

Joint Meeting  
Social Justice & World Affairs (SJWA) - SW Presbytery  
& Justice & Global Issues Team (JGI) of TSE Presbytery  
Sept 21, 2017

## MINUTES

Present: Won Hur (SE), Steve Watson (SE), Tina Conlon (SW), Barbara Sheffield (SW), John Ryerson (SE), Ren Ito (Staff – SE and Living Waters), Robin Wardlaw (SE), Susan Eagle (CCRR Living Waters), Barbara Edwards (SE), Brian McIntosh (SW), Virginia Beane (SW), Susie Henderson (Staff -SW) and George Bartlett (SE)

### Chair and Note-Taker

Tina and Robin co-chaired the meeting and George was note-taker.

### Opening

Robin and others shared in a reading from *Earth Gospel – A Guide to Prayer for God's Creation*.

### Presentation on Toronto Conference Social Justice Facebook Group

Susie took us through a Prezi relating to a recently created Social Justice in Toronto Conference Facebook Group for sharing information on social justice issues among congregations and others in Toronto Conference. The Group is intended for UCC folk but if others want to join they will not be excluded. It is a closed Group on Facebook, which means that others can see that the Group exists but will not be able to make or read postings until they join as a member. The Prezi is available online at the web address given at the bottom of the first page of the prezi, namely <https://prezi.com/mmyt5qsb5tpc/social-justice/>

Susie stated that the purpose or goal of the Facebook Group is not only the sharing information but is also a tool for encouraging each other. It can also be used as a resource - for example asking others in the Group where a worship resource on a particular topic can be located.

Susie pointed out that the Facebook Group can be used for giving notice of events, i.e. creating an event within the Group. Other organizations like KAIROS may pick up info posted there and publish it more broadly.

Susie also referred to a practice Beth Baskin used of giving notice of an event and then saying she will meet people there. The effect was that people who might not otherwise go to the event would be encouraged to go because they would know someone else attending and could meet there. In other words, be creative in using the tools available.

### Minutes

Robin reviewed the Minutes of the previous Joint Meeting of our two committees held on May 3, 2017 and summarized what had been discussed. The Minutes of the May 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting were approved by consensus.

### Business Arising

No business arising from the Minutes was identified.

### Check In by Committees/Updates

Tina gave a summary of the activities of SJWA committee. She highlighted the committee's work on Mining Justice and emerging inter-faith work. She mentioned that Barbara's refugee work is spiralling into different areas.

### *Walking with Our Sisters*

Tina mentioned the Walking with our Sisters event that will be open to the public at the Aboriginal Education Centre, 16 Phin Avenue (Danforth & Donlands) from October 15 – 29, 2017.

### *Faith in the City/Commitment to Community*

Both Tina and John spoke of the Faith in the City anti-poverty campaign. John noted that Social Planning Toronto has now added this campaign as one of their priority areas. It has also partnered with Commitment to Community (C2C), a coalition of residents, faith communities and community organizations working to build a better community through active engagement at City Hall.

John shared the disappointing information that at this point few United Church ministers signed a statement asking politicians to make addressing poverty a priority. A question of some concern going forward.

### *No Way to Treat a Child*

George spoke about his experience earlier this year as an Ecumenical Accompanier (EA) in Israel-Palestine, focusing particularly on the work his team did in 'Azzun. The Israeli military regularly do night raids in this West Bank Palestinian community to arrest Palestinian young people who may be as young as 13 years old. These raids occur at 2-3 a.m. They start with soldiers banging on the door threatening to break the door down if it is not opened. When they enter the home the soldiers force everyone in the home, other than the child they are after, into a single room. They then go to the bedroom of the child they have come for. After questioning the child for a time, they take the child away, blindfolded and in hand cuffs and leg irons. The parents are not told where their child is being taken. The next time the parents see the child, and the first time the child may possibly see a lawyer, will be in the military court. By then the child often will have signed a confession in Hebrew, a language the child does not understand.

George noted that Defense of Children International – Palestine, a partner organization of the United Church of Canada, has recently started a *No Way to Treat a Child* (NWTTAC) campaign in Canada urging Prime Minister Trudeau and Foreign Affairs Minister Freeland to prioritize human rights of Palestinian children and hold Israeli authorities accountable for widespread and systematic ill-treatment and torture of Palestinian child detainees.

George was asked to prepare a joint letter for our two committees to sign in support of the NWTTAC campaign.

### *Indigenous*

Stephen reported that the Petition initiated by West Hill United Church which calls upon the Government of Canada to correct injustices and the failure to honour the Treaty Relationship with Indigenous Peoples will be presented in the House of Commons in November of this year.

Stephen also referred to the email he sent concerning an urgent appeal for a call-in action to support the clan mothers and grandmothers of Treaty 3 and 9 territories (northwestern Ontario) in their demand that the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry stop spraying herbicide on their land. The grandmothers report that the spray poisons the berries, bears, amphibians, bees, and humans. The practice of spraying a "herbicide" is especially insensitive to the long cherished tradition of the autumn berry

pick which has great meaning for the Indigenous people on the territory. People wishing to support the call to stop the spraying were urged to call the District Manager of the Ministry office in Sioux Lookout. Here are the numbers:

807 737 5026 – Bob David, Sioux Lookout District Manager  
807 737 5027 – Julie Burrard, District Business Coordinator

Stephen's email included a sample letter that could be used. The following is a link to a video from the grandmothers:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s3QQ67D\\_RgM&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s3QQ67D_RgM&feature=youtu.be)

Brian suggests that letters could be copied to the Ontario Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

#### *Greenest Church Award*

Won advised that Hannah Lee and he met with Ron Ewart of Toronto United Church Council, Lucy Cummings the executive director of Green Sacred Spaces, Donna Lang of the Faith and the Common Good. They were very supportive of the suggestion of an award program to recognize green churches in Toronto Conference.

Won noted that Greening Sacred Spaces has a program to help churches go green. Instead of giving one prize, the people with whom Hannah and Won met recommended that three prizes be established under the categories of "Light Green," "Medium Green" and "Deep Green" so 3 congregations would receive an award. The thought was that the best time to launch the award program would be Ash Wednesday 2018 with the "40 Actions for Lent". Hopefully the award winners could be announced in time for the Toronto Conference Annual Meeting.

In the discussion following Won's report it was agreed that our two committees/teams should try to generate \$750/presbytery/year for two years to help fund a 3-year award program. In the discussion there was strong support for this suggestion from all who spoke. The idea will be taken back the individual committees/teams for further discussion and decision at an early meeting.

#### *Parliament of World Religions*

John drew our attention to the event scheduled for November 1-7, 2018 with a registration deadline of September 25, 2018.

#### New Business

In the context of the 2 recent hurricanes, Brian encouraged us to promote the UCC Hurricane Relief Funds.

Brian also raised the issue of the risk of war with the on-going sabre-rattling between the USA and North Korea, noting that our church used to be more active on peace issues. We still support peace through Project Ploughshares. Brian will check with the Moderator's office to see whether they have crafted a response to the risk of war between North Korea and the USA. Ren suggested we could involve United Church congregations with Korean connections.

John suggested that we explore how we can help ministers by creating postings with talking points on various issues such as Palestine, Climate Change and Poverty.

Meeting Adjourned

**NEXT JOINT MEETING:** Thursday November 23, 2017. Upper Club Room of Bloor Street United Church, 300 Bloor Street West, Toronto

Lunch at 12:00 noon; Meeting at 1 p.m.

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Co-Chairs: Tina Conlon & Robin Wardlaw

Note-taker: George Bartlett