



Working ecumenically for justice

The Justice and Peace Office

By Mark Hathaway, Ph.D.

From its earliest days, Scarborough Missions has been concerned about situations of poverty, injustice and oppression among the people they serve in mission. In 1911, Fr. John Mary Fraser, Scarborough's founder, responded to a devastating famine in China by using funds originally raised to build churches. Beginning in the 1940s, Scarborough missionaries in the Dominican Republic, the Philippines and Japan, worked to establish cooperatives and credit unions as a way to improve the people's lives. In the DR, Frs. Joe Ainslie, Harvey Steele, John Gault and John O'Connor were forced to flee the country due to their opposition to the brutal dictator Rafael Trujillo, and in 1965 Fr. Art MacKinnon was assassinated because of his defence of members of his parish who had been imprisoned by the Dominican military.

By the 1970s, formed by their experiences in mission, by Vatican II, and the statements of the Latin American bishops at Medellin and Puebla, and others, Scarborough missionaries were beginning to see that the causes of poverty and injustice were rooted in global economic and political systems. In particular, there was increasing evidence of the impact of Canadian government policies and corporate actions on the poor, both within and outside of Canada.

Scarboro recognized the need to do mission education in Canada through their Mission Centre, their magazine and other educational materials, including audiovisuals such as "Guess Who's Coming to Breakfast," which showed how the Gulf and Western Corporation exploited sugar workers in the Dominican Republic.

In the face of these pressing global situations of poverty and injustice, it became clear that the work for justice and peace could be done more effectively in collaboration with others. At different times, Scarborough missionaries in Canada worked with the Ontario Association of Priests for Social Justice, the Latin American Working Group, and the Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Southern Africa (TCLSAC). A number of missionaries like John Walsh and Bill Smith became involved in justice education activities via the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace. Others such as Robert (Buddy) Smith, Clair Yaeck and Terry Gallagher participated in the newly formed Canadian ecumenical church coalitions working on human rights and economic justice issues.

In 1976, Scarborough missionaries involved in many of these ministries were invited to form a committee to provide information, advice and input on social justice

involvements to the Society's General Council. Following this, the 1978 General Chapter mandated the formation of an office "to be responsible for Society commitments in this area," "to raise a free prophetic voice against all aspects of society and life in our age which impede the full humanization of all persons everywhere," and to respond to "the signs of the times."

Work and mandate

The Justice and Peace Office (JPO) was launched in 1980 with Fr. Tim Ryan as director. The mandate of the office drew on church teachings following Vatican II, particularly the work of theologians and bishops conferences in the global South that recognized human greed for wealth and power as a form of sin. Latin American bishops at Puebla, for example, spoke of evangelization as a process that disposes people "to fulfill themselves as children of God, liberates them from injustices and fosters their integral advancement" (Puebla #1145). The Asian bishops stated that "our preferential option should be for the poor. We assert that our commitment to justice and reform is not politically motivated but comes solely from a desire to follow Christ's radical teaching" (Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference, 1979).

At Scarborough Missions' 1982 Chapter, delegates affirmed

At the annual (since 1978) ecumenical Good Friday Walk for Justice in Toronto.

In this 1995 photo, Anne MacGregor-O'Neill (off-camera) leads a spiral dance in Nathan Phillips Square. Pictured are (near to far) Jack Lakavich, United Church of Canada (UCC) staff; teacher Rebecca Cunningham with John Mihevc of the Interchurch Committee on Africa; Mark Haslam, Patti Talbot, UCC; unidentified; Catholic theologian Bernard Smyth; Scarboro lay missionary Lorraine Reaume; teacher Vera Bratuz; lay missionary Mary Anne O'Connor; and Fr. Russ Sampson.



that raising “issues of injustice, especially those in which we as Canadians participate” was an integral part of Scarboro’s charism. The Chapter also affirmed that “our experience of solidarity with the poor pushes us on further in search of the causes of suffering and injustice. The analysis that we can make of our socio-economic system demonstrates that the centres of oppression and exploitation are here in the industrialized nations.”

During the next 20 years, the JPO continued to evolve and change with the times. Dan Gennarelli succeeded Tim Ryan as director from 1985 to 1993 and was joined by Kathy Gillis, and later by Monica Lambton and Anne-Marie Jackson. In 1993, Tim Ryan returned as director. At that time, as a lay missionary who had worked in Peru, I was asked to join Tim as associate director, a position I held until 1998. Throughout these years, the JPO focused on communication, education and advocacy work, including specific issues arising from Scarboro’s overseas work. At the same time, the office continued to consult with a wider group of Scarboro missionaries working on issues of justice, peace and care of creation via a Justice Ministries Group.

Ecumenical coalition work

Many of the JPO’s longest and deepest commitments were expressed in our work through a variety of Canadian ecumenical church coalitions. Most had two to four permanent staff members plus volunteer boards made up of representatives of the Catholic, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Anglican, United, and smaller churches. Catholic participation included not only representatives of Development and Peace and the Canadian Catholic Bishops’ Conference but also many religious congregations. Scarboro supported most of the 12 ecumenical coalitions financially and, through the JPO, was particularly involved in the work of TCCR (Taskforce on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility), ICCHRLA (Interchurch Committee on Human Rights in Latin America), CAWG (Canada-Asia Working Group) and ECEJ (Ecumenical Coalition on Economic Justice).

Through TCCR, Scarboro Missions worked with other churches to raise ethical concerns about Canadian corporate activity and practices that harmed the lives of the poor or caused ecological damage. Churches and religious congregations holding shares

in these companies would often sponsor resolutions at annual meetings to pressure for corporate responsibility. Tim Ryan served as the co-chair of TCCR for several years in the 1990s. In 1995, an Inter-Church Committee on Ecology was formed within TCCR to deal more broadly with issues such as climate change, mining and deforestation—including pioneering work with Canada’s Forest Stewardship Council. Former JPO director Dan Gennarelli served as the staff coordinator of this committee beginning in 1996.

Through ICCHRLA, the work focused on issues of human rights in both Central and South America. Scarboro missionaries in Brazil and Peru were raising alarms about human rights issues directly affecting the people in their parishes. In Brazil, deforestation, over-fishing and mega development projects were severely impacting Indigenous Peoples in the Amazon. In Peru, the worsening situation of conflict and violence was a major focus. Tim Ryan served as chair of ICCHRLA for two terms in the 1980s during which time he often testified at the UN Commission on Human Rights. I served as co-chair of ICCHRLA for several years in the 1990s and took part in advocacy work in Ottawa as well as Canadian church human rights



Kim Paisley (left) and Fr. Frank Hegel visit a human rights office in Peru to document abuses. 1991. During the 1980s and 90s, armed conflict between the government and guerrilla groups resulted in human rights abuses and thousands of deaths. Scarboro missionaries serving there during this time called for the intervention of Canadian churches and government.

delegations to Peru, Colombia, and Chiapas, Mexico.

Through CAWG (Canada-Asia Working Group), Scarboro worked on issues related to human rights and violence in the Philippines. At different times, Terry Gallagher, Ray O'Toole and Tim Ryan actively participated in CAWG's work.

Broader issues related to trade agreements, economic policies and social inequality were addressed through ECEJ (Ecumenical Coalition on Economic Justice) where Gerry Curry played an active role for many years. In the mid 1990s, I joined the ECEJ board and was also able to participate in the Moral Economy education project that conducted workshops with people from a wide cross-section of churches across the country on issues related to faith and economic justice.

From 1997 to 2001, Scarboro Missions joined with Canadian churches and many ecumenical coalitions to begin work on the Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative to focus on issues related to debt cancellation ("release from bondage"), the redistribution of wealth, and renewal of the Earth (right relationships

with Indigenous Peoples and ecology). The Initiative's petition to cancel the debt of the world's poorest nations gathered 640,000 signatures, the largest number in Canadian history. Shortly after this project was completed, the ecumenical coalitions merged to form KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, which continues to this day.

Key issues

During the tenure of Dan Gennarelli, Scarboro's Justice and Peace Office worked to halt construction of the Balbina hydroelectric dam in the prelate of Itacoatiara, Brazil. Scarboro missionaries working in the area provided information documenting how this dam threatened to contaminate the water of thousands of people and destroy the fisheries they depended on for their livelihood. In the end the dam was built, causing widespread sickness and hardship.

The work that was done to focus attention on World Bank loans for the Balbina dam raised concerns about the role of the bank in financing "maldevelopment"—development that actually

harm the poor. Ultimately, this advocacy work contributed to stricter environmental criterion in the World Bank and the call for its fundamental restructuring and remandating. Another offshoot of this work was the "50 Years is Enough" campaign promoted by the Inter-Church Coalition on Africa and the Ecumenical Coalition on Economic Justice, along with other international groups. Much of this work was continued by the Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative, including its call for the cancellation of crippling national debts that undermined the lives of the poor and of fragile ecosystems.

In the late 1980s, the parish of Scarboro missionaries Pat Kelly and Charlie Gervais in the province of Bukidnon, Philippines, became involved in the successful struggle to stop large-scale logging that threatened the local ecosystem and the livelihoods of the people. The JPO was able to highlight these struggles in its publications and support urgent actions to protect local activists.

In Peru, the worsening human rights situation throughout the 1980s and early 1990s led the



Dan Gennarelli, director of Scarboro's Justice and Peace Office, attends an inter-church coalition meeting in Toronto, 1992. Dan was from the Diocese of Syracuse, New York, and became an associate member of Scarboro Missions in 1983.

JPO to work not only through ICCHRLA but also the Peru Solidarity Forum, which had been formed with other North American Catholic mission groups. Fr. Frank Hegel, working at that time in Chiclayo, was an important source of information, sending frequent faxes to the JPO. In turn, the JPO was able to participate in urgent action campaigns to protect human rights advocates and put pressure on the Peruvian government to guarantee due process for political prisoners.

Communication and education

In all this work, the JPO tried to serve as a conduit for information between Scarboro's overseas missions and those advocating in Canada for issues of justice, peace and care of creation. For a time, the office published a newsletter called *Witnesses of Hope* that was distributed, not only to Scarboro missionaries but also to more than 700 subscribers. Besides highlighting the anti-logging struggle in the Philippines and work to halt the Balbina dam in Brazil, *Witnesses* featured articles on the church's social encyclicals, the connection between spirituality and social jus-

tice, the need for debt cancellation for poor nations like Guyana, and human rights issues.

Later, *Witnesses* was replaced by a JPO digest that distributed articles from a wide range of social justice-related publications to Scarboro missionaries. At the same time *Scarboro Missions* magazine increased its coverage of social justice issues, including special editions such as the 1996 "Economics —The care and management of our home," demonstrating the connection between social justice and care of planet Earth. Another special edition in 1998 was dedicated to the Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative. Copies of this magazine became one of the most widely distributed resources for that project.

In addition to its communication work, the JPO also served as an educational resource for schools, teachers' groups, parishes and other organizations. Within Scarboro Missions, the JPO facilitated several workshops for new missionaries preparing to go overseas on themes such as Catholic social teaching, social analysis, grassroots adult education and the work of the ecumenical coalitions.

Over its first two decades, the JPO evolved to encompass work not only on poverty, violence and human rights, but also on Indigenous Peoples, the

The JPO was able to participate in urgent action campaigns to protect human rights advocates and put pressure on the Peruvian government to guarantee due process for political prisoners.

integrity of creation and the deeper systemic roots of these issues. Throughout this time, the reflections of the poor, of social movements and of theologians from the global South—along with the Church's social teachings and the work of our ecumenical colleagues in Canada—guided our work and understandings. The ongoing flow of information and reflections from Scarboro missionaries, giving voice to the struggling communities they journeyed with in mission, grounded this work and guaranteed its authenticity. Throughout, the JPO worked to assist the Scarboro community to embody its commitment to live out a preferential option for the poor, the most vulnerable, and the Earth itself by advocating for human rights, social justice and the care of creation.[∞]

Mark Hathaway worked as a Scarboro lay missionary in Peru and Canada from 1982 to 1998. Mark is currently a postdoctoral researcher and educator at the University of Waterloo whose teaching in both Canada and Latin America focuses on transformative ecological learning and wisdom. Together with Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff, he is the author of The Tao of Liberation: Exploring the Ecology of Transformation (Orbis, 2009).



By Karen Van Loon

Cry of the poor, cry of the Earth

Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation

The Constitutions of Scarborough Missions begin with a quote from the Liturgy of the Hours: "Help us, Lord, to work with you to make this world alive with your Spirit and to build on earth a city of justice, love and peace." Justice and solidarity with the poor have long been at the heart of Scarborough's missionary spirituality.

In attempting to live out this missionary spirituality as well as respond to the signs of the times, the Justice and Peace Office (JPO) focused on three inter-related themes since the beginning of the new millennium:

- global economic justice;
- Indigenous Peoples' rights; and
- ecological justice with a focus on climate change.

Hearing the cry of the poor

In 1999 I returned from mission in Brazil to work in the Justice and Peace Office, which was directed by Fr. Tim Ryan. For the past four years I had been in Itacoatiara working in leadership formation and with small rural communities along the Amazon River as part of a preventative health ministry of the Brazilian Catholic Church. Sharing life with people on the margins of the global economy energized my own commitment to return to Canada to work for justice, so that everyone "may have life and have it to the full." (*John 10:10*)

I became involved in the ecumenical justice work Scarborough Missions has long supported,

beginning with debt cancellation and the work of the Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative (CEJI). From 1998 to 2001 CEJI worked on debt cancellation, initially in connection with the Jubilee 2000 campaign. CEJI debt cancellation efforts were seeking unconditional cancellation of low-income country debt owed to other countries and to international financial institu-

tions like the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and World Bank. In solidarity with debt campaigns in the Global South collaborating as Jubilee South, CEJI also began calling for cancellation of illegitimate debts (e.g. dictator debt, debt for destructive projects) owed by all developing countries.

With Jubilee South calling for continued international solidarity, and with CEJI ending, the Justice and Peace Office continued to work on debt cancellation through KAIROS, the Religious Coalition for Debt Cancellation, Make Poverty History Canada, and others. Persistent worldwide advocacy led to some progress between 1999 and 2006 when several low-income countries received 100 percent debt cancellation after they met all the conditions laid down by the IMF and World Bank. However, too many countries remained excluded or failed to meet the many conditions. Also, no independent process was set up to deal with illegitimate debt.

Unsustainable debt is on the rise again and calls for debt cancellation continue, including the Caribbean churches' appeal for debt relief after last year's devastating hurricane season.

In 2001, several Canadian religious congregations formed a network for discussion and information exchange on the work of KAIROS. This network nominated



Karen Van Loon (right) visits a rural community to work with women on alternative nutrition. Itacoatiara, Brazil, 1996. Karen worked with the Brazilian Bishops' Children's Pastoral in a preventative health ministry. Through courses and training, the pastoral also aimed to enable women to become agents of change within their communities.

representatives to serve terms on the KAIROS Steering Committee and program circles. Scarboro Missions Superior General Fr. Jack Lynch currently serves on the Steering Committee and I served for two years on the Sustainability Circle. Fr. Tim Ryan was involved in both the formation of KAIROS and this network.

The JPO also worked with Catholic, ecumenical and civil society organizations to seek just trade rules, increased overseas aid focused on ending poverty, and a more effective process for dealing with environmental and human rights complaints concerning Canadian mining and oil and gas companies operating overseas. All of these were issues of concern to countries where Scarboro missionaries were working.

In addition to ecumenical justice work I was interested in exploring interfaith possibilities. Scarboro Missions' interfaith office connected me with the Toronto Chapter of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP), a coalition promoting cooperation among the world's religions for peace. I joined WCRP and then I also became involved in the initial years of Faith & the Common Good, which was established to support Canada's diverse faith communities to seek common ground for the common good. By 2003 I was working alone in the



Catholic high school students on Parliament Hill, Ottawa, take part in the Jubilee debt campaign, which sought to eliminate CDN\$340 billion of debt owed by the world's poorest nations. May 11, 1999. Photo courtesy of Sara Stratton.

JPO and no longer had the time to continue this work.

After Tim Ryan retired in 2002, I became the coordinator of the JPO and began a consultation process of Scarboro missionaries to identify JPO priorities until Chapter 2007. Their response showed significant support for debt cancellation work as well as a new priority on Indigenous Peoples' rights. Work for peace was chosen as the third priority, given the "war on terror."

Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Some Scarboro missionaries have lived and worked among Indigenous Peoples and witnessed to their struggles in such places as Ecuador, Guyana, the Philippines, Thailand, and still ongoing in Brazil. Despite some gains in recognition of their rights, Indigenous Peoples around the world remain among the most disadvantaged with many facing threats and violence while defending their lands. They continue to call for their cultures, rights and traditional territories to be respected and protected.

"The struggle to eradicate poverty constitutes, in our eyes, a sign of the times by which God calls us, as well as a sign of hope for our world...Beyond aid, however, is the urgent need to redesign the unequal structures of the international free market system. Pope John Paul II, in the spirit of the Book of Leviticus (25:8-12), has called for the substantial reduction, if not outright cancellation, of the \$1.8 trillion international debt of poor countries as preparation for the Jubilee Year (2000)...Fairer and even preferential trade practices for the countries of the South, controls and taxes on international speculative investment, ecological tax reforms, curtailment of military spending, corporate codes of conduct and other restraints designed to increase dignified employment while fostering the circulation of more benefits in local communities, are all among laudable and possible goals."

The Struggle Against Poverty: A Sign of Hope in our World, Pastoral Letter by the Episcopal Commission for Social Affairs, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, October 1996



The work of peace. In front of the central house in Scarborough, missionaries and staff express support for the Canadian Churches' call to the Canadian government for a non-military response and "a peace-building approach to the problems of Iraq." 2002. Standing L-R: Fr. David Warren, staff member Inez Fernandes, Frs. Pat Kelly, Charlie Gervais, Gerry Curry, Vince Heffernan, and Gerry Sherry; staff members Philomena Scott and Varatharajasunda (Vee) Aiyadurai. Front L-R: Lay missionary Jean MacInnis; staff members Kathy Gillis and Marie Butler, Fr. John Carten and lay missionary Louise Malnachuk.

The final year (2000-2001) of the Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative focused on restoring right relations with the Earth and with Indigenous Peoples, recognizing that corporations and government policies were prioritizing wealth and resource extraction over Indigenous rights as well as damaging or appropriating their traditional lands. The JPO collaborated with CEJI education and actions seeking a better process in Canada to deal with Aboriginal land and other rights as well as effective Canadian regulation of corporate conduct to protect Indigenous Peoples' rights.

Calls for international solidarity from Indigenous organizations and peoples in Brazil influenced the JPO's decision to continue prioritizing work on Indigenous rights until 2017. The Indigenous Council of Roraima and Indigenous Peoples of Raposa Serra do Sol requested international support in 2004 and 2008 for their efforts to protect their traditional lands as well as protect Indigenous Peoples from violence. The JPO facilitated and promoted

these international solidarity requests as well as others.

Indigenous Peoples in Canada have also faced a long history of injustice. Between 2005 and 2008 the JPO participated in various solidarity efforts concerning the Lubicon Lake Cree in northern Alberta who were seeking a just land rights settlement as massive oil and gas development on their traditional lands was devastating their land, health and way of life. In later years the JPO promoted and I received training in facilitating the KAIROS Blanket Exercise, a participatory activity that helps people learn about Canada's history from the perspective of Indigenous Peoples. Demand for this teaching tool has grown considerably in the wake of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

For many years Indigenous Peoples from around the world, government delegates and others worked on drafting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, urging all countries to respect, protect and promote the rights of Indigenous Peoples. Between 2004 and 2015

the JPO participated in various advocacy efforts organized by KAIROS and others seeking Canadian government support, endorsement and effective implementation of the Declaration.

Hearing the cry of the Earth

Indigenous Peoples in many countries have continued to give voice to the cry of the Earth, as environmental impacts from resource development and climate change threaten their traditional lands, culture and spirituality. In Brazil, rice growers were causing deforestation and polluting rivers on Makushi traditional land. In Canada, oil and gas development was causing pollution and destroying wildlife habitat on Lubicon traditional land. We have much to learn from Indigenous Peoples about how to live wisely in caring for the Earth and for future generations as well as how to be respectful allies in care for our common home.

Initially, care for creation was integrated into JPO work on global economic justice or on Indigenous Peoples' rights. A shift happened

Scarboro Missions Ecological Mission Statement

"Source of life and goodness, you have created all things, to fill your creatures with every blessing and lead all people to the joyful vision of your light." (Preface Eucharistic Prayer IV)

when Scarboro missionaries at Chapters 2007 and 2012 unanimously supported a JPO proposal to make ecological justice with a focus on climate change the first priority for the office. Climate change was a sign of the times in 2007 with a major scientific assessment report on climate change released that year and an important UN climate change conference approaching in 2009. KAIROS also planned a three-year campaign (2007-2010) on moving Canada towards a just and sustainable energy economy.

Scarboro Missions was at the time participating in a pilot program of Faith & the Common Good called Greening Sacred Spaces which continues today to assist faith communities with the educational, spiritual and practical dimensions of reducing their ecological footprint. An energy audit conducted in 2006 at its central house in Scarborough, Ontario, led Scarboro Missions to gradually implement various energy retrofits including a solar assisted water heater with help from various grants. Scarboro missionaries and staff participated in education sessions on environmental practices as well as a process that led to the approval in 2009 of Scarboro's Ecological Mission Statement.

These steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions helped to strengthen Scarboro's climate

All creation is a revelation of God, from the shining stars and sun and the vast sky and waters, to the myriad diversity within the community of life—plants, animals, people and other life forms. God loves all of creation and called it "very good" (Gen.1:31). As bearers of the image of God we are called, within our capabilities, to collaborate with God in loving and caring for creation and especially for all that suffer. "We know that all creation is groaning in labour pains even until now; and not only creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:22-23).

Today, life on earth is threatened by an escalating ecological crisis—climate change, deforestation, pollution, species extinction and more. Ecological destruction, poverty and injustice are all intertwined in social structures and lifestyles which value individual status over community well-being, possessions over relationships, and profits over the common good of all life. We believe God is calling the human family to conversion—to a profound respect for all life; to a mending of our broken relationships with our sisters and brothers, with the community of life, and with the Creator.

We are grateful for the many committed people around the world working generously to protect the integrity of creation. At the same time we know that more efforts are needed. We belong to an interdependent community of life on earth. Our actions affect the earth's ability to sustain life. God ever invites us to "choose life" (Deut. 30:19), to restore right relationships and to choose a way of life based on solidarity and sufficiency rather than exploitation and excess. We believe God intended the human family to use wisely and distribute justly the bounty of God's earth so that all people may live with dignity both now and in the future and so that the community of life may flourish. Deep gratitude to God for the wonder of creation and the precious gift of life moves us to consistent action.

"I have come that they may have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10). Jesus Christ lived simply and showed the way of life and love, service and sacrifice. We desire to follow Jesus more closely and trust in the creative, redeeming and sustaining love of God. Scarboro Missions seeks:

- to live simply and more sustainably in solidarity with the poor and marginalized peoples of the world as well as with the whole community of life;
- to work on behalf of social and ecological justice.

change advocacy as they could be referenced in letters to government officials and at occasional meetings with our local MP. This advocacy tied primarily into the work of KAIROS, Make Poverty History Canada, and Citizens for Public Justice. Scarboro Missions also signed on to and promoted occasional public advocacy statements such as the Canadian Interfaith Call for Leadership and Action on Climate Change, developed through an interfaith process con-

nected with the Canadian Council of Churches.

In 2014 the name of the Justice and Peace Office was changed to the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Office to reflect the growing priority being given to work on care for creation.

Fossil Fuel Divestment

A growing international movement to divest from fossil fuel investments and re-invest in more sustainable alternatives began in

“We, representatives of Canadian faith communities, are united in our conviction that the growing crisis of climate change needs to be met by solutions that draw upon the moral and spiritual resources of the world’s religious traditions...We call for leadership to put the long-term interest of humanity and the planet ahead of short-term economic and national concerns.”

Canadian Interfaith Call for Leadership and Action on Climate Change, 2011

2012. People were questioning the morality and financial wisdom of fossil fuel investments when studies indicated that most fossil fuel reserves cannot be used if the world hopes to avoid more dangerous climate change.

Least developed and low-lying island or coastal countries—including Guyana, Malawi, Bahamas and other countries where Scarboro missionaries have served—are highly vulnerable to climate change impacts and continue to call for global warming to be kept below 1.5°C.

After discussion and reflection, Scarboro Missions decided in October 2014 to divest over a period of about five years from stocks and bonds in fossil fuels and related infrastructure. In April 2017 Scarboro’s General Council sent a letter to relevant officers and directors of all the fossil fuel companies informing them of the reasons for the recently completed divestment. The JPIC Office has occasionally shared this experience at faith-based discussions on divestment.

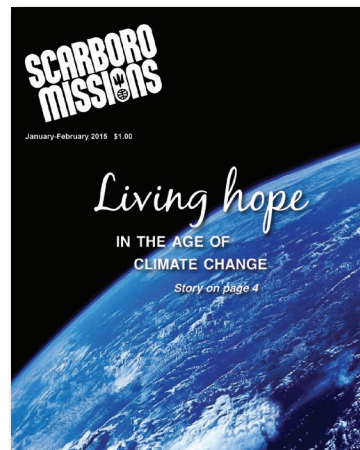
Laudato Si’ and Paris

Anticipation was growing in 2015. Countries were getting ready for the United Nations Conference on Climate Change in Paris. Pope Francis was preparing the first ever encyclical on ecology and planned to address the UN

General Assembly in September. In response, the JPIC Office made preparations to hire an Education Program Coordinator to develop and facilitate programs focused primarily on the Pope’s encyclical and on climate change. As well, the office contributed to a special issue of *Scarboro Missions* magazine (inset), which would be used as a resource for reflection and action.

Pope Francis released *Laudato Si’*, On Care for Our Common Home in mid-June amidst unprecedented worldwide attention. *Laudato Si’* was easy-to-read, yet a powerful and hope-filled message inviting every person on the planet to protect our common home in the face of environmental degradation, global poverty and growing inequality.

Paige Souter joined the JPIC Office as the Education Program Coordinator the same week that *Laudato Si’* was released. That fall, the office launched Caring for Creation, a program to help adults and young people understand



their Christian vocation to care for creation and for the most vulnerable. Paige and Fr. Dave Warren presented the five-part pilot series Caring for Our Common Home at Scarboro’s Mission Centre and Paige later facilitated the series in three parishes. During

her year with the JPIC Office, Paige facilitated and collaborated in workshops and retreats, did speaking engagements, and worked with others to develop resources on caring for creation and on *Laudato Si’*.

Communication and education

JPIC Office communication and education activities to build Scarboro community witness included circulating office news and reports as well as sharing information, facilitating conversations, and seeking collaborative action on priorities and concerns. Formation for new overseas mission candidates included a JPIC workshop introducing and inviting participation in Scarboro Missions’ work for justice, peace

“Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging and of a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life. A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal.”

Pope Francis, Laudato Si’ #202

and integrity of creation. The office also gave occasional presentations and workshops for Catholics and other groups, especially on care for creation.

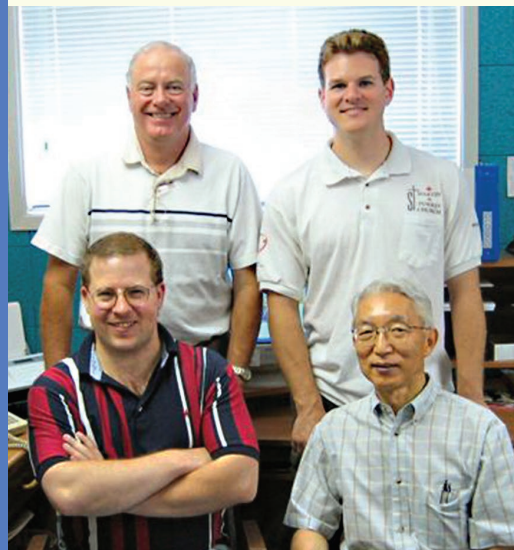
Scarboro Missions magazine and Scarboro’s website helped to raise awareness and invite a faith response to the signs of the times and to highlight the work of organizations such as KAIROS, Development and Peace, and Citizens for Public Justice. The JPIC Office contributed several articles to the magazine, including a special issue in 2005 on Indigenous Peoples. The Scarboro Missions website featured news related to office priorities and highlighted Catholic Social Teaching.

Transitions

Scarboro Missions’ work on behalf of justice, peace and integrity of creation evolved over the

years in response to the signs of the times as well as to the reality of a diminishing number of Scarboro missionaries serving either overseas or in Canada. The transition leading up to the closure of the JPIC Office at the end of 2017 was a busy and difficult time as commitments were gradually let go. Sorting through 37 years of JPO/JPIC Office files and resources was like traveling through time and revisiting all the JPIC work, struggles and celebrations over those years—the vast majority done collaboratively with other Catholic, ecumenical, interfaith and civil society organizations. Along the way it has been in the diversity of people coming together to seek the common good, persistence in the face of setbacks, and everyday acts of hope where I felt in the presence of “this world alive with God’s Spirit.”∞

After the JPIC Office closed, Karen Van Loon began work in February 2018 with Faith & the Common Good as coordinator for their new program, Cultivating Care for Our Common Home. Five years of legacy funding from Scarboro Missions is supporting this program. The program offers interactive presentations, workshops and collaboration to Catholic parishes and other groups in Toronto who would like to explore and respond more deeply to Pope Francis’ call for a new dialogue and a new solidarity in the work of caring for our common home (Laudato Si’ #14). Karen will be promoting neighbourhood, ecumenical and interfaith collaboration as part of this work. For more information please contact kvanloon@faithcommongood.org.



Standing, L-R: Fr. John Carten, director of the Mission Information Department, and Chris Atkinson, webmaster. Seated: Norbert Mayer, computer support consultant, and Roy Sakaguchi, web support. 2005.

Scarboro Missions website

www.scarboromissions.ca

The Scarboro community was saddened by the loss of two members of its technical team (photo above). Norbert Mayer, a father of five, died on September 2, 2009. For several years Norbert offered his computer expertise and assistance to departments and to individual missionaries.

Roy Sakaguchi, a wonderful Scarboro supporter and friend, died on March 13, 2017, after a brief illness. Roy had been an unpaid volunteer since 2003, focusing on website design and content. Fr. John Carten said, “We owe Roy an incredible debt of gratitude for all the work that he has done on our behalf.”

The website contains history and information about Scarboro Missions, as well as mission education learning tools, including links to comprehensive interfaith and justice, peace and the integrity of creation resources. Also on the site is a digital collection of every magazine edition going back to the inaugural issue of October 1919—an incredible 100-year history of mission.