

## **JUSTICE, MISSION, AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE**

### **Part 1 JMOC Activities**

Justice, Mission and Outreach Committee (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.

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

- I. Brief summary of the situation during this past year
  1. 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.
  2. 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.
  3. 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.
  4. 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.
  5. 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.
  6. 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.

7. 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.

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

1. **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.
2. **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.
3. **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.
4. **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.
5. **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.)
6. **Promoting and participating** in the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) movement
7. **Promoting:** the growing Apartheid-Free Communities movement
8. **Organizing and participating** in a book club on: "The Cross and the Olive Tree"

9. **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)