

JUSTICE, MISSION AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE

After annual regional meetings in 2022, JMOC began the new year by planning for its first fall gathering since the COVID-19 pandemic.

The planning committee (Sandi Tomsons, Jim Wicks, Kathryn Anderson, and Trish Betts) put together an agenda with recharging as the goal. We thought it was necessary to do the work of rebuilding and maintaining relationships weakened by COVID-19 social distancing. In JMOC, we call this work “Outreach”. JMOC members, invited speakers, and Rev. Shepherd Munikwa came together at the Tatamagouche Centre on October 27-28. There we were lifted up (Mission) to change the systems that keep people and ecosystems down (Justice). Since our gathering, the committee and its working and networking groups have engaged in justice actions.

At the Fall Gathering, we had time to get to know Rev. Shepherd, learn about recent actions of Working Groups, and to learn from our invited guests how we can better do the justice work we are committed to doing. Bill Chambré, Rev. Marion Lucas Jefferies, and Hallett Llewellyn & Karen MacKay Llewellyn presented their justice work to a group eager to learn and to respond to these justice challenges. This link (<https://ucceast.ca/justice-mission-outreach-2>) will take you to the JMOC website where you can find reports of the activities of JMOC’s Working Groups and associated networks.

JMOC has several very active Working Groups which welcome new members from communities of faith in Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters and Region 15.

Ecological Justice (Chair, Sheila Van Schaick sheila.vs@outlook.com)

This group has several sub-groups working on particular issues, for example, Gail Wylie provides information and opportunities for action regarding nuclear power issues; Kathryn Anderson, a founding member of Breaking the Silence, reports on Canadian support for Indigenous Peoples in Guatemala and elsewhere in their resistance against the social and ecological injustice of Canadian mining corporations.

Just Peace in Palestine and Israel (Contacts: Steve Berube srjberube@gmail.com; Linda Scherzinger lindakseven@gmail.com)

Mental Health (Contact: Chair, Norm Laverty lavertynw@gmail.com)

JMOC has several Working Groups that paused activities during COVID-19. The Indigenous Working Groups, for example, continue to look for Indigenous guidance to remain faithful to JMOC’s commitment to following Indigenous lead. Rev. Shepherd is assisting in this effort. JMOC welcomes expressions of interest in this group.

This year JMOC has engaged with the national church in two contexts.

1. At the fall gathering we passed a motion from Just Peace in Palestine and Israel to ask the Executives of the two Regions urge the General Council Executive to i) enter a partnership agreement with Independent Jewish Voices, ii) through the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee develop education material on anti-Palestinian racism and Islamophobia while they are developing anti-Semitism resources, iii) that our partner Sabeel's material be prioritized for study.
2. Justice concerns arising from General Council 44 procedures and processes.

JMOC also passed a motion from Just Peace in Palestine and Israel requesting the Executives of the two regions to urge Commissioners and communities of faith to consult resources provided by trusted NGOs, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch regarding the conflict in Palestine and Israel.

JMOC's motions were passed by both Regional Executives. Although the General Secretary explained on behalf of General Council Executive that the content of our motions presumed entitlements neither JMOC nor regional executives have, our concerns were passed on to the committee developing the anti-Semitism resource materials.

The Planning Committee for the 2022 fall gathering had invited Moderator Carmen Lansdowne to some, or all, of the Gathering. Unable to join us at that time, early in the new year we were told the Moderator will meet with us in April, when she will be in Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters and Region 15. At our February meeting, JMOC prepared for our meeting with Rev. Dr. Lansdowne, and we look forward to our conversation in Sackville on April 15th.

Respectfully submitted:

Sandi Tomsons, co-chair Region 15

Jim Wicks, secretary, Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters

APPENDIX WORKING GROUP REPORTS

Ecological Justice

The Group is comprised of:

Sheila Van Schaick, Cape Breton, chair

Gail Wylie, Fredericton

Linda Scherzinger, Halifax

Kathryn Anderson, Halifax

Robin Goodfellow-Baikie, Labrador

Regularly attending also is Rev. Shephard Munikwa, of Regional offices

On break: Elisabeth Baichim (Annap Valley) and David Lewis (NB)

Contact if interested in joining our group is sheila.vs@outlook.com

Our group has been meeting monthly and discussing ways to help in a variety of concerns.

Past activities:

- Created a personal Climate Change Pledge sheet, to distribute at church and online to make people think about how they can help the world.
- Connected with Faithful Footprints and then created a video of regional churches experience with that funding program and recommending more churches sign up.

Current projects

- Starting the plans for a series of info sessions around the Maritimes with Chris Benjamin of Faithful Footprints and Rev. Shepherd Munikwa of regional office and local churches already completed a Faithful Footprints Project, inviting other local church building reps to come and learn more and ask questions and get started. First one is planned for mid-April in Cape Breton.
- Staying in touch with mining issues and learning how we can help prevent injustice.
- Staying up to date with nuclear Reactor issues, especially in NB, and learning how we can help prevent more development there.
- Planning an announcement at the 2 AGMs about mining and nuclear issues.
- Planning a workshop/info session at the 2 AGMs on nuclear situation in NB.

Yours respectfully,
Sheila Van Schaick

Just Peace Palestine Israel

The Just Peace Working Group (JPWG) has continued its work to improve the understanding of United Church members and others regarding the 55 year long illegal occupation of Palestine by Israel. We have worked closely with other United Church groups, Independent Jewish Voices (IJV) and Palestinian and Israeli partner organizations.

Much of our focus over the past year has been on deepening people's understanding of antisemitism and anti-Palestinian prejudices.

Prior to the meeting of the General Council, JPWG organized a Zoom conference led by Dr. Larry Haiven of IJV on antisemitism.

JPWG was disappointed in the General Council's failure to take direct action on Proposals from 5 Regions that urged the denomination to follow the lead of other partner denominations and leading NGO's such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch on naming Israel as an apartheid state. Subsequently, JPWG developed a Proposal that was passed by the Executives of Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters and Region 15 that called on the General Council committee working on antisemitism to use resources from the Palestinian liberation theology organization Sabeel and to develop a formal partnership relationship with IJV.

We hope many will attend workshops we will hold with IJV at the Regional meetings that will focus on developing a deeper understanding of antisemitism and anti-Palestinian bias.

Our membership has expanded and we have added people with different skill sets that will enhance our work. Additionally, we have benefited from the addition of Bill Chambre, who served the

denomination and the World Council of Churches as an Ecumenical Accompanier. Bill has held several presentations describing the violence and human rights abuses faced by Palestinians in the rural South Hebron Hills and Masafer Yatta where he served.

We are pleased and proud that Anne Hoganson attended as the Canadian representative at the Global Kairos meeting in December held in Bethlehem.

Refugee Issues

Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship, Canada (IRCC): A brief description of the lead IRCC takes in the complex process of bringing Refugees from overseas - who, on arrival in Canada are designated Newcomers. Both concerning issues and support were described. Examples of some of the many programmes and processes offered were explained.

The Role of The Refugee Advisor for the United Church of Canada, - East: A The Role of The Refugee Advisor A description of this role as outlined in the policy of UCC Region 15 was presented with a description of the work already begun since I took over this volunteer position.

Refugee Sponsorship Training Programme (RSTP): This programme, supported by IRCC is essential for anyone involved in supporting newcomers to Canada. Specifically, for the position I hold, links must be made with the Cited Church of Canada in one way or another. The major training programme has been completed but there are still some outstanding aspects that need to be covered by the local trainer. The initial programme takes the participants through the steps required to bring refugees, who have been identified as potential newcomers, and settle and support each family or individual for a year (or for two as the case maybe, in an initial Canadian community

Resources: There are many resources available which will help the Refugee Advisor offer the best alternatives, for the sponsoring group to be prepared to provide support to the newcomers, and for the settlement support available to the newcomers.

Experiences as a Refugee Advisor: Moving Forward: I have already given support to several families over the past nearly four years. This has included being party of the support group with three families linked with my own church. Responding to requests to help families who have recently arrived in Nova Scotia, and applications in process. Moreover, apart from my commitment to the position, the ongoing support given to newcomers who have been in Canada for some time, one of whom completed an application for refugee status/asylum from within Canada.

An example of a success story includes the Asylum seeker and I spending two years helping a newcomer establish a small business, from the initial idea until the point where a business license to produce and sell a product was completed successfully.

As part of my way forward, I did have an opportunity to discuss some of the frustrations that arise from a long and complex process. These frustrations occur at all levels of involvement. However, there are many successful stories and despite different levels of frustration, due in great part to the overwhelming number of displaced people applying to come to Canada, the impact of COVID on the delay in completing applications successfully, and completing my own training, this is a busy, but very worthwhile and exciting volunteer position to hold.

I believe strongly that following up on a recommendation from the current JMOC committee and working with a long-time former Refugee Advisor, Bev MacDonald, we will be able to overcome many of the frustrations, which hopefully will impact a speedier arrival of newcomers through the United Church.

Bev and I will be meeting soon to complete the next step as supported by the JMOC.

Mental Health Working Group

1. The Mental Health Working Group was formed by a motion of Maritime Conference as initiated by one of the discussion groups that arose out of the open space technology format of the particular AGM.
2. It has held a number of workshops during Conference itself and during the year between conference AGMs.
3. It initiated a successful proposal to General Council requiring that ministry personnel have training in mental health.
4. In recent years the working group has not been active partially because it has not had a convenor, but also because of COVID 19.
5. People who participated in the working group and its events included persons that had suffered from a mental illness, members of their families, and volunteers that wanted to be part of the church involvement in the various problems. Some of the volunteers had professional or work experience.

Recent actions

1. When Laura Hunter left, she left the list of persons who were participants in or with the working group with Norman Laverty. This list contained about 2 dozen names with Emails.
2. A mailing was sent out to these persons early in 2022 to ask them if they were interested in continuing. A handful of Email addresses were not valid or the people had left the eastern regions. About a dozen responded saying that they were interested in continuing. It is estimated that there are 2 or 3 others that did not reply but would be interested.
3. The General Council has organized zoom events. Katherine Anderson informed Norman Laverty about these events, and he sent out a second communication to the Laura Hunter list, who had valid Email addresses. About 3 or 4 on the list did participate. In addition, there were another half dozen persons from the 3 eastern Regions who have participated in these sessions and/or the advisory committee established by Amy Crawford, staff person with General Council. The Rev Catherine Stewart, the youth staff person for the 3 eastern regions has been one of these latter participants.
4. The General Council meetings have received presentations from the UC of Christ on the concept of a WISE (welcoming, inclusive, supportive, engaged) congregation, which resembles somewhat the concept of an Affirming congregation. At the last meeting of this national committee Oct. 25, a number of ideas for congregational involvement:

- a. How will community adjust or develop post COVID?
- b. Can the WISE concept be applied to activity groups within a congregation rather than a total congregation?
- c. The Committee focused on two things:
 - i. congregational education and involvement
 - ii. advocacy for adequate service from government
- d. Can mental health be linked to other activities such as environment