

## **FRIENDS OF LIVING SKIES REGIONAL COUNCIL**

### **FARMLAND LEGACIES**

Farmland Legacies is a faith-based organization with representatives from the Anglican, Roman Catholic, Mennonite Central Committee and the United Church of Canada.

The Executive Council of Living Skies Regional Council appointed me as the Living Skies Regional Council Representative to the Farmland Legacies on March 24, 2022.

Presently we have a staff consisting of an Executive Director and an Office Manager and a Board of Directors of four members. We are hopeful that we can add more Directors to the Board in the coming year.

Farmland Legacies is a non-profit organization and a registered charity devoted to sustainable agriculture and food security. We acquire arable land through donation or bequest and lease land to persons who share our commitment to sustainable agricultural practices and act as stewards of the land. There are several ways you can entrust your property to Farmland Legacies

- A charitable gift
- Joint Partnership
- Bequest
- A Charitable donation

We promote growing food with awareness for health and consideration for the Earth (quote from Marilyn Gillis). We do this by acquiring land in trust and giving preference to young or beginning farmers. You can check us out our fresh and updated design on our web page at [farmlandlegacies.org](http://farmlandlegacies.org). As well we have a one-page summary of Farmland Legacies to be used in mail-outs and as introductory material for potential donors and sponsors.

Presently we have land in trust in several areas of Saskatchewan and Alberta. This past year there were 9 quarters of land placed in trust with Farmland Legacies.

In 2022 we donated over 41, 000 servings of beef to Saskatchewan Food Banks and soup kitchens. As well we added a new project this year - "Lentils for Lunch" which added another source of protein for the food banks and soup kitchens.

submitted by Rosellen Bjarnason

## **UNITED NETWORK FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE IN PALESTINE ISRAEL**



**"And the fruit of justice will be peace..." Isaiah 32:17**

UNJPPI , United Network for Justice and Peace in Palestine Israel , was created in 2012 with the encouragement and support of UCC. We have a dual role:

- a. support UCC efforts in working for justice for all who live in Israel and the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories, and for Palestinian refugees.
- b. encourage the UCC to stronger action to help achieve that justice.

Not surprisingly, many in UNJPPI served as Ecumenical companions in Palestine with the UCC's EAPPI program. Others went on 'Come and See' tours. UNJPPI does not file a formal annual report but UCC members can keep up with its work by reading the periodic newsletter, published in the Rambler.

The following are some of the main issues that UNJPPI has engaged on in the last year.

#### **GC 44**

In preparation for GC 44 which was to take place on Zoom, UNJPPI prepared an info package containing material on Palestine Israel for commissioners. GC44 was to vote on the recommendations from the Just Peace Task Group which offered a set of "Principles for decisions and actions towards a just peace" and on 6 proposals made by regions to lift up justice work for Palestine.

The GC Executive was asked to distribute the package but this was not possible so we worked with those commissioner emails that we had access to. At least 6 members of UNJPPI are commissioners. The feedback we received from them indicated that many commissioners were not sufficiently informed on Israel Palestine to make informed decisions.

On August 15 Omar Haramy from Sabeel, a funded UCC ecumenical partner organization in occupied East Jerusalem, met by zoom with fifteen people including: seven GC 44 Commissioners, UNJPPI Co-ordinating Team members and other activists committed to Palestinian human rights. We asked each other what happened at The United Church General Council 44 meetings this summer around the Palestinian proposals and what our next course of action is. Much disappointment was expressed.

It was recognized how often people claimed they did not know or understand the issues. We agreed we need to offer more education – both to those somewhat aware and interested and to those who are not at all interested. We recognized the impact of the word "anti-Semitism" and wondered how we might have some influence on the study of anti-Semitism to which the United Church has committed itself. We were reminded of the power of ordinary people within the Church and that we can exercise our power. How can we build networks on the ground? A working group was established to discuss strategy around anti-Semitism and the resources we have to offer to the Church.

After corresponding with the general secretary on concerns about GC44, the Coordinating Team met in March 2023 on zoom with Moderator, the Rev.Dr. Carmen Lansdowne, General Secretary, The Rev. Michael Blair, The Rev. Dr. Jennifer Jantzen - Ball (Executive Minister of Theological Leadership) and The Rev. Dr. Japhet Ndhlovu. (Church in Mission and Churches in Partnership).

UNJPPI Chair George Bartlett offered the story of Jim Manley, a retired UCC minister who was on the 'boat to Gaza.' He was arrested and declined the Israeli army's offer of release, refusing to go until all others were released too. Jim's action is a fitting example of the courageous actions for justice UCC members should be about; it's why we joined, and why we stayed-a history of solid action for justice, often when that action was not popular and not something that created revenue for the church.

We reminded the church leadership of the 2009 Kairos document "A Moment of Truth" which asked us to take a stance *against* apartheid and *for* justice speaking explicitly as Christians to Christians. In 2012 the Church responded by adopting several resolutions. In 2017 an open letter from Palestinian churches to the World Council of Churches, of which UCC is a member, warned the situation was 'beyond urgent'

In 2020 Global Kairos for Justice and Kairos Palestine issued a call for decisive action "rooted

in the language of love, holding firm to the hope articulated in the 2009 Kairos document: “A Moment of Truth” that Palestinians and Israel have a *common future*. The UCC, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada, Kairos Canada Ecumenical Justice initiative and the Anglican Church of Canada responded to this call with a letter admitting ‘with humility’ there was no agreements in the churches to fully endorse - or take on ourselves - all of the non-violent strategies for resistance and advocacy that were proposed.

It is UNJPPI’s role to help UCC fulfill the commitments made in 2012.

The general secretary responded that UCC has a history of making resolutions and not living up to them

We also raised the issue of problems with communication. Church leadership admitted that they found gaps in communication within the church as well as between church and congregations.

In work outside of GC44, UNJPPI employed a Palestinian academic to help us develop a BDS strategy to share with congregations. It can be found on our website, <https://unjpji.org/index.html>

### **Advocacy**

Only a few examples:

UNJPPI wrote numerous letters to Foreign Affairs Minister Joly when Canada did not respond when Defence for Children International Palestine (dci-P) and 6 other Palestinian NGOs were declared terrorist groups by Israel. Even the CIA has found the designation to be unsubstantiated. European partners have resumed funding but as Canada has not made its position clear, dci-P, a UCC partner organization, is having difficulty receiving donations via RBC. No answers have been received.

UNJPPI also wrote letters to Minister Joly about Canada’s silence when journalist Shireen Abu Akleh was killed by the Israeli army, and other cases involving human rights violations specifically of children (Ahmad Manasra, Shadi Khoury). UNJPPI endorsed petitions and letters to the United Nations and government bodies prepared by other Palestine advocacy organizations.

### **Ongoing work**

Engaging with UCC on antisemitism training in the church and improving communication; Continuing to educate commissioners in advance of the October GC44 session; Continuing to network with other Palestine advocacy groups. UNJPPI just held a highly successful in-person gathering in Calgary for EAs and advocacy groups in Western Canada.

### **Recommended resource**

Sabeel just released a new book: *This Is Where We Stand: A Sabeel Reflection on Antisemitism*. The webinar of the book launch will be on the kuminow.com website under Kumi Online. [Kumi Now Online Archive](#) Listen to reactions from Rabbis who reviewed the book. Available for download from [Fosna.org/fosnabookstore](http://Fosna.org/fosnabookstore). \$20 USD. Hardcopies also available.

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On behalf of UNJPPI.