JUSTICE, MISSION AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Part 1 JMOC Activities

After plenary presentations and Workshops at the Regional Councils 'Annual Meetings in 2023, JMOC began organizing its Fall Gathering. We met at the Tatamagouche Centre November 9-10, 2023. Guests included regional presidents Shauna MacDonald (B-NS) and Elizabeth Stevenson (FSLDW), theme speaker Dorene Bernard, and Guaranteed Living Income Group representative Rose-Hannah Gaskin. Our theme for the meeting was: "Building Indigenous Relationships". Kathryn Anderson provided a brief history of JMOC's relationship with the Indigenous leaders who guided JMOC's Indigenous Working Groups. Dorene Bernard (Sipekne'katik First Nation Community Elder), our guest speaker via Zoom, presented on the Indian Residential School Legacy Project. Rev. Shepherd Munikwa, Kathryn Anderson and Linda Scherzinger shared their experience at the recent Women of First Light Seven Generations Gathering at the Tatamagouche Centre. Kathryn Anderson reported on meetings discussing the rematriation of the Tatamagouche Centre and facilitated group discussion of the question: How can we as United Church of Canada people act as allies to facilitate this process? JMOC's agreed to participate in and support the rematriation process and create an Indigenous Rights and Relations Working Group.

JMOC Working Groups presented reports and motions. Rose-Hannah Gaskin attended via Zoom to present the work of the Tri-Regional Guaranteed Livable Income (GLI) group. JMOC moved to make GLI a JMOC Working Group. We also began a discussion of making JMOC a Tri-Regional UCC-East committee.

JMOC accepted Patricia Betts 'resignation as Refugee and Newcomer Representative for the United Church of Canada-East. We are preparing a job description and looking for a volunteer for this position. If you or people you know have experience in this area and the passion for this justice problem to do this work, please share this information with JMOC.

JMOC met again on February 13th by Zoom to discuss business held over from the Fall Gathering, including budget, committee membership, Refugee and Newcomer Representative, JMOC's relationship with First Dawn Eastern Edge's JMOC, logo for JMOC, a request for a JMOC decision regarding support for private MP's Bill S-210 (Young Persons 'Exposure to Pornography Act; JMOC decided to not support the bill), updating the JMOC website and initiating planning for the AGM's. At this meeting, it was also agreed that co-chairs Kathy and Sandi meet with chairs of B-NS and FSLDW's nominating committees in March to discuss JMOC membership.

Part 2 Working Group Activities

Eco-Justice, Just Peace in Israel and Palestine, Guaranteed Livable Income, and Mental Health Working Groups have regular monthly meetings throughout the year. The following summaries of their activities show their commitment to justice and how they provide communities of faith opportunities to make visible the members 'passion for justice.

Guaranteed Livable Income

Atlantic provinces 'four GLI groups belong to a nation-wide UCC network of provincial groups which have advocated for GLI for many years. Together they encourage all communities of faith

to join the GLI movement. Although GLI group members have been affiliated with JMOC for some time, GLI has only been a Working Group under the JMOC umbrella since the Fall Gathering. In UCC-East, in addition to informing communities of faith, GLI has been focused on getting municipal and provincial support for this solution to many of the justice problems in communities.

See Appendix A for a report from the working group.

Eco-Justice

This year Eco-Justice lived into its goals to educate and advocate. To do both more effectively, it acted to increase collaboration with other climate justice groups. Already partnering with KAIROS-Halifax and organizations such as Faith and the Common Good and the Ecology Action Centre, in September Eco-Justice was part of conversations at the Tatamagouche Centre which began the process of creating an Interfaith Coalition on Climate Change.

See Appendix B for a report from the working group.

Just Peace in Israel and Palestine

At the Fall Gathering, several members of the Working Group shared what they have been doing since October 7, 2023 to improve the understanding of United Church members and others of the 55 year-long occupation of Palestine by Israel. Their presentations helped JMOC members place Israel's war with Hamas into this historical context and better understand what just peace would look like for Palestinians and Israelis.

Since Israel's declaration of war on Hamas, the content of media reports and Canada's pro-Israel actions gave a new urgency to deepening people's understanding of antisemitism and anti-Palestinian prejudices.

See Appendix C for a report from the working group.

Mental Health

This year the working group has been focused on two projects:

Regional Councils hiring a part-time person to support congregations in dealing with problems of mental challenges.

Working with congregational clusters. With support from Rev. Shepherd Munikwa and the cooperation of clergy in the Miramichi area, the first mental health cluster event is being organized. Clergy have joined the Working Group in several Zoom meetings to plan a Mental Health Awareness event for Saturday May 4th. The event is intended to be a time of fellowship, getting to know one another, learning and encouragement.

The Working Group is offering two Workshops at B-NS and FSLDW regional councils.

Indigenous Rights and Relations Working Group

JMOC has had active Indigenous Working Groups in the past and at the Fall Gathering agreed to create a new group. We are looking for Indigenous guidance so we remain faithful to JMOC's commitment to following Indigenous lead. Rev. Shepherd Munikwa is assisting in this effort. JMOC welcomes expressions of interest in this group. Contact <sandratomsons@gmail.com>

Respectfully submitted:
Kathy Bigsby
Co-chair of JMOC, Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters

APPENDICES

Appendix A

GUARANTEED LIVABLE INCOME REPORT
To
First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council, Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council,
Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Regional Councils 2024

There will, however, be no one in need among you. (Deuteronomy 15: 4 NRSV)

But there will be no poor among you. (Deuteronomy 15:4 RSV)

…great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned land or houses, sold them an brought the proceeds of what was sold…and it was distributed to each as any had need. (Acts 4: 33b, 34, 35 NRSV)

The ideal, "there was not a needy person among them", has its source in the Hebrew Scriptures. The early church embodied it, extended it to all Christian faith communities, and to the central Church in Jerusalem. It was, in truth, a summary of the commandment given by Jesus, drawing upon his Jewish heritage, to love God with all our heart, soul and mind; and to love our neighbour as ourselves (Mark 12: 31, Matthew 22: 37 – 39).

We believe this ideal carries for us today a 'call for action 'for a Guaranteed Livable Income (GLI), a payment to individuals or families by government that covers the cost of basic necessities (food, shelter, clothing, transportation and community participation) and is not conditional on meeting employment criteria in order to qualify for the benefit. It ensures everyone as income adequate for basic needs, allowing all people to live with dignity, because of work status.

For people of faith, concern for those who live in poverty is not an 'act of charity'; it is "faith in action". Since the 1970's The United Church of Canada has affirmed that a guaranteed livable income is the most effective and efficient way to lift a greater number of people out of poverty. Over the years we have joined with people and organizations from all political parties, other faith communities and all walks of life (for example, economists; business leaders; professionals in medical and social arenas) calling on our governments and political leaders to take action for a guaranteed livable income.

Presently, in The United Church of Canada we structure most of our efforts through national and regional networks. We have a United Church of Canada national GLI network, comprised of interested people throughout Canada. It meets monthly (via Zoom) to consult, provide resources and initiate advocacy work for GLI. Our network is supported by General Council staff and co-chaired by the Rev. Barry Morris (Vancouver, BC) and Ann McRae (Hamilton, ON). A recent video (2023) by Moderator Carmen Lansdowne highlights how important this work is, given the poverty and context of our times. (See: The Right Rev. Dr. Carmen Lansdowne calls for a Guaranteed Livable Income for All – youtube.com) The national network is complemented by

Regional GLI networks, from coast to coast, providing important information, motivating and coordinating action.

In the Atlantic Region, six of us (Rose-Hannah Gaskin; Karen and Hal Llewellyn, Rob Fennell, Bob Lockhart, Marion Pardy) form The United Church of Canada Atlantic Region GLI Network. Together, with others from the Atlantic Region, we meet regularly for the sharing of ideas, mutual support and action. For example, in 2022 we sponsored a well-attended book study on "Bootstraps Need Boots; One Tory's Lonely Fight To End Poverty in Canada" by Hugh Segal. Presently, we are working with a 'group of 12 'congregations in the Atlantic Region who are "learning and acting" about a guaranteed livable income. Other congregations are encouraged to join. Click on AtlanticRegionCongregationalResource_2024 for the Tool Kit and, if interested, contact your regional representative, email below.

In our First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council, we have a network of 8 interested persons with Marion Pardy as coordinator: Liz Dawson (North West River); Hope Rowsell (South Brook); Shane Foote (Burin); Holly Smith (Hant's Harbour); Frank Fry (St. John's); Sarah Mills (Stella's Circle); Rob McLennan (Stella's Circle). In addition, we have a number of others who, by request, receive pertinent information via email. On April 15, 2023, St. James United Church, co-sponsored by Gower Street United Church, held a Multi-faith Vigil (Jews, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs) to shine light on the need for a guaranteed livable income with representatives from our municipal, provincial and federal levels of government present. At the time of preparation for this report, two congregations have joined the 'group of 12', St. James and Gower Street United Churches, St. John's.

In our Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council, we were successful last year in getting the municipality of Pictou to support GLI, and a letter to follow up on that support was sent just recently to make sure action promise was taken. At the time of preparation for this report, four churches in our region have agreed to be part of a congregational cluster in support of GLI: Pictou United Church; Sharon St. John United Church, Stellarton; Greenhill-Alma Pastoral Charge; St. Matthews United Church, Halifax. Two other churches have requested events (worship followed by panel discussion). As Coordinators for our region we continue to participate in Zoom meetings with Basic Income NS, and encourage Senators in our Region to support Bill C-223 and Bill C-233.

In our Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Regional Council, we have a network of 6 interested persons with Rose-Hannah Gaskin as coordinator: Steve Berube; Audrey Lounder; Anne Pirie; Bruce Moore, Suzanne Hickey; Elisabeth Stevenson. In addition, we have a number of others who, by request, receive pertinent information via email. At the time of preparation for this report, three congregations have joined the 'group of 12': Wilmot United, Fredericton, NB; Park Royal United Church, Charlottetown, PEI; Bedeque North Pastoral Charge, PEI.

Take Action. Here is what you can do.
Municipality Action. Because Municipalities carry so much of the weight in dealing with local and regional poverty, it is important to obtain the support of municipal councils. Across Canada this support is growing. In the Atlantic Region the following Municipalities have passed Resolutions endorsing a Basic Income:

New Brunswick: Moncton (passed, September 2022); Fredericton (passed, October 2022); Saint John (passed, January 2023); Edmundston (passed, February 2023); Miramichi (passed May 2023)

Nova Scotia: Halifax (passed, June 2022); Pictou County (passed, February 2023); County of Annapolis (passed, March 2023); Wolfville (passed, March 2023); Antigonish Town Council (passed, May 2023); Town Council of Yarmouth (passed, July 2023); Cumberland County (passed, July 2023); Cape Breton Regional Municipality (passed, October 2023); Kentville (passed, November 2023); Colchester County (passed, February 2023).

Prince Edward Island: Charlottetown (passed, May 2023); Summerside (passed, July 2023); Town of Kensington (passed, August 2023); Municipality of Three Rivers (August 2023).

Newfoundland and Labrador: City of St. John's (October 2022); Municipalities of Newfoundland and Labrador (October 2023).

Get a copy of the Basic Income Resolution passed by other Municipalities. https://www.big-ns.org/atlantic-canada-basic-income-now Contact your city/town/community Councillor or Mayor to request them to do the same.

Contact your Member of Parliament and urge them to support Bill C-223 to establish the first (if passed) national framework for an unconditional Guaranteed Livable Basic Income for all persons over 17 across Canada. An identical Bill S-233 is in the Senate as well. To show support for these two Bills, go to: BillsS-233 and C-223 for unconditional Basic Income in Canada (ubiworks.ca). Write to your provincial Senators urging them to support Bill S-233. Write to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Chrystia Freeland, and ask them to seize this moment to roll out a guaranteed livable program in collaboration with the provinces, territories and indigenous leadership.

Consider establishing a "Learn and Act" group within your congregation. Your regional coordinator/contact person below can provide you with further assistance in addition to the Tool Kit.

Resources for above and other action can be found on our United Church website: Create a Guaranteed Livable Income Program|The United Church of Canada (united-church.ca). You could also email: justice@united-church.ca.

Submitted by: The United Church of Canada Atlantic Region Guaranteed Livable Income Network: Rose-Hannah Gaskin, Fredericton, NB email: rosehannah@gmail.com; Karen Llewellyn, Stellarton, NS email: mackayllewellyn@bellaliant.net; Hal Llewellyn, Stellarton, NS email: hallettllewellyn@gmail.com; Rob Fennell, Halifax, NS email: scotiafriends@hotmail.com; Bob Lockhart, Coleman, PEI; email: bob@spectrumsolutions.com; Marion Pardy, St. John's, NL, email: m-pardy@nf.sympatico.ca

Appendix B
Eco-Justice Working Group Summary of Activities – 2023 to April 2024

Letter writing to:
-Dept of Environment about keeping the proposed Coast Protection Act
-Dept of Natural Resources about keeping the ban on Nuclear plants and Uranium mining

Our group joined the Climate Champions Group in For the Love of Creation. We are having a first Zoom gathering in May with Erika Thogersen.

Discussed the UC East weekly e-newsletter – how many people does this reach? How effective is it for getting a message out to all congregations?

Discussed UC National Council's Communications Committee, which in January had no members, so we could not ask them to help us in any way. Has this changed?

Learned more about Electric Vehicle Charging Stations possible coming to church parking lots. An idea that started at the Anglican Diocese we believe.

Started accumulating a Green Enthusiasts List for connecting with a member in each congregation that shares our interests. Only a few responses so far….. Also started collecting contact info for social justice groups in any churches, so we can connect with them. Do you have a green enthusiast or social justice committee in your church? Let us know their contact

Planning for participation in the 2 AGMs coming up. We have a young speaker who attended COP28 and has a message for all to hear. She created a Fridays for Future group in her university town in ON and is very active in social justice.

We discussed how to request our Canadian Mining Ombudsman to have the power to hold mining companies responsible for their branch offices human rights actions. This has several hurdles to overcome. Learned recently that this role's mandate is now under review.

Learned from Robin in Labrador that Gull Island Dam is going to be the 3rd part of the Emira Hydro Plan, which not a green solution. Robin has also been pushing for a suspended mono-rail solution to transporting people and goods between distant locations in Labrador to have the least impact on the land.

Planning ideas for Earth Week participation for ourselves and for church members. Connected with For the Love of Creation and their activities planned, the parade in Halifax on April 20th at noon. Message out in e-newsletter to encourage congregations to plan an Earth Day activity.

Sheila Van Schaick
Chair, Eco-Justice Working Group

Appendix C

Just Peace Working Group report spring 2024
Members: Steve Berube, Linda Scherzinger, Bill Chambre, Anne Hoganson, Audrey Lounder, Jim Wicks, Myrna Wicks, Barbara Cairns, Sharon Lohnes, Bev MacDonald

Bill Chambre continues to speak to churches and others of his experience as an Ecumenical Accompanier and Anne Hoganson has been approved to be an Ecumenical Accompanier.

October 7th, 2023, following 16 years of Israeli military blockade, Palestinian fighters from Gaza launched an unprecedented assault, in which hundreds of Israelis were killed and wounded, and civilians kidnapped. The Israeli government declared war, launched airstrikes, killed hundreds of Palestinians and wounded thousands, bombed residential buildings, hospitals, schools, universities and other forms of infrastructure in Gaza.

Casualty numbers in Israel and who actually killed whom have continued to be debated and investigated. Numbers of casualties in Gaza immediately began to be counted and to grow from Israeli bombardment by air, ground troop actions, and then also from starvation and diseases. The majority of the Palestinian causalities are women and children. No place is safe in Gaza. Attacks resulting in deaths and forced removal of Palestinians in the West Bank has also begun and continues to grow.

Due to the catastrophic and tragic reality, Sabeel immediately organized a time of prayerful contemplation regarding the ongoing anguish. All Ecumenical Accompaniers were evacuated. At Christmas, Munther Issac's sermon, "Christ in the Rubble" was a call to Western Christian churches for repentance and solidarity. It was heard by many thousands around the world.

We and many others across the country have advocated for Canada to call for an immediate ceasefire, de-escalation, respect for international law, safe provision of humanitarian aid, and to ban all arms trade with Israel. In December, South Africa filed a case against Israel at the International Court of Justice invoking the Genocide Convention in the context of Israel's ongoing military assault on Gaza. In January, The International Court of Justice issued provisional measures against Israel for its genocidal acts in Gaza.

Israel accused 12 members of UNRWA of participating in the October 7th attack on Israel which caused the US, Canada and several other countries to withhold their financial support for UNRWA. We advocated for funds to be reinstated since that is the only organization with capacity to provide aid necessary for Palestinian refugees.

Our committee has focused on a book study of The Other Side of the Wall by Munther Issac, and a training event for new facilitators of the Palestine Land Exercise. Both of these projects are for further education about the history and context in which the events of October 7th occurred in order to lead to further advocacy and action for a just and lasting peace for both Israelis and Palestinians.

Many churches have been hosting the Palestine Land Exercise. The Just Peace Working Group has trained leaders for and presented the Palestine Land Exercise in both regions. Additionally, we hosted weekly online worship events during Advent and Lent. Members of our group were involved in organizing and hosting a viewing and discussion of Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac's Christmas service focused on "Christ in the Rubble". We are currently planning an online study of Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac's book, The Other Side of the Wall. Additionally, at the Regional Meetings we will be hosting two workshops in each region, the Palestine Land Exercise and a workshop titled Canadian Responses to the Apocalypse in Gaza: Sharing Stories of Faithfulness, Complicity and Turning a Blind Eye.

Members of our group, returned Ecumenical Accompaniers, clergy and others, have also been active at the local level, speaking at worship services and "lunch and learn" events, organizing local community based groups, Gaza Ceasefire Pilgrimages, working with international and national based groups, meeting with and writing Members of Parliament, etc.