

# **SOCIAL JUSTICE NETWORK OF THE ONTARIO REGIONAL COUNCILS**

## **The United Church of Canada**

### **MEETING OF 25-26 NOVEMBER 2019**

In attendance: Charles Barrett (Eastern Ontario Outaouais Region), Tina Conlon (Shining Waters Region), Jane Dawson (Eastern Ontario Outaouais Region), Susan Eagle (ISARC and Shining Waters Region), Ernie Epp (Canadian Shield Region), Marilyn Fortin (East Central Ontario Region), Sharon Hull (East Central Ontario Region), Ren ito (Shining Waters Region), Will Kunder (Canadian Shield Region), David Moore (East Central Ontario Region), Joan Tuchlinsky (Antler River Watershed Region, Horseshoe Falls Region, and Western Ontario Waterways Region), and Carey Wagner (Antler River Watershed Region)

and General Council Staff from the Church in Mission unit: Beth Baskin (Discipleship and Witness Ministries, Social Analysis and Congregational Support), Lori Neale (People in Partnership, Program Coordinator), Christie Neufeldt (Discipleship and Witness Ministries, Public Witness, Take a Stand Advocacy Campaign), Jennifer Reed (Discipleship and Witness Ministries, Program Assistant/Communications Support), and Sara Stratton (Reconciliation and Indigenous Justice Animator)

Serving as Chair, **Charles called the meeting to order** in the Red Room of Church House shortly after 1:00 pm **on 25 November 2019** and introduced himself. Carey opened the meeting with prayer. Will checked on hotel arrangements for the following night. Charles noted that Ernie had prepared a record of the meeting of 18-19 June 2019 and he had circulated it to those in attendance. Tina pointed out that her surname had been misspelled on page 8; it is Conlon.

Charles then reviewed the agenda he had circulated prior to the meeting and asked for additions. Ernie suggested a discussion about motivating "people in the pews" into social justice activities, and Susan circulated copies of a *Toronto Star* column by Linda McQuaig on the ongoing efforts to privatize health care in Canada.

Those in attendance introduced themselves.

#### **General Council Activities**

**Beth** expressed her pleasure at being able to attend and described the activities of some General Council staff. She noted that Sara Stratton and Christie Neufeldt would attend later. She would need to leave briefly to participate in a teleconference at 2:00 pm.

Beth noted that Jordan Sullivan had attended the June meeting, and she was pleased to report that he had worked hard to achieve organization the previous day of Queering Christian Voices, a Canadian Ecumenical Coalition among people from quite an array of churches.

**Sara** described work in support of a movement toward an Indigenous Church. After General Council 43, a National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering took place in Rama, and a National Elders Council and a National Indigenous Council are being developed in association with The United Church of Canada. They are working on a mapping exercise of Indigenous communities, adapted from "Mapping: A New Way Forward" developed by the Anglican Primate's Fund. A first draft is expected early in the new year.

Sara also stated that Sunday School material should be ready by February to assist in teaching our young people about Reconciliation issues. She referred to the proposal of a Have a Care Day. She distributed copies of the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People. She provided links to a Minute for Mission video on the National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering, which would be very useful for young people. Jane pointed to a resource regarding the Calls to Action available on a really good blog from the Ottawa area. Sara noted a conversation with Matthew Stevens, ministry personnel, who challenges communities of faith in "Learning to Dance Together toward Reconciliation."

**Christie** described staff support for the UN Climate Negotiations, which will find another climax in the Conference of the Parties (COP25) in Madrid in early December (since Chile was forced to withdraw its invitation because of civic unrest). The support will include Tony Snow from the National Indigenous Church and the Rev. Wendy Evans from The United Church of Canada, and Christie herself as staff support during the second week working with the World Council of Churches and Climate Action Canada as partners. The hope is to lift up Indigenous voices. (Check the "COP25 Delegation Announcement," issued on 26 November 2019.)

Christie expressed concern that the shift to Madrid made this the third conference held in Europe, and the fourth is to take place there, too. Indigenous voices from Latin America, for example, are likely to be missing from the discussions in civil society. She suggested, however, that action was expected from Canada. Sara observed that Tony Snow will be bringing Indigenous knowledge and experience to the discussions.

Susan enquired about participation by other Canadian churches, and Christie stated that only The United Church of Canada has accreditation at COP25. KAIROS and Citizens for Public Justice have been involved at previous gatherings. The Canadian Catholic organization, Development and Peace, is part of Caritas International. Charles pointed out that this was in the context of Canadian civil society organizations.

Christie also reported on efforts to achieve a human rights ombudsperson regarding the activities of Canadian extractive industries in other countries. The efforts led by the Canadian Network for Corporate Accountability had not succeeded. They had learned recently that the Trudeau government's appointment of a Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise with limited powers was the result of very strong industry push-back at a time when SNC-Lavalin was much in the news. Levels of fatigue have set in after ten years of work, with people asking whether justice could be obtained at the highest levels of government. Ernie asked

whether the election of a minority government might help, and Christie recognized that there were some hopes. Tina referred to lithium mining in Bolivia, the coup that has occurred and the impact on Indigenous people.

**Sara**, who had attended the 20th annual international conference of MiningWatch Canada with Russell Burns, noted the nods to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of indigenous People that were being made.

**Jennifer** reported on pushing the Climate Strike scheduled to take place on the following Friday, with The United Church of Canada playing a part in it. She wondered about regional activities and pointed to the Justice Initiative of the Open Society organization in Kitchener as providing a good resource. *Broadview* had sought information about the September strike, and *Mandate* will be reporting on them.

Jane recognized the visibility that climate strikes have and noted a variety of initiatives such as a "wild church" in the Ottawa valley. Jennifer stated her desire to connect as much as possible. To Susan's query about churches, Jennifer stated that she had sent out information but didn't know whether people were getting it. Jane suggested that the newsletters of the new Regions offered a means for sending information out. Will and Ernie both spoke of great events in September, but there was less certainty about the coming Friday.

Jennifer noted that the next *United Action for Justice* newsletter would focus on Climate Change.

**Beth** pointed to two other things, the newsletter part of the website of The United Church of Canada and the Church in Mission unit itself with its six clusters. The Church in Mission newsletter was a good resource, although Jane expressed concern that things can get lost in a newsletter attached to an email message. Ren conceded that it took some sorting

Beth added another couple of things, the first being the activity of the White Privilege Working Group--she conceded that the title was problematic--with a mandate of working on anti-racism. Among those involved, she mentioned Paul Douglas Walfall, Larry Doyle, and Ha Na Park. There are two reference groups, one focused on Indigenous concerns and the other, on Racialized people. Ren is involved, too.

Beth's second item was the establishment of an anti-racism working group by General Council Executive. She recognized that change requires local action and noted the establishment of Equity Monitors in a number of areas. Could there be local champions? Ernie mentioned the book by an American anti-racism counsellor, *White Fragility*, as showing how difficult it is to bring people to concede their racist attitudes (and he might have thanked Will for drawing this book to his attention at a previous meeting of the Network).

Beth also mentioned the Palestine-Israel discussions and expressed the hope of having something by January. This would probably relate to the "No Way to Treat a Child" campaign

challenging the way the State of Israel prosecutes Palestinian children in military courts. Also relating to Palestine was the Youth for Peace pilgrimage this past summer. The young adults continue to meet regularly. They plan advocacy efforts in the third week of January and provide mentoring for meetings with Members of Parliament. Lori suggested that local meetings with MPs would occur in the first week of February. There will be Webinars before that week.

The United Network for Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel could animate the activity being discussed. (UNJPPI had its September meeting in Ottawa.) Among the organizations speaking strongly on the treatment of Palestinians are Independent Jewish Voices, the Mennonite Central Committee, and The United Church of Canada. They face the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, with its staff of eighty people, which reacted bitterly to Canada's voting at the United Nations against the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

Ernie mentioned a recent presentation to the Canadian International Council branch at Lakehead University by Professor Jennifer Tunnicliffe of Western University, on Canada's hesitancy in years past as the United Nations developed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The UBC Press has published her book, *Rights Resisted*. He wondered whether there was any bibliography for those concerned about the Middle East, citing a recent purchase, *Anonymous Soldiers*, which describes the Jewish terrorism and ethnic cleansing that was part of creation of the State of Israel.

Beth asked whether anyone had used the election material prepared by the Church in Mission unit. Some people said they had. Jane asked about speaking on political matters without being partisan. Beth noted that these challenges are faced by our Church's Treasurer Eric Mathiesen, Christie herself, and Michael Blair, who get questions from communities of faith. Beth noted that the rules on political advocacy have changed, with 10% being allowed for advocacy work.

Susan mentioned the work of the KAIROS network in Barrie and the denial by the People's Party of Canada of the reality of Climate Change which threatened to make discussion of it more difficult. Beth responded that an initial briefing by Elections Canada had raised the possibility that environmental organizations advocating for action on Climate Change might have to register as third-party advertisers, but Elections Canada backed off from this position and developed a more nuanced approach in August.

Lori mentioned a listing with the Speaker's List of People in Partnership as offering great ways to connect on various issues. There are also mission trips in which people can join within our Church's external partnerships.

Beth described the organization of the Church in Mission unit headed by Michael Blair as Executive Minister. Included are Discipleship and Witness Ministries, Refugee Sponsorship, Faith Formation and Mission, People in Partnership, Church in Partnership, EDGE, and Ministries in French. (Beth provided Ernie with an organization chart--which he was only able to print in part.)

Charles asked about the involvement of The United Church of Canada with health policy. Beth responded that the church was still affiliated with the Canadian Health Coalition, in which Linda McLaren in Edmonton is a leading force. Achieving meetings of the Board is a great challenge. The staff try to amplify the work of the Coalition. A Mental Health Working Group has been established, too. To Susan's query, "Is the Ontario Health Coalition still active?" Beth responded in the affirmative.

After taking a break, the Network heard from Susan about the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition (ISARC).

## **ISARC**

Susan sketched the history of ISARC, dating back to 1986 when an advisory committee was struck by the then Liberal Government. As a coalition primarily of Christian and Jewish faith leaders, ISARC remains active in policy analysis, advocacy and education. Members meet with policy makers and hold forums. Periodically, ISARC pulls together the stories of people on social assistance and asks such questions as: Are the claims the government is making true? Do the fruits of the policies reach you? ISARC is in the story-telling and collecting mode again in six different areas. Many organizers are tired, however, and agencies have lost staff. But some of the stories would be presented at the Religious Leaders Forum on the following Wednesday.

Susan distributed the ISARC brochure and observed that MPPs knew ISARC better than did the coalition's own members. A current issue is the restraining of wages in the not-for-profit sector. Among the cuts the Ford Government has instituted, the one to legal aid clinics is keenly felt. The Income Security Advocacy Centre has been badly impacted and has had to lay-off staff. ISARC itself has only one staff person working ten hours per week.

Jane asked about the involvement of organizations, and with money and not people. She thought ISARC was Toronto-centric, and Susan responded that they tried not to be such. Charles supported Jane's observation, adding that they had tried to get stories from people and found push-back in terms of protecting the dignity of people telling their stories. Susan responded that ISARC uses the UN Rapporteur model and provides a place where people can be comfortable in telling their story, to which one listens compassionately. In Orillia, it was done in a safe place, a real story was told but confidentiality was maintained and the story might be linked to another place in the retelling. Jane pointed to the concerns of the social worker about reflecting back and seeing no results from the telling. Ernie mentioned the stories collected in the Basic Income Program termination in Thunder Bay, and Susan expressed an interest in having them.

Jane asked when ISARC would be interested in hearing stories: in the spring? before the next cheque arrives? Tina noted that she knew of one person prepared to tell the story and give the name. She wondered about the Religious Leaders Forum, where participants would be asked to show ID. Susan conceded the fact but offered accompaniment for persons concerned about having to provide their ID. She thought they might have six people ready to tell their stories at

the Forum, which would probably bring 80-100 people together. Tina suggested that the stories might be given to Murray MacAdam whose book is used in college and law school courses: see *From corporate greed to common good: Canadian churches and community economic development* (1998).

Susan observed that people say that public policy would be even worse if ISARC were not at work. Charles queried her about health care privatization a la the column by Linda McQuaig and Susan pointed to links to the Ontario Health Coalition (which remains at work). Ernie pointed to one notable activist in Thunder Bay, Jules Tupker, and suggested that the medical needs of Boomers as they age would affect the politics of health care, as Boomers have affected policy and practice in every "age" they have traversed. Susan noted statements from United Church doctors as well and Ernie pointed to the work of Canadian Doctors for Medicare. Will and Beth referred to specific activists. Ernie asked also about the National Pharmacare issue in the last Federal Election, and Beth responded affirmatively.

### **The Regional Reports**

Tina led off with a written statement from the Social and Ecological Justice Commission of **Shining Waters Region** of its purpose and responsibilities. The Commission was doing a survey, using a questionnaire to ascertain interest in social and ecological justice. Jane enquired about the organization of this commission. Susan stated that it came out of the Regional Council meeting, which nominated the members. The membership is ten at most and is currently only eight, with support staff. It was designed to overcome the isolation that people can feel. Charles asked whether a commission is better than a ministry team, and Ren pointed out that a commission has powers to act as per the Manual and also has a budget. Susan described it as having more legitimacy and access to staff.

Ren pointed out the various activities that staff have pursued. In regard to Affirming Ministries, people had attended the Annual Meeting in August at Hillsboro United Church in Calgary. They had supported the Climate Strike in September in a number of places. The same would happen later that week. A street preacher had been assailing the Gay Village, and a rally of support for the Gay Village had been organized. The Mayor attended the rally. There had been a Living into Right Relations at Rama on October 19th. They were now waiting on the National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering.

Among his projects were responding to anti-Gay activity in the past and a gathering on the next Saturday to build community. He was developing material for Teaching Just Faith that included Sex/Gender issues, Mental Health, Anti-Racism, and Indigenous People. In the racial justice area, he would be offering a course on Justice and Faith Theology. Both Joan and Jane were interested in this course.

Ernie asked about the revised fee structure for Affirm United, and Beth pointed to their need for more resources. Will suggested that the increasing membership was providing a larger income for Affirming Ministry work. Joan and Susan offered their own views. Charles thought

there was a lack of transparency in the process. Will referred to his own opposition the previous year to demanding the new regions undertake the Affirming Ministry process when the predecessor conferences and presbyteries were Affirming Ministries.

Carey described the work of the Mission and Discipleship Commission in **Antler River Watershed Region**. Joan was the resource person for this Commission. The Social Justice Committee of the former London Conference remains at work and is another resource. He promised a report by email, especially about a social justice fair at a church in London. Marg Murray continues her work on Climate Change. The Bread Not Stones activity continues as well. Curtis Marwood had reported on the September conference of UNJPPI. In these various activities, they were speaking TO the Church, NOT For the Church.

Charles expressed interest, including in the continuity from the Conference to the Region. The Social Justice Committee could now become a network, of course reporting to the Commission. Sharon wondered about the other regions with which Joan was involved. Joan responded that each of the other regions had the same commission. Ernie wondered whether the three regions met together in the spring and was told, "yes." Joan expanded on her initial remark by saying that she had been on the job since September 23rd (Diane Matheson is still on leave). Ren provided a vision of what could be done! Refugee requests were coming in and she was connecting people in response. She was supporting the Social Justice Network and getting newsletters out--or rather getting the sequence of newsletters going. She recognized the Affirm United challenge and was contemplating the Social Justice Covenant.

Jane described activity in the **Eastern Ontario Outaouais Region** and circulated a written report. Interest was developing in their Social Justice Network. Other networks, especially in Refugee Sponsorship and in developing a "chapter" of UNJPPI in the region, were active. There is no Right Relations staff but connections are being made. Charles provided some background to the report. There had been a meeting in Perth a year ago of people from four presbyteries, which revealed quite a variety of concerns. Global Partnerships meets monthly and Church in Society is primarily a street ministry, now known as Vision and Transformation. The challenge is to bring people with different interests together. An innovation was the conference on Interfaith Relations in Bell's Corners.

### **Financial and Other Matters**

Will circulated expense claim forms and explained that claims for meals could be made without receipts: breakfast and lunch at \$15 and dinner at \$25. The hotel for those staying at the expense of the Network was the Four Points by Sheraton.

It was decided that the Social Justice Network should meet again on 5-6 May 2020.

Charles observed that the review of the Covenant was going well in the Regions. The Canadian Shield Region had already passed it, and consideration is going well in other places.

The meeting rose until the next morning, with some people gathering for dinner at the hotel.

**The meeting resumed at 9:15 am on November 26** in the Red Room, with Charles in the chair and Tina, Jane, Ernie, Marilyn, Sharon, Will, David, Joan, and Carey present and Susan calling in by telephone.

## **UPDATE FROM KAIROS**

Shannon Neufeldt had joined the gathering to describe the work of KAIROS. She began with an acknowledgement of the Indigenous land on which we were gathered and was given a "round table" of introductions. She then offered a big overview with updates in the various areas (she also sent an email with links to the material she was mentioning):

**Migrant Justice**--there have been positive changes in regard to Immigration, Refugees and Settlement Canada regarding caregivers who now have a smoother path to continuing residence in Canada. KAIROS had campaigned for this change for quite a long time, including a gathering in Barrie in 2017 and conversations with **Elaine ???**. But the changes have been made only for caregivers; why not for agricultural workers, too.

When Shannon asked for the involvements others might have had on this matter, Sharon mentioned a gathering in the spring and a guest speaker at a church which was involved with agricultural workers and Joan said that she would be speaking at a church the following Sunday. The Catholic priest in the area does a service for migrant workers. Shannon noted that a workshop had been written for the churches, which includes Bible studies and theological reflections. KAIROS also offered an 11-minute video on the causes of migration and issues with the Canadian programs.

**Gender Justice**--She distributed information about Women of Courage: Women, Peace, and Security. KAIROS had experienced a budget cut in 2009, and some restoration of funding in 2018 enabled KAIROS to launch the Women, Peace, and Security program within the Government's Feminist International Assistance policy. KAIROS always encourages the Government to reach the level of 0.7% of Gross National Income in spending in these areas (it is only 0.2% now). She observed as well that spending is more effective when women are at the table. KAIROS is no longer funding activity in the Philippines, but five areas remain.

**Corporate Accountability**--Shannon had recently been given an update on the court case involving the Fenix nickel mine in Guatemala. Gathered in an OISE classroom, women from Guatemala spoke in their Indigenous language, which was translated first into Spanish and then into English. They are being grilled by corporate lawyers. Their own lawyer is confident that with documentation becoming public, they were going to win. And Shannon confirmed that this would be a precedent. (The company in court is a subsidiary of Hudbay Minerals, originally the Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Company.) Shannon noted that an information hub was being launched the following evening at Ryerson University with a researcher from St. Vincent University involved in the project. It will be linked to the KAIROS website.



**Indigenous work**--Shannon noted that Bill C-262, Romeo Saganash's private member's bill to bring Canada's laws into conformity with the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, had died in the Senate when Parliament was dissolved before the October Federal Election. One of the Liberal promises in the campaign was to re-introduce the bill as Government legislation. She urged people to talk to their MPs about this promise. Will observed that he had had an appointment booked but that turned out to be the day of the MP's swearing-in in Ottawa.

Shannon also mentioned the ruling of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal on treatment of Indigenous children by the Federal Government. Cindy Blackstock's work as Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada has won \$40,000 for each child impacted by Federal policy, but the Government is seeking a judicial review of this award. The challenge to the Government is to follow through on its rhetoric about respect for Indigenous People.

**Ecological Justice**--Shannon noted that more than 60% of Canadians voted in the October federal election for parties that seek action on Climate Change. This constitutes a strong majority for such action as elimination of subsidies to carbon-emitting activities, training of workers to build the renewable-energy economy, and action to confront environmental racism. We need to involve the churches, she said, and several people responded:

Jane spoke for the Eastern Ontario Outaouais Region about the need to network among communities of faith to join in the protests and to take action. Charles spoke of the Green Space efforts of Ottawa Presbytery in support of the Paris Agreement achieved by COP23. He recognized that there had been limited action by communities of faith.

Joan looked across the three regions of southern Ontario and noted the good turnout in Kitchener-Waterloo for the Climate Strike in September. They came close to electing a Green Party candidate as Member of Parliament. Carey noted the activity of Marg Murray in Oxford County. His own church has installed solar panels to generate renewable energy.

Will noted that Sudbury was celebrating forty years of re-greening under the Re-Think Green program. North Bay had seen strong resistance to the Energy East pipeline proposal. Also in the Canadian Shield Region, Ernie mentioned the excellent Climate Strike action in September in front of MP Patty Hajdu's office. One of the Thunder Bay churches is leading on sustainability work.

Tina noted action by various Toronto churches and expressed concern about geo-engineering ideas being proposed these days, such as seeding the skies to reduce solar radiation.

Shannon noted a collaborative effort by KAIROS Canada among church leaders on Earth Day 2019. Included were the Canadian Council of Churches, Citizens for Public Justice, Faith & the Common Good, and other groups. The church leaders called for action on climate change. Beth

observed that Sara and Christie could bring back details of this effort. Ernie mentioned that Buckminster Fuller's *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth* had been published half-a-century ago. Will wondered when the line, "To live with Respect in Creation," had been added to the New Creed (Sharon found the date, 1994). Ernie mentioned Wesley Granberg-Michaelson's book, *Redeeming the Creation: The Rio Earth Summit Challenge to the Churches*--published in 1992 by the World Council of Churches--which surveyed the way in which the WCC had taken the incomplete success of the Stockholm Earth Summit in 1972 into discussions about sustainable communities (which led to the idea of Sustainable Development). Tina pointed to the impact on Indigenous People of the twenty-three nuclear tests carried out on these islands in the South Pacific between 1948 and 1958, which includes children born without brains.

Shannon concluded by distributing postcards by Kateri Boucher entitled "Gnats" and from KAIROS seeking help in "Aiming to Inspire!" She offered a resource for Epiphany entitled "Listen to the Children." She encouraged people to go to the KAIROS website for more information.

Charles thanked Shannon for a "tour-de-force" during the preceding hour, and the meeting recessed for a few minutes.

### **Restoration of Identity Project**

Brian McIntosh, whom many of the Network know as a former leader, joined the circle to present the Restoration of Identity Project. Brian pointed out that Call to Action 82 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is that "provincial and territorial governments, in collaboration with Survivors and their organizations, and other parties to the Settlement Agreement, . . . commission and install a publicly accessible, highly visible, Residential Schools Monument in each capital city to honour Survivors and all the children who were lost to their families and communities." He handed out copies of the prospectus for a wonderful teaching and learning Healing Garden planned for the southwest corner of Nathan Phillip's Square over the entrance to the underground parking garage. It's a \$12 million project with about \$6 million providing for engineering work. Toronto Council Fire has made the project a focus of action. An inter-faith fundraising group has pledged two million dollars. The first \$100,000 came from Toronto Conference. It is hoped to achieve the fundraising goal by November 2020.

Brian recognized that he had heard Commission Chair Murray Sinclair's concern about limited action on the Calls to Action. The efforts of those involved with Living into Right Relations were designed to ensure that was not the case and, Brian declared, "I am available for consultations." He and a Catholic representative are receiving/providing updates on funding for the project. Jane expressed concern about its being a Toronto project, and Brian encouraged viewing of the website and joining in the discussion. Ernie wondered about the Residential Schools which operated for years in Kenora; would people look to a memorial in Winnipeg? Charles confirmed that individual donors would receive charitable receipts.

Brian reported that a gathering the previous evening at the Gardiner Centre had been told that \$6 million of a required \$10 million for an Anishinabek Health Centre had been raised. Toronto Conference gave \$100,000 a couple of years ago.

### **The Other Regional Reports**

David reported on activities in the **East Central Ontario Region**, the Regional Council having created a Council of Elders--currently ten in number but a youth is still needed--to provide coordination, and Leadership Teams responsible for related forums and networks. The presbyteries continue to function. Sharon provides staff support, and Rodney Smith-Merkley is responsible for Respectful Relationships and Indigenous Justice. They have met once face-to-face and then by Zoom. There is a very broad mandate in the Leadership Team including children and youth, fostering faith, and responding to social justice concerns. Priorities include Right Relations work in response to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Social Justice, and Rural Ministries.

Among the social justice concerns, David focused homelessness, based in part in a lack of affordable housing. In Durham. GM's recent closure of factories has added to the strain caused by growth in health care and three university campuses. People are being forced out of apartments by students. Exacerbating the situation is the opioid crisis, with four deaths in "his" church recently. He hoped that the Federal program, Home Initiatives, would produce affordable housing soon. The Durham Advisory Committee on Housing is wrestling with these issues. And, he added, homelessness is a rural problem, too.

Charles thanked David for raising these concerns, citing the tent city that appeared in Peterborough's Victoria Park during the summer and Emmanuel United Church's responding with proposals for redevelopment of church properties. Tina mentioned the Markee Development proposals in Toronto which had grown out of Faith in the City, an interfaith effort to deal with housing and other poverty issues in Toronto. David recognized that The United Church has provided great leadership, pointing to Trinity Housing in Cobourg as an example. There was some further discussion of redevelopment of properties. Charles concluded the discussion by observing that housing and homelessness might be made the focus of a future meeting.

Sharon commented on Right Relations activities in various areas of the East Central Ontario Region., including the Petroglyphs Provincial Park managed by the Curve Lake First Nation. She highlighted Wampum-Neechi: Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Youth Experience held at Five Oaks in July. Trent University offers many events, including presentations by Dr. Pamela Palmater from Ryerson University. Sharon provided a survey of equity issues, too.

Will then addressed the reorganization of three conferences into the **Canadian Shield Region**, including part of Cambrian Presbytery (which had been part of the Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario). There are two commissions, one responsible for Pastoral Relations and the other for Support to Communities of Faith. Social justice matters are taken up in the latter commission. There are three staff, each on a part-time basis, totalling 1.8 Full-Time-Equivalents.

The Resource Teams had programs specified by the annual conference, with Affirming Ministries being concerned with the Annual General Meeting in Calgary and planning for PIE Day on March 14th. In regard to Right Relations, they had pushed for passage of Bill C-262 and were contacting the MPs and supported Orange Shirt Day. Other concerns included Mission Support, Grants, and Youth Activities.

Will pointed out that the Canadian Shield Region is the largest in the province--actually, in the country. The former Presbyteries and Conferences had left legacy funds to provide for activities. There have been conversations on some things, such as race issues in Thunder Bay and a proscription on single-use water bottles (which, as Ernie noted, had been advanced by General Council in Thunder Bay in 2006), and Palestinian issues. Will conceded that energy had been lost this year in the context of reorganization. There had, however, been fast approval of the Covenant with the Social Justice Network of the Ontario Regions. which had been sent to Mission Support and the Executive decided to accept it.

Ernie followed from the west end of the Canadian Shield Region, with a written report that focused the activities being carried out in a number of Thunder Bay churches, which had not yet recognized that they should cooperate on social justice (and other) matters as a cluster. He was pleased by a number of activities in the Right Relations context, including an event on the preceding Sunday evening where members of the community gathered at the Thunder Bay Police Station to launch a fund drive in order to find some of those guilty of seizing and--in too many cases--murdering Indigenous women and girls.

### **The Budget**

Will distributed a report on the finances of the Social Justice Network of Ontario Conferences since 2007. Given the legacy funding of activities in 2019 by the conferences, a new format will be required for 2020. With seven regions now involved and a total of \$8,700 to \$10,000 being necessary to continue activities, the question was what level of funding should be requested. It was decided that expenditures should continue to include a grant to ISARC. Ernie noted that there had been discussion at the June meeting of a levy of \$1,500 to \$2,000. The consensus arrived at was that \$1,500 should be sought from each region for 2020 and that \$3,000 should be granted to ISARC out of the 2019 funds.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 12:05 pm and some members went off to lunch together.

Respectfully submitted,

Ernie Epp  
Recorder