

## **ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT OF CANADIAN SHIELD REGIONAL COUNCIL EXECUTIVE**

The Canadian Shield Regional Council is very large geographically, with boundaries from Val-d'Or Quebec in the east to Thunder Bay in the west (1,060 km), and it faces significant challenges and opportunities around supporting of the vastness. There is challenge in terms of time and resources for meeting in-person or having volunteers and staff support the work of the regional council in-person. The regional council has depended a lot on connecting via video conferencing, mostly Zoom. The distance also creates a challenge meeting with staff in-person, with staff living throughout the entire regional council. The geography has also created opportunity for creativity in ministry; we have a number of communities of faith that connect via two-way video conferencing on Sunday mornings, sharing worship and leadership between communities of faith. However, we are also mindful that as Executive, Commissions, and Staff we hear stories and concerns regarding isolation. The Regional Council Executive, Commissions, Committees, Resource Teams and Staff are actively working to address these concerns through "Let's Connect Sessions", lay and clergy gatherings, Regional Council Meetings and local gatherings.

Another challenge and blessing within Canadian Shield Regional Council is that approximately 45% of our communities of faith are lay-led and will continue to be lay-led in the future, without paid Ministry Personnel. We celebrate these active communities of faith with strong lay leader worship, supported by Licensed Lay Worship Leaders and retired supply who are connecting to other communities of faith live on Sunday mornings through two-way video link and providing and opportunity for folks to gather together as Church and celebrate and live the gospel. The Canadian Shield Regional Council continues to shift and adapt as worshipping communities to support ministry opportunities now and in the future.

One of the challenges of the CSRC is filling "called" positions within the regional council. Often full-time (and part-time) called positions can remain open for a number of months or over a year or more. The Canadian Shield Regional Council offers wonderful ministry opportunities with many healthy communities of faith that offer a more manageable cost of living in relation to many other parts of Canada. The Regional Council Executive has been working towards formally promoting Canadian Shield Regional Council (CSRC) within the broader church as a place to consider for long-term ministry. The CSRC continues to be a leader in supporting Ministry Personnel who feel called to serve within the United Church. Often this means folks moving to Canada. The inclusion of new Ministry Personnel to The United Church of Canada has both provided exciting opportunity, learnings and also, challenges related to cost of moving and transitioning to a new culture and country. Many communities of faith have been delighted that they have been able to call new Ministry Personnel who are committed to their ministry.

Our regional meeting theme for this year is "Hard Places, Holy Ground". Staff and volunteers have worked countless hours preparing, changing, experimenting, and succeeding in continuing as Church in new and creative ways. As an Executive, we have heard stories of sacrifice, perseverance, hope, success, and also, deep fatigue. We have also heard stories of worry, stress,

frustration and struggle. As a region and as community, we give thanks; we continue to be on a long journey together and we celebrate the resilience of our churches and the expression of the Gospel. As an Executive, we look forward to seeing you in-person and/or online at our Regional meeting.

As a regional council, the region has hosted townhall meetings for both Ministry Personnel and Lay Leaders for support, updates, and education. Our website 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.

Distance can be a barrier to meeting in-person and the primary tool for connecting continues to be online gatherings, for both Ministry Personnel and Lay Leaders. Our website/newsletter “Bedrock” is a way for communication within our region. The Executive also celebrates the significant work of the Regional Council Commissions, Committees, Resource Teams, networks/clusters, informal gatherings, UCC folks/Community members, and active UCW groups across the region. Consider connecting with the greater United Church through subscribing to Essentials, The United Church of Canada newsletter. The link below describes several opportunities for learning and wonderful resources! <https://united-church.ca/e-newsletters>

A resource for connecting regularly in the regional council is “Let’s Connect Lay Leader Resources.” The regional council offers these events several times a year with a variety of foci. What is new and very exciting is that we are now intentionally partnering with the 3 southwestern Ontario regions to pool resources, wisdom, expertise; to model collaboration; and to better steward our shared resources (our time and the gifts of the facilitators we draw from). Recently, a gathering had 269 leaders from 5 Regional Councils learned about the work of trustees. Still more will watch the recording when it’s made available. The website offers recorded copies of events as a resource:

<https://canadianshioldrc.ca/communities-of-faith/lets-connect-lay-leader-resources/>

### **MILC Network**

One network within the boundary of the regional council, is MILC - Manitou Intentional Learning Community. As shared on their website, “Manitou Intentional Learning Community creates and sustains opportunities in learning.” MILC 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. For more information, please see: <https://www.manitoulearningcommunity.com/>

### **Festival of Faith 2025**

In June, the Canadian Shield Regional Council, in partnership with Shining Waters Regional Council, joined together to mutually plan another Festival of Faith for June 13-15, 2025 in Sudbury, Ontario. The event was an opportunity for folks to gather in Sudbury for a time to pray, reflect, grow, and learn and this event is open to people beyond our regional council. The event offered workshops, connecting, learning, worship and friendship. Highlights included participation and leadership by Moderator Rev. Dr. Carmen R. Lansdowne along with keynote dynamic

leadership of speaker Rev. John Bell, hymn writer and speaker. For a lot of folks, a highlight of the Festival of Faith was singing (and dancing!) to the music of Uganda Martyrs United Church's musicians.

### *Future Festival of Faith*

The Canadian Shield Regional Council has decided to continue with Festival of Faith (FoF) but focus specifically on the Canadian Shield Regional Council and local connections. The inspiration for the 2027 model of FoF was Diane Matheson-Jimenez's and Melody Duncanson-Hales' road trip in the autumn of 2025. They visited every CoF who wished to have face time with them, as they toured the highways towards Timmins where they hosted a day-long worship and workshops.

The Executive made the following decision for the 2027 FoF:

*MOTION by Dave LeGrand/Susan Lindquist*

*CS EXEC 2026-01-08-08*

*That after extensive discussion, the Canadian Shield Regional Council Executive has decided not to enter into a shared Festival of Faith with the Shining Waters Regional Council for 2027 and will notify the Shining Waters Executive of this decision; and will explore the concept of a traveling Festival of Faith to a minimum of five (5) locations within the Canadian Shield Regional Council during 2027.*

*CARRIED*

We are excited about connecting locally in person in 2027!

### **The 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 2026 - C.3.1.1). Often the Executive has a very full agenda which includes oversight of the regional Commissions, regional finances, regional policy, the Regional Council Meeting, emerging work, and the Executive Minister and staff.

In 2025/26, the Executive spent a significant amount of time considering our ministry now and, in the future. One of the primary foci has been discussing how we support the regional council ministry and specifically, communities of faith in the next 5 to 10 years and beyond! The themes and work is similar to the Toward 2035 work of General Council. We also spent time focusing and discussing the UCC Strategic Plan - Deep Spirituality, Bold Discipleship, and Daring Justice – as well as focusing on how to 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 Commissions and the UCC, especially the UCC Growth Unit. The Executive gives deep thanks for the work of the Commissions, Committees, and Resource Teams within the regional council and we reflect monthly on their significant contribution to the wellbeing of our region.

In August, on behalf of the Executive and Regional Council, following General Council 2025 in Calgary, President-Elect Rev. Bill Jones and Executive member Rev. Stewart Walker, along with Peter Hartmans, participated in a meeting specifically designed to discuss The United Church of Canada strategic plan called Toward 2035. One of the primary goals of the strategic plan is to

support communities of faith now and in the future. More importantly, to work towards creating a foundation for our Church locally and denominationally and to support regional councils as they support communities of faith. To learn more information Toward 2035, please visit:

<https://united-church.ca/toward2035>

### **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. Through the partnership of the United Church, together we offer 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, videos, workshops, and printed materials, which provide key support for our Anti-Racism and Equity work of the regional council. The Commissions, Committees, and Resource Teams also support Anti-Racism and Equity work through both policy and education.

Canadian Shield Regional Council celebrated becoming an Affirming Region and the United Church of Canada made a formal statement of apology to the 2S and LGBTQIA+ Community at the 45 General Council, with a designated worship service focusing on the apology! The apology can be viewed online at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGyyOYaAYak>

From CSRC, Peter Haddow is serving on a national task group to look at implementing the apology to 2S and LGBTQIA+ folk.

*United Church of Canada Statement Regarding the Apology:*

<https://united-church.ca/news/apology-offered-today-united-church-2s-and-lgbtqia-communities>

We also continue our journey towards living into right relations. The regional council continues to partner with the United Church who offers 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, videos, workshops and printed materials to support our work. See <https://united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/anti-racism>

### **2026 Equity Team**

The Regional Council Planning Team for 2026 has also included a Regional Council Equity Team to support our regional council gathering through learning, feedback and a vibrant and safe gathering through community engagement.

### **Work and Support of Ministry within The Regional Council**

The Regional Council Executive, Commissions, Committees and Resource Teams are involved in a wide variety of ministry-focusing on justice work, support to communities of faith, Ministry Personnel, granting, and youth.

The Canadian Shield Regional Council, through its Commissions, are involved in a wide variety of ministries focusing on support to communities of faith and Ministry Personnel. The Property

Commission, Pastoral Relations Commission, and Support to Communities of Faith Commission and their Resource Teams, focus on supporting communities of faith with transitions of Ministry Personnel and partnering with communities of faith through amalgamations. Sometimes communities of faith are sharing buildings with more than one United Church or many Faith Communities, along with the sale of Church property. The Commissions, Committees and Resource Teams are an invaluable extension of the work of the Executive and Canadian Shield Regional Council. We continue to work with the UCC Growth Department, focusing on supporting partnership, innovation, support to communities of faith, and emerging communities of faith.

### **Youth Ministry and Incorporated Ministry**

The pandemic had a major impact on regional youth ministry. In 2024, we hired a new part-time Youth Minister to support the work of youth ministry within both Shining Waters Regional Council and the Canadian Shield Regional Council. Our most recent in-person youth event was hosted by five regional councils, both in Guelph and Thunder Bay, which included the GC45 Youth Forum contingent. In August, the GC45 CSRC Youth and Young Adults joined a group of 100 youth at General Council to participate, pray, and grow together as United Church. Key youth ministry continues in CSRC in partnership with the Youth and Young Adult Resource Team, local communities of faith and local youth networks. Camp McDougall and Camp Duncan provide opportunities for youth ministry. Camp McDougall, along with many dedicated volunteers, plan to offer full camping program in 2026.

Along with our camps mentioned, the CSRC supports a number of Incorporated Ministries and local outreach ministry which support housing, address the challenges for the unhoused, underhoused, food instability, advocacy, justice, community support, and ministry outreach. These the local groups and Incorporated Ministries are key leaders within the regional council who expand the ministry of the United Church with many volunteer and staff hours. Their ministry is vital.

We celebrate the resilience of our communities of faith and outreach ministries across our regional council and express deep appreciation for their resilience, innovation, and Deep, Bold and Daring discipleship across the Canadian Shield Regional Council. We give thanks for the work of the General Council and the General Council Office.

As an Executive, we would also like to take time to give thanks for our Regional Council Staff, beginning with Melody Duncanson-Hales, who was called to serve the General Council fulltime this year. Her primary responsibility is the Canadian Shield Regional Council, after serving the CSRC and our region as local staff for many years!

We also give deep thanks for the ministry of Diane Matheson-Jimenez, Staff Lead and Minister of Community of Faith Support; Susan Whitehead, Executive Assistant and administrative support; Robert Smith, Communities of Faith Support and Pastoral Relations Minister; Jody Maltby, Minister of Finance; Shawn Redden, Minister of Justice and Faith Formation; Celio de Andrade Santos Jr., Administrative Support; Kathleen Jones, Administrative Support; Donna Rutz,

Communications and Administrative Support; Meranda MacKenzie, Bookkeeper; and from the General Council Office: Calin Lau, Growth Animator; Lillian Roberts, Office of Vocation.

We also celebrate the partnership with Shining Waters Regional Council staff including: Eun-Joo Park (Communities of Faith and Pastoral Relations Minister), Kim Uyede-Kai (Intercultural Diversity, Anit Racism and Right Relations Minister), Andrea Allan (Community of Faith Support and Pastoral Relations) and Mastard Sakala (Communities of Faith and Pastoral Relations Minister).