

Division of Regional Services and Support

April 23, 2026

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, Vacant

Faith Formation and Leadership Development Chair, Michael Thompson

Justice, Mission and Outreach Chair, Sandra Tomsons (*resigned Feb. 24, 2026*)

Stewardship Chair, Wanalda Parsons

Children, Youth and Young Adult Chair, Paige Fraser

Regional Council Annual Meeting Planning Chair, Jane McDonald

Affirm Chair, Vacant

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

Since we reported to the last Bermuda-Nova Scotia Annual Meeting, the Division has met by teleconference on May 21 & Nov. 19, 2025 and on Mar. 3, 2026. A teleconference meeting is planned for May 6, 2026.

During the past year, Sandra Tomsons stepped down as Chair of Justice, Mission and Outreach. Shelley Pick stepped down as Chair of the Affirm Committee and was replaced by Julien Davis on Oct. 30, 2025 who unfortunately had to resign in January 2026. We thank them all for their participation in the work of the Division.

Executive Minister Faith March-MacCuish continues to be the Staff Support for the Division. Faith is also Staff Support for the Communications, Annual Meeting Planning and Affirming Committees. We are grateful for Faith's guidance and leadership.

We are also continue to be thankful for the dedication of the Support Staff who work with other Division committees: David Hewitt (FFLD & AMC), Catherine Stuart (CYaYA), Sherpherd Munikwa (JMO). Roger Janes retired during the year and Sharon Ballantyne has assumed the position of Growth and Stewardship Animator.

The Division Committee Secretary, Mike Henderson, has provided the Division with his valuable input and thorough minutes since its inception. We are very grateful.

The Division Committee is also grateful to the many individuals who share their gifts and passion with the Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council through the Division committees.

The **Communications Committee** has no chair and the committee is not functioning.

The Executive Minister continues to work on finding a new vision for the Communications Committee.

The **Affirm Committee** has no chair presently.

The committee meets monthly on the first Wednesday. They met on Oct. 1 & Dec. 3, 2025 and on Jan. 7, Feb. 4, Mar. 4 & Apr. 1, 2026. Upcoming meetings are May 6, June 3 and July 1, 2026.

Committee members are Ian Harrison, Mary Jolynn Harrison, Michael Henderson, Katie Logan (Secretary), Shannon MacLean, and Max Martin.

A webinar was presented on March 25 by Ian Harrison called “Invisible Illnesses Awareness, My Journey with Crohn’s”.

Another possible webinar is “How to be more Equitable in our Faith Communities”. Further discussions on other webinars are to come with hopes to coordinate with neighbouring regions.

The Affirm Committee is continuing its equity support work and continues to be a supportive and constructive presence at regional meetings and when opportunities arise.

The Affirm Facebook page attempts to keep up to date with relevant events and resources for BNS Affirming people/communities. The committee makes an effort to share any affirm-related events happening in affirming churches in the region.

Submitted by Donnie Morrison, former Chair, and Anne Cameron, Chair Division of Regional Services and Support

Reports from Committees Follow:

FAITH FORMATION AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Report for Faith Formation and Leadership Development Committee for inclusion in Division Report for the BNS Annual Meeting

This past year the committee, following the previous AGM, has been blessed with the introduction of 4 new members: Samuel Graham, Michelle Green, Thea Koenig Burton, and Darlene Brewer; it is great to have this infusion of new blood to invigorate the committee’s activities.

As of the AGM this year long time member Susan Reid will be resigning from the committee and Michael Thompson will be resigning from his role of Chair. The committee has not yet confirmed the replacements for the Chair and Secretary but will do so prior to the AGM. Finally long-time chair of the Division of Regional Services & Support, Donnie Morrison, has moved on to his role as President Elect for the Region and been replaced by Anne Cameron as the new chair of the Division of Regional Services & Support. We wish Donnie the best in his new role, he will be missed by the committee and we welcome Anne and look forward to her input and support in the future.

This past fall the Committee sponsored a successful webinar series where the Atlantic participants in the past Moderator’s (Re)generate program presented on their experiences and their keystone projects. The presenters for this series were Rev. Penny Nelson, Rev. Rick

Gunn, Rev. Katie Aven, and Rev. Michelle Johnson-Armstrong. This two-webinar series was well received and attended.

This Spring we sponsored a webinar on the statistical analysis of church neighbourhoods that are available through Rev. Sharon Ballantyne, the Growth Animator for Atlantic Canada, who along with Sharon Buttrey the Geographic Information Systems Strategist for the United Church General Council led this presentation. This webinar was well attended and received.

Blessings

Michael A. Thompson (He/Him)

Chair of the Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council Faith Formation and Leadership Development Committee – <https://ucceast.ca/regional-council-15/region-15-faith-formation-and-leadership-development>

JUSTICE, MISSION AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE

April, 2026

Justice, Mission, and Outreach Committee Annual Report for 2025-2026

Part 1 JMOC Activities

JMOC continues to operate as a bi-regional committee consisting of the chair or representative from each working group, members at large who may or may not also belong to a working group, and a co-chair from each region. The current active working groups are Just Peace, Guaranteed Liveable Income, and Eco-Justice. The Mental Health working group is being re-developed. Refugees and Newcomers is an inactive group, in need of regional leadership. Indigenous Rights and Relations does not have a current working group, but JMOC as a whole has committed to doing this work as we are able. JMOC met five times over the year, including an in-person meeting at the combined 2025 annual meeting in Sackville.

JMOC met at Tatamagouche Centre October 23-24, 2025 for the annual Fall Gathering. The theme for the meeting was Clusters: Deep, Bold, Daring? Our guests for the meeting were Robyn Brown-Hewitt and Jordan MacDonald.

Robyn Brown-Hewitt was our guest speaker for our theme conversation on clusters. Robyn's position in BNS was created to support the establishment of the clusters that had been envisioned during restructuring. She described the main needs filled by clusters and what elements she identified as important for the success of a cluster. JMOC hopes to use clusters to connect the work of JMOC with communities of faith. It appeared that few clusters in BNS were ready to invite JMOC or any other outside speakers. There was a JMOC-themed PEI Cluster gathering planned for the next week. JMOC agreed that clusters are important for the health of communities of faith and the need for staff support for clusters would be communicated to the regional executives.

Jordan MacDonald participated in the Pilgrimage of Learning Initiative of the United Church of

Canada (<https://united-church.ca/news/pilgrimage-learning-initiative-launches-global-engagement-2025>). Jordan was invited to share a presentation on his team’s visit to UCC partners in Kenya. His reflections included how we relate to international partners as equals, youth engagement and empowerment, and global perspectives on climate change and adaptation.

At the Fall Gathering, JMOC also asked “How can JMOC support the strong youth network in their justice work?” Catherine Stuart met with JMOC in February to discuss this, as well as to help JMOC with the task of addressing the loss of the Dalhousie campus ministry. There was strong endorsement from JMOC for the wider church embracing Youth and Young Adult Ministry as a priority, framing the need to address the lack of campus ministry in the context of “Towards 2035.” There was agreement that the issue of campus ministry should be under Youth and Young Adult Ministry. JMOC will bring forward a proposal for each region asking that

Youth and Young Adult Ministry be assigned a high priority in our regions, including creating a task group to explore options for animating this priority, and (for BNS) that JMOC not be given responsibility for handling concerns related to loss of the Dal Chaplaincy.

Part 2 Working Group Activities

Guaranteed Livable Income, Eco-Justice, and Just Peace in Israel and Palestine have regular 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

The 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.

Eco-Justice

Eco-Justice continues to live into its goals to educate and advocate. It continues collaboration with other climate and environmental justice groups and has undertaken identifying a Green Enthusiast from each community of faith. See Appendix A for a report from the working group.

Just Peace in Israel and Palestine

The Just Peace working group continues to shine light on the tragedy unfolding in Gaza and the occupied territories. Facilitators are providing the Palestine Land exercise to communities of faith. Members of the working group continue their advocacy activities. Their Proposal: “Pledging to Become an Apartheid-Free Community” will be presented at the annual meeting. See Appendix B for a report from the working group.

Mental Health

JMOC agreed to pause the Mental Health Working Group until the group’s mandate has been established. During the pause there will be no workshops or meetings. JMOC is in the early stages of redeveloping this working group.

Indigenous Rights and Relations

JMOC has not yet re-established this working group, but a small group of JMOC members are responding to the request from BNS region for a webinar on Land Acknowledgements. JMOC was very sorry to learn that Tatamagouche Centre is closing its doors and will continue to monitor the progress towards repatriation of the property.

I would like to recognize and thank retiring FSLDW JMOC members Barbara Cairns and Keith MacPherson and BNS co-chair Sandra Tomsons for their many years of passionate service to social justice and the work of JMOC. I would also like to thank our regional minister for JMOC, Rev. Shepherd Munikwa, for his support and guidance.

Respectfully submitted:

Kathy Bigsby

Co-chair of JMOC, Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Eco-Justice Working Group

In the face of climate change, come paddle with us



Our group is made up of 7 members and 1 regional representative. We have had 2 members step down for personal reasons. We will be actively searching for and recruiting new members during the two AGMs in May and June. Our members are in NS, NB, PEI and Nfld.

We met on Zoom almost every month and had interesting conversations while working towards our objectives. We use UCC foundational policies and documents to guide our direction, particularly “One Earth Community” and its application, as in “Energy in the One Earth Community.”

Summary of this year’s activities:

- assisted Faithful Footprints Program coordinator in spreading the word about their Road Show and inviting other churches to come learn more
- continued to add to our list of Green Enthusiasts from congregations in Nova Scotia, PEI and

New Brunswick; in March, eleven new Green Enthusiasts signed up; we can do more together!

- created a working document in Nov. stating our group's Goals, Objectives and Activities; created our Group's full "Terms of Reference" in April
- continued improving content on the Ecological Justice page of the UCC East website
- continued posting climate information in weekly UCC East E-newsletter
- continued working on a series of 'Minutes for Creation' for churches to use in their announcements
- connected and worked with ecological organizations: Clean Nova Scotia, Faithful Footprints, Seniors for Climate Action Now, Green Nova Scotia First, Sustainable Northern Nova Scotia, Cape Breton Climate Change Task Force, KAIROS, CRED-NB, Ecology Action Centre, East Coast

Environmental Law, MiningWatch Canada and UCC members from organizations in other UCC Regions with related issues.

- read, discussed and forwarded Information on radioactive facilities planned within Ottawa River watershed and the St. Lawrence River, potentially affecting the Gaspé
- signed the petition against Bill 5 in Ontario, which is to remove protections such as Indigenous, species at risk, and environmental rights from zones slated for resource extraction, particularly to permit mining
- signed on to a letter about "Building Canada with Renewable Electricity"
- signed in August the Open Letter by faith organizations in support of El Salvador's Ban on Metals Mining
- signed on to letter to Prime Minister and Ministers re: Civil Society Groups Support Renewable Energy and Oppose Federal Investment in New Nuclear Reactors
- signed on to letter from faith leaders urging Canada's banks NOT to finance new LNG pipelines on Indigenous territories
- signed on to a letter about "Building Canada with Renewable Electricity"
- as an organization, signed a Petition on 2SLGBTQIA+ rights in Canada in July
- in July, signed a Petition to the federal government on the management of nuclear waste, multi-billion-dollar contracts and against involvement of U.S. firms with connections to U.S. nuclear weapons

Some members participate in webinars or events and report to our Group:

- Canadian Food Grains Bank Webinar on June 19 World Refugee Day to learn more about ending global hunger
- KAIROS Book Study on "Serviceberry, Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World" (2024) by Robin Wall Kimmerer
- "In Peace and Friendship" webinar about the repatriation of the Tatamagouche property, led by Women of First Light.
- Parade for Life on Earth in Halifax, June 7
- NB Social Forum 2025 in Fredericton in Oct to inform and reflect on ways to strengthen social movements
- "Shoulder to Shoulder: We Are All Treaty People" event in Halifax in Nov.; a very worthwhile experience continuing in rallies together on important issues
- Seniors for Climate Action Now event "Later is too late!" at St. Andrews Church in Halifax in September, with an information table; one member was a speaker on "Climate Solutions –

Don't be Misled"

- Peoples Parade for Life on Earth in Halifax in April

Our Group's participated in public awareness through CBC programs on the proposed Strange Lake Rare Earth Elements Mine which would impact areas of Quebec and Labrador:

- 2 members provided information to CBC in Labrador on potential impacts of this mine and were interviewed on CBC Morning Labrador

- 1 member provided information on the Impact Assessment process of the IAAC for the proposed Strange Lake Rare Earth Elements Mine to CBC researcher for the Fifth Estate program on that project.

We are monitoring draft policy proposals and government studies at federal and Atlantic provincial levels for other opportunities for our Ecological Justice Working Group to have input. Our goal is to support improvements in:

- phasing out power sources that are GHG emitters or radioactive waste producers
- energy efficiency and appropriate modern renewable energy and storage (including church buildings - Faithful Footprints program)
- the equitable distribution of electricity with a priority for the poor
- plans and decisions concerning energy and climate-related policies
- environmental protection policies for land, freshwater and marine environments
- impact assessments and regulations of projects for greater social and environmental protection – including related to nuclear power, resource extraction, and mega projects
- consultation with the Indigenous peoples of Canada (UNDRIP)
- treatment of people negatively affected by projects and changes in policies for a just transition
- environmental justice and addressing the harm caused by environmental racism
- countering climate misinformation, greenwashing, and other deceptions
- regulation and accountability of mining for uranium, thorium, rare earth metals and other metals
- controls of nuclear energy projects because of the legacy chain of toxic radioactive wastes from uranium mining, milling, fuel fabrication, nuclear reactors, and used nuclear fuel storage.

We watch for proposed legislation, project impact assessments and other opportunities for advocacy, comments or submissions on ecological justice issues including:

resource extraction projects

development projects affecting protected spaces

power-related projects: social and environmental problems of large scale, potential of small-scale

hydroelectric

wind energy - onshore and offshore, focus on safety issues

solar energy - individual, community, decentralized

grid systems - bi-directional, web format to accommodate small energy producers.

energy storage - batteries; innovation in storage systems

hydrogen industrial projects - inefficient with limited application

nuclear power/waste - costs and risks: economic, health, environmental, social and future generations

oil production, natural gas fracking and new fossil fuel power plants

Our focus is on issues related to UCC Regions East and, if our group has the expertise, we try to help other UCC Regions.

Some Documents by our Group during this annual report period:

March/April 2025

Letter to the NS Premier on the dangers of Fracking including the UCC Maritime Conference statement (2012).

Written submission and in-person presentation to the Nova Scotia Legislation Public Bills Committee to remove articles in Bill 6 on restarting Fracking and remove articles in Bill 6 on eliminating the ban on uranium mining.

Letter of Concern on the Churchill Falls and Gull Island Proposed Projects to NL Premier, pointing out the significant adverse impacts on people and ecosystems, the legacy of debt and the lessons that should have been learned from the grave errors of the Muskrat Falls dam.

May

Joint Submission to IAAC by UCC East-West Regions on proposed Peace River Nuclear Power project AB, raising ethical, social and environmental issues associated with this project.

August

Submission to Employment and Social Development Canada raising concerns that the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and ESDC proposed changes did not address effective protection but in fact would worsen the systematic exploitation faced by temporary foreign workers.

Submission to IAAC on unacceptability of proposed gas power generation facility at Centre Village NB

Submission to Canadian Standards Association on inadequacies in CSA N292.8
“Characterization
of radioactive waste and irradiated fuel.”

September

Submission to the Public Bills Committee, NS legislature, regarding Bill 137 “Making Business Easier Act” which emphasizes the need for amendments to ensure economic development is tied to responsible resource development projects that bring economic prosperity to NS without threatening the environment and quality of life.

October

Submission to the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission on the proposed Wheeler River Mine and Mill, SK, the first proposed in-situ leaching uranium mine in Canada, on the failure of the proponent to address groundwater, watershed, environmental, health, and social impacts

known from other countries .

Provided the material for the SK-based retired UCC minister, Rev. Vicki Obedkoff to report to the Wheeler River Project Panel Hearing in person on the documented harmful impacts of in-situ uranium mining in the US.

January 2026

Brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Natural Resources on the ethical, financial, and record of failure of the Management of Canadian Nuclear Laboratories by U.S. companies with ties to military nuclear applications.

February

Submission to IAAC on the Proposed Deep Geological Repository for Canada's Used Nuclear Fuel critiquing the project description including bringing forward the relevant conclusions of UCC multi-year work on this issue through the Seaborn Panel and the 3 years of UCC inputs to the NWMO process of Choosing A Way Forward.

Comments of concerns to the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission on the Environmental Effects Review related to the application by Canadian Nuclear Laboratories to proceed with decommissioning of the Gentilly-1 Waste Facility

Submission to IAAC on the proposed Wesleyville Nuclear Project in Port Hope ON calling into question the ethics, indicating the weakness of information and the serious risks of having up to 10 large nuclear power plants on this one site.

Submitted by Sheila Van Schaick, and the Eco-Justice Group
For the period from March 2025 to April 2026

Appendix B

Just Peace Working Group Annual Report to JMOC and Regional Councils

Brief summary of the situation during this past year:

Last year in Gaza at this time there was constant bombing by Israel's military as well as IDF ground invasions resulting in deaths of many tens of thousands of Palestinians, including tens of thousands of children, and hundreds of thousands injured. There was total destruction of every type of building and infrastructure and large areas of former cities and towns were left as rubble. Gaza itself was clearly becoming uninhabitable. Very little food, medicine or humanitarian aid was allowed into Gaza. Young children and elderly Palestinians were dying of hunger and diseases and a famine was officially declared. And while the world's attention was on Gaza, violence, death and destruction by both Israel's military and Israeli settlers against Palestinians increased significantly in the West Bank.

During the summer and early fall the United Church General Council 45 met in Calgary and held its final meetings online. A revised version of the Justice Principles to be used as the basis for all justice work of the United Church were approved as well as all proposals relevant to Palestine/Israel that had not previously been voted on. The UCC formally endorsed the

Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism and not the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism. Antisemitism is discrimination, prejudice, hostility or violence against Jews as Jews (or Jewish institutions as Jewish). The UCC is using educational resources to increase the understanding of United Church people of the background of Israel's military occupation of Palestinians and called for urgent action on the ongoing genocide and humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza.

After two years of intensive investigation, September 16, 2025, the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory reported that Israel met the definition of the crime of genocide and urged Israel and all States to fulfill their legal obligations under international law to end the genocide and punish those responsible for it.

In mid-October, a ceasefire was declared between Israel and Hamas. Israel did not abide by the ceasefire agreement and continued the genocide in Gaza. Since that ceasefire, as of mid-April 2026, over 700 Palestinians have been killed by Israel in Gaza.

Trump created a Board of Peace which many countries signed onto with a plan to build many expensive high-rise buildings along the waterfront and to move Palestinians who remain in Gaza into small, well-guarded and monitored enclaves.

Late November, Palestinian church leaders and other UCC partners wrote Kairos II: Faith in a time of genocide and their Christmas appeal to Christians, churches, and people of conscience everywhere. Here is some of what they wrote: They are on the verge of total annihilation of Christians in the land of Jesus where our Christian faith began. They are being destroyed by a destructive system and the world's silence. It is an urgent call that demands costly solidarity until there is justice and equality. Faith demands truth-telling about what international law and human rights organizations have confirmed: genocide, settler colonialism, apartheid and illegal occupation. Courageous action is needed for churches and governments to hold Israel accountable under international law. Theologies that justify oppression must be rejected. Use Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions and other nonviolent actions.

When Israel and the U.S. began a bombing war against Iran in February, Israel closed all exits and entrances to Gaza which meant no food or other aid could enter and there is the renewed possibility of famine.

Actions of the Just Peace Working Group since last year's annual report:

Speaking: Returned Ecumenical Accompaniers Bill Chambre and Steve Berube continue to speak to churches and community groups educating them on the background of relations between Israel and Palestinians and what has been and is happening 'on the ground' there now. Steve also led a group of church people on a visit to church partners in the West Bank and Jerusalem through Canadian Friends of Sabeel. Linda Scherzinger spoke on a panel at New Horizons Baptist Church in Halifax.

The Palestine Land Exercise: We have teams that continue to lead the Palestine Land Exercise (PLE) with churches and community groups throughout Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and PEI. As

a result of our having done a training of teams in Toronto in 2024, many Palestine Land Exercises are being led by new teams throughout Canada. In March our Halifax team introduced the PLE to an online meeting of Friends of Sabeel North America and, as a result, there may be teams beginning to lead the PLE in the U.S.

Supporting Palestinian farmers: We continue to support Palestinian farmers and their families and communities by promoting and selling Zatoun Fair Trade Palestinian olive oil – and also

Palestinian dates.

Fund Raising and solidarity with local neighbours from Gaza: We have responded to local neighbours whose families are in desperate need in Gaza by organizing a series of fundraisers with churches and donating funds raised to his family and their neighbours in Gaza. We also sold handiwork of, stood in solidarity with, and wrote letters on behalf of another neighbour who has applied to bring her family to Canada through the family reunification program. Unfortunately, she has still not been able to reunite with and bring her family from Gaza to Canada.

Advocating: We have been writing letters and signing petitions for Canada to take various action such as: establish a complete arms embargo to/from Israel including ending the U.S. loophole allowing arms/weapon parts to go to the U.S. and then they go to Israel; speaking up for a ceasefire and release of all captives/prisoners before those happened; to speak up against a new settlement being built near Beit Sahour in the Bethlehem area; speak up to release the doctor who was kidnapped from Gaza and mistreated (still not released); to use the names of the international crimes Israel is guilty of – genocide, apartheid, illegal occupation, settler colonialism; to exercise Canada’s legal and moral duty to use all its abilities to urge Israel to comply with international law; to ban trade with companies in the settlements; to disallow Israel’s players in the Davis Cup and FIFA; and to take a position against the death penalty law that was just passed by Israel that effects Palestinians and not Israelis. (Unfortunately, the Canadian government did not respond positively to almost all of our requests.)

Promoting and participating in the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) movement

Promoting: the growing Apartheid-Free Communities movement

Organizing and participating in a book club on: “The Cross and the Olive Tree”

Proposing that the Bermuda Nova Scotia Region and the Fundy St Lawrence Dawning Waters Region Sign the Pledge to become Apartheid-Free Communities (to be voted on at the 2026 Annual Meetings)

Stewardship Report

1. Continue to use Weekly Wednesday Region Newsletter to put Stewardship News in, at least, monthly.
2. Received 23 email responses to the Region Stewardship Committee request sent out by the Sackville Office to the local Regional Representatives.
3. Electronic Easter cards sent to Community of Faith (COF) that responded to general email from Sackville Office.
4. One COF Stewardship Committee is gathering recipes to do a cookbook, using some of my well loved recipes to their project.
5. Visitation planned to Cape Breton to talk with COF Stewardship Committee in May.
6. Attending AST Convocation 2026 to receive my Certificate in Stewardship.
7. Display space requested at Regional Council Annual Meeting, poster presentation on Stewardship.
8. Small posters on Stewardship to be available for each delegate table.

9. Many thanks to Margaret Dobson, our one committee member, for her great support.

Respectfully submitted,
Chair, Wanalda Parsons

Children, Youth and Young Adult Committee (CYAYA) Report – 2025-2026

Committee Members: Chair Paige Fraser, Secretary, James O’Connell, Alicia Cox, , Ema MacLeod, Elliot Chambers, and Regional Minister for Children, Youth and Young Adults Rev. Catherine Stuart (staff support).

In 2025, the Children, Youth and Young Adults Committee (CYAYA) has continued to support and advocate for ministry with children, youth, and young adults across the region. Our work remains grounded in the region’s strategic priorities, with a growing emphasis on leadership development, accessibility, and strengthening connections between communities of faith.

A significant focus this year has been the ongoing development and support of the Youth @ Region (Y@R) program. While registration and leadership engagement remain strong, financial accessibility has emerged as a challenge. The committee has engaged in meaningful conversations with regional partners around funding structures, sponsorship models, and policy limitations, while continuing to support the planning team and explore sustainable ways to ensure broad participation for youth across the region.

Looking ahead to summer 2026, CYAYA is actively supporting participation in the national Collective gathering. The committee has allocated funds to help subsidize youth participation and is working alongside regional partners to coordinate transportation, including a bus pilgrimage. This initiative continues our commitment to ensuring that youth and young adults in our region can access national United Church events, fostering connection, leadership development, and a sense of belonging within the wider church.

Leadership development has also been a key priority through our exploration of a Regional Youth Advisory Council (YAC). Building on learnings from other regions, CYAYA has begun discerning a model that would empower youth to participate meaningfully in governance and decision-making. This work includes ongoing conversations, research, and planning for a potential pilot.

The committee has also been engaged in broader conversations about “First Third” ministry and the place of children, youth, and young adults within the life of the church. This includes contributing to emerging proposals and identifying opportunities to strengthen advocacy and visibility for this demographic at the regional level. CYAYA continues to support camping ministry through Outdoor Recreational Ministry (ORM), including United Church camps Sherbrooke Lake Camp, Berwick Camp and Camp Kidston, which we have also supported financially. We celebrate the ongoing

leadership, collaboration, and program development within these ministries, recognizing the vital role camps play in faith formation across all age groups.

In addition, the committee is attentive to emerging needs, including the possibility of offering training opportunities such as a neurodiversity workshop to better equip leaders working with young people in faith communities.

Other areas of engagement this year include initial conversations around chaplaincy and campus ministry in partnership with other regional committees, as well as recognizing the growing importance of digital communication. CYAYA is exploring opportunities to support churches in strengthening their social media presence as a tool for outreach and connection.

As we look ahead, CYAYA remains committed to fostering vibrant, inclusive, and accessible ministry with children, youth, and young adults. We are grateful for the dedication of leaders, volunteers, and communities of faith across the region who continue to nurture spaces where young people can grow in faith, leadership, and belonging.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the committee,
Paige Fraser (Chair)

Annual Meeting Planning Committee 2025

Every year the Annual Meeting Planning Committee ramps up in the fall to begin deliberations on what our Annual Meeting will look like the following year. We were happy to plan each year for an awesome experience for our members. Our meeting place for 2025 was at the Mount Allison University in Sackville, NB. As we were in the year of the 100th Anniversary of the United Church of Canada we choose to celebrate with Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters (FSLDW). It was great to spend time with old friends.

This would be our third-year meeting in person since COVID. We strive to have this meeting in various locations in our Region to attempt to facilitate equitable travelling arrangements for the members of our Regional Council. Because of the coming together of the two regions, we felt it appropriate to celebrate in the location where we historically have used. Somewhat central to both regions.

The whole weekend was reminiscent of when we were all as Maritime Conference. Familiar spaces, dining hall, meeting areas etc.

The program was focused on Janet Gear's book *Undivided Love*. Throughout the weekend we heard from different people what brings them to the faithful community to which we belong. Hearing those stories was extremely thought provoking and gave us an understanding of where people come from and what drives them in their faith journey. It helps us to have greater respect for the passions that drive each of us to this important work within our faith communities and region. The best piece of this was our fortune in hearing from our very own participants on their journeys. It made the message more profound.

Aside from the message that Janet helped to portray to us the time we were able to share with our friends in FSLDW, enjoy meals and opportunities for sharing stories and of course replenishing our spiritual reading material with browsing and the ever-present Bookstore pop-up. We did not have workshops available for participants. This was a focus on the Anniversary of the United Church and living into the message and teachings delivered through our Theme speaker. This was an opportunity to be together to experience spirit lifting and this opportunity to learn together gave us that sense of belonging to something larger than ourselves.

As the Annual Meeting Planning Committee, we strive to bring you a thought provoking, spiritual filled time of sharing and learning each year as to strive to improve upon the last. As with our new format of holding the business online prior to the coming together allows us to do that.

We continue to work on making our Annual Meeting enjoyable, faith filled, informative and transforming.

Respectfully Submitted
Jane McDonald
Chair Annual Meeting Planning Committee.