

GENERAL SECRETARY'S ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

Origin: General Secretary

"Since we have such a hope, we are very bold." 2 Corinthians 3:12 (English Standard Version)

Executive Summary

This is the final General Secretary's report for the triennium. It provides some updates and progress on the work of the General Council Office, reports from bodies accountable to the General Council and some information about events. The report begins by lifting some of the risk factors being monitored and managed by the Management Team.

Introduction

As I pen this report, we are in the liturgical season of Epiphany; it is Black History (African Heritage) Month; Donald Trump has been serving as the 47th President of the United States of America for less than 30 days; there is a fragile ceasefire in the war in Gaza; a provincial election is in progress here in Ontario; Justin Trudeau has resigned as Prime Minister; the parliament of Canada is prorogued, and there is a leadership contest among the Liberals and the possibility of a federal election looming.

There is fear and anxiety, and much uncertainty about the economy, as well as increasing oppression of members of the LGBTQ community globally. It is impossible to trivialize the fear and disheartenment in these uncertain times.

When we meet in March, we will be in the early days of Lent, the time of journeying to the cross and the anticipation of the resurrection. It is important to keep our contexts in mind as we gather to do our work. Like Isaiah (6), *"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up."* As we look for the presence of God in our midst.

"We sing of a church seeking to continue the story of Jesus by embodying Christ's presence in the world. We are called together by Christ as a community of broken but hopeful believers, loving what he loved, living what he taught, striving to be faithful servants of God in our time and place." (Song of Faith)

As the triennium draws to a close, we have much for which to be grateful. This Executive has worked hard. We had to deal with some difficult and complex issues, but we have worked as a team and struggled to understand our governance role. We have lived into the strategic operational plan; we have sought to anchor our work around the North Star of the Call and Vision. I personally find it heartening when I visit communities of faith and see the ways they are seeking to live into the vision. Recently, I was with the folks at St. Luke's United Church in Toronto, a motley crew of faithful disciples, a significantly diverse church with a big heart and a

mandate to care for the marginalized community outside of their building – each Sunday they begin their worship by grounding themselves in the Call and Vision.

The church has not always lived up to its vision. It requires the Spirit to reorient it, helping it to live an emerging faith while honouring tradition, challenging it to live by grace rather than entitlement, for we are called to be a blessing to the earth. (Song of Faith)

As we lean into our 100th anniversary, I am hearing that many of our communities are ambivalent about commemorating/celebrating this milestone. The struggle for survival, the lingering effects of COVID, and the challenges related to the colonial project – the abuse and genocide of Indigenous peoples, the weariness of coming to terms with white privilege and racism – I think all contribute to the challenges. As I hear this, I can't help but remember the reflection of Peter Gordon White on a similar reluctance and reticence around the 65th anniversary in 1990:

“Would it be better then to let this time pass and not to speak of ourselves to ourselves? That would be to assume that the perplexities of our generation are so exceptional that we are overwhelmed by them. It would be to trap ourselves in a petulant state of mind: if we cannot be the way we were, we will not be at all, as though past problems were all minor and present one insurmountable. It would be to say that we speak only in a confident voice, in triumph not in tribulation (Peter Gordon White, Voices & Visions – 65 Years of The United Church of Canada)”

“God, propel us into your future, rooted in the richness of our past.” (Call to Purpose)

My imagination continues to be shaped by the work of Rishad Tobaccowala – *The future does not fit in the containers of the past.* In a recent [article](#), Tobaccowala identified four (4) Keys to Leading Today: Passion for Excellence, Face and Accept Reality, Empathy combined with Vulnerability and Continuous Improvement. At the November meeting of the Executive, you engaged with the framing of the emerging strategic operational plan- – Vision 2035. This is a framework that is reflective of the qualities that Tobaccowala has identified.

As we partner with God in mending the world, and as we continue to refine and operationalize Vision 2035, we hold the challenges and importance of:

- our progressive identity
- our commitment as a justice seeking/justice living church
- our solidarity and companionship with global partners
- our ecumenical DNA, and
- our unique Canadian identity.

So, as you work your way through this report and the various proposals coming before you, be aware we are engaging with a significant amount of complex and competing values, each proposal has its own impact, and we will need to figure out how we keep in mind the good of the whole. I would encourage you to use the risk factors and Vision 2035 as a framework for evaluating the proposals before you at this meeting.

Risk Management

As a management team, we continue to pay attention to the ongoing impact of COVID; the health and well-being of ministry personnel, and the tension between our polity, practices and the changing context of the church and world – including climate impacts, technological advancements, housing costs, risk of a recession, economic inflation, foreign exchange fluctuation, changing governments and policies, changes in immigration and the aging demographics of our members, to name a few. However, there are other risk factors we are observing and managing.

It is critical for the church that we, as management and governors, are intentional about using a risk-management framework for our work and decision-making. I have often identified some of the risk factors being managed by the Management Team, and I realize that, as an Executive, we have not engaged with the issues named. The Audit Committee does keep an eye on a variety of risk issues, for which we are grateful. For this report, I am identifying these issues up front and invite you to engage with them as we make decisions at this meeting and prepare for the 45th General Council. As a risk framework we seek to pay attention to political, economic, social, technology, legal/leadership and environment factors (**PESTLE**). Here is an overview of some of the factors we are attentive to:

Financial/Economic

Uncollected assessments: At the beginning of 2024, there was about \$1.5M in outstanding assessment reimbursement, which grew to \$2M at the end of 2024. We are trying to understand the reasoning for the lack of payment and determine a process for collecting.

Mission and service income is showing decline year over year.

Captive insurance: The captive insurance alleviates the premium increase pressure for congregations but doesn't eliminate the claim risk.

2026-2028 budget and the possibility of increasing assessment.

Possible Loss of Charity Tax Exemption [Commons Report](#) [cccc report](#)

United Property Resource Corporation as we continue to understand the reality of affordable housing, the expected financial return to the General Council Office will be less than expected in the immediate future.

Governance

Recommendations from the two task groups – Task Group Report Total Compensation and the Office of the Moderator and General Secretary – will have implications for the church. The work on the implementation of the governance structure of the Indigenous Church is another relational factor we are monitoring.

Advocacy

Concern for Political Activity

Israel-Palestine Advocacy

Operational

Move to 300 Bloor

Staff Demographics

Cyber security

Pension & benefits service levels

Reputational

Staff Complaint (Antisemitism)

Broadview

Strategic Operational Plan

We have now completed the second year of an annual GCO plan linked to the overall strategic objectives. Please see the 2024 Q4 Strategic Plan report for further detail. We are working on an annual report bringing forward highlights of 2024 with financial reporting. Two years in, we are seeing tangible results across the plan, including in the Growth initiative, which was both new within this strategic plan and identified as the highest priority. Some of the results include: new attendees from invite plans developed by congregations; new ministries within existing congregations; 25 emerging migrant and diaspora communities of faith, and new donors and subscribers from denominational outreach strategies.

With the presence of a research and development team (data), there has been significant advance in the use of data in decision-making, particularly by making retrieval and analysis more accessible, not only in the GCO but also with regions. This has not only helped facilitate better decision-making in the Growth initiative, but also in other aspects of the plan.

In a critically important advance, staff were able to develop the annual plan for 2025, with budget, for approval prior to the end of 2024. It is hoped that 2026-2028 might offer the opportunity for more denomination-wide coordination and sharper focus in furthering strategic directions in significant continuity to the existing plan. Increased capacity with data is providing deeper and wider denomination-wide analysis of both the current and future trends in the church. The emerging picture makes clear the need for greater national-regional strategic collaboration to sustain and increase the resilience, diversity and inspiration of communities of faith across the country.

New initiative: 100 Tables This initiative will form a cornerstone of the “A Place at the Table” campaign celebrating the church’s Centennial in 2025. In this campaign, we extend an inclusive welcome to all to participate in the church’s continued Call and Vision. The campaign's key platforms will be national and local media, united-church.ca, and our social media channels. The “A Place at the Table” kick-off event and launch are expected at Easter.

The Growth Animators, working with feedback from regional colleagues and others have compiled a list of 134 promising participating Communities of Faith (COFs) of the 100 Tables Project. As of February 11, 2025, 77 of them have received invitations, responding with excitement at being invited and many have responded that they are taking this idea to their governing body with 10 having already confirmed their desire to participate.

In this project, 100 tables will be set up outside of United Church buildings; each table will be used to express each community’s unique incarnation of Jesus’ invitation to the Table, and together they will form a nationwide symbol of the church’s commitment to justice and the thriving neighbourhoods we call home.

Indigenous Church

The National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering (NISG) was held at the end of November 2024 in Winnipeg. The National Indigenous Elders Council has committed to offering leadership for the time being, as they engage with the communities to determine the future of the National Indigenous Council. You can find the Elders’ statement [here](#). I will not be replacing the Executive Minister position until we have some clarity from the Elders.

Financial Management

2024 Financial Preview: As we finalize the fiscal year of 2024, it's still too early to provide a complete year-end financial update. However, I'm delighted to share some preliminary insights. The UCC's treasury investment portfolio has performed exceptionally well, achieving a double-digit return of 14.32% for 2024, with a total market value of \$87.5 million; approximately \$30M+ of that is designated as operating reserve, and the rest is earmarked for various designated purposes, such as the group benefit plan, property fund and annuity fund. This outstanding performance is a testament to the investment committee's good work. It is worth noting that this follows the excellent return in 2023 of 11.73%. The strong performance translates to healthy financial reserves, strengthening the General Council Office's financial resilience and providing a greater buffer for budget planning in the next triennial.

The 2024 Mission and Service contributions totaled \$19.4 million, only \$80,000 less than the budgeted target. While meeting the budget is excellent news, it represents a year-over-year decrease of \$1.4 million, which is not surprising but continues to increase pressure on future assumptions about budget revenue. Included in the total received Mission and Service contributions of \$19.4 million, \$15 million is from congregations, which represents a \$700,000 decrease compared to 2023.

The unpaid balances for 2024 assessments have increased by another \$500k, bringing the total to more than \$2 million. A priority for 2025 will be to work with regional councils to establish a protocol focused on collecting unpaid assessments from congregations.

The expenditure figures are still being finalized, and the year-end audit is scheduled to commence in the last week of March. The two biggest expense categories, salaries and grants, are tracking very close to the budgeted figures, which demonstrates good financial accountability.

Finance Team Transformation: Over the last four years, the finance team has undergone significant changes, including five retirements and five new hires. Succession planning has been a top priority to ensure seamless transitions and minimize business interruption risks. Effective January 1, 2025, the finance team has implemented a renewed structure that will enable the financial function to mitigate transition and succession risks, further enhance efficiency, and help the church make better-informed financial decisions.

2024 Interim Audit: The interim audit was conducted from November 11, 2024, over a three-week period. During this time, auditors reviewed the financial records of GCO and KAIROS as of September 30, 2024. Their work included control testing over key accounting processes such as cash, investments, donations, payroll, and expenses. Additionally, KPMG selected samples from

both revenue and expense transactions for substantive testing. Our finance team collaborated closely with the auditors, providing all required supporting documents in a timely manner. As a result, all scheduled work was completed within the established timeline, with no delays or issues encountered. The auditors have not identified any material deficiencies or areas of concern that could impact the year-end audit.

UCC Protect United Insurance Program (Kindred Insurance): The 2024/2025 renewal cycle has been successfully and smoothly completed, thanks to the hard work of Erik Mathiesen, and the HUB team. We achieved significant service-level improvements during this renewal cycle. Regarding the financial health of the captive insurance company, it has been a year of mixed news. The two catastrophic fire claims in 2024 severely impacted the claim reserve level, which is closely monitored by insurance regulators. Despite this negative impact, the captive managed to keep the premium increase to a minimum. Unfortunately, the interest payment on the \$3 million loan to the Common Good Foundation will need to be postponed until next year when the insurance company can rebuild its claim reserve. The two fire claims essentially wiped out the reserve buildup since the program's launch. On a positive note, the captive insurance continues to deliver the anticipated savings in premiums for all participating congregations.

Changes to end-of-month community of faith payroll run dates: Currently about 500 pastoral charges run a once-a-month payroll at the end of month. When this pay date falls on a banking holiday and the treasurer has not adjusted the payroll schedule to pay early, it means that their employee(s) are not paid on time and there are no pension contributions or benefits premiums submitted that month.

This creates three problems. First, they are out of compliance with the Employment Standards Act regarding timely pay. Second, they are out of compliance with the Financial Services Regulatory Authority (FSRA) requirement for timely contribution of pension moneys. This can result in penalties against the employer and the Fund as the administrator. Third, it results in the termination of health benefits for employee(s). While benefits are restored when premiums renew, it does mean a four-to-six-week period when the employees do not have access to their benefits. This is often a hardship, and inconvenience, for plan members.

To remedy this problem, staff have instructed ADP to adjust the pay date to the 25th of the month, starting in June. Affected communities of faith have received notice from the General Council Office and directly from ADP, the payroll service provider. If a pastoral charge's cash flow will be impacted, the Pastoral Charge Payroll team at the General Council Office will assist in managing the transition.

Mission and Service

While the overall results for Mission and Service met budget, we were hoping for closer tracking on prior years. A bright point was great success in increasing direct giving, particularly through major gifts. Several factors may have played into year-over-year decrease, including economic uncertainty and the postal strike. One of the challenges with Mission and Service continues to be visibility in the life of the church.

A number of initiatives in 2025 are intended to highlight the role of Mission and Service in the life of the church including: increased presence at governance meetings (GCE, Regional Councils); increased promotion of when Mission and Service is funding programming (e.g. badges for online presenters that note the program is funded by Mission and Service); changing “Mission Support Grants” administered by regions to “Mission and Service Grants” for improved clarity and recognition, and increased collaboration with regions to share and showcase regional Mission and Service grant recipients to highlight Mission and Service “close to home,” etc.

A significant point of risk for Mission and Service over the next two years will be the economy. With the uncertainties created by US policy and tactics, if there is a downturn in markets, donors, particularly those whose income is reliant on investments, may need to shift resources to cover necessities as compared to donations. There’s not much we can do to address this risk except to continue sharing the impact of Mission and Service and focusing on best practices.

Continued focus on supporting Communities of Faith in their stewardship initiatives will also be increasingly important as we strive to improve congregational health across the country. We know that the support provided through the Called to Be the Church program is critical in giving leaders the resources and knowledge to undertake the work well. For example, on average 96% of Communities of Faith that did Stewardship Best Practices or Set Up Your Giving Program in 2024 created a plan and acted on it, which resulted in improved communication, transparency, and morale within the community of faith. We also saw positive change in at least three key financial indicators for 90% of participants in those courses from 2023-2024 and expect similar results for the 2024 cohorts.

The Centennial Legacy campaign is gathering momentum with additional congregations coming on board and frontline volunteer training taking place. We are gradually increasing promotion of the campaign, and you’ll begin to see campaign ads and materials in more locations both online and at events like regional meetings. Thank you to everyone who has been in touch about inviting Communities of Faith to participate – your work has been instrumental in getting to where we are today.

Follow-Up on Work Assigned

This section of the report provided updates to various pieces of work that has been assigned by the General Council and decisions you have made as an Executive.

a. General Council

Total Compensation Review Task Group: will have a report for this meeting with recommendations for the consideration of the Executive. Some may be acted on by the Executive while others will be for the Executive to decide whether to recommend to the General Council.

Structural Change Evaluation Steering Committee: is beta testing the surveys that will be widely distributed after Easter. In addition to this, there will be a series of focal group conversations and interviews with those who have been most involved with structural change. These will continue into the fall so the final report will not be ready until then. However, by General Council, there will be some feedback to share.

b. The Executive of General Council

The Review of the Roles of Moderator and General Secretary Task Group: will have a report for this meeting with recommendations for the consideration of the Executive. Some may be acted on by the Executive while others will be for the Executive to decide whether to recommend to the General Council. A small group of staff developed the process and parameters for implementing the recommendation endorsed by the Executive in November to undertake background reviews of nominees. The process and parameters were circulated to you prior to consideration by the Sub-executive on February 3, 2025. The Sub-executive adopted the process, and it has been communicated to nominees. I am currently engaging a third party to undertake the reviews.

United Property Resource Corporation/Kindred Works: as per your direction (GS118) we have completed the negotiations of a satisfactory agreement on the governance structure. You will have in this meeting a proposal to authorize me to sign the Unanimous Shareholder Agreement (USA). A fuller report is found later in this report

Request for support from the Canadian Council of Churches: in response the GS100 we contributed \$10,000 to the campaign.

Office relocation: Because the current office space is significantly underutilized, the high rent, the inflexibility of the Landlord around the renewal term, and most importantly, the uncertainty around the occupancy date of 300 Bloor West, you approved GS107 at the November 2024 Executive meeting. The motion directing staff to explore and assess interim office location options and develop a project plan that is operationally and financially viable, and b) provided

that an operational and financially viable space was found, terminate the current office lease at the end of its term on February 28, 2026.

After preliminary searches, two options were identified: the Presbyterian Church office at 50 Wynford Drive, North York, Ontario, and the Anglican Church office at 80 Hayden Street, Toronto, Ontario. A staff survey was also conducted in December 2024 to gather data on staff commute patterns to be included in the office location selection criteria.

After site visits, cost analyses, and moving plan feasibility assessments, staff is recommending The Presbyterian Church of Canada offices at 50 Wynford Drive, North York, Ontario, as the interim office location. The selection was based on criteria including accessibility, cost, size, layout, and staff commute survey data. The staff survey revealed that, among the 68 staff who participated, 39.68% were coming from the west and 38.10% from the east, with most using cars for their commute. The survey also asked about the modes of transportation used by staff, finding that 32% used cars, 25% used a combination of bus and train, and 13% used a combination of car, bus, and train.

The move to the interim location is expected to deliver at least \$500,000 in one-time savings on office rental costs in 2026, with manageable interruption to operations, as most staff are working remotely most of the time. However, it does add pressure on the moving planning team, especially the IT team. To mitigate this pressure, temporary contracts will be utilized to assist with the move. The next steps include preparing communication to the staff about the interim office location decision and establish a detailed project plan ensuring a smooth transition to the interim office location.

Proposals on Essential Agreement referred to TICIF:

Motion: *Kit Loewen/M Chorney 2022-11-18-015 That the General Council Executive forward proposal WF13: CS02, CW01, WOW01 Essential Agreement and the notes from the General Council 44 discussion groups to the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee (TICIF) and the Office of Vocation for discernment and direction, and report back to the Executive for action.*
Carried

The Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee reviewed the regional council proposals and the Way Forward proposal, as well as the notes from the General Council 44 discussion groups. The committee recommends to the Executive of General Council that no action be taken on these proposals.

Additional Mandatory Training for Ministry Personnel: The Board of Vocation has a proposal before the General Council Executive, offering a way forward for mandatory trainings for ministry personnel, as passed by the 43rd General Council.

Programmatic Updates

Anti-Racism Common Table ends its mandate with the rise of General Council 45, and we have decided to look to the new General Council Executive for decisions on how a reference group for the Anti-Racism and Equity focus moves forward. The Common Table will continue to meet through May, with an eye to providing learnings from its three-year term and suggestions for moving forward.

Apologies Research Project is part of the initial work on reparations. The Rev. Dr. Miriam Spies has been hired on a research contract to gain a picture of how apologies offered on behalf of The United Church of Canada came to be through both asks from individuals and responses from church governance. Looking at timelines of motions, actions, and responses as well as archival interviews helps us have a fuller sense of each apology. As well, examination of how each apology has/has not been and is/is not being lived out within the church has started. Out of this research, we will compile a summary of recommendations for making truthful and meaningful Apologies. We expect to provide an interim report to GC45.

The apologies under research are:

- The 1986 Apology to Indigenous Peoples for the church's role in colonization and attempts to destroy language, culture, and spirituality
- The 1998 Apology for Residential Schools
- The 2006 Apology to Women who were Disjoined
- The 2009 BC Conference Apology regarding the treatment of Vancouver Japanese United Church during World War II
- The 2020 Apology for Forced Adoptions
- The 2023 process towards an Apology to 2SLGBTQIA+ communities

The Pilgrims of Learning program will unite four delegations of 4-5 individuals from diverse backgrounds across Canada's United Church regions. From May to September 2025, these delegations will embark on a transformative 10-12 day in-person journey to global partner contexts, culminating in virtual debrief sessions in September 2025. Through immersive experiential learning and witness to global partners' priorities, the program seeks to deepen understanding of global partnerships and decolonizing approaches. *Ultimately, this initiative aims to harvest key learnings, informing a paradigm shift within the Church towards decolonized partnership ministries.*

A Response to Cuba's Crisis: Cuba is facing its worst economic crisis in over 60 years, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and decades-long sanctions. Inflation is soaring to 31% and average monthly salaries barely cover basic necessities. The United Church of Canada works with its partner, The Martin Luther King Memorial Centre (CMMLK), as part of an ecumenical collaboration with Alongside Hope (formerly the Primates' World Relief and Development Fund), Presbyterian World Service and Development, and the Public Service Alliance of Canada. Together, they are providing a shipment of food to assist about 2,000 vulnerable individuals in care centres across five communities. These centres support seniors, people living with disabilities, children, and pregnant women who have little to no family support. We're grateful for the support of our partners and donors, including The United Church Foundation and a designated donation to the church.

Humanitarian Crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo): The Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo) is facing an escalating humanitarian crisis, with violence intensifying since the start of 2025. According to the UN World Food Programme, over 700,000 people have been displaced this year, adding to the 4.6 million already seeking refuge in neighboring countries. The crisis has resulted in an estimated 3,000 deaths and left more than 25 million people facing acute food insecurity, disproportionately affecting women and children. The situation on the ground is dire. The suspension of USAID funding has further exacerbated the crisis, with humanitarian agencies facing staff and program cuts. This has severely impacted their capacity to provide life-saving support to those in need. We are working closely with our global partner, Église du Christ au Congo (ECC), to respond to the as part of the ACT appeal. We have made an initial gift of \$25,000.

Overview – Advocacy and Partner Solidarity: Throughout 2024, GCO staff have continued to accompany partners in Palestine and Israel as violence persists, with impacts extending to Lebanon and Syria. Advocacy efforts have focused on calling for a permanent and just ceasefire, increased humanitarian aid to Gaza, and an end to arms sales to Israel. GCO has actively been engaged through various actions, including:

- Issuing a letter (August 13, 2024) urging the Prime Minister to suspend relations with Israel until it complies with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) advisory opinion issued on July 19, 2024.
- Co-drafting and signing an ecumenical letter (March 2024) with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada, supporting the government's decision to reinstate funding to UNRWA.
- Collaborating with Act Alliance Canada Forum in a March 2024 letter urging Canada to take decisive action to end suffering in the region.

- Partnering with KAIROS Canada and other ecumenical groups to organize the Gaza Ceasefire Pilgrimage to Ottawa (May 22, 2024), attended by the Moderator and including meetings with MPs.
- Signing a Food Security Policy Working Group letter addressing the use of food as a weapon of war in Gaza, Sudan, Yemen, Ethiopia, Ukraine, and DR Congo.

The challenges around this advocacy work are multifaceted and pressing. The temporary ceasefire in Gaza has created a critical window for humanitarian aid to reach previously inaccessible communities, and we are proud to be supporting these efforts alongside our partners. Staff will continue to help the church in applying the principles to its advocacy work as we continue to navigate the transition from policies to principles.

Upcoming Events

Centennial Celebration: By now you will have received your invitation to the Centennial celebration in St. John's, NL. Gower St. United Church is excited to be hosting the event and First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council is helping us connect with United Church ministries in the area. Many thanks to the worship planners who are finalizing the service that will be used that day and available to congregations. We look forward to welcoming the *Rev. Prof. Jerry Pillay*, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, as our preacher, as well as several ecumenical and interfaith guests.

General Council 45: Planning is well underway. Insights from the governance coach, Dan Hotchkiss, are being employed in the development of the agenda. Previously, work was often organized according to the source, i.e. regional council or General Council. If the proposed agenda is adopted by the General Council, the work will be organized around a question that is tied to the theme of Visions and Dreams, such as "What is the Vision/Dream for Daring Justice?" The goal is to ensure that the General Council has the time and opportunity to consider the overarching questions facing the church, and to chart a course for the future and provide guidance for day-to-day decisions.

Registration invitations have been sent, and regular newsletters are being delivered. *The Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson*, General Minister and President of The United Church of Christ, U.S.A., has kindly agreed to be our theme speaker and is scheduled to make three presentations. Our guest list for global and ecumenical partners slightly exceeds the number authorized at the November meeting of the GCE and we beg the GCE's indulgence, trusting that our guests' wisdom will enrich our experience.

Leadership Recruitment:

The Member Engagement team (Diane Bosman and Jamie Wilder) oversees the policies and procedures for the recruitment, selection, and support of more than 500 elected and appointed roles within the General Council structure, including the Office of Vocation and the National Indigenous Church. This spring, the church launches the triennium's largest call for nominations (affectionately referred to as "the BIG Recruit") seeking more than 200 people to serve on the committees of the General Council, the General Council Executive, the Board of Vocation and its committees following the 45th General Council.

The Nominations Committee maintains a high commitment to ensuring that those appointed to these leadership roles reflect the full diversity of the United Church, with particular attention paid to its equity commitments and the presence of both lay people and ministry personnel from across the geography of the church. The Leadership Counts end-term report, to be released this summer, will provide a snapshot of the current diversity within these leadership roles.

Member Engagement is working with colleagues across the General Council Office to prepare for the effective onboarding of these 200+ appointed members to the policies and commitments of the United Church, including the new Behavioral Covenant.

In recognition of National Volunteer Week, April 27 to May 3, 2025 Member Engagement has coordinated with the Moderator and staff in the Communications unit to launch a church-wide thank-you to the thousands of volunteers – all across the church and in its many ministries – who are essential to living out the call and ministry of the United Church.

Reports:

Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee: There are two proposals before you at this meeting, representing significant work on the part of the committee: revisions to the principles for justice; a new Statement on Ministry.

The 44th General Council (2022) also tasked TICIF with engaging the church in a study of discipleship. TICIF recognizes there are many ways in which the wider church is engaged in thinking about and living out discipleship and so is inviting United Church communities and individuals to share their discipleship stories with the committee, through a variety of media (word, music, art, video, etc.). The [discipleship campaign](#) was launched a few weeks ago. The committee particularly encourages GCE members to submit discipleship stories from their own communities of faith/ministry sites.

Board of Vocation: The yearly accountability report and appendix from the Board of Vocation are before you for this meeting.

United Property Resource Corporation: In 2019, the United Church created the United Property Resource Corporation (UPRC) to assist communities of faith and regional councils in making faithful property decisions. The original mandate anticipated the redevelopment of church properties for rental housing, including affordable units. A partnership with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) was key to this goal. Since then, there have been significant changes in the property development sector, among them increased construction costs. We also understand the challenges of redevelopment better and have greater insight into the property needs of communities of faith, beyond redevelopment.

Since 2019, and more intensely over the last year, we have applied these insights to adapt UPRC to the changing context. Under the leadership of Executive Director, Rev. Miriam Bowlby, UPRC is available to work with faith communities as they reimagine their property assets to strengthen their financial and social health, and the common good of their neighbourhoods.

UPRC is wholly owned by The United Church of Canada and works closely with the General Council Office Growth team and with regional councils. UPRC is actively developing the services they offer to communities of faith, in order to respond to the varied needs across the country – urban, suburban and rural.

Kindred Works is now a separate company sharply focused on redeveloping properties for rental housing, resulting in community gathering spaces and mixed income homes. The need to sustain private equity flows and a continued partnership with CMHC have required some changes in governance. The United Church continues in a critical role as a majority investor and key strategic partner.

Kindred Works is a Certified B Corporation, meeting high standards in social and environmental performance, as well as accountability and transparency. Through the United Church majority investment, the denomination furthers its commitments to emissions reduction and equity; Kindred Works builds carbon-neutral homes (30% of which will be fully accessible), with an 80% commitment to local labour and businesses, including 10% labour hours with equity-seeking groups.