



From: Robert Murdock (Regional Representative: Shining Waters Region)

To: Official Board of Collier Street United

Chair Manuel and fellow Members:

Preamble:

The Inaugural Conference of the reformed Court of the United Church known as "**Shining Waters Regional Council**" was held on Friday, May 24, through Sunday, May 26th inclusive at Georgian College Campus in Barrie.

Regional Representatives from Collier Street United are: Erryle George, Laurie Lloyd, Maureen-Attwell-Murdock and Robert Murdock with Ministerial Representation from Rev. Hewitt Holmes, Rev. Richard Moffat and Rev. Dr. Don Jay. Mrs. Leona Appleby is a non-voting attendee.

The entire weekend was devoted to the theme of "Creating Connections" in the newly formed Court which extends from Lake Ontario to Parry Sound. This is a wide and diverse geographic, socio-economic and cultural varied slice of rural and urban communities of faith.

The challenges facing individual congregations contained many points of similarities and although area-specific issues were recognized, we tried to build on our common grounds as a Court reaching an area of over 3 million people.

Summary Report:

As this was the Inaugural Meeting, the emphasis was the transition from Living Waters Presbytery to Shining Waters Region. Areas of governance and budget were foremost on the agenda. "Networks and Clusters" was an underlying theme which fit

into the broader theme of "Creating Connections". This was all with a view to streamline the administration of the United Church in our area but also to provide a more effective resource for Churches while in need or in crisis. It became clear that many congregations are starting to develop and implement a "sharing model" implied in networking or clustering.

Budgetary constraints were highlighted as the income of the Region has been cut from 1.4 million dollars to just under 400 thousand dollars. Needless to say, staff cuts, attrition and job-sharing were necessary to implement, even at this early stage.

The liturgy of the United Church through this conference was emphasized for its inclusivity and acknowledgement of **all** peoples. Marginalized, racialized, physically and mentally challenged persons were especially considered as we seek to open our doors and our hearts to a concept of radical love. The Regional Council renewed its commitment to "Affirmation" as a general policy.

Social justice and ecological issues were also considered. Following in the traditions of other bodies within our Church, Rev. Susan Eagle and her team from Grace United Church, championed mental health and sexual orientation issues in our Vision Statement. They also authored and presented a motion to have a new Commission formed specifically tasked with issues of Social and Ecological Justice. There was a small concern that this issue only required a committee as opposed to a commission, but in the end it was successfully passed.

On a much lighter note, there were 5 Admittands to Ministry by Ordination and one transfer from the Church in Nigeria, Africa. Saturday afternoon was filled with this celebration. On Sunday morning and afternoon, following completion of the necessary voting and open and frank discussions, we then celebrated Retirees and Jubilands. There were two Ministers with 70 years of service, neither of whom could be in attendance. Next in order of seniority was our own Rev. Don Jay, who along with a classmate, were celebrating 65 years of ministry service to the United Church. A standing ovation was delivered in recognition of this outstanding length of service.

Many good contacts were made. Many new friendships and connections of ideas and resources were created and the entire 350 registered members left after extinguishing the Sacred Fire which had been lit on Friday to start our weekend.

With much enthusiasm and blessings,

Robert Murdock

Regional Rep.