

**THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA****MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL  
MINUTES****Friday, November 17 to Saturday, November 18, 2023**

The 44th Executive of the General Council of The United Church of Canada met in-person for a time of relationship-building and business from the evening of Thursday, November 16 to Saturday, November 18, 2023. The Moderator, Carmen Lansdowne, presided.

**Attendance**

Voting Members: Mitchell Anderson, Michael Blair, Richard Bott, Teresa Burnett-Cole, Michael Caveney, M Chorney, Samuel Vauvert Dansokho, Paul Douglas Walfall, Catherine Glover (online), Wilson Gonese, Carmen Lansdowne, David Leyton-Brown, Kit Loewen, Jane McDonald, Arlyce Schiebout, Thea Sheridan-Jonah

Regrets: Alcris Limongi

Corresponding: Angelica Benalcazar, Diane Bosman, Marlene Britton, Sarah Charters, Treena Duncan, Cameron Fraser, Alan Hall, Adele Halliday, Peter Hartmans, Éric Hébert-Daly, Jennifer Henry, Jennifer Janzen-Ball, Mark Laird (acting Executive Minister), Harry Li, Faith March-MacCuish, Erik Mathiesen, Shannon McCarthy, Japhet Ndhlovu, Ronda Parks, Murray Pruden

Thursday evening was a time for conversation between members of the Executive and national and regional council staff. This time centered on governance, including the following: accountability, transparency, and that the current structure is non-representative. The guiding questions for the discussion time included:

- What are you noticing?
- What does partnership look like between those in governance roles and staff at the regional council level?
- What should the Executive be attentive to?

There was some time for reporting back at the end of the session.

**Friday, November 17, 2023****Welcome**

The Moderator and General Secretary welcomed the Executive to the business session, which followed an evening of conversation between the General Council Executive and the Staff Leaders.

**Territory Acknowledgement**

Catherine Glover shared the territory acknowledgement from the Akwesasne tourism website. She noted that the acknowledgement ritual reminds us that each of the 634 different

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Indigenous communities, 53 Inuit communities and 8 Métis settlements have a unique historical, cultural, spiritual and environmentally sustainable connection to the land that their people and ancestors have inhabited since time immemorial.

### **Constituting the Meeting**

The Moderator constituted the meeting in French and English.

"Au nom de Notre Seigneur, Jésus-Christ, seul chef souverain de l'Église, et par l'autorité qui m'a été conférée par le quarante-quatrième Conseil général, I hereby declare this meeting of the Executive of the General Council to be in session for the work that may properly be brought before it to the glory of God."

### **Agenda Review**

Kit Loewen reported that Alcris Limongi, the newest member of the Executive, had sent her regrets for this meeting due to health reasons. Kit also noted that Kathy Brett had resigned from the Executive. She then provided a brief overview of the agenda.

### **Equity Reminders**

M Chorney named the members of the equity team for this meeting: Arlyce Schiebout, Paul Douglas Walfall, Wilson Gonese and herself, and noted that they would be available throughout the meeting. She provided an overview of the Equity Aspirations:

#### **Equity Aspirations**

Remember to...

1. Question biases
2. Challenge assumptions
3. Notice who's missing
4. Value all voices
5. Aim for equity
6. Live out our commitments

...as we strive to live out God's call

#### **Pour cibler l'équité**

Assurez-vous...

1. de déceler les préjugés
2. de remettre en question les idées préconçues
3. de prendre conscience des absents
4. d'accorder une valeur à toutes les voix
5. de viser l'équité
6. de mettre en pratique nos engagements

...lorsque nous incarnons l'appel de Dieu

### **Connecting**

There was time for the table groups to reconnect and have some discussion and check-in time together. The last in-person meeting had been held in September 2022.

### **Worship**

The Moderator led opening worship which began with the Holy Manners litany. The scripture passage Isaiah 43:18-19 was read three times in both French and English in order to more deeply engage with the words. Worship concluded with the hymn *Called by Earth and Sky*.

**Introduction of Elder**

The Honoured Elder, Evelyn Day, of the Tahltan, Gixtsan, and Tlingit nations, was introduced by the General Secretary and welcomed by the Moderator. Elder Evelyn offered elements of food and water, creating a sacred centre for the gathering. She spoke of moving from old to new, and the healing that needs to occur before moving forward and the difficulty in letting go.

Elder Evelyn received tobacco and a medicine bag of sacred medicines from the Moderator.

**GS 60 Procedural and Consent (v.2)**

The General Secretary noted that the Procedural and Consent proposal had been updated to include the GCE cascading appointments and the updates to *The Manual*. The full text of the reports and proposals is found in *Appendix II*.

**Motion: Michael Blair/Kit Loewen****2023-11-17-073**

That the General Council Executive:

1. Approve the [minutes](#) of the General Council Executive meeting held May 12-13, 2023.
2. Receive for information any [correspondence](#) to the General Council Executive received since the last meeting of the Executive (sent to the Executive by email and found online).
3. Adopt the agenda for this meeting as circulated, with any changes which may be necessary as the meeting evolves, to be made on the recommendation of the Business Planning Committee.
4. Name as corresponding members to this meeting any General Council Officers, Executive Ministers, Executive Officers, and Regional Council Executive Ministers who are present; anyone else who may be named by the General Secretary to serve as resource persons to the General Council Executive.
5. Receive for information the following reports:
  - Moderator's Accountability Report
  - General Secretary's Accountability Report
  - Pension Board Report
  - Partner Council Message
  - Operational Plan Report – Third Quarter 2023
6. Approve the following proposals:
  - BP 04 Recommendations for Appointment - GCE Cascading
  - GS 61 Partner Council Message
  - GS 71 Changes to The Manual re A.4 and D.3.1 (2023-11)
  - GS 72 Changes to The Manual re D.1.1 g) (2023-11)
  - GS 73 Changes to The Manual re I.1.2.1 and I.1.7.1 (2023-11)

**Carried**

### **GS 62 2024 Operating Budget (Appendix III)**

Erik Mathiesen, Executive Officer, Finance, and Harry Li, Controller, presented a thorough overview of the budget forecast, addressing both 2024 and 2025. This budget was presented based on principles which had been approved at the September GCE meeting.

A learning session will be held in February, 2024, for the Executive to engage in a conversation about “living within our means,” including appropriate use of the reserve funds, with a goal of beginning to build a framework for the 2025 budget.

There was time for comments and questions.

### **Motion: Michael Blair/Jane McDonald**

**2023-11-17-074**

That the General Council Executive approve the 2024 Operating Budget and underlying principles and assumptions as summarized in the appendices. The projected deficit for planning purposes is \$2.3 million, which includes funding allocated from the operating budget for both approved strategic plan activities and programs that were previously managed separately from the strategic plan. In the 2023 budget, a strategic plan budget of \$1.5 million was reported on a segregated basis. For the 2024 budget proposal, we have developed an integrated program budget approach to incorporate all existing programs into the strategic plan, aiming to enhance efficiency, transparency, and accountability. As the growth objective has been identified as the highest priority in the strategic plan, it is also recommended that the additional investment required to achieve the strategic plan's growth objective be funded through annual draws on the Hope Bequest.

Key assumptions include:

- a) Inflation will continue to moderate but not return to pre-COVID levels soon;
- b) Travel and meeting expenses to target 40% of pre-COVID expenditure (which with increased travel cost implies 25% of pre-COVID travel). This implies a significant cultural shift in what we choose to participate in and how. Will require careful monitoring;
- c) All financial and investment decisions must be evaluated through the lens of affordability and sustainability. Affordability will need to be considered in light of current and future reserves;
- d) All financial and investment decisions must be evaluated through the lens of alignment with and linkage to strategic plan objectives;
- e) Budget and programming decisions must be linked to proactive communication planning and delivery;
- f) We will try to be as transparent as possible regarding the likely future direction of our spending and the likelihood of future reductions. When known, we will provide two or more years notice of a phased, complete cut;

- g) We are seeking to evolve to a triennium approach to budgeting. Most immediately, we are looking at 2024 and 2025, but will extend that process as we gain more information about the state of the church post-COVID;
- h) For 2025 we will need to update the assessment revenue sharing with regions as assessment revenue is projected to decline in proportion to membership from its 2023/2024 high water mark. This indicates we need to look at options for the church to continue being viable;
- i) Increasing the assessment rate is not recommended for 2024 or 2025 and seems problematic going forward. The whole basis for the new financial model was for the financial capacity of the broader church to align with congregational health and ability to fund;
- j) For grant funding reductions, we contemplate using an impact lens to the extent possible and will contemplate funding fewer programs but also invest more deeply when feasible;
- k) Annual incremental investment in strategic plan not to exceed \$1.5 million;
- l) Continued but slower decline in overall annual M&S (\$725,000 per year) consistent with membership related metrics;
- m) Mission and Service grant reductions including:
  - a. 25% reduction in regional council allocation (from \$240,000 each to \$180,000),
  - b. 25% reduction in global grants;
- n) Indigenous church budgets to be maintained level for 2024 subject to ongoing discernment around longer term funding and participation in cost reduction in 2025. All aspects of our budget have suffered from erosion in real dollars over the years. We need to trigger the work of the church to be innovative in ways that we can support the Indigenous church without necessarily compromising our other commitments as well;
- o) 2024 Assessment distributions to regional councils to be held level, with notice given of likely reductions for 2025;
- p) The COLA factor for the General Council staff system will be 2% effective January 2024; and
- q) With exception of extraordinary Lloyd Hope gift, bequest income will be used to support the operating budget for the coming triennium as has been the case for 2019-2022 (this maintains on hold our 2014 policy of transferring 50% of bequests to the Foundation).

**Carried****Meeting as the Pension Board Administrator**

Anne Soh, chair of the United Church Pension Board, presented the accountability report. Anne noted that the plan is considered “mature,” as there are more retired than active members in the plan. This means more is paid out in pensions than is collected in contributions, with investment funds supplementing the shortfall. However, due to the positive investment performance, plan improvements have been possible in the last few years.

The presentation is included in the appendices (*Appendix IV*).

There was time for questions and comments. There was a hope voiced that communication with the wider church might be increased, particularly in order that members might better understand and value their pension plan. The Moderator thanked Anne for being present with the Executive.

### **Conversation Between the National Indigenous Council and the General Council Executive**

The National Indigenous Council (NIC) held meetings simultaneously with the GCE, and joined together for a joint session on Friday afternoon. After an opening prayer by Elder Evelyn, Leeann Shimoda, chair of the NIC, introduced the Council, including its youth members. The NIC members present were Ashley Keeping (youth), Gloria Cook, David B. Fiddler, Janet Root, William Joseph Harasymow, Keetah Levac, Delores Kenny, Kimberly Roy, Ronald Wayne Hoekstra, Kaileigh Dumont (youth), Nathaniel Grieves (youth), Grant Queskekapow, Robert Patton. Teresa Burnett-Cole is a member of both the National Indigenous Council and the General Council Executive. Wayne Monague was not able to attend the gathering.

Two breakout times created space for discussing questions centered on relationship-building and a shared understanding of the relationship. At the end of the afternoon there was an opportunity to share feedback from the various discussion groups. This feedback will be used for further planning between the settler and Indigenous church. (*Appendix V*)

In closing the time together, Leeann and Murray Pruden, Executive Minister, Indigenous Ministries and Justice, responded to questions about Remit 1, which would create an autonomous Indigenous Church. There was also an update regarding the current status of the Indigenous church.

### **Governance Education – Decolonization Conversation**

After dinner, the chair of the Governance Committee, Kit Loewen, led the Executive in a generative discussion regarding decolonization. The following questions were considered in small groups, with a request that notes be taken for follow-up:

- What can we learn from the NIC that will help us to build strong and trustworthy relationships?
- What does it mean to have voice in dialogue and decision-making, and what do we mean by “voice”?
- What does it mean to be “data-informed” in a way that honours our commitment to decolonizing our work? What does “decolonized data use” mean to us?

### **GS 63 Recommendations on the Use of the Word “Mission” (*Appendix VI*)**

Teresa Burnett-Cole, on behalf of the working group, introduced the context and background regarding the word “mission” in the church setting in Canada, and the impact of the word on Indigenous communities. Teresa ended by addressing several questions to the Executive,

including what other word(s) could be used to convey the idea of mission in the world.

Jennifer Janzen-Ball, Executive Minister of Theology and Ministry Leadership, highlighted the need for ongoing work to more fully understand “mission” in The United Church of Canada.

There was an opportunity for questions and comments. There was affirmation for not using “mission” as a noun, and when used as a verb, that it be in relation to God’s action in the world.

**Motion: Michael Blair/Teresa Burnett-Cole**

**2023-11-17-075**

That the General Council Executive:

- a) direct the General Secretary to develop theological, educational, and worship resources to engage the church in discussion, learning, and action around the histories, theologies, and practices of mission within the church, with a specific focus on naming and deconstructing those theologies and practices that contributed to harm, inequity, and colonization. Further, that the differences in the histories, theologies, and practices of mission overseas and domestically be named. In developing these resources, the General Secretary will ensure a particular focus on resources that can be used by local communities of faith and individuals connected to the United Church;
- b) encourage all councils of the church to use the word “mission” less and to use it with careful consideration, guided by a “hermeneutic of suspicion” (Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza), which invites us to raise questions about the assumptions, underlying theologies, and unconscious biases we bring to our understanding of “mission;” and
- c) encourage the church to continue to prioritize its decolonization work, through concrete, structural changes that are needed to address the continued inequity and harm that has happened, and continues to happen, through the church’s participation in colonization. The church is particularly encouraged to deconstruct its participation in colonization that was masked with the word “mission.”

**Carried**

**GS 64 Behavioural Covenant for Members of National Committees** *(Appendix VII)*

This proposal was introduced by Adele Halliday, Anti-Racism and Equity Lead Staff, and Arlyce Schiebout and M Chorney.

There was time for questions and comments. The Moderator suggested changing the language with regard to responsibility / accountability (page 6 of document) to be consistent with the rest of the document. It was noted that there is no place for apology in the document and that this should be included. There was a hope that this document might be shared at the regional level.

**Motion: Michael Blair/M Chorney**

**2023-11-17-076**

That the General Council Executive:

- Adopt the attached “Behavioural Covenant for National Committee Members” as policy, and

- Direct the General Secretary to ensure that all national committee members sign the Behavioural Covenant.

The group agreed to break for the evening and come back the next day with any further suggestions on wording before making a decision.

The Moderator offered a prayer to close the day.

### **Saturday, November 18, 2023**

#### **Worship**

The second day of the business portion of the meeting opened with worship led by the Moderator based on the reading John 14:1-3. This included the Holy Manners Covenant and time remembering those in whose name contributions were made to Mission and Service by their estates or through “in memoriam” donations.

The Moderator prayed for a ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas conflict, for peace in Ukraine, and all the places in the world where there is war that is not reported in Western media.

The General Secretary provided an overview of the agenda for the day.

#### **Benefits Presentation (Appendix VIII)**

Alan Hall, Executive Officer, Shared Services, outlined the Executive’s role as sole overseer of the Group Benefits Plans since the change in structure in 2019. Prior to that time the Permanent Committee on Ministry and Employment Policies and Services oversaw the plans. David Dawrant, Director, Pension and Benefits Administration, provided an overview of the three proposals regarding the Group Benefits Plans.

There was time for questions and comments.

#### **GS 65 Group Benefits Plans Addressing Age Discrimination (Appendix IX)**

##### **Motion: Michael Blair/Michael Caveney**

**2023-11-17-077**

That the General Council Executive approve the following design changes effective January 1, 2025\*:

- Extend core health and dental coverage to active employees who mandatorily retire at age 71 (or are hired after age 71);
- Maintain life insurance beyond age 65 at a level affordable to the benefits plan;
- Extend accidental death and dismemberment coverage to the maximum age the insurer is able to offer (insurer currently does not insure plan members age 70 or over);
- Extend Restorative Care Program to employees who mandatorily retire at age 71 (or are hired after age 71)
- Extend Employer Indemnity to active Ministry Personnel who mandatorily retire at age 71 (or are hired after age 71).



\*to provide adequate lead time to configure the new administration system and promote to impacted employees and their employers

**Carried**

**GS 66 Group Benefits Plans Administrative Expenses Funding (Appendix X)**

**Motion: Michael Blair/Mitchell Anderson**

**2023-11-17-078**

That the General Council Executive approve the creation of a working group of up to 5 persons, including one appointed from the Executive, to direct the implementation of a funding model to utilize existing premium reserves to offset up to half the fixed administration costs. The group will:

- Establish a Benefits/Fund policy and a Statement of Investment Policies and Procedures (SIPP) to set out parameters, asset mix and targets;
- Oversee the separation of benefit assets from other assets; and
- Recommend service providers (bank/custodian/investment consultant/investment manager(s)).

**Carried**

**GS 67 Group Benefits Plans Termination of Lifespeak Contract (Appendix XI)**

**Motion: Michael Blair/Wilson Gonese**

**2023-11-17-079**

The General Secretary recommends that the Executive of the General Council approve the termination of the current LifeSpeak contract effective December 31, 2023.

**Carried**

The Moderator thanked David and the Benefits team for their work on behalf of the church.

**Strategic Plan (2023-11-17 GCE Appendix Operational Plan Quarterly Report)**

A short presentation by Jennifer Henry, Executive Minister for Organizational Development and Strategy, and Cameron Fraser, Director of Growth and Ministry Development, outlined where the church is at this time in the strategic plan timeline and objectives, and highlighted opportunities for growth in the church.

There was time for smaller groups to discuss and ask questions based on the pillars of the strategic operational plan: climate, justice, common good, Indigenous pathways, leadership and growth. In response to questions at the end of the presentations, it was confirmed that there will be an evaluation after the initial three years to see what work can / should continue; and for the 2024 budget year, reporting is being reframed to align to the six strategic areas.

The Moderator thanked Jennifer and her team for their work.

**Pastoral Relationships Thriving with Equity Research Project (Appendix XII)**

Adele Halliday introduced this research project, which is before the Executive for information and initial conversation. It is hoped that recommendations for decision will come to the next

GCE meeting in February. A learning session will be scheduled for January, 2024. Kimiko Karpoff and Marcie Gibson, the co-researchers for the Pastoral Relationships Thriving with Equity Research Project, joined the Executive for the presentation and discussion time.

At the end of the overview there was time for small groups to reflect on what they had heard. Adele asked that notes be taken and returned to her as further work is done on this report.

#### **GOV 01 Recommendation for Appointment – GCE Cascade**

**Motion: Kit Loewen/Wilson Gonese**

**2023-11-17-080**

That the General Council Executive appoint Thea Sheridan-Jonah as one of its representatives to the Pension Board until the rise of the 45th General Council (2025)

**Carried**

#### **Behavioural Covenant for Members of National Committees – Update**

An edited version of the Behavioural Covenant was made available to the Executive for review and comment by the end of January, 2024. This item of unfinished business will be considered at the next meeting of the Executive in February 2024.

#### **In-Camera Session**

**Motion: Jane McDonald/David Leyton-Brown**

**2023-11-17-081**

That the General Council Executive move into an in-camera session with the following membership: members of the Executive, and Angelica Benalcazar.

**Carried**

#### **Out of In-Camera Session**

After lunch the Executive voted to return to plenary.

**Motion: Michael Caveney/Wilson Gonese**

**2023-11-17-082**

That the Executive of the General Council move out of the in-camera session.

**Carried**

#### **Regional Council Executive Minister**

**Motion: Michael Blair/Thea Sheridan-Jonah**

**2023-11-17-083**

That the General Council Executive approve the General Secretary's appointment of a Regional Council Executive Minister for the Horseshoe Falls, Antler River Watershed, and Western Ontario Waterways Regional Councils, effective no later than April 1, 2024, and directs the General Secretary to make public the selection at an appropriate time.

**Carried**

#### **Equity Reflection**

Paul Douglas Walfall offered a reflection on discomfort and its impetus to change. He urged the Executive to embrace the uncomfortable moment, which may be a teaching moment.

**Time with the Moderator**

The former Moderator, Richard Bott, assumed the chair.

The Moderator highlighted some of the changes to her Flourishing Project, including discontinuing the public forums in some areas. She went on to note the positive experiences she has had engaging with young people in the church. The Flourishing Project – with its congregational workshops, leadership program, book club and remaining public events – is being well integrated with the strategic plan, particularly the work of the objective areas of leadership and growth. The Moderator concluded her comments by affirming Michael Blair’s dedicated leadership as General Secretary.

There was an opportunity for questions and comments.

Samuel Vauvert Dansokho prayed for the Moderator and her work. The Moderator resumed the chair.

**GS 68 Public Registry of Ministers (Appendix XIII)**

Norm Seli, chair of the Board of the Office of Vocation, joined the meeting to provide background on the proposal to ratify the decision by the Board of Vocation to make the Discontinued Service List (disciplinary) available to the public. He and Marlene Britton, Team Lead, Policy and Programs for Ministry Personnel, outlined this change in policy and responded to clarifying questions.

Making this list available to the public follows precedents set by other institutions and denominations and allows communities of faith to perform due diligence when searching for a prospective minister. The Executive was assured that the process of being placed onto the discontinued service list (disciplinary) was lengthy and includes opportunity for rehabilitation.

**Motion: Michael Blair/Teresa Burnett-Cole****2023-11-17-084**

That the General Council Executive affirm the decision of the Board of Vocation to make public the list of ministers who have been put on a discontinued service list (disciplinary).

**Carried**

At his request, it is noted that Paul Douglas Walfall voted against the motion *GS 68 Public Registry of Ministers*.

**GS 74 Retired DLM Membership (Appendix XIV)**

At the annual meeting of the 44th General Council, held October 21, 2023, the Council approved a proposal that encouraged regional councils to review their practices with regard to those who retired as designated lay minister members of a regional council. Further consultation with the Manual Committee revealed that while the ability to grant sacramental license was clearly up to the regional council, granting membership required a change to the

Basis of Union, section IV, 6.2. This proposal is to delay regional councils from moving forward with the proposal approved by GC44 in October until the Basis of Union and *Manual* issues are resolved.

There was an opportunity for questions and discussion on this proposal. The need for clear communication with the church, and Designated Lay Ministers in particular, was emphasized.

**Motion: Michael Blair/Wilson Gonese**

**2023-11-17-085**

That the General Council Executive delay the implementation of the request to regional councils in *GCE 08 Ministry Leadership to Meet the Need of the Church in the 2020s, Part B Designated Lay Ministry, Part 5*, which suggests that Regional Councils grant membership to retired DLMS, pending the General Council 44 annual meeting in October 2024, at which time a remit to test the will of the church regarding changing the Basis of Union section IV, 6.2, could be authorized.

**Carried**

**GS 69 Global Partnership Program (Appendix XV)**

The General Secretary reported that staff of the General Council Office had facilitated an internal review of the Global Partnership program. Japhet Ndhlovu briefly outlined the current partnership program. While partnership grants in 2024 will be reduced by 25%, as approved in the budget, the United Church will maintain relationships, and the partners will continue to share their stories, prayers and advocacy.

There was time for questions and comments.

**Motion: Michael Blair/Samuel Vauvert Dansokho**

**2023-11-17-086**

That the General Council Executive

- a. affirm "*Radical Accompaniment*" with its objectives and components (see appendix) as the framework for the United Church's Global Partnership Program in the current Strategic Planning cycle; and
- b. direct the General Secretary to
  - i. begin implementation in 2024, within the constraints of the budget; and
  - ii. initiate a consultation process building on this review and recommendations, led by elected members to envision and propose a global partnership framework to guide the witness of The United Church of Canada into its second century.

**Carried**

**General Secretary Accountability Report**

The General Secretary opened his verbal update by thanking colleagues for their commitment to the work of the General Council Office. He encouraged the members of the GCE to be proactive about reading the material and making sure the General Council Office is moving forward on the strategic operational plan

There was an opportunity for questions or comments.

Evelyn Day offered a prayer for the General Secretary and his work.

### **Governance – Strategic Conversation** (*Appendix XVI*)

Kit Loewen, chair of the Governance Committee invited the GCE to reflect on the recommendations they had accepted from the Workflow Task Group, noting the need to continue to prioritize the governance renewal action plan pillars: purposeful, visionary, trustworthy and decolonizing leadership.

### **Correspondence Received**

The GCE spent time reviewing the General Council Office's response to the Israel-Hamas War, both prior to and since October 7, 2023, when the current conflict began. They also reviewed and approved a letter to be sent to Prime Minister Trudeau from the Executive. This letter will be made available online as a template for individuals to use in writing to their local members of Parliament.

The General Secretary outlined advice from government officials about the importance of collaborative advocacy, both with other denominations, as well as the power of individual letters from United Church members. In-person meetings with government officials indicated that they appreciated ecumenical visits, such as the trip the Moderator made with the faith leaders of the Anglican, Presbyterian and Lutheran churches earlier this year on the issues of the illegal occupation and the siege on Gaza. It was also noted that it is a challenge to make collective statements when the church is not of one mind.

The General Secretary thanked staff for their work on this item.

The Moderator closed this item in prayer and thanked the Executive for their diligence and thoughtfulness on this important piece of work.

Before closing for dinner, the Moderator handed the chair to the Immediate Past Moderator Richard Bott, as Moderator Carmen had to leave the meeting.

### **National Indigenous Council Update**

After dinner a video from the National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering this past summer was shared with the Executive.

### **United Church Centennial (2025)**

The General Secretary invited those present to discuss in small groups what events might be considered for the 100th anniversary of the church. Suggestions (*Appendix XVII*) will be shared with the Centennial Committee for consideration.

Celebrations and commemorations will begin in June, 2024, and will culminate in a national worship service on June 8, 2025.

**GS 70 Recognition of The United Church of Canada Centennial (Appendix XVIII)**

**Motion: Michael Blair/Wilson Gonese**

**2023-11-17-087**

That the General Council Executive:

- a) Recognize June 2024 through June 2025 as the centennial year of honouring and commemoration, to begin with a service of thanksgiving on June 9, 2024, and culminating in a national service June 8, 2025;
- b) Adopt the following theme for the commemoration – Deep Bold Daring;
- c) Affirm the following framework for the centennial year:
  - An external focused communication and action plan focused on introduction and invitation, shaped by the Call and Vision;
  - An internal focused communication and action plan focused on the Vision statement of being “a bold connected evolving and diverse church;”
  - Model a new understanding of being The United Church OF Canada;
  - The development of a capital campaign;
  - Development of liturgical and other resources for communities of faith; and
  - Global and ecumenical engagement;
- d) Approve the attached logo as the logo for the centennial; and
- e) Direct the General Secretary to develop a detailed budget with funds to be drawn from reserves to be presented to the February 2024 meeting of the General Council Executive.

**Carried**

**General Council 45, 2025 Calgary**

The General Secretary invited those present to think about what might be done differently at the next General Council meeting? Suggestions will be shared with the General Secretary (Appendix XIX).

As with GC44, the next General Council will need to be constituted early in the year of the meeting, in order that the learning and discussion times can occur prior to the decision making and celebration time in July of 2025. Regional Councils will have to appoint or elect their Commissioners by late summer 2024, so there is time for them to be oriented.

**Equity Reflection**

Wilson Gonese offered the closing equity reflection.

**Elder Reflection**

Elder Evelyn spoke of the importance of words, and the importance of the Indigenous church and the settler church walking together. Moderator Richard thanked Evelyn for her work with

*Approved motion 2024-02-23-097*

the Executive over the duration of the meeting.

The General Secretary thanked those present for their work and diligence over the last few days.

### **Reminder of Next Steps**

- Next meetings: February 23-24, 2024; then May 10-11, 2024 (both online)
- Learning session in January re: Pastoral Relationships Thriving with Equity Research Project (January 23, 2024 6:30 pm Eastern)

### **Authorizing the Sub-Executive of the General Council**

The General Secretary noted those on the Sub-Executive: Richard Bott, Teresa Burnett-Cole, M Chorney, the Moderator and himself.

### **Motion: Michael Blair/Kit Loewen**

**2023-11-17-088**

That the General Council Executive authorize its Sub-Executive to deal with the business placed before it by this meeting of the Executive and any emergent business that may arise prior to the next meeting of the General Council Executive.

### **Carried**

In closing, Moderator Richard shared the words of Cardinal Dearden, which had been shared earlier in the meeting:

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.  
The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.  
We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.  
No statement says all that could be said.  
No prayer fully expresses our faith.  
No confession brings perfection.  
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.  
No program accomplishes the Church's mission.  
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.  
This is what we are about.  
We plant the seeds that one day will grow.  
We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.  
We lay foundations that will need further development.  
We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.  
We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.  
This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.  
It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own.

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Moderator, Carmen Lansdowne

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General Secretary, Michael Blair