



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA/L'ÉGLISE UNIE DU CANADA

# 2017 Year in Review



The Right Rev.  
Jordan Cantwell,  
Moderator



Nora Sanders,  
General Secretary

## Dear friends in Christ,

The National Aboriginal Spiritual Gathering in Pinawa, Man. last summer was an inspiring moment for us to witness the church's journey toward right relations. The Caretakers of the Indigenous Circle presented the principles for a full partnership with Indigenous peoples. This is one example of significant change occurring in the church (see page 12). We are also excited about the innovative work that was accomplished through EDGE and Embracing the Spirit funding in 2017 (see story below).

More change is on the horizon. Conferences, presbyteries, and pastoral charges across Canada have voted in favour of all but one of the remits on the agenda at the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Council (GC43) in July 2018. The structural simplification, now on the agenda for enactment at GC43, is aimed at freeing up volunteer time and financial resources to support a renewed commitment to mission and ministry. Thank you for sharing God's love in the world through your support for Mission & Service as we embrace change and all the hope that it offers.

## On the cutting edge

EDGE is transforming the way we think about, and "do," church. Here's a snapshot of a few things this innovation hub achieved in 2017:

- **450** people involved in the social mentor network.
- **300** non-church partnerships.
- **300** congregations participating in Embracing the Spirit (EDGE's learning network).
- **300** congregations in the Buying United cost-saving program.
- **200** communities of faith engaging in workshops.
- **One in six** faith communities in the church connecting with EDGE.

Find out more about EDGE, which is funded by Mission & Service, and how you can benefit from this initiative. Visit: [edge-ucc.ca](http://edge-ucc.ca) and [buyingunited.ca](http://buyingunited.ca)

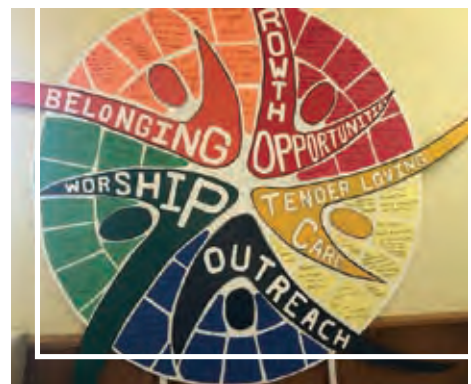


Photo: EDGE/The United Church of Canada

# Steps towards full inclusion

As progress toward full inclusion of LGBTQ people continues in the church, it's important to remember there are countries where rights are still attacked. That's why it is significant that in late 2017, about 40 people (including a dozen global partners, Affirm United, and the church's Partner Council) met with United Church staff and elected members to talk about how we might support LGBTQ rights around the world, and encourage a conversation toward inclusion.

Participants in this LGBTQTwoSpirit consultation included four Indigenous people who identify as Two Spirit. They guided a talking circle, kept a sacred fire, and led sunrise ceremonies. Their experience will be part of ongoing discussions in Indigenous settings across the church.



Photo: Jim Hodgson/The United Church of Canada

Global partners—some of whom face personal risk in their home countries because of their identity—supported the United Church's advocacy of human rights and inclusion, and called for more “south-south” dialogue.

## Spotlight on Mission & Service global partners



Photo: Paul Jeffrey/ACT Alliance

### Rohingya: relief for a real-life nightmare

The Rohingya people are considered the world's most persecuted minority. Almost a million individuals, like this mother and child, have fled violence in Myanmar and now live in refugee camps in Bangladesh. The United Church began accepting donations for the Rohingya crisis in 2017. Mission & Service partner ACT Alliance is on the ground providing food, clean water, sanitation, health services, and shelter. For more information and to make a donation, search for “rohingya-crisis” on [united-church.ca](http://united-church.ca)





Photos: Robert Massey

## Rendez-vous 2017

### **Be the Church/Soyons l'église**

Empowering. Exceptional. Eye-opening. These are just a few sentiments that youth from across Canada used to describe their Rendez-vous 2017 experience in Montreal last August. The event brought together 600 young people and leaders over four days of worship, prayer, singing, and learning about social justice issues. Highlights include Moderator Jordan Cantwell—who attended each day, speaking with participants and leading worship—and the presence and leadership of global partners. Rendez-vous happens just once every three years, but it deeply inspires participants who return home motivated to engage with, and lead in, their churches, communities, and beyond.



# Your gifts to Mission & Service have made so much possible in God's world in 2017

Thank you to United Church Women (UCW), congregations, and individuals for \$23.205 million in giving to the Mission & Service of the church.

Your generosity continues with giving from congregations, UCW, and individuals decreasing quite slowly (by \$474,000 or 2%) as the church continues to experience a decline in the number of members and adherents (down by 2.94% in 2016).

In 2017 (as in 2015), a significant increase in gifts from wills and planned giving has offset those decreases and resulted in total gifts of \$26 million, marking a small increase of \$75,000 in total giving to the Mission & Service Unified Fund over 2016!

## **Contributions to the Mission & Service Unified Fund:**

1. \$23.205 million in annual giving by congregations, UCW, and individuals.
  2. \$1.831 million in giving through wills and planned giving.
  3. \$0.964 million in giving from donors to the United Church of Canada Foundation.
- TOTAL:** \$26 million in total gifts to Mission & Service Unified Fund in 2017.

## **Contributions to Mission & Service Partners and Other Mission and Ministries:**

4. \$1.085 million in specific designations and Gifts with Vision catalogue gifts to Mission & Service partners.
  5. \$1.049 million in Emergency Appeal gifts.
  6. \$0.800 million in specific designations to other work of the denomination.
  7. \$2.934 million in total designated gifts in 2017.
- TOTAL:** \$28.934 million in total contributions received at the General Council Office in 2017.

## **As we look forward into 2018 and 2019, there is a significant opportunity to increase participation in congregational and Mission & Service giving through:**

- Showing the strengthened role of the Mission & Service of the church with:
  - the addition of Embracing the Spirit to the Mission & Service;
  - clarifying the role of Mission & Service in Mission & Ministry as proposed in the remits.
- Providing congregational and Mission & Service giving program leaders with proven resources as well as coaching and mentoring from our experienced staff.

We make great things happen through Mission & Service and the ministry of our local churches. Thank you for generously giving to Mission & Service and helping change the world.

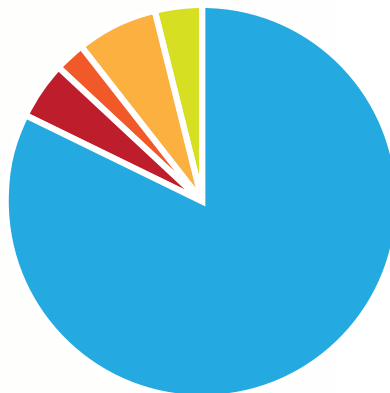


Photo: Ruth Noble/The United Church of Canada

Job Mwetich, the Organization of African Instituted Churches' Farm Director, dances with women who are leading the way in conservation farming.

# Thank You!

## SOURCES OF \$26 MILLION IN CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE MISSION & SERVICE UNIFIED FUND



- Congregations \$21.36 million
- Wills and Life Insurance \$1.831 million
- UCW \$1.22 million
- United Church Foundation \$0.964 million
- Individuals \$0.625 million





# Financial snapshot

## **The United Church of Canada**

In 2017, there was considerable change in the church as it planned for more innovation and remit implementation. Operating results were better than the original budget projections, with a particularly strong contribution from our investments, leading to a small surplus. The investment asset mix was adjusted at year-end to hold more liquid investments in anticipation of greater volatility in markets, and to reduce the risk of needing to sell investments during a market correction. In addition, we remain a leader in the faith community, promoting responsible investing in partnership with SHARE.

The General Council Office reduced its environmental and financial footprint by 60% in 2017, consolidating to a single open-concept floor with greatly improved digital capacity and overall efficiency. In this move, 92% of materials from the former space were repurposed, recycled, or donated. Electronic meetings have become a common way of saving money across the church to focus more resources on mission. In September 2017, the commissioners of General Council convened electronically to deal with a few hours of business that, in the past, would have required an expensive face-to-face meeting. The General Council Executive also met this way. Both efforts saved thousands of dollars as well as many days of staff and volunteer time. The audited financial statements will be available online. Search [united-church.ca](http://united-church.ca)

## **The United Church of Canada Foundation**

In 2017, individuals and communities across the country continued to generously support the long-term work of the church through the Foundation. We are grateful for the support the General Council has shown since the Foundation's inception, including the transfer of its long-term assets in 2013. As of December 31, 2017, the Foundation had \$66,572,246 million in assets, an increase of \$7,872,324, or 13.4%, over 2016. In 2017, the Foundation provided a total of \$5,589,441 million in grants. This included the board awarding: 43 grants from Seeds of Hope, totalling \$327,616; 14 grants from New Ministries Funds, totalling \$293,000; 25 scholarships and academic awards, totalling \$64,250; and 12 grants from the Good Samaritan Fund, totalling \$189,865. The Foundation also granted \$925,111 to the Mission & Service Unified Fund and gave \$653,443 to Mission & Service partners and programs.



Photo: Gary Tompkins

Protestors show support for Mohawk people over disputed lands in Oka, Quebec.

## On the frontlines of reconciliation

Coast to coast, congregations put their passion, time, and talents behind countless social justice issues.

In Montreal, Trinity United Church's advocacy work made national news during the summer of 2017. Church members joined The Right Relations Committee of Quebec Presbytery and GO Project youth as they stood in solidarity with the Mohawk people of Kanehsatake in Quebec, who are deeply concerned about construction on their ancestral lands. Everyone who participated was invited into a prayer circle and smudging ceremony.

The Rev. Read Sherman, the minister of Trinity United Church, told CTV National News, "It's important for us to show up at protests like this, to try and build a new relationship that is more based on justice and equality, rather than one people over another."

Living out the concept of reconciliation, the group will continue to support the Mohawk participants as they seek a process of proper consultation, respect for human rights, and monitor the situation.

**We are grateful**

The inspiring initiatives and stories of how we are changing lives featured in this Year in Review are made possible by your gifts to Mission & Service. Thank you for offering hope and compassion to people and communities in Canada and around the globe. Your support is transforming the world. To make a gift, visit

**[united-church.ca/donate](https://united-church.ca/donate)**



# Moderator Jordan Cantwell

## A milestone to remember

### Iridescence: The Living Apology Project Launched: September 2017

“2018 marks 30 years since the United Church voted to approve that sexual orientation will not be a barrier to ordination or commissioning in the church. Many in our church were deeply hurt in the lead up to, and years following, that decision. Hearing sincere words of apology and repentance may be an important part of the healing journey. Confession, lament, repentance, truth-telling, healing, celebration—these are the principles



Photo: Iridescence/The United Church of Canada

The Right Rev. Jordan Cantwell, Moderator.

at the heart of Iridescence. They are deeply theological and profoundly spiritual gifts.”

Learn more and get involved: [iridesce.ca](http://iridesce.ca)

Photo: Amani Bawani



## Seeing is believing

A Mission & Service pilgrimage to Kenya in spring 2017 allowed participants from across Canada to see the life-changing impact of Mission & Service global partnerships first hand. They went to a refugee camp, learned about farming, food security, LGBTQ+ rights, women’s empowerment efforts, and saw the inspiring work of child ambassadors.

## Spotlight on Mission & Service global partners

The group of 17 also saw Christian and Muslim relations in action with visits to a number of Mission & Service global partners. These valuable partners include: the National Council of Churches in Kenya; All African Conference of Churches; Kenya Alliance for the Advancement of Children’s Rights; Organization of African Instituted Churches; World Student Christian Federation; ACT Alliance; The Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa; and Pembizo Christian Council.

Embracing the theme of “Come and See, Go and Tell,” participants have passionately shared their experience and insight, nurturing enthusiasm for Mission & Service. Contact your Conference office or Ruth Noble at the General Council Office ([rnoble@united-church.ca](mailto:rnoble@united-church.ca)) if your congregation or group would like to hear from one of our pilgrims.

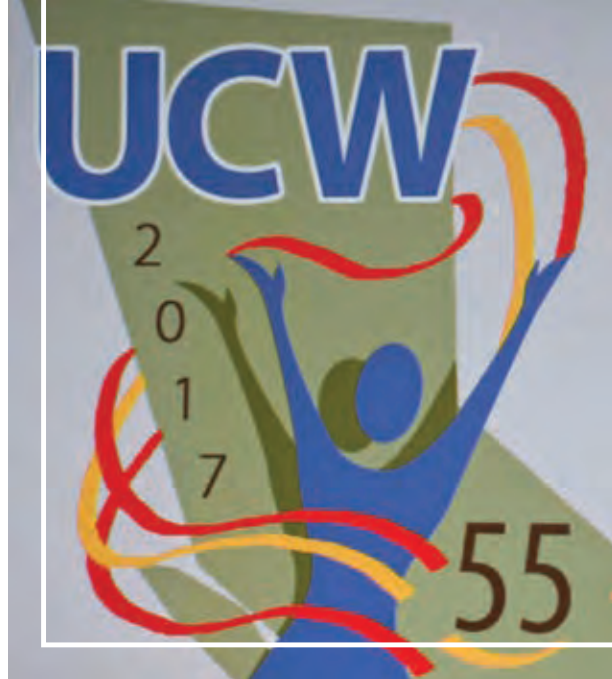


# United Church Women

## 55 and going strong

The presence of two special guests at the United Church Women's (UCW) 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary event last summer demonstrates the tremendous impact this group has on so many lives.

The UCW has a rich history of fundraising, community-building, and social advocacy. This includes raising \$268,956 over five years (ending in 2017) for traditional birth attendants at the Morogoro Training Centre, a United Church partner in Tanzania. So it was fitting that during its 55<sup>th</sup> year, two UCW members went to Morogoro, and two women from the training centre travelled to Vancouver last July to join the UCW at "Celebrating the Spirit." Over 300 women from all across Canada—and as far away as Bermuda, Tanzania, and Korea—gathered



to celebrate, worship, and join educational sessions.

A major highlight of UCW's work includes its ongoing support of the "Child Well-Being Initiative," a program sponsored by Mission & Service and UCW to raise awareness about child poverty in Canada. UCW members have delivered scores of "Dolls of Hope" (a symbol of the campaign) to politicians in different parts of Canada. It's inspiring to think about what the UCW will accomplish over the next 55 years.

### Spotlight on Mission & Service global partners



Photo: ACT Alliance

### Compassion in action

In fall 2017, a series of hurricanes struck several countries and territories in the Caribbean, and two major earthquakes hit Mexico. Our partnership with ACT Alliance supported those who were impacted. ACT members worked quickly to assist with evacuations and emergency shelters where necessary. ACT also helped communities rebuild.



Photos: Sara Stratton/The United Church of Canada

Canada–Australia Reconciliation Dialogue delegation.

## Cross-continental reconciliation

Moderator Jordan Cantwell’s vision of sharing reconciliation experiences with Australian church groups came to life in July 2017. The United Church hosted eight representatives of The Uniting Church and the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, both from Australia. Despite the distance, we share many similarities, notably, our nations’ and churches’ similar—yet distinct—histories of colonization and journeys toward self-determination and reconciliation. The Australia Delegation learned about the United Church’s ongoing reconciliation journey as participants and hosts travelled to Vancouver, Treaty Four Territory in Saskatchewan, and the National Aboriginal Spiritual Gathering in Pinawa, Man.

There were many deeply moving experiences that included learning

about the history and current context of Indigenous peoples. And there were opportunities for Indigenous culture and traditions to be celebrated and shared.

The Australia-Canada Dialogue continues in 2018. A United Church group went to Australia in March. As one participant from Australia noted, “visits like this offer an important sign to the world.”





# The ongoing work of resettling refugees

The efforts of settling refugees were not in the media spotlight in 2017. Still, a great deal of work was underway. Many refugees arrived in Canada last year, keeping church groups busy. Other groups were helping out with the “echo effect,” or surge in family reunification, as refugees began the process of bringing relatives to Canada.

The General Council Office (GCO) helps church groups settle refugees and processes new applications every day. “We deal with crises and often play the role of counsellor,”



Photo: Don Workman

Nour Yassin is one of the family members who is sponsored by Hillhurst United Church in Calgary.

says Khwaka Kukubo, a refugee program adviser with the GCO. The church also continues to support global partners, such as The Middle East Council of Churches, in their response to the ongoing refugee crisis.

# Spotlight on mutual recognition

A warm welcome greeted the Rev. Noel Suministrado when he arrived from the Philippines last year to serve at Broadway Disciples Church in Winnipeg. He is the first minister to be appointed under the United Church’s mutual recognition agreement with the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. In another 2017 first, the Rev. Tazvionepi Nyarota of Zimbabwe began her role as mission coordinator for the Zimbabwean community in Western Canada. The ministry is a partnership with the United Church, Edmonton Presbytery, and the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church.



Photo: Alan Hall/The United Church of Canada

The Rev. Noel Suministrado (second from left) is a newly covenanted minister at Broadway Disciples United in Winnipeg.

Being an inclusive church that embraces newcomer ministers as well immigrant communities in Canada is at the heart of our mission.

# “We have our own way of doing things”

**“Calls to the Church” provides a way to build relationships of mutuality, equity, and respect**

“Our roots have been broken by colonialism and we will restore them,” reads the Indigenous Church’s “Calls to the Church” document. Over 2016 and into 2017 the Caretakers of Our Indigenous Circle (a group of Indigenous leaders) consulted with Indigenous peoples and communities of faith on a common vision in this time of structural change. Their “Calls to the Church” were affirmed at the 2017 National Aboriginal Spiritual Gathering held in Pinawa, Man.

“Calls to the Church” shares Elder Alberta Billy’s insight that Indigenous peoples have their “own way of doing things.” The document calls for a new relationship with a repentant church. It also spells out concrete measures toward self-determination, including an Indigenous office in the



“Indigenous people want a fresh start,” says Marlene Lightning of the Caretakers of Our Indigenous Circle. “Historically the church did not ask us what we believe.”

Office of Vocation, Indigenous oversight of Indigenous ministry students, and a strong and well-resourced national Indigenous Elders council.

To learn more, search for “Calls to the Church,” “reconciliation and justice,” and “Indigenous ministries” on [united-church.ca](http://united-church.ca)

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