

# The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada

## Strategic Plan

### 2023–2025



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# Executive Summary

**A Call, Vision, and Plan will guide us as we strive to boldly embody the Christian story in this time, filled with certainty of resurrection and hope for new life.**

We believe The United Church of Canada is called to witness in love and justice to the liberating, healing Christ risen in this place and time. Through discerning a strong purpose and offering a clear vision for the church, together with a strategic plan for the General Council Office, we express common hope “for such a time as this” (Esther 4:14), disrupting narratives of decline and despair in our church in the last years. Our overarching goal is to create the conditions for renewal, dedicating focus, energy, and resources to slowing—if not interrupting—a decrease in participation, giving, and impact.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul claims a resurrection hope in a perilous time: “Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness” (2 Cor. 3:12). We too claim such a hope to ground us towards a bold and vibrant future for The United Church of Canada. Recognizing the social trends to secularize and fragment, we know we are swimming upstream in claiming this hope and working towards growth and renewal. And yet, believing that God is not finished with us yet, we continue to live the Good News as a unique witness in our place and time, calling ourselves to Deep Spirituality, Bold Discipleship, and Daring Justice in a church renewed.

Between 2023 and 2025, we will be clear about **where** we are going, **what** we are doing, and **how** we are doing it. The General Council has confirmed a Call and Vision, a North Star, that will guide our path as this unique and particular witness of God’s people. We are inviting the church to find common identity in six words: Deep Spirituality, Bold Discipleship,

Daring Justice. This is our **Call**, grounded in our statements of faith, right relations commitment, and core values, but articulated anew for this time. Along with our Call is a **Vision** to become “a bold, connected, and evolving church” as disciples of Jesus in this place.

We invite diverse reflections and robust study, visioning, and planning as we share this Call and Vision with one another across the church, but perhaps even more importantly with God’s whole aching world. We are excited to see how regional councils and communities of faith, including congregations, camps, education centres, chaplaincies, community ministries, networks, clusters, and communities of the future (whose shape we do not yet know) will live out this renewed direction for the whole church.

Oriented by the Call and Vision and guided by the consultation process, the General Council Executive approved strategic objectives. They articulate what the General Council Office will do in its role as coordinator, connector, and service provider to move towards the Vision. Covering areas of justice, leadership, common good, climate integrity, growth, with Indigenous pathways, they form the substantive goals towards which the General Secretary will guide the work of staff at the General Council Office. These objectives will shape what we do, and what we leave behind.

These objectives do not form six separate plans but one strategic plan with an overarching priority: **growth**.

In partnership with regions and the Indigenous Church, the national ministry will dedicate focus, energy, and resources to revitalizing the church towards a vibrant future. We will **renew** by strengthening existing communities of faith towards transformation. We will **create** by encouraging the development and sustainability of 100 new communities of faith, with a particular focus on churches that serve migrant communities. And we will **invite** by investing in sharing our unique witness with neighbours across the country and encouraging participation in our ministries, communities, and campaigns. This passion for growth will be enabled by leadership development, supported by denomination-wide strengths, fostered by justice campaigns and climate initiatives, and realized alongside Indigenous pathways. Our priority plan pulls key activities in each of these strategic objectives into service towards dynamic growth.

Transforming the church is not simply about where we are going or what we are doing but also how we will do it. We will change current ways of working towards new culture, systems, and processes. Key to these changes in the General Council Office is committing to the plan and to being accountable for the objectives, initiatives, and activities. Efforts will be tracked, measured, and adjusted based on research and evaluation. We will strive to align the plan, the budget, and how we deploy and assess human resources. We will be able to adjust the plan, but through common decision-making that takes into account what revising is required across the whole system. Our goal is to have a common orientation towards work that is deep, bold, and daring, and common organizational values—integrity, respect, equity, innovation, service—permeating all we do, from delivering services to offering theological leadership.



# How This Plan Was Developed

**This has been a Spirit-led process to articulate an inspiring purpose, direction, and plan for The United Church of Canada “for such a time as this” (Esther 4:14).**

In light of the earlier restructuring of the church, and in response to BC03 - Leading on Purpose and BCO5 - A Vision to Ground Us (available at [commons.united-church.ca](https://commons.united-church.ca)), General Council 43 recommended developing a common mission and vision for The United Church of Canada. This work overlapped with the General Council Executive's (GCE's) desire to establish some clear priorities for the national work of the denomination and the General Council Office (GCO). These pieces of work were brought together in a broad consultation process that led to creating the Call and Vision for the whole church and a full strategic plan for the General Council Office for 2023–2025.

An advisory Project Team from across the church was formed in December 2020. The team reviewed relevant denominational reports, reflections, and statements, and confirmed organizational values, beginning with joint reflection by the National Indigenous Council (NIC) and the General Council Executive. A series of right relations commitments were also confirmed and understood to be foundational for developing the plan, such as the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), the [Calls to the Church](#), and [Working Towards Becoming an Anti-Racist Church](#).

In February and March 2021, again engaging the NIC and GCE, six key areas were identified that were seen to offer challenge but also opportunity. Out of these, three possible directions for the General Council Office were developed,

each with a proposed mission and vision statement. [A series of consultations](#) on mission, vision, and possible objectives and initiatives for the GCO followed: Moderator's Town Halls (5), Indigenous Church Circles (4), and virtual focus groups with specific communities across the church and partnerships (23). These virtual gatherings were in addition to a set of focused surveys.

By the end of June 2021, a proposed mission and vision statement was being tested with church leaders, including regional council presidents/chairs, principals of theological schools, and staff leaders. In August, the refined statement was tested with General Council commissioners through a survey, to strong support. The final proposed statement was brought to the General Council Executive on September 25, 2021, which reviewed and revised the statement and recommended it to General Council 43.

Following the unanimous support of the mission and vision statement at the annual meeting, the GCE gave final approval to five strategic objectives for the General Council Office for the General Secretary to develop into an accountable operational plan for 2023–2025. Responding to input from the National Indigenous Council, and in recognition of the destructive legacy of colonization, the word “Mission” was changed to “Call.”

Between December 2021 and October 2022, the General Secretary supported animating the church's new [Call and](#)



Vision across the denomination and oversaw the development of a first operational plan for the General Council Office. This has included integration with GC44 outcomes, and discernment on Indigenous pathways in the five identified Strategic Objective areas and as a unique stream. The first year of this operational plan, with priority and comprehensive aspects, was received by the General Council Executive in November 2022, alongside 2023 budget principles.



# Affirmation, Values, Commitments, and Approach

These affirmations, values, and commitments are understood to be foundational to the Call and Vision, and to the strategic plan.

## Affirmations Drawn from Our Tradition

- Basis of Union
- 1940 Statement of Faith
- A New Creed
- A Song of Faith

## Values Developed with the National Indigenous Council and the GCE

- Christian Faith
- Sacred Story
- Compassion
- Integrity
- Respect
- Community
- Equity
- Reconciliation
- Service
- Humility
- Innovation

## Commitments Drawn from Our Statements

- To right relations with Indigenous Peoples: Reflected in the United Church apologies and commitments to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Calls to the Church
- To become a church that is anti-racist, intercultural, affirming, open, accessible and barrier-free, and functionally bilingual
- To live principles of partnership in global and Canadian solidarity\*

\*Such as from "Reviewing Partnership in the Context of Empire" (2009) and "Canadian Partnership" (2012).

## Approach

A vital and vibrant future for the United Church relies on the health of each part—national, regional, and communities of faith, including in and

with the Indigenous Church. In a healthy church, the General Council Office supports the regions, which support communities of faith as the primary

locus of ministry. Approaching how to implement this plan will require paying attention to the roles of each part and to positive and supportive interconnections.

# Call and Vision

**Becoming Beloved Community.** Our Call was developed through a widely consultative process that strove to reflect the core of what The United Church of Canada seeks to be in this time.

While the six words and three phrases stand alone, they also reflect a process through which a deep and grounded faith compels a life of bold discipleship lived in worship, service, and community, and expressed in the church and world in daring acts of justice.

The Vision aims to reflect what the church aspires to be within a 5- to 10-year span.

Living purposefully into this vision anticipates becoming what some call the Beloved Community, the ever-inbreaking, ever-transforming, ever-reconciling realm of God, realized in our time.



**Called by God, as disciples of Jesus, The United Church of Canada seeks to be a bold, connected, evolving church of diverse, courageous, hope-filled communities united in deep spirituality, inspiring worship, and daring justice.**



# Strategic Objectives

Strategic objectives to guide progress towards the Vision were approved by the General Council Executive. They are focused on the ministry of the General Council Office. While each objective has a specific theme—justice, leadership, the common good, climate, growth, and Indigenous pathways—there are strong intersections among them. Each objective forms part of the operational plan, and is broken down further into initiatives and activities that will be accountably tracked and evaluated.

## Embolden Justice: Collaborating to Mend Church and World

**Make meaningful collective progress on Indigenous justice, racial equity, and Two Spirit or LGBTQIA+ rights both in the church and world, while demonstrably deepening bold effective solidarity on other justice issues, through ecumenical collaboration and denominational networking.**

Dedication to social, economic, and ecological justice—in the church, in Canada, and around the world—is an essential ministry of The United Church of Canada that is rooted in our relationship with God. Commitments to Indigenous justice and right relations, to becoming an intercultural and anti-racist church, to becoming accessible and barrier-free, to welcoming people of all sexual orientations and gender identities—all contribute to living out our bold discipleship.

This means we must collectively address historic and ongoing injustices in the church by living out our apologies to Indigenous peoples and confronting the church's racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of systemic discrimination. We must strive to be both justice-seeking and justice-living at every level of the United Church: the General Council Office, regional councils, communities of faith, with members, and with adherents. Focusing on being just and doing justice, and informed by those who are most affected, how might we involve the whole church in

these critically important areas from 2022 through 2025, in partnership where possible, and also as an expression of our identity? How might we, as people of faith, be engaged in advocacy and justice-making beyond the church and in the world?

The non-Indigenous church is called to do this work collaboratively with the Indigenous Church and in partnership with ecumenical and interfaith partners, global partners, and people's movements around the globe. Does "such a time as this" (Esther 4:14) call for an even deeper ecumenical collaboration? Are there other global partnerships and justice initiatives that might best be undertaken together?

While the General Council Office has a particular role in social justice work and nurturing national and global partnerships on behalf of the church, the strength of our justice work is measured by communities of faith consistently leading on justice. We need to continuously pay attention to the

intersections of spirituality and justice, liturgical rites and human rights, pastoral care and justice-making. We must ensure the tools, support, and invitation to do so are as creative and inclusive as possible, and commit to inviting an

even greater diversity of communities and people to “do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God” (Micah 6:8). We are called to both live out our faithful witness within the church and to live out our faith in the public square.

## In the Next Years

- We will continue to empower the advocacy of the whole people of God, affirming and strengthening commitments from individuals, communities of faith, and regions as expressions of the justice ministries of The United Church of Canada.
- We will work to live up to our responsibilities, dismantle systemic oppressions within the United Church, and also participate robustly in public advocacy in the community.
- We will seek to go deep on three core commitments—Indigenous justice, racial equity, and Two Spirit or LGBTQIA+ rights—while discerning and working with intersections/overlapping issues, particularly climate justice.
- On other core commitments, we will nurture networks and deepen collaborations.
- Working with our global, Canadian, and ecumenical colleagues, we will discern ways to better coordinate advocacy to strengthen our collective voice.



## Invigorate Leadership: Adapting and Innovating for Bold Discipleship

**Renew a vision of leadership based on the call of the denomination—deep spirituality, bold discipleship and daring justice—and align discernment, recruitment, training, and support of ordered and lay leadership, to this vision.**

While the pandemic intensified change, the landscape for ministry in the church and the world was already one of rapid development. Within a radically changing context, we must ask: How can we find and nurture the leadership we need—lay and ordered—for this moment and for a future we discern and create from the signs of these times? The church needs leaders who are diverse in identity, who are collaborative, curious, adaptive, innovative, and faithful, embodying bold discipleship and sustaining the bold discipleship of others.

A focus on leadership is one way to address challenges in the denominational and organizational culture that impede the bold change required in this time. Some of these challenges include competitiveness, work being done in isolation from other work (“silos”), high degrees of criticism, lack of trust of decisions, and reliance on every individual voice rather than on collective processes. In this context, there can be a fear among leaders to truly lead, acting decisively and accountably, for the common good. In the national and regional staff systems, there is potential to strengthen accountabilities and enhance teamwork to achieve results, as two more aspects of organizational culture change.

The United Church of Canada asserts that to “embody God’s love in the world, the work of the church requires the ministry and discipleship of all believers” (A Song of Faith, 2006). A vibrant future requires new strategies for affirming and equipping lay leadership. This includes congregational and community ministry and bold discipleship in personal and professional lives.

In ordered and lay roles, in Indigenous and non-Indigenous church, The United Church of Canada is gifted with tremendous leaders. And yet, there appear to be unintentional barriers to attracting and sustaining exceptional leaders in the authorization and oversight systems for ministry personnel, as well as in the educational pathways. Questions continue to be raised about whether current training and ongoing learning are suited to the demands of the present and the future. For instance, is there sufficient focus on emotional intelligence (including self-awareness), conflict management, property development, community engagement, and adaptive leadership? Does ministry formation help change the paradigm to the collaborative ministry that is our future? Is lifelong learning expected and supported with adequate materials, money, and staff?

## In the Next Years

- We will strive to shift our culture.
- We will assess the changing needs of communities and the denomination.
- We will work to align policies and systems for training, authorizing, and overseeing paid, accountable ministry with the Vision.
- We will reinvigorate our commitment to the ministry of the whole people of God through coordinated support.
- We will encourage and support more collaborative leadership.
- We will enhance the vitality of communities of faith by recruiting, engaging, equipping, and supporting diverse and innovative leadership, both lay and ordered, staff, and elected members serving on national committees.
- Priorities for staff time, financial, and other resources will be given to leadership development, guided by three commitments: 1. "first third" ministries (children, youth and young adults); 2. our commitments to equity, diversity, inclusion, and becoming an intercultural and anti-racist church; and 3. building relationships of trust and accountability.



## Nurture the Common Good: Equity and Sustainability in Resources

**Significantly increase denominational capacity and will to make decisions on properties and resources focused on the ministry of the whole church, enhancing equity, sustainability, right relations, and administrative efficiency and effectiveness.**

A Canadian church calls for a complex balance between regional diversity and national cohesion, as well as recognition of the sovereignty of Indigenous nations, the distinctness of francophone identity and culture, and the multiracial and multilingual nature of our society. A United Church also lives creative tensions between congregational and whole-denominational structures and approaches. Nurturing the Common Good aims for a strengthened focus on the needs of the whole while respecting diversity.

Denominational inequities chip away at our collective integrity. We have everything from well-equipped congregations with large endowment funds to churches without bathrooms that are constantly facing closure. There are painful situations where churches that rely on rental income are charging significant rent to other United churches, including migrant communities with little ability to pay.

For congregations across the church, this is a time of stress and loss. Common concerns include worries about failing to pass on faith and challenges of governance and property for aging communities. The pandemic has also shown that people experience church and worship in many ways, and the digital capacity of the whole church needs to evolve in response. In remote, rural, and Indigenous communities these are more

acute crises as the communities struggle to survive secularism, depopulation, and, in the case of the Indigenous church, the weight of colonialism.

There is also inequity between regions, but the assessment process has been a giant leap forward in sharing across the church. During the pandemic, there were examples of denominational capacity to pull together, with communities of faith experiencing regional and national solidarity through concrete advice, resources, and support. There have been recent significant investments in shared services, particularly among regions. Denominational-wide services will be further explored and implemented to include communities of faith and possibly even other denominations, with a view to greater effectiveness and cost containment, recognizing that there are continued emerging needs such as in information technology (IT). We will also address the much-expressed desire for a stronger national, coordinated strategy to deal with property, focused on a purpose-driven and sustainable whole-church approach, and lending support and guidance to congregations navigating the complexity of climate issues, neighbourhood needs, regional ministry opportunities, and denominational equity, alongside the needs of the specific community of faith.

## In the Next Years

- We will explore innovative strategies to support communities, address inequities, increase sustainability, and mobilize new and existing resources for purposeful growth that reflects our Call and Vision.
- While being mindful of financial constraints, we will recognize the church's abundance, particularly as seen through the lens of its people, investments, and properties.
- We will seek to share services within and beyond the denomination, including to support IT innovation, lighten administration, decrease costs, and increase effectiveness.
- We will work differently, collaborating wherever possible. We will strive for a more equitable, coordinated, and adaptive denomination that is equipped for bold collective discipleship in our present and our future.
- We will develop planning, deepen capacity for evaluation, review policies, and strengthen governance and accountability.





## Deepen Integrity: Living Climate Commitments

**Amplify and integrate current initiatives in a bold, hopeful denominational climate strategy that accelerates reductions towards the goal of an 80% decrease in emissions by 2030.**

The United Church of Canada has a particular responsibility as a religious institution to dramatically reduce our carbon footprint. To be a credible climate justice leader, the church must not only put its own house in order but also collaborate with Indigenous peoples, global partners, and the ecumenical community in strategies that reflect renewed eco-spirituality, Indigenous self-determination, youth engagement, and sustained advocacy.

We must acknowledge the interconnections between ecocide and genocide and Christianity's collusion in both. Historical interpretations of the Bible have played a role in ecological degradation and in repressing the wisdom and spirituality of Indigenous peoples. The current climate movement has a particular responsibility to be guided by Indigenous peoples around the globe, who have been consistently faithful in caring for and protecting Creation. Can we integrate the call to live with respect in Creation across all our ministries and operations and intensify church-wide participation, communal and individual, in courageous action?

The focus of our efforts to dramatically reduce our carbon footprint must be our buildings, where heat and light continue to be the largest contributors to emissions. [Faithful Footprints](#) has been successful in offering congregations opportunities to improve their buildings' energy and carbon performance. The climate emergency requires that this work

be expanded with a more ambitious target for reduced emissions for the church as a whole. As the pandemic winds down, transportation emissions will present another important place to reduce emissions. [United Property Resource Corporation's](#) commitment to net zero redevelopment of property should also continue to be affirmed as a contribution to the construction sector and system change. As well as buildings, church green spaces of all kinds offer possibilities for reconnecting with the earth and deepening ecological commitment, such as through protecting biodiversity or producing food. What further opportunities exist for communities of faith to be disciples in their watersheds?

The United Church's history of commitment to climate justice includes advocacy and investor action, as well as organizing towards a collective vision with ecumenical partners and civil society. A renewed faith-in-action campaign—[For the Love of Creation](#)—offers new opportunities for United Church communities to collaborate on climate justice, including urging governments to take meaningful action on climate change. In addition to responding to the climate advocacy of existing global partners, there are opportunities to build new relationships, including with young people whose moral leadership has been unparalleled. What opportunities are there to strengthen intergenerational relationships with communities, including youth, who share our commitments to ecological justice?

## In the Next Years

- We will face the climate emergency through deepened commitment to reducing our carbon emissions, consistently integrating this goal across buildings as well as programs, services, and operations.
- We will invite United Church members to encourage this commitment in their own households and support local calls for action in their communities.
- We will strengthen collaborations with Indigenous communities, global partners, and ecumenical bodies.
- We will encourage ongoing learning, particularly as offered by Indigenous communities, that facilitates reconnection to the earth, and explore the intersections between eco-spirituality and social justice.
- We will strive to make a faithful and ambitious contribution to the climate movement as part of the necessary transformation required to protect God's living world.



## Strengthen Invitation: Humility and Confidence in Sharing Faith

**Develop and implement effective and connected regional and national strategies that result in growth within existing ministries, and by seeding and sustaining new expressions of communities of faith.**

If personally and communally we experience the good news of God's grace as liberation and healing, as life-giving invitation to Beloved Community, then the instinct to share our story with seekers is more than appropriate. And yet congregations and other ministries across the United Church, with a strong belief in Christ's transformation, report lacking the confidence to share faith and build community with their neighbourhoods. Failure to consistently find words and strategies for that invitation may be compromising our capacity to grow.

While broader North American trends of secularization have affected our denomination and religious affiliation as a whole, opportunities for outreach remain, for example to migrant communities, progressive spiritual but not religious individuals, and younger Christians no longer comfortable in conservative Christian contexts. A vibrant future for the United Church requires developing our collective confidence in deepening invitation and sharing faith to make new disciples of Jesus. As we strengthen our voice in invitation, we might also amplify our voice of influence, more effectively speaking into secular

society the just and inclusive values and commitments deeply needed across Canada and the world.

Being tentative about proclaiming our beliefs is understandable given the evangelism, both globally and in what is now Canada, that was linked to colonization and genocide. While we recognize important exceptions, particularly related to Indigenous leadership, the "good news" was fused with imperial conquest and ethnic superiority, as displayed in the horrors of residential schools. Through our apologies to Indigenous peoples, we have pledged to neither ignore nor evade this complicity in spiritual violence but to take responsibility for it. In global and interfaith relationships, we also reckon with a damaging trajectory of conversion over invitation. It is essential that we show our capacity to live the change reflected by our stated commitments. There is no place for paternalism. An ethical future for the United Church requires true humility in our continued invitation and genuine integrity in our continued influence.

## In the Next Years

- We will seek to strengthen a consistent invitational culture across our church that is both humble and confident.
- We will demonstrate vulnerability and listening.
- We will discern gaps in diverse expressions of church that might be filled in non-traditional ways.
- We will be informed by Indigenous and migrant communities within our church, and with global partners, who are striving to live the gospel free of colonialism.
- We will be particularly attentive to opportunities for mutual transformation through engagement with youth, and Indigenous, migrant, and francophone communities and peoples.
- We will energize our invitational strategies with evidence and expertise.
- We will amplify our unique Christian voice and innovate and broadcast with digital tools.
- We will share faith in word and action that holds to the true test of the good news of Christ—personal, church, and social transformation that is liberating and healing.



## Journeying Indigenous Pathways: Forging Right Relations

**Deepen Indigenization and healing in The United Church of Canada towards self-determination and the possibility of reconciliation.**

Indigenous ministries of The United Church of Canada have been evolving, struggling, adapting, and growing since church union. Even before union, ministries like the Grand River Methodist Mission, founded in 1825, were serving communities. In the transition to The United Church of Canada, and throughout the denomination's history, Indigenous communities have not been treated as autonomous nations and Indigenous ministries have not been understood as self-governing. It is time to move towards a different relationship.

Currently, the National Indigenous Circle embraces all Indigenous ministries of The United Church of Canada across the land, both urban and rural. The National Indigenous Council is the Executive of the Circle. A new relational framework within the United Church is needed so the Indigenous Church and the non-Indigenous church can truly move towards being “partners in God’s call to all the earth.”

The Haudenosaunee speak of the Two-Row Wampum, a covenant of two peoples travelling down a river, each in their own canoe, allowing one another to be who they are. This covenant leads us to imagine two bodies side by side—the United Church with all its complexity, the National Indigenous Circle with similar complexity. Together we will support each other’s journey.

This means focusing our efforts on constructing the governance framework of the National Indigenous Circle, necessitating changes to the United Church’s structure so it properly reflects the governance of the Indigenous United Church and its relationship to the General Council and General Council Executive. This work to develop governance that supports a truly Indigenous Church addresses the Indigenous framework envisioned in the Calls to the Church and accepted by General Council 43. It also begins to live out the United Church’s commitment to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

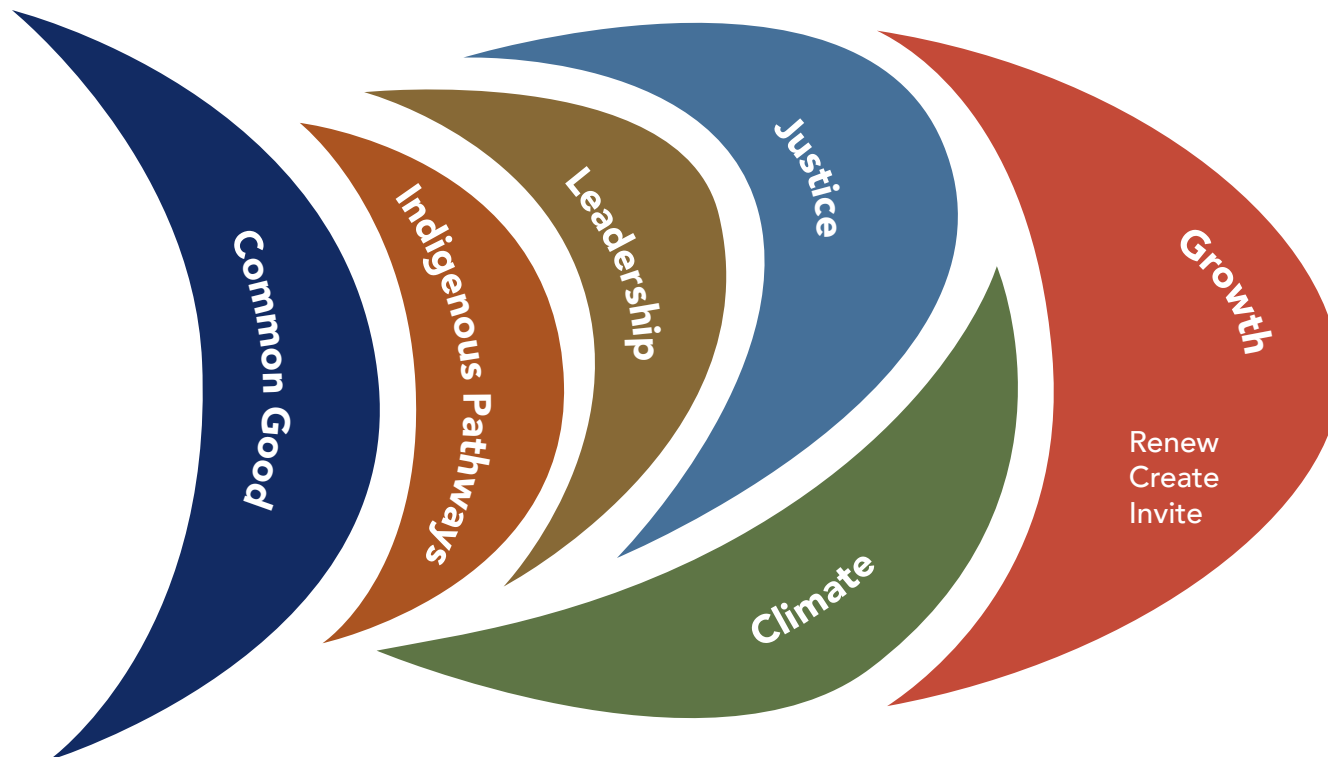
### In the Next Years

- We will build consensus towards a governance way and structure for the Indigenous Church, including as it relates to the broader United Church.
- We will develop a longer-term funding model for Indigenous ministries.
- We will create and implement an Indigenous Testamur.
- We will facilitate recovery and development of Indigenous ways of being and knowing in theologies and spiritual practices.
- We will sustain and grow Indigenous youth leadership.
- In connection to the [Invitation strategic objective](#), we will create and sustain new Indigenous ministries, particularly in urban settings

## Priority Plan

Under the direction of the General Secretary, and working with regional colleagues, the staff of the General Council have developed a detailed plan—initiatives, activities, and key results—to advance each of the strategic objectives. This will be used to shape workplans for staff, including letting go of pieces of existing work. Staff leaders have drawn from this comprehensive plan, weaving key priority activities together in a strategy towards growth to create the priority plan.

### Priority Plan: Lead towards Growth





## Leading Priority: Growth

The first and leading priority will be achieving the strategic objective related to **growth**: Strengthen Invitation: Humility and Confidence in Sharing Faith. Working in partnership with regions and the Indigenous Church, we will advance three interconnected streams of work to revitalize and activate growth:

**Renew:** We will strengthen the capacities of existing communities of faith to welcome, attract, retain, transform, and send people into the world. This includes assessing current tools, and mapping the coaching and consulting resources—national, regional, and related ministries—including stewardship support. The hope is to work towards a creative, robust, clear, and coordinated set of resources to help communities of faith strengthen invitation and innovation, reducing duplication and filling in key gaps.

**Create:** Mapping demographic information and assessing community needs, we will propose, develop, and create 100 new communities of faith with a view to their long-term sustainability. This involves segmenting into key target communities—such as migrant, intercultural, persons with disabilities, young adults, and francophone—and working directly with the Indigenous Church to invest in growth animators that are or will engage church planters and online ministry creators. Strategies will include experimentation to learn from and unlock current policies that inhibit growth, new partnerships that invite collaborative outreach to communities, seeking leadership among current admission ministers, and negotiating agreements with full communion and global church partners regarding migrant communities.

**Invite:** Drawing deep on the new Call and Vision, we will galvanize common identity and purpose across the church, strengthening the understanding of our discipleship in this time. Clearer about our identity and unique public witness, and mindful of diversity, we will develop multi-pronged and targeted strategies to communicate effectively with different groups of the public about the spiritual home or pathways to home in the church. We will use the 100th anniversary of the United Church in 2025 as an opportunity to celebrate, commemorate, lament, and learn, reaching out beyond those who attend United churches to renew relationships with those who identify with our denomination or share our values.

## Supporting Priorities

Working with the Indigenous Church and in partnership with regions where appropriate, activities within the remaining strategic objectives will support the overarching commitment to growth.

### Justice

Being clear about our identity and unique public witness requires bold action on social justice commitments. Priority justice activities:

- **Advocate** in robust, creative, and effective ways to advance Indigenous justice, equity in housing for racialized communities, and Two Spirit or LGBTQIA+ refugee rights.
- **Engage** in cross-sectoral change-making conversations about issues that matter, led by the Moderator.
- **Fulfill** our denominational responsibilities for specific impacts of colonizing mission within and beyond residential institutions.
- **Advance** frameworks and strategies for reparations.
- **Transform** theologies and existing congregations towards racial justice and right relations, and denominational justice-making towards a principle-based approach.

### Leadership

The capacity to create and transform communities of faith requires recruiting, engaging, equipping, and supporting diverse and innovative leadership. Priority leadership activities:

- **Develop** a coordinated and extensive set of lay leadership programs based on assessment and research.
- **Identify** young leaders in the church and support their continued development, including in a Moderator's mentorship initiative.
- **Enhance** collaborative, innovative, and diverse ministry through experiments in different models and through renewed recruitment and admission processes.
- **Reimagine** theological education through a process that enables schools to collaborate around the ministry needs of the future.

### Common Good

Renewing our attention to growth includes unleashing denominational capacities to support the whole church. Priority activities related to the common good:

- **Implement** a self-insurance program for the denomination.
- **Integrate** granting and donation portals and information management services across the denomination.
- **Steward** church buildings or money released from sales for future ministry and implement pooling of investment resources.
- **Target** a national capital fundraising program for the church's 100th anniversary in 2025.

## Climate

Our integrity as a denomination contributes to our capacity to flourish. Priority activities related to climate:

- **Expand** Faithful Footprints denomination-wide to improve the energy efficiency and reduce the carbon pollution of church buildings.
- **Champion** attention to urgency of the climate emergency by tangibly strengthening education and advocacy for climate justice across the denomination.

## Indigenous Pathways

Clearing the path towards a self-governing Indigenous Church will enhance the growth and development of the whole United Church community. Priority activities in Indigenous pathways:

- **Build** consensus towards a governance structure for the Indigenous Church.
- **Initiate** new local Indigenous ministries, with a focus on urban communities.



## Monitoring and Evaluation

The General Council Executive will monitor the strategic plan related to progress on the strategic objectives, with particular attention to the priority plan. The General Secretary will provide high-level reports based on monitoring the detailed operational plan.

The operational plan uses objectives and key results (OKRs). Each activity in the plan will have an activity lead and will be tracked on a monthly basis related to key results. Those results will then be a measure of progress on the strategic objective.

Strong progress or issues of concern will be flagged with the Executive Minister responsible for the related strategic objective area. Quarterly, senior management will examine reports and identify key issues. An annual evaluation will be done to help adjust the operational plan for the next year. Key to this process is the capacity to measure, using baselines and key results, and basing decisions on data. Because of this use of concrete data, projects can be adjusted in a timely manner.

## Resources

Resources—financial, human, and time—will be linked to the strategic plan, including its priority commitment to renewal and growth. The plan anticipates tolerating an operating budget deficit in 2023, including committing an annual incremental investment in the plan not to exceed \$1.5 million. Within 2023, **strategic** decisions regarding needed reductions in 2024 will be possible given implementation of a focused plan.

While currently the budget for the General Council Office is organized around units, we will shift to link the budget to the activities related to each strategic objective. This will align expenditures to progress on each strategic objective, and enable us to show the impact of budget expenses.

For more information contact [planning@united-church.ca](mailto:planning@united-church.ca).

