

<p style="text-align: center;">ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT OF CANADIAN SHIELD REGIONAL COUNCIL EXECUTIVE</p>
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Regional Council:

Our regional meeting theme for this year is “Upon this Rock”. This Regional Council Meeting (RCM) is a wonderful opportunity to gather together in-person and online across our Regional Council. We join together as United Church to celebrate our Ministry together as communities of faith to seek encouragement from each other, as we share the gospel and most of all, to worship and give thanks! As a regional council, as communities of faith, as outreach ministry, we have returned to a more normal routine following lockdowns. Returning to a new normal has been slow for many communities of faith with the disruption of the pandemic challenging the foundation of many within our regional council. We hold each other in prayer.

As a region, as community, as individuals, we give thanks as we continue to be on a journey together; we celebrate the resilience of our churches; “Upon this Rock” in every way and the expression of the Gospel in many new and creative ways.

Connecting within our Regional Council:

Although this past year many of our communities of faith, outreach ministries, and camps have struggled figuring out our new normal, we have continued a ministry of caring and support in new and creative ways. Volunteers, music leaders, ministry personnel, camp staff, outreach staff, and congregational support staff have all worked tirelessly. Many communities of faith continue to offer ministry through online worship and gather for meetings virtually – a new and creative offering which was limited across the regional council, pre-pandemic.

As a northern regional council, distance remains a barrier to meeting in-person. The region’s primary tool for connecting continues to be online gatherings, for both Ministry Personnel and Lay Leaders for support, updates, and education. Our website/newsletter “Bedrock” continues to be a key tool for communication within our regional council. Many local and a few regional networks and local groups have also met to connect, learn, challenge, listen, and work together. The Executive also celebrates the significant work of the regional council Commissions, Teams and networks/clusters and informal gatherings of UCC folks and community members.

The regional council met together online in November, to honour our mutual ministry together and complete our administrative duties for the year.

Festival of Faith:

This past year, Spring 2023, the regional council (and many guests from outside the Region) were invited to gather together in mutual ministry at the Festival of Faith in North Bay. This was the first time we gathered together in North Bay and offered an opportunity for folks across the region to join together as community to listen, learn, laugh, cry, and grow together in our mutual ministry. We put aside our administrative ministry, and as a regional council planned a gathering together focusing on fellowship and learning from across the region and including guests from across Ontario and Canada.

New in 2025, both the Canadian Shield Regional Council and Shining Waters Regional Council will

join together, mutually planning another joint Festival of Faith for June 7-9, 2025 in Sudbury Ontario. More details are to come! See our regional council website for updates, following our spring RCM. We will not be meeting together in-person as a regional council, for our administration role in 2025, but rather online.

Work of the Regional Executive

Our Executive meets monthly (with the exception of the summer) and does the work of the regional council when our region is not meeting (C.3.1.1). Often, the Executive has a very full agenda which includes oversight of the regional commissions, regional finances, regional policy, regional meeting, emerging work, and the Executive Minister and staff.

The draft 2025 budget will be presented at our Regional Council Meeting (RCM). This past year's spending reflects an unusual year following Covid travel restrictions. Staff travel was up in 2023, as staff re-connect in-person.

Monthly Work of the Regional Council Executive:

If you are interested in a detailed account and overview of the work of the regional council Executive, please see the Digest of Actions, which will be received for information at our regional council meeting. The digest offers an itemized account of the regional council Executive since our last RCM. It also gives you an idea of the monthly variety and work of our Executive. We have also added a link to our webpage which offers a close look at our finances, including audited statements as they are completed by the auditors, in one location.

Working towards Right Relations, Anti-Racism and Equity

The United Church of Canada is working towards becoming an anti-racist institution. For the United Church, it means encouraging the General Council Office, regional council offices, communities of faith, and even Canadian society to pause and reflect. The United Church has allocated staffing and resources for both General Council staff, regional staff and Ministry personnel. The United Church is offering training, learning opportunities, and discussion groups as part of a strategy of becoming an anti-racist Church. Practically, the Canadian Shield Regional Council and Shining Waters Regional Council staff have joined together for reflecting, learning, re-learning history, theological reflection, and discussion working towards becoming an anti-racist Church and also working towards right relationship.

Both regional councils have encouraged equity conversations at the Executive level, commission and committee levels of the church. The regional council continues to lift up our commitment to equity across our work. We are beginning to live into our new pattern of equity being named by each commission. We continue to work and celebrate the Canadian Shield Regional Council as an Affirming regional council and support community of faith conversations too!

Staffing:

In 2023/2024, we saw more transition of staff in our regional council. Rachael Howes transitioned into retirement at the end of May 2023. Jeffery Dale finished his work at the regional council and transitioned to local community of faith ministry in 2023. We have deeply appreciated their work with the regional council and they will be missed. We welcomed Shawn Redden as Justice and Faith Formation Minister, sredden@united-church.ca, who works part-time for the regional council. Melody Duncanson-Hales also has shifted part of her work to General Council, working 50 percent for the regional council.

In 2023/2024 we started a more intentional transition to shared staff between regional councils. Rob Smith transitioned from full time in CSRC to part-time, now supporting Ministry personnel in Shining Waters Regional Council. All four administrative staff (Susan Whitehead, Donna Rutz, Kathleen Jones, and Celio de Andrade Santos Jr.) have now officially transitioned to serving both regional councils to increase our support to program staff, with Susan Whitehead serving as the Executive Minister's Executive Administrative Assistant.

We continue to deeply appreciate working with Diane, Rob, Melody, Shawn, Celio, Donna, Susan, Kathleen and Peter. We are blessed with incredible staff who have worked tirelessly over the past year. Thank you! We are also grateful for our Past Chair Barb Nott and current Chair Nancy Ferguson, who have provided attentive leadership throughout this year. Thank you!

UCC Strategic Plan:

2023 marks the start and implementation of The United Church of Canada Strategic Plan (2023-2025). We welcome Calin Lau (clau@united-church.ca 1-800-268-3781 ex. 2047), General Council Growth Animator, supporting the Canadian Shield and Shining Waters Regional Councils.

Sharing the introduction of the UCC strategic plan (found on the UCC website) it states:

"In partnership with regions and the Indigenous Church, the national ministry will dedicate focus, energy, and resources to revitalizing the church towards a vibrant future. We will renew by strengthening existing communities of faith towards transformation. We will create by encouraging the development and sustainability of 100 new communities of faith, with a particular focus on churches that serve migrant communities. And we will invite by investing in sharing our unique witness with neighbours across the country and encouraging participation in our ministries, communities, and campaigns. This passion for growth will be enabled by leadership development, supported by denomination wide strengths, fostered by justice campaigns and climate initiatives, and realized alongside Indigenous pathways.

Our priority plan pulls key activities in each of these strategic objectives into service towards dynamic growth. Daring Justice. This is our Call, grounded in our statements of faith, right relations commitment, and core values, but articulated anew for this time. Along with our Call is a Vision to become "a bold, connected, and evolving church" as disciples of Jesus in this place." (The United Church of Canada Strategic plan 2023-2025 document, post on the UCC website)

The strategic plan has much more detail. See [The United Church of Canada website](#) for the most up to date details.

100 Years!

2024 marks the beginning of the 100th year celebration of The United Church of Canada with an online/in-person hybrid service, hosted by The United Church of Canada, at Metropolitan United Church in Toronto. Let's give thanks together for our mutual ministry for many years. [Click here for more details.](#)

Thanks

We give thanks for the work of the regional council, outreach ministry, communities of faith, its many volunteers, Ministry Personnel, music teams, administrative staff, custodians, and treasurers to name

just a few. May God continue to bless our ministry in 2024/2025.

With Gratitude and Prayer,

The Canadian Shield Regional Council Executive:

Nancy Ferguson, Chair

Peter Hartmans, Executive Minister

Barbara Nott, Past Chair

Jim Jackson

Helen Smith

Mastard Sakala

Joy Galloway

John Watson

Susan Lindquist

David LeGrand

Stewart Walker

Bill Steadman