member. Thank you to this team and to the Division for trusting me with this first leadership role at a Regional level. This was a valuable and enlightening experience as we all work together to develop this new model for the wider church. I wish you all well going forward and hope you will call on me if there is a need to help with projects and events in the future. Blessings as you continue this work and special thanks to Kevin Parks who agreed to co-chair with me this past year and to Heather Ferrier who keeps us all on track with her detailed minutes.

Faithfully submitted on behalf of our committee and in the name of Jesus Christ,  
Rev. Kim Curlett Co-Chair, Faith Formation and Leadership Development  
April, 2021

### **Stewardship Committee**

The Stewardship Committee met via Zoom for the first time in November 2020. Currently, we are a committee of 4.

Time was spent discussing goals for this committee. Defining who we are and what we are hoping to accomplish going forward.

Our hope as a committee will be to get the word out to the Communities of Faith about all aspects of Stewardship. Roger Janes, Stewardship and Special Gifts Officer for Region 15 has offered his assistance along with his wealth of knowledge to this committee.

The Stewardship Committee is hoping to reconnect with each Community of Faith. As Covid19 does not seem to be going anywhere, anytime soon, we may be doing everything virtually with as many churches as possible. We will be discussing options in upcoming meetings.

Committee members are discussing the mandate of the committee and whether it can be improved.

Yours In Christ,  
Shauna MacDonald, Chair  
Stewardship

### **Children, Youth and Young Adult Committee**

**Committee Members:** Paige Fraser; Chair Terry Skidgemore; Secretary, Catherine Stuart; Staff Support, April Hart, Caitlin Smithers, Dana Pardy, Penny Nelson and James O Connell.

In 2020, Region 15's Children, Youth and Young Adult committee (CYaYa) said goodbye to our former chair, Mat Whynot and welcomed a new chair, secretary and committee members. 2020 was a year of navigating support for churches, camps and children and youth programs as they pivoted and adapted to the change, challenge and opportunities the pandemic brought. Region 15's CYaYa committee offered support for our local United Church Camps, Sherbrooke Lake Camp and Camp Kidston, as they adapted and offered a Camp in a Box program, as well as virtual programs and innovative drop-in programs. We also offered financial support for Ukulele Church, a program facilitated by Catherine Stuart and Leanne Goode, which offers virtual Sunday School through music and storytelling. We supported the ongoing work of Youth Forum which was hosted virtually in 2020.

Looking ahead to 2021 we look forward to continuing to support communities of faith in prioritizing the voices of children, youth and young adults. We hope to answer the call to be an anti-racist committee and church by participating in and sharing anti-racism training and resources. Our committee has been working on developing a contact list of point people for Children, Youth and Young Adult ministry in all Region 15 Communities of Faith, so we can best serve these groups with resources, programs and support.

Submitted by Paige Fraser, Chair