

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

Strategic Plan 2023—2025

Operational Plan Report

Second Quarter

August 1, 2023



Operational Plan Report: Second Quarter

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For more information contact planning@united-church.ca

Introduction

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.

“I love this bold statement... The United Church could be rebuilt upon this statement.” –A grassroots response to the Call

The General Council Office developed an operational plan that would reflect the Call and Vision adopted by the General Council in October 2021 and implement the strategic objectives confirmed by the General Council Executive in November 2021. This required not just the creation of content, but the development of systems and processes of detailed planning, reporting, and evaluation, and clarification of lines of accountability. The operational plan uses objectives and key results (OKRs) as the organizing framework.

In alignment with six strategic objectives, staff developed 26 initiatives, broken down into 99 activity streams. 40 of those streams were identified as priority. Some activities were identified to begin only in 2024. Each 2023 activity has an activity lead, with progress tracked monthly, and reports issued quarterly related to key results. The cumulative key results for that strategic objective are a measure of overall objective progress. This report reflects both overall and priority area progress for the second quarter of 2023. It also feeds the 2023 evaluation which will help adjust the operational plan for 2024.

Call

Deep Spirituality

Bold Discipleship

Daring Justice

Vision

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.



Overall Results

The Q2 results of the operational plan show consistency with Q1 in making solid progress on the strategic objectives.

This quarter continues the pattern of determined progress towards key results. Staff are working collaboratively in activity teams, larger strategic objective groups, and across the operational plan, with increasing synergies. While the hard work of change management continues, particularly strengthening focus, project management, and accountabilities, reporting has assisted strategic objective leaders with identifying needed areas of staff support. Reports have also aided in revising key results as required to reflect experience and learning. Six months into this first operational plan streamlining possibilities are becoming clear, with the goal of a smaller number of results-oriented, strategically-aligned, robust activities in 2024.

Approximately 35% of the activities have fully met their planned key results for this quarter with 100% completion. When we look at all the activities, the average completion of key results in activated areas is 77% (similar to 76% in Q1). The strongest area continues to be the Climate objective, with sustained action both on our denominational carbon emissions and dedicated climate justice education and advocacy. This quarter shows improvement in the priority initiative of Growth, while still experiencing some delay. As staff capacity continues to build, we are seeing early results in the formation of new communities of faith. Despite the high complexity of the projects of Common Good, and staff capacity challenges, progress is still being made, including the completion of a critical grants review. An important review of continuing education programming happened in Leadership, foundational for evidence-based program development, as well as significant progress on [Leadership Counts](#) and key pilot initiatives.

Critical to this period was also significant advance on the [Moderator's Flourishing Project](#) with intersecting planned initiatives—book club, corporate and public workshops, congregational and theological gatherings, and a leadership program--that help advance our strategies in Justice, Leadership, Climate, and Growth.

Seven 2023 activities are still awaiting activation. This is largely due to challenges in hiring for new positions, related to an under-resourced human resources department. We have been able to secure a number of key positions in this quarter, including a key role in 2S and LGBTQIA+ Global Advocacy which will significantly strengthen work on the Justice objective. All remaining positions—related to Growth and Government Relations--are in progress with hiring decisions likely by the end of Q3.

This quarter included the work of making key changes to General Council Units to ensure stronger alignment with the strategic plan. Significant to increased capacity in both planning, and the strategic plan's highest priority area—Growth—the Organizational

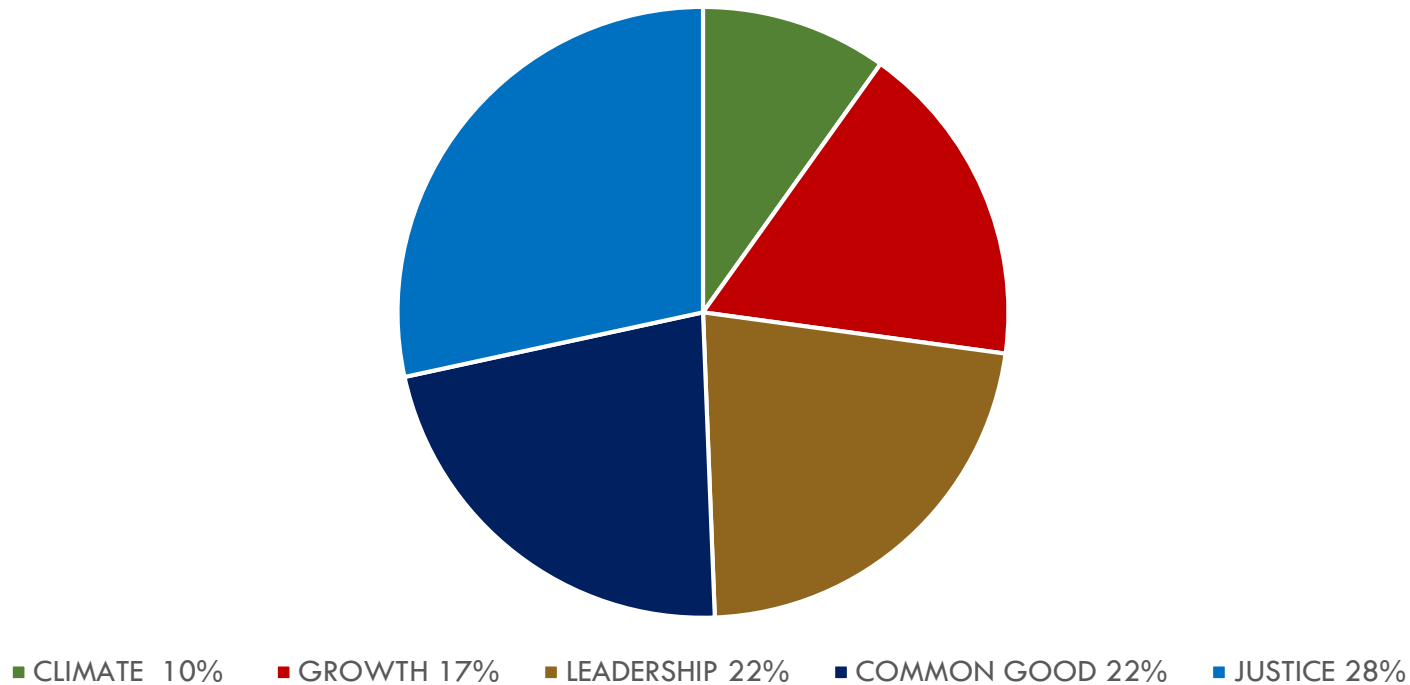
Development and Strategy Unit was substantively built with leadership and staffing confirmed for intersecting departments related to Growth, Communications, Research & Development and Ministries in French. In addition, to create greater alignment with the Leadership and Common Good objectives a Theology and Ministry Leadership Unit and a Shared Services Unit respectively were created (from the former Ministry and Employment Unit). While this will show great benefit in the subsequent quarters, it also increased the load on human resources as transitions were managed.

We continue to make progress in the ongoing work of operational plan implementation, with training supporting huge changes in ways of working and overall culture. Leaving behind activities not prioritized in the strategic plan, while increased efficiency in operational work, continues to be an area of focus and challenge. Looking towards 2024, we are further integrating budgeting and operational planning, as well as aligning performance management strategies to our overall objectives.

Activities Distribution and Start

91% of the planned 2023 activities have started

Distribution of 2023 Activities per Strategic Objective - Q2



- 2023 Status: 74 of 81 activities have started. 33 of the 38 prioritized have started.
- All planned 2023 activities in Climate and Common Good are underway
- Of the 7 "not yet activated" activities planned for 2023, 4 relate to recently hired positions, and three relate to hiring still in progress.
- Indigenous Pathways is reporting in a narrative manner.

Progress against Key Results

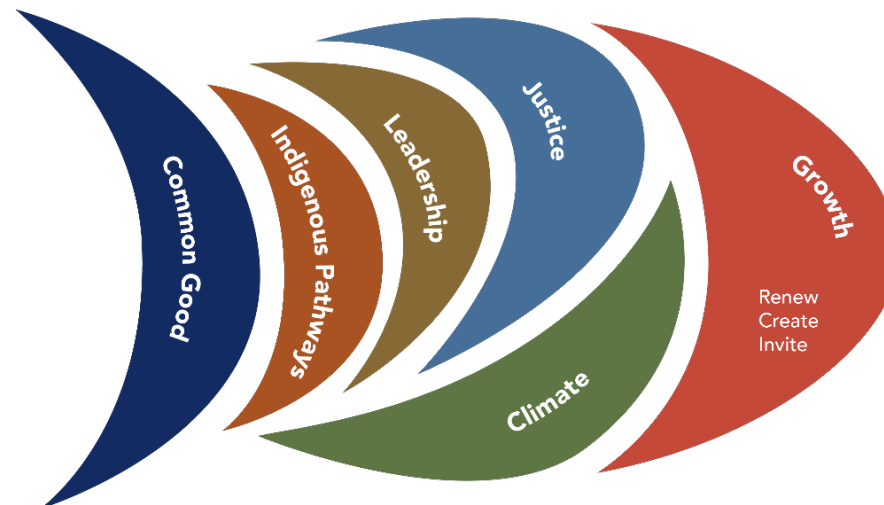
77% is average result for Q2 (compared to 76% for Q1)



- Progress against key results in Q2 varies from 84% in Climate to 73% in Growth
- Average is calculated from key results on all activated 2023 activity streams.
- Indigenous Pathways is reporting in a narrative manner.

Strategic Objectives

The strategic objectives--Justice, Leadership, Common Good, Climate, and Indigenous Pathways—show strong intersections among them, and collectively contribute to the overarching strategic priority on Growth. The following section identifies the objective and offers a narrative and numerical summary of the overall progress for this area (including all activated activities), as well as giving more detailed information as to how each priority activity in this objective has fared in the second quarter of 2023.



Strengthen Invitation: Humility and Confidence in Sharing Faith

73%

Objective: 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.

Related to the Growth Objective, all of the proposed activities are identified as priority, with 2023 starts. Work has begun in each of the three streams:

- Renew existing communities of faith
- Create 100 new communities of faith
- Invite through galvanizing common identity and reaching out beyond existing members

While there was significant progress from Q1, longer than expected hiring processes continue to impact the key results. As of the end Q2, two of the six Growth Animators have been hired covering the Prairies and the Atlantic regions, while the remaining four positions have been posted with interviewing still in process. We anticipate hiring all Animators by the end of August, with start dates varying throughout the fall months. We have been excited to see the quality of applicants and their passion for growth and renewal in the church. The Growth area will benefit significantly from the dedicated leadership of Cameron Fraser who came on board full time on August 8, 2023 into the role of Director of Growth and Ministry Development.

In the *Renew* stream, the team are working on an inventory of key resources and tools available to support renewal, which now looks slated for completion in the fall. The EDGE website has been integrated into the main united-church.ca website, EDGE programming is being aligned with Growth objectives, and roles of continuing EDGE staff have been clarified. A coaching and consulting model is being refined to work within the new eco-system of regionally deployed Growth Animators and existing regional staff.

In the *Create* stream, the greatest progress is in the area of migrant and intercultural ministry. Emo Yango gives leadership to both streams and has been moved into the Growth department from Church in Mission to create greater alignment. To support the migrant stream, we defined the role of a part time emerging church lead, and hired our first leader dedicated to nurturing a community of faith among Hong Kong immigrants. Three other leads are expected to begin in the fall with three other communities in development, and potentially in need of church lead staffing, in 2024. In the intercultural team, two new communities of faith are in process, one reflecting queer folks from Hong Kong and another of Indigenous and racialized young people (18-25).

In addition, with the hiring of a permanent Responsible, Rev. Emmanuel Tehindrazanarivelo, brings dedicated focus to emerging

francophone communities of faith. Overall, close to a dozen new communities of faith are in some kind of formation process.

We also continue to work with the Zimbabwean Methodist Societies and a newly enquiring Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (FJKM) on greater and greater partnership with the United Church, as well as entering into conversations with other existing faith communities expressing interest in relationship.

Within the context of *Invite*, and linked to advancing ownership of the Call and Vision within the UCCan, at least five spring regional meetings and gatherings included substantive focus on some aspect of this renewed direction or strategic planning. A merchandise plan is unfolding across the church, while two projects—a renewed *Dare to Be* video, and the *Immersion* discipleship book—grappled with some added complexities. The general sense is that regional ownership of the Call and Vision is becoming stronger, with more attention now needed to congregational and individual connection.

The overall public outreach campaign has not yet begun in earnest, but additional capacity in public relations and communications is bearing fruit in more timely, strategic and focused communications on key UCCan public commitments and justice initiatives. Foundational work on brand strategy will lead into development of the outreach strategies in Q3 and 4.

Mon Credo has had a soft launch to impressive early results and is developing a marketing strategy, including a Montreal launch event, for the fall. A logo has been developed for the Centennial that integrates 100 years, the Call and the Crest.

Accountable: During this period the Accountable was Jennifer Henry. However, as of August 8, this becomes Cameron Fraser.

RENEW: We will strengthen the capacities of existing communities of faith to welcome, attract, retain, transform, and send people into the world. The plan is for a creative, robust, clear, and coordinated set of resources to help communities of faith strengthen invitation and innovation, reducing current duplication and filling in key gaps.		
General Council 43 Proposal	Priority Activities	% Progress against Key Results

	Conduct an assessment towards providing concrete tools and grants or loans to communities of faith so that they might clarify their identity, strengthen their invitation, and ensure the future of their ministry.	60
	Develop coaching and consulting resources to assist in community of faith transformation, including towards collaborative ministry models or ecumenical shared ministry.	50
	Build a coordinated strategy to provide financial sustainability and stewardship support to communities of faith to create a stable operating base, including engagement in social finance.	100
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.		
General Council 43 Proposal	Priority Activities	% Progress against Key Results
	Create eight new online communities.	Not yet activated
	Create 45 new communities in regional priority areas or identity communities.	50
NEW03	Create 30 new migrant communities.	100
	Create 7 new intentional, intercultural engagement communities.	100
	Create 5 new francophone communities.	50
	Create 5 new communities aimed at connecting with persons with disabilities.	50

	Advance communion and partnership conversations that enhance the creation and development of communities of faith.	70
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. We will develop ways to communicate effectively with different groups of the public about the spiritual home or pathways to home in the church, including using the 100th anniversary to renew relationships.		
General Council 43 Proposal	Priority Activities	% Progress against Key Results
TICIF01	Encourage all members, adherents, affiliates, and communities, councils and ministries of the church to engage with the Call and Vision in diverse ways.	75
	Develop and implement a multi-pronged communication strategy focused at Canadians with no current relationship with The United Church of Canada that invites them to discover deep spirituality, belonging and community.	50
	Develop MonCredo.org to enhance development and welcome of francophone community in the United Church	75
	Celebrate, commemorate, lament and learn by developing a coordinated approach to Centennial 2025.	80

Embolden Justice: Collaborating to Mend Church and World

79%*

Objective: 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

The Justice Objective of the strategic plan continues to make strides in implementation of outlined activities. As the milestones evolve, the motivation behind our action plan, and its progress so far, remains unchanged: it is all about collaborating in spaces where just relationships can flourish for abundant life in the church, Canada, and in global communities.

Through several educational opportunities, seeds are being planted towards highest standards of equality and nondiscrimination, inclusion, dignity and respect. This has covered a wide range of spaces which have included anti-Indigenous racism actions, anti-racism education, Indigenous learning opportunities, and creating safe spaces for Indigenous racialized people in small circles to strengthening global accompaniment of partners by sending volunteers to the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel. The river of justice continues to flow with great anticipation of what is yet to come. Under the plan, a Program Coordinator for 2S LGBTQIA+ Global Advocacy has just been hired in this quarter.

Accountable: Japhet Ndhlovu

**Note that averages in Justice, Leadership, Common Good and Climate are calculated from all activated activity streams not only the priorities which are highlighted below in these sections*

General Council 43 Proposal	Priority Activities	% Progress against Key Results
	Deepen understanding and action on the ongoing colonial injustices identified in the TRC Calls to Action and MMIWG Calls to Justice, contributing to advocacy on TRC I-6, as well as on Calls to Action directed to the Churches and Parties to the Settlement Agreement.	100

	Drawing from experience, develop theology, policy, educational resources, and strategies to return resources, real estate and artifacts taken from Indigenous and racialized communities or provide appropriate compensation.	Not yet activated
	Support the relational, funding, and archival work related to <i>Bringing the Children Home</i> and develop further specific responses to denomination's colonial legacy as discerned to be appropriate.	50
	Following the lead of affected communities and developing trust/mutuality, contribute to increased access and equity in housing for racialized communities.	Not yet activated
	Develop and implement educational strategy that deepens understanding of the diverse impacts of colonialism, White supremacy, and racism in our church.	100
	Develop a change strategy to move from awareness to ownership and action, that leads to rejecting the power and privilege that comes from Whiteness, and restoring right relationship.	25
	Increase the shift from white Euro-centric male dominant theology, encourage existing and new theologies that promote multiple marginalized identities and intercultural practices, and develop relevant accessible theological resources.	75
	Develop an engaging campaign that increases the support of the Canadian government to 2S-LGBTQIA+ refugees in Canada and globally.	Not yet activated
GCE03	Develop a principles-based approach to social justice in the United Church.	95
	With the theme human flourishing, support the Moderator in hosting cross sectoral change making conversations on “things that matter” that result in deep dialogue and bold commitments, while broadening engagement of the Moderator’s office within and beyond the church.	90

Invigorate Leadership: Adapting and Innovating for Bold Discipleship

76%

Objective: 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.

In Q2, the Leadership objective team continued to make good progress on their key results. Some key results have been revised to account for shifting timelines due to a number of different factors: external causes outside of staff control; staff workload; volunteer/elected member capacities, schedules, and meetings of regional councils in Q2.

Highlights include the implementation of Leadership Counts and the ongoing review of continuing education programming. Over 1750 people have participated in [Leadership Counts](#), voluntarily sharing information about how they identify. This represents 75% of national committee appointments and over 50% of active ministry personnel. Over 40% of ministry personnel and 45% of committee appointments hold one or more of the UCCan's named equity-commitment identities.

The review of continuing education programming has happened with 47 programs to date from EDGE, United-in-Learning, United Fresh Start, and LeaderShift. The review is intended to discover what programs are being offered and what gaps and needs may exist.

The Admission Matching Commission has been meeting identified challenges through the development of a new video geared towards communities of faith and the search committees. The Commission and staff are working on strategies to ensure that this video is directed to those who need to see it as we work at getting the matching going. Members of the Matching Commission are also making themselves available to meet with search committees who want to find out more about the project.

The Standards Committee is working diligently to develop a standard for continuing education that offers a clear, helpful, and realistic framework for continuing education expectations for ministry personnel. The Standards committee consulted with five small groups representing regional council staff, ministry personnel, Ministry & Personnel leaders, and theological school staff to get feedback and make modifications to the current draft document. It's a blessing to have dedicated elected members from the Standards Committee of the Office of Vocation alongside in the work.

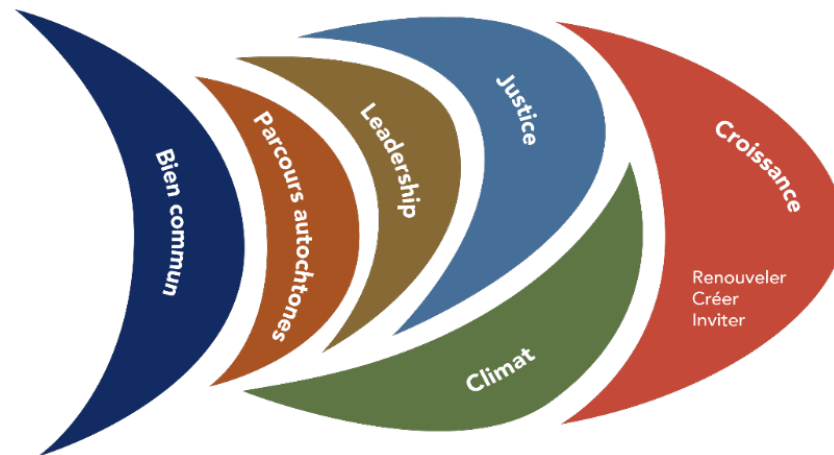
We are continuing to deepen our learning about creating key results and timelines that are realistic, have depth, and help to advance work towards the multi-year initiative and the overall objective. Much of this we were already aware of; however, our vision for what we could accomplish is sometimes larger than what our time, and others' time (staff colleagues and elected members, as well

as external partners and groups), will allow. The opportunity for continued cross-unit collaboration in some key activity streams continues to be rewarding. And we are starting to see more clearly some of the interconnections amongst activity streams, within the Leadership objective and with activity streams in other objective areas. This will serve us well in Q3 and 4, as we look ahead to planning for 2024.

Accountable: Jennifer Janzen-Ball

General Council 43 Proposal	<u>Priority</u> Activities Only	% Progress against Key Results
	With a view to strengthening lifelong vocation and connection to the church for lay people and ministry personnel, review continuing education and leadership development programs currently offered and develop a coordinated, extensive set of training programs.	100
	Intentionally identify young leaders in the church and support their continued development.	80
GCE06; N:ka 01 notes	Reimagine theological education through a process that enables schools to collaborate around the ministry needs of the future.	80
	Collaborate with regional council colleagues and theological schools around collaborative ministry models, including Ecumenical Shared Ministry.	60
	Increase the number of youth and young adults moving towards paid, accountable ministry, bridging the gap between First Third ministry and recruitment, including racialized, Indigenous, and queer people, including addressing the compensation model.	Not yet activated

	Enhance ongoing leadership development for/with ministry personnel, with focus on developing mentorship/accompaniment skills, with a special focus on mentoring for those who want to learn and share church planting skills, including Admission ministers.	0
NEW03	Create a working group within the Board of Vocation that would review the admissions process for ministry personnel, as well as gather data, with particular consideration of anti-racism commitments, isolation in ministry, financial stressors, structural barriers within the church, and external advocacy around immigration processes. This might lead to an Admission Matching Commission.	80



Nurture the Common Good: Equity and Sustainability in Resources

74%

Objective: 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.

In the area of the Common Good, we have named several strategies that would help us reach that goal of increased capacity across the denomination including: the exploration of innovative strategies to support communities, address inequities, increase sustainability, and mobilize new and existing resources for purposeful growth that reflects our Call and Vision and seeking to share services within and beyond the denomination, including to support IT innovation, lighten administration, decrease costs, and increase effectiveness. The priority initiatives and activities for 2023 fall mainly under those two categories.

As reported at the end of Q1, much of the work is surveying current state, gathering information to assess solutions which is time consuming. Issues rising to the surface continue to be about staff capacity as we finish transitioning into the strategic plan. Learnings include ensuring adequate time frames for consulting, completion of tasks and realignment of staff.

The priority activities for this objective are large and complex – they require collaboration between many units in the General Council Office as well as with the Regions. The progress has varied and the piece most at risk, due to lack of staff capacity, is the information management system. We will need to revise the timelines and consider the resourcing for this particular activity to enable progress and complete the work. The work on donor and granting portals is in part contingent on the grant review activity and now that the review work is mostly complete, the work on the portal will be able to progress more rapidly.

Finally, the insurance initiative remains on track to deliver the target savings to congregations, but service levels continue to be a challenge as the rushed implementation has resulted in delays and errors which are in the process of being corrected.

Accountable: Sarah Charters

General Council 43 Proposal	Priority Activities Only	% Progress against
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		Key Results
GCE07	Implement a self-insurance program for all church entities. Reduce a significant cost and stressor by 15-30%.	75
	Integrate granting and donation portals to improve efficiency, transparency, accountability and our ability to tell our story.	25
	Steward church buildings or money released from sales for future ministry, strengthening and seeking to align existing regional council property policies including reconciliation and reparations considerations.	80
	Promote, encourage and increase giving in support of denominational work and target a national capital fundraising program for the church's 100th anniversary.	100
	Develop a cross United Church or potentially cross-denomination strategy for information management.	25

Deepen Integrity: Living Climate Commitments

84%

Objective: 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.

Q2 was a strong quarter for climate related initiatives, with various Earth Week themed activities, planning and hiring for the Climate Motivators program, and the release of the [church's second Sustainability Report](#). Regional councils have increasingly embraced the programs. The [Faithful Footprints](#) program has now reached over 400 communities of faith and will exceed the goal of 500 by 2025. We are now aiming for 1,000 by 2030.

A key element in evaluating each initiative will be the extent to which it gains traction and scale to achieve broad engagement and therefore great potential impact both within and outside the church.

Accountable: Erik Mathiesen

General Council 43 Proposal	<u>Priority Activities Only</u>	% Progress against Key Results
GS01	Expand <i>Faithful Footprints</i> denomination-wide to improve the energy efficiency and reduce the carbon pollution of church buildings, dramatically increasing the number of participating communities.	100
GS01	Deepen engagement in ecumenical, interfaith, and civil society education and advocacy towards climate justice by identifying and amplifying the capacity of communities of faith and individual champions.	70

Journeying Indigenous Pathways: Forging Right Relations**

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

As we continue our journey together, we look forward to implementing our Indigenous Pathway within the Strategic Plan. The focus is on the structure of the Indigenous church and what will be the outcome of the GS01 Remit vote March 2024. The National Spiritual Gathering happens in July 27-30, 2023 in Edmonton. The goal is to appoint the new National Indigenous Council (NIC) and add new National Indigenous Elders Council members. We also look at the important work that needs to happen within the Indigenous United Church and our communities, like addressing the national state of emergency of high number of deaths in communities across Canada. Other items that affect our identification of our Indigenous spirituality and how we continue to uplift this mandate in the United Church have been placed in our dialogue as well. We have lifted our Sacred Bundle and continue to recognize this piece of our placement and identity as Indigenous Nations and communities of faith to lead us in our place in the United Church. The newly appointed NIC will meet in September to start our work for the next three years and will look forward to meet the GCE in November to engage our equitable relationship and leadership perspectives.

The National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering was held following the conclusion of this reporting period. However, information on that gathering is accessible [here](#).

Accountable: Murray Pruden

General Council 43 Proposal	Priority Activities Only
NIC01; GS10	Build consensus towards a governance structure for the Indigenous Church.
	Initiate new local Indigenous ministries, with a focus on urban communities.

***Note that Indigenous pathways is using another process other than key results methodology for their reporting.*