

ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT OF THE CANADIAN SHIELD REGIONAL COUNCIL EXECUTIVE

Regional Council:

Our regional meeting theme for this year is “Upon This Rock.” This Regional meeting is a wonderful opportunity to gather online across our regional council to connect, to pray, worship, and update each other. We join together as United Church to celebrate our Ministry together as communities of faith, seeking encouragement from each other as we share the gospel and most of all, worship and giving thanks!

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 our expression of the Gospel in many new and creative ways. As we move through 2025, we raise up for you our regional council, local communities of faith, the UCC and our Country as we face new concerns south of the boarder, especially communities living near the boarder like Sault Ste. Marie and folks concerned with Tariffs and the impact on employment.

Connecting within our Regional Council:

Although this past year many of our communities of faith, outreach ministries, and camps have struggled with figuring out our new normal, we have continued a ministry of caring and support and we have continued 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, hybrid worship, and gathering for meetings virtually. Hybrid worship is a new and creative offering, which was limited across the regional council five years ago and now has become routine.

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 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, Committees, Resource Teams, networks/clusters, and informal gatherings UCC folks and community members. In 2024/25, the Executive spent a significant amount of time considering our Ministry now and, in the future, including participation in a joint retreat with the SWRC Executive in fall of 2024. One of the primary foci to come out of the retreat is supporting communities of faith in the next 5 to 10 years and beyond! Questions were asked like how do we support Communities of Faith and Ministry personnel and how do we as a regional council, support each other? The Executive continues this work, in partnership with the UCC.

A newer resource for connecting regularly is the “Lets Connect Lay Leader Resources” work of the regional council. CSRC offers *Lets Connect* events several time a year with a variety of foci. The website offers recorded copies of events as a resource. See <https://canadianshieldrc.ca/communities-of-faith/lets-connect-lay-leader-resources/>.

The Executive always celebrates volunteers within the regional council and have organized a number of connecting events between communities of faith, Ministry Personnel both locally and across the regional council. One network, which meets several times a year, is MILC - Manitou Intentional Learning Community. As shared on their website, “Manitou Intentional Learning

Community creates and sustains opportunities in learning... The Community has its physical and administrative home at St. Andrew's United Church in Sudbury Ontario. It recognizes and lives a broadly local and global commitment to transformational learning for all members of the United Church and its partners and friends." Please check out their website:

<https://www.manitoulearningcommunity.com/>

Festival of Faith 2025:

In June 2025, both the Canadian Shield Regional Council and Shining Waters Regional Council will join together, mutually planning a joint Festival of Faith for June 13-15, 2025 in Sudbury, Ontario. The Executive receives regular updates from the Planning Team and is grateful for their work and planning this big event.

For more details see: <https://canadianshielddrc.ca/about/festival-of-faith-2025/>

Work of the Regional Executive:

Our Regional Council Executive meets monthly (with the exception of the summer) and does the work of the regional council when our region is not meeting (The Manual 2025 - C.3.1.1). Often the Executive has a very full agenda which includes oversight of the regional Commissions, regional finances, regional policy, the annual regional council meeting, emerging work, and the Executive Minister and staff. Key leadership in the Regional Council continues through the regional council Commissions and Resource Teams. The Executive partners with the Property Commission, Support to Communities of Faith Commission, and the Pastoral Relations Commission, along with a number of invaluable Resource Teams, who support specific work the regional council including Right Relations, Affirming, Finance, Youth and Affirm, along with a number of working groups.

The Draft 2025 Budget will be presented at our Regional Council Meeting. We are grateful for the faithful work of the Finance Team and the folks who prepare our budget and support our regional finances, both volunteers and staff.

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 (RCM). 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 last meeting. 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. Minutes are also posted on our website.

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 and communities of faith, and even Canadian society to pause and reflect. The United Church is offering training, learning opportunities and discussion groups as part of a strategy of becoming an anti-racist Church. The United Church offers a wide variety of resources, video's, workshops and printed materials to support our work. See <https://united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/anti-racism>

Both regional councils have encouraged equity conversations at the Executive level, and the Commission and Committee levels of the church. The regional council continues to lift up our commitment to equity across our work.

We also continue to work and celebrate the Canadian Shield Regional Council as a Affirming Regional Council and support community of faith conversations too!

Regional Council Staffing update and Staffing Support Through the General Council Office:

In 2024/2025, we saw more transition of staff in our regional council. Jeffery Dale finished his work at the regional council in 2023 and transitioned to local community of faith ministry. We have deeply appreciated his work with the regional council and he 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. Janet MacDonald, who has provided financial administrative support and leadership to the regional council since 2019, will transition into Retirement in June 2025. We wish her well and we are so very grateful for her work through reorganization and normalizing our financial operation. Meranda MacKenzie, accounting assistant/bookkeeper, has been hired fulltime for CSRC/SWRC, to work with Janet as she transitions into retirement. Meranda works part-time for CSRC and can be reach at mmackenzie@united-church.ca . Jody Maltby, Minister, Finance and Property/Staff lead SWRC, has move some of her work time from SWRC to CSRC and is providing key leadership and support to the finance team and the regional council, focusing on the regional budget.

In 2023/2024 we started a more intentional transition to shared staff between both regional councils. Rob Smith transitioned from full time in CSRC, to part-time, now also supporting Ministry Personnel in Shining Waters Regional Council. All four administrative staff now officially serve both regional councils (Donna Rutz, Kathleen Wolfe, Celio de Andrade Santos Jr. as admin support and Susan Whitehead, Executive Assistant to the Executive Minister) to increase our support to program staff, as we work with less program staff for the regional council.

To learn more about our staff see: <https://canadianshieldrc.ca/about/staff/>

We continue to deeply appreciate working with Diane, Rob, Melody, Shawn, Celio, Donna, Susan, Kathleen, Meranda, Jody, Janet, 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 Knot and Chair-Elect Bill Jones, and current Chair, Nancy Ferguson, who have provided attentive leadership throughout this year. Thank you!

Office of Vocation and Support of Ministry Personnel:

We continue to be well served by the Office of Vocation, its many volunteers, and staff. The staff person who supports the Canadian Shield Regional Council through the office of Vocation is Kellie McComb, Vocational Minister kmccomb@united-church.ca . Kelly's contact information is on the Canadian Shield Website. We express gratitude for Kelly's work.

Community of Faith Stewardship Support:

While Melody Duncanson-Hales serves part-time as CSRC staff, the General Council also supports Stewardship learning, growth conversations through the work of Melody, for the General Council office in CSRC. For questions about stewardship, email Melody at: MDuncanson-Hales@united-church.ca . We are grateful for Melody's work, experience and inspiration.

United Church of Canada Incorporated Ministry:

In partnership with the General Council, its staff and regional council staff, the Executive provides primary oversight to our United Church of Canada Incorporated Ministries. In Canadian Shield, we support both Camping and housing Incorporated Ministry. We give thanks for the many hours folks offer supporting Incorporated Ministry as volunteers. This important ministry is an invaluable extension of the Regional Council.

United Church of Canada Foundation:

In partnership with the regional council and the Executive, The United Church of Canada Foundation supports the work of The United Church of Canada, its regions and communities of faith. The role of the UCC Foundation is to help you make powerful, meaningful gifts to the ministries and causes that are most important to you, helping them grow into the future. The UCC Foundation also can provide investment opportunities for congregations that have at least \$50,000 in Reserve Funds. The Foundation also offers grants. For more information on the UCC Foundation, please see: <https://unitedchurchfoundation.ca/about-the-foundation/>

UCC Strategic Plan:

2025 marks the end of the first chapter of the implementation of The United Church of Canada Strategic Plan (2023-2025). The United Church of Canada Executive is currently working on a draft update of the Strategic Plan called Towards 2035 and the regional council Executive has offered feedback to the draft. We look forward to discussing this with the regional council at a future townhall meeting. General Council 45 will review and consider the draft updated Strategic Plan in August of 2025.

We are grateful for the work of Calin Lau, General Council Growth Animator, supporting the Canadian Shield Regional Council and Shining Waters Regional Council. clau@united-church.ca, 1-800-268-3781 ex. 2047

Sharing the introduction of the 2023 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; please see The United Church of Canada website for the most up-to-date details.

100 Years!

In 2025, we prepare for the 100th year celebration of The United Church of Canada with an online/in-person service, hosted by The United Church of Canada. Some communities of faith are planning “watch” events across the regional council. The regional council is also providing \$100 grants to support communities of faith who request the grant in their planning and preparation for this time of reflection, confession, and celebration.

The Centennial Theme is:

Deep Spirituality

The words of Jesus’ prayer that the disciples be one (John 17:21)

Bold Discipleship

The belief that what unites us is stronger than our differences

Daring Justice

The desire to live out the gospel call to love and justice in Canada and around the world”

For more information see: <https://united-church.ca/100years>

Thanks:

We give thanks for the work of the regional council, outreach ministry, and 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 2025 and beyond.

With Gratitude and Prayer - The Canadian Shield Regional Council Executive:

Nancy Ferguson – Chair, CSRC Executive

Peter Hartmans – Executive Minister, CSRC and SWRC

Bill Jones – Chair-Elect, CSRC Executive

Jim Jackson

Laurie Stevenson

Bill Steadman

Lionel Ketola

Susan Lindquist

Dave LeGrand

Susan Peverley

Stewart Walker

Gord Roberts

Diane Matheson-Jimenez – CSRC Staff Lead

Susan Whitehead – Administrative Support