

**Toronto Southeast Presbytery
Justice Global Issues Team
Minutes of September 7, 2016**

Present: Jean Lee, Robin Wardlaw, Won Hur, George Bartlett and Beth Baskin

Regrets: Hannah Lee

Opening Readings and Prayer:

Robin opened the meeting with two readings on repentance and forgiveness from With Open Hands, followed by a prayer.

Check In:

We shared personal news of events and activities during the time since our last meeting.

Agenda Approval:

The draft Agenda circulated in advance of the meeting was approved as circulated.

Approval of Minutes:

The Minutes of the May 11, 2016 meeting were approved with 2 minor corrections in wording.

Business Arising from Minutes of JGIT May 11th Meeting:

- (a) Beth has spoken with Ruth Gill about possibly joining JGIT and will speak to her again. **[Beth]**
- (b) Jean will contact Vicki Obedkoff for information concerning Kincardine United Church and whether she has contacts there. **[Jean]**
- (c) George will contact Wendy Miller and request her assistance in getting word out to Presbytery that we are looking for a contact/advocate for the nuclear file. **[George]**

Business Arising from Minutes of Joint Meeting with SW Presbytery SJWA Committee:

- (a) Beth will consult people at St. Luke's United to see if someone there is interested in working on the United for Mining Justice file for our Team. **[Beth]**
- (b) George will contact Connie Sorio at KAIROS and the minister at Thorncliffe United to see if they have suggestions of someone in Toronto Southeast Presbytery who might be interested in being our representative on United for Mining Justice. **[George]**
- (c) We again discussed the subject of the possible sharing by three Toronto Conference presbyteries of a new social justice staff person. With Beth funded as a 2/3rd time position to the end of 2017, there were questions as to how a new position could be funded to start at the beginning of that year. In our discussion it was reiterated that we were supportive of more staff time being provided for social justice work. The question that was unanswered is how to make it work. Robin noted that this matter would be discussed at the Social Justice Project Steering Committee meeting next week.
- (d) Our JGI Team will be hosting our November 2nd joint meeting with South West Presbytery's Social Justice and World Affairs Committee starting with a lunch. It was agreed that George would make arrangements for lunch from an indigenous caterer with the cost charged to the JGIT budget. **[George]**

Budget and Expenditures:

At our Team's April 6, 2016 meeting, we approved the expenditure of \$300 for a Voices from the Margin event to be held at Glen Rhodes United. A cheque for this amount was issued, with the funds now held by Glen Rhodes. Beth and Robin reported that the Voices from the Margin event was cancelled. Instead of that event, there is a related *Chew on This Campaign* event being planned by a multi-faith group for October 16th.

MOTION: Won Hur / Jean Lee that Glen Rhodes be authorized to retain the \$300 and use it for the October 16th *Chew on This Campaign* event. After the event there will be an accounting and any funds not used will be returned to Presbytery.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Our Team has previously made financial contributions to Northwatch, which is active on issues related to nuclear energy and the disposal of nuclear waste. After discussion it was decided that we should continue our support of Northwatch.

MOTION: Jean Lee / Won Hur that \$400 from the Partnering With Organizations line in our Team's 2016 budget be donated to Northwatch.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

At our Team's February 3, 2016 it was decided that half of the \$1,000 designated for the Unsettling Goods Campaign in our approved 2016 budget be provided to the United Network for Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel (UNJPPI National) and the other half be used for UNJPPI work in Toronto. Of the \$500 designated for UNJPPI Toronto, it has been decided that \$200 be used to assist Elizabeth Block, a member of the local UNJPPI Toronto group, with the cost of attending the UNJPPI annual gathering which this year is being held in Saskatoon.

MOTION: Jean Lee / Won Hur that \$200 from the Unsettling Goods Campaign line in the Team's approved 2016 budget be paid to Elizabeth Block to assist with the cost of attending the UNJPPI annual gathering in Saskatoon from September 23-25, 2016

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

[George]

Possible Survey of congregations on justice & outreach issues:

Over a number of meetings we discussed options for collecting information on the outreach and social justice activities of congregations in our presbytery. We identified congregation annual reports as one possible source of such information. At our May 11, 2016 meeting, Anne Shirley advised that Congregation Health has a team of volunteers with experience gleaning information from congregational reports which might be able to help us with this project. Anne Shirley undertook to investigate this possibility.

Beth undertook to follow up with Anne Shirley concerning the possibility of using Congregation Health's team of volunteers to obtain the desired information. **[Beth]**

Staff Attendance at JGIT Meetings

Beth reported that she and Anne Shirley have agreed that Beth will provide staff support for our Team and that Anne Shirley will attend our meetings when needed.

On a going forward basis, George stated that he would do his best to give verbal and/or email reminders concerning outstanding task items to team members, Anne Shirley and Wendy.

Poverty Reduction

Beth commented that one of the things missing in Toronto is a city-wide umbrella group working on poverty issues and able to put together a coherent position on issues such as 'basic income'.

She advised that in the past there have been numerous studies undertaken by governments. Put Food in the Budget and a number of other groups are presently preparing a joint statement, likely to be issued next week, saying that it is time for the government to get off the treadmill of studies and reports and to move forward with concrete action. Not all the groups agree on things such as Basic Income, but they all agree that something needs to be done, even if on a pilot basis.

Beth noted that October 17th is the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. On that date there will be a walk organized by a multi-faith group on the Danforth. Commitment 2 Community (C2C) is working to get a Faith Communities Leaders Statement issued on that date, similar to the one signed in relation to casinos when casinos were being proposed for Toronto. A multi-faith/inter-faith dinner is also being considered for the evening of October 17th.

This year's *Chew on This* event will also be taking place on October 17. Robin and Beth are working on this.

Truth and Reconciliation/Indigenous Issues

(a) Request from Chair of Presbytery

Robin advised that he was contacted by Paul Hutchison, the chair of Presbytery. He would like the June 2017 presbytery plenary to have a focus on right relations

and he requested that our Team organize it. We agreed that we should take on this assignment as right relations falls within our mandate.

We decided that Robin, Won, George and Beth would start work on planning for the plenary, with Robin convening the first meeting. Some names suggested as people with whom we should consult – Brian McIntosh, Ruth Gill, Greta Vosper and Evan Smith. Beth suggested that we could ask that the June plenary be held at Metropolitan, where Toronto Urban Native Ministry worships once a month.

[Robin]

(b) 30th Anniversary of Apology Event in Sudbury

Robin reported that feedback he received concerning the 30th Anniversary events is that they went very well. Won heard from Brian McIntosh that one of the presbyteries in the Sudbury has taken on responsibility for repairing and maintaining the commemorative cairn.

(c) Toronto Urban Native Ministries (TUNM) Toronto Conference Grant Request

Our Presbytery has been invited to a meeting concerning the subject grant application. In the most recent communication the date suggested conflicts with our Presbytery plenary meeting. George will reply, noting the conflict, and asking to be advised of the results.

[George]

Police Carding and Street Checks

Beth advised that John Ryerson of Fairlawn has made contact with Black Lives Matter folks asking how Fairlawn can connect with BLM on poverty issues. BLM suggested that they talk at a later date.

Environmental

(a) Questionnaire from Northwatch

George will circulate a questionnaire received from Northwatch and circulate future communications received from Northwatch.

[George]

(b) People's Climate Change Plan Consultations

Beth will look into which consultations have not yet been held.

[Beth]

Social Justice Network of Ontario Conferences

George reported that he participated as the representative of the Social Justice Network of Ontario Conferences in a conference call with the chairs/representatives of six Ontario Conferences of the United Church of Canada. The reason for the call was a concern that the Ontario government early in the Fall would be introducing a motion in the Ontario legislature similar to one recently adopted in the House of Commons condemning boycott, divestment and sanction (BDS) campaigns, which are being undertaken against Israel until it complies with international law. On the call it was noted that while the United Church is not part of the BDS movement, we do hold strong commitments to democratic rights and freedoms, which include the right of citizens to engage in constructive critiques of both Canadian and foreign governments.

On the call Ontario Conferences were asked to consider mobilizing United Church people in their regions to contact their members MPPs regarding a threatened motion to suppress the BDS Movement.

George noted that subsequent to the conference call, information received from individuals who have contacted MPPs may have lessened the fear that such a motion will be introduced in Ontario. George undertook to continue to monitor the situation and report further as appropriate, between meetings if necessary.

Unsettling Goods

At a previous meeting it was decided that a communication would be sent to congregations in September in relation to the Unsettling Goods Campaign. George undertook to draft such a letter and circulate it for comments. **[George]**

George noted that with the present structure of Presbytery plenary meetings, there appears to be little opportunity for committees and teams to effectively share information with presbyters at plenary meetings. It was agreed that Robin would write to the chair of Presbytery to enquire how committees and teams are to share information at plenary meetings. **[Robin]**

Communications

Beth brought to our attention an event being organized by the Student Christian Movement. The event, entitled Turning Tables: A Young Adults Retreat on Jesus and Liberation, is being held from September 30 to October 2nd near Cambridge Ontario.

MOTION: Won Hur / Jean Lee that we contribute \$500 to the Student Christian Movement to help cover the costs of the planned Turning Tables event, and contribute up to an additional \$400 to assist individuals attending the event, with the funds to come from the Educational Events/ Leadership Events line of our Team budget.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Adjournment.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

NEXT MEETINGS:: Wed. Oct 5, Nov 2 (Joint Meeting with SJWA), Dec. 7, Jan 4/17, Feb 1/17, Mar 1/17, April 5/17, May 3/17 and Jun 7/17

Chair: Robin Wardlaw

Note-taker: George Bartlett