

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

Strategic Plan 2023—2025

Operational Plan Report

Third Quarter

November 1, 2023



Operational Plan Report: Third Quarter

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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.

“The Call and this work on planning, both regionally and nationally, brings me hope.”

—A grassroots response

Today, we celebrate the United Church’s new call and vision...This vision underscores the commitment of the United Church to ecumenism and the principles of partnership in the shared mission.

—United Church Partner Council

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 third quarter of 2023. It also feeds the 2023 evaluation which will help adjust the operational plan for 2024.

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 Q3 results of the operational plan show a drop from the levels of Q1 and 2. While progress on strategic objectives is still being made it is clearer and clearer that the original plan was overly ambitious. This information will assist in more focused operational planning for 2024.

This quarter has seen a dip in our progress towards key results over last quarter. One of the main reasons is an overestimation of work able to be done through the summer period. As well as this quarter-specific challenge, we are continuing to learn that we need to take an even more focused approach to our activities and key results in 2024 to ensure that we are making consistent progress. As we turn the corner from 2023 to 2024, we are engaging in a robust evaluation and anticipating a smaller number of results-oriented, strategically-aligned activities in 2024—with the same commitment to meeting the overall strategic objectives.

Approximately 25% 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 67% (it was 77% in Q2). Climate is the most focused and therefore also the most successful in meeting its planned key results. Growth, the most challenging of our areas and our highest priority, is in a difficult period between Growth Animators being hired and those animators beginning their work. Where we do have staff capacity already—migrant/diaspora and francophone communities—we see huge progress with over 40 active conversations about possible new communities of faith.

While some projects were delayed in Leadership, a significant step was achieved in completing a continuing education programming review that will lead to refocusing and sharpening offerings linked to present and future needs. Common Good initiatives are turning the corner from information sharing and identification of knowledge gaps to development of more detailed strategies, which will see significant roll out in 2024.

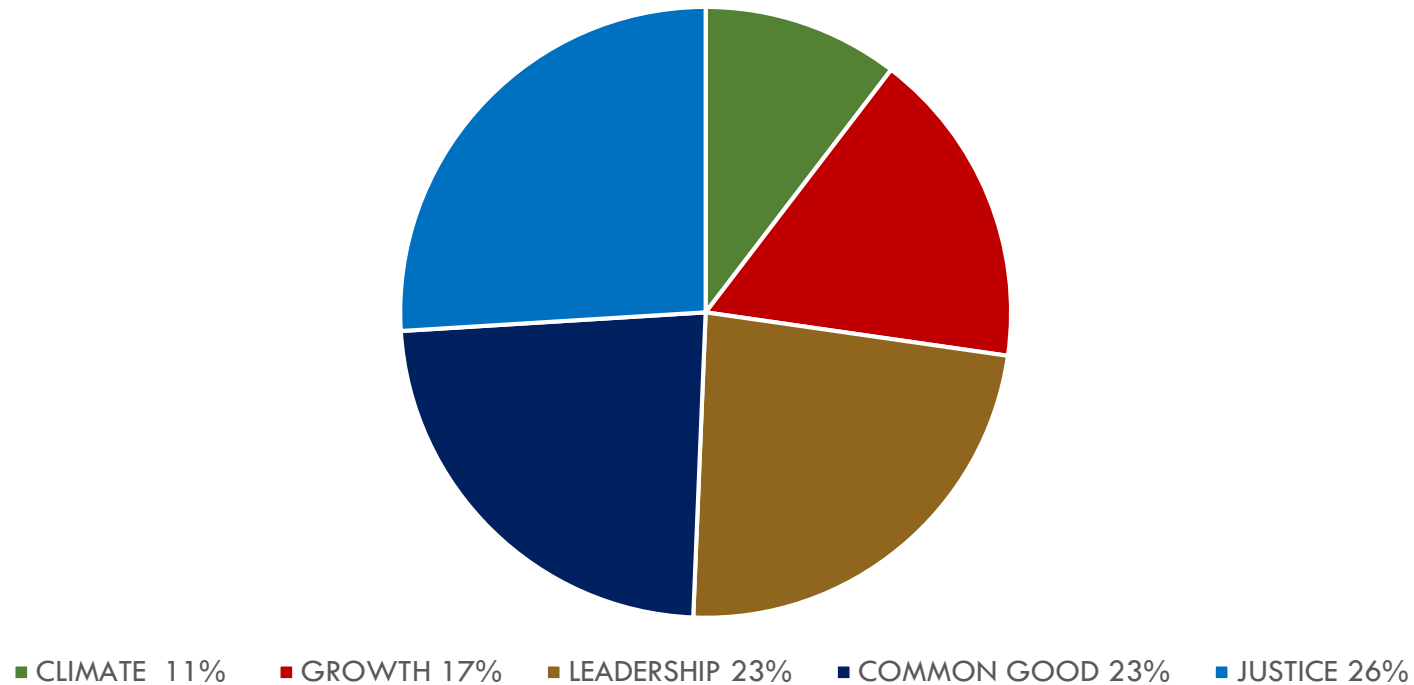
The Moderator's Flourishing Project began in earnest in this period with enthusiastic participation in the initial Mod Squad Book Club and a congregational #wecanflourish workshop in Winnipeg. We are planning intensely towards the Kingston congregational workshop in November and for the Moderator's Re-generate Leadership Program, which received an excellent response in diverse and enthusiastic applications.

For the activities awaiting activation—four in total—the issues relate to staff capacity, including for the recently hired. The only outstanding strategic plan related hiring is for a Government Relations Coordinator and it is in process.

Activities Distribution and Start

95% of the planned 2023 activities have started

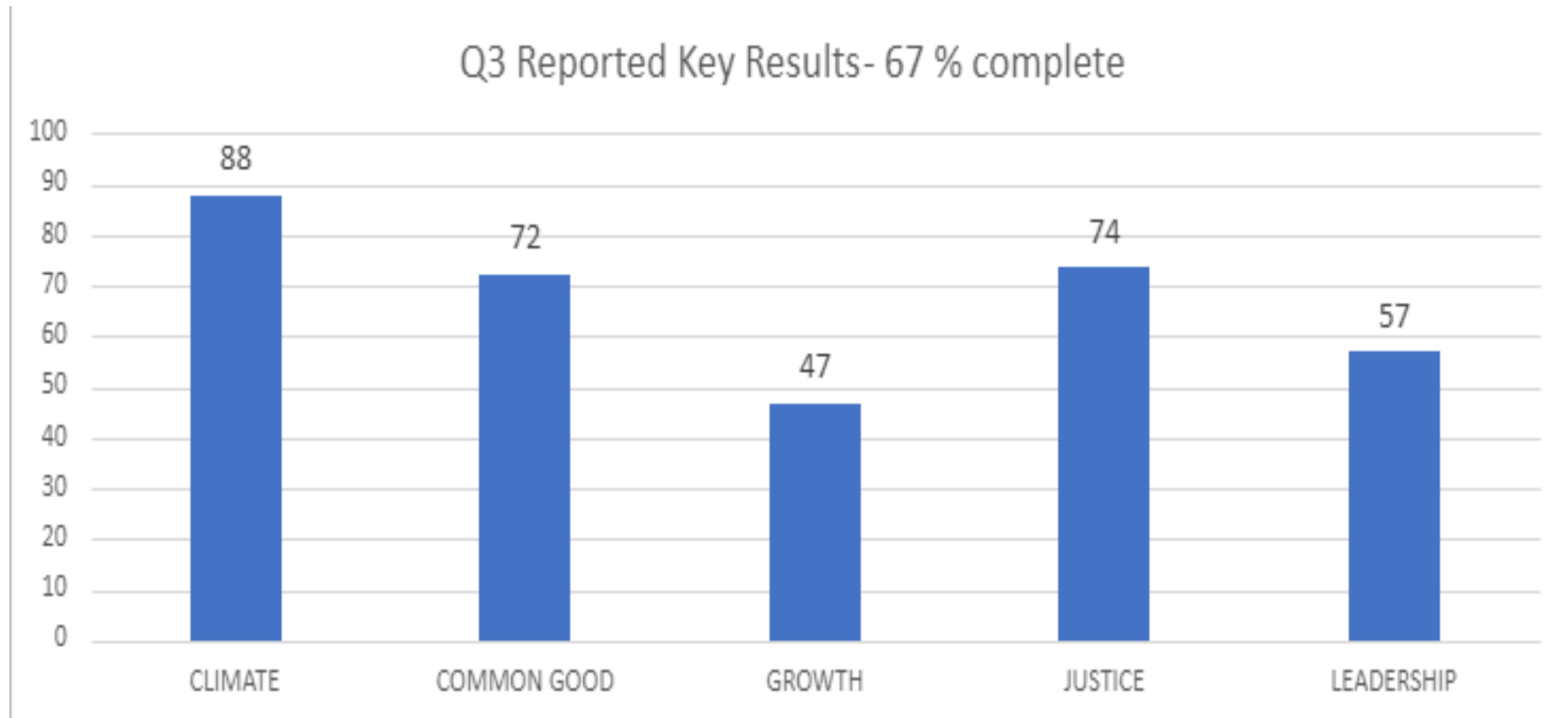
Distribution of 2023 Activities per Strategic Objective - Q3



- 2023 Status: 77 of 81 activities have started.
- All planned 2023 activities in Climate, Common Good and Leadership are underway
- Of the 4 "not yet activated", one relates to a position not yet hired, and two relate to recent hirings. The final is a capacity problem to be addressed in 2024.
- Indigenous Pathways is reporting in a narrative manner.

Progress against Key Results

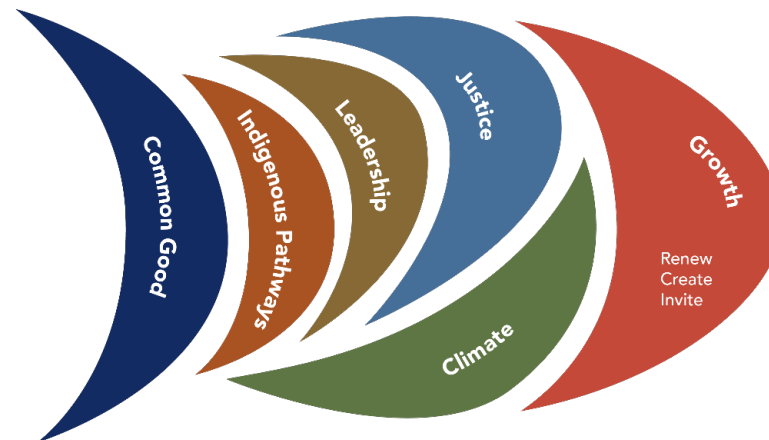
67% is average result for Q3 (compared to 77% for Q2)



- Progress against key results in Q3 varies from 88% in Climate to 47% 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 third quarter of 2023. Please note that the numbers reflect progress not to the ultimate three-year goal, but to the planned key results for this quarter.



Strengthen Invitation: Humility and Confidence in Sharing Faith

47%

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

By the end of Q3 all six Growth Animators were hired, with two slated to start at the beginning of November 2023, and the remainder in January 2024. All Growth Animators will come together with the rest of the Growth Department and Organizational Development and Strategy Unit (ODS) in early December for orientation. The Director of Growth started full-time in early August and has taken on the role of Accountable for the Growth Initiative, reaching out to regions to facilitate strong collaboration when the Growth Animators arrive. Additional needs and capacities for Growth are being identified in General Council Office departments related to Ministries en Français, Communications, and Research and Development.

In the *Renew* stream the work related to tools and coaching for Communities of Faith has struggled with the volume of existing offerings. The hope was to complete a thorough assessment so that existing resources could be matched to emerging needs, before the creation of new tools. Moving into Q4 of this year and Q1 of next year the *Renew* working group will bring in stronger regional representation and incorporate the work of Growth Animators. They will benefit from the focus provided by the clarifying and alignment of existing EDGE work into the Growth Strategy and with United in Learning offerings. While the process was more intensive than originally expected, Stewardship resources have been successfully migrated to CHURCHx and Q3 and Q4 combined registrations for initial courses well exceed the original goals.

In the *Create* stream, migrant and diasporic work with the leadership of Emo Yango and Rev. Emmanuel Tehindrazanarivelo continue to lead the way. A contract has been set up with a second emerging church lead working to establishing community of faith among Hong Kong diasporic communities of faith and conversations continue with Zimbabwean Methodist Societies, enquiring Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (FJKM), as well as Filipino and Pan-African groups. In total, 40 possible sites of new development have

been identified and in some level of conversation. Key work is being done in regard to conversations with regions, obtaining of space, and developing materials to engage in conversations around what is The United Church of Canada. Meanwhile initial conversations are occurring related to the creation of online communities through beginning engagement of online ministry practitioners. Ideas related to emerging communities of identity around disability are being further clarified with input from the United Church Disability Network.

In the *Invite* stream, a major highlight was the official launch of moncredo.org with over 70 attendees representing a rich tapestry of ages, cultural backgrounds, communities of faith, and ecumenical sensitivities. Building from this strong start important marketing and ongoing development strategies are being identified to support this evolving project. In regard to engaging the Call and Vision and developing an external communications strategy, the first examples of Deep, Bold, & Daring merchandise are now available at the [United Church Bookstore](#). Work is underway to engage an external firm to provide leadership around branding, and public engagement campaign strategies are being explored. Centennial planning was delayed because of a transition in staffing.

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

| 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. | 25 |
| | Develop coaching and consulting resources to assist in community of faith transformation, including towards collaborative ministry models or ecumenical shared ministry. | 10 |

| | 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. | 70 |
|---|---|--------------------------------|
| 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. | 5 |
| NEW03 | Create 30 new migrant communities. | 100 |
| | Create 7 new intentional, intercultural engagement communities. | 100 |
| | Create 5 new francophone communities. | 70 |
| | Create 5 new communities aimed at connecting with persons with disabilities. | 60 |
| | Advance communion and partnership conversations that enhance the creation and development of communities of faith. | No report received |
| 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. | 20 |
| | 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. | 0 |

Embolden Justice: Collaborating to Mend Church and World

74%*

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

No report received.

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. | 90 |
| | 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. | 75 |
| | Following the lead of affected communities and developing trust/mutuality, contribute to increased access and equity in housing for racialized communities. | Not yet activated |

| | | |
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| | Develop and implement educational strategy that deepens understanding of the diverse impacts of colonialism, White supremacy, and racism in our church. | 90 |
| | 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. | 80 |
| | 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. | 100 |
| | 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. | 80 |

Invigorate Leadership: Adapting and Innovating for Bold Discipleship

57%

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 Q3, staff continued to make good progress generally on key results. The opportunity to revise key results in quarter two was helpful in quarter three as timelines and interdependencies (with staff colleagues and external vendors) were more realistic. At the same time, many of the key results for quarter three were overly ambitious in terms of what could be accomplished during a quarter that spanned two months of summer and with a number of staff persons being away on vacation. This is particularly a challenge for key results that are dependent on staff teams, where staff have different holiday schedules. Work continued to progress on many key results during this quarter but at a slower rate than any of the Leadership Objective team had planned for. We will be building in some contingency time and noting key dependencies as we start to plan activities and key results for 2024.

Highlights for Q3:

Then Let Us Sing! Sampler

- Over 300 communities of faith are actively engaging with the sampler, with a lot of positive feedback
- 3 different regions are planning events based on the content of the sampler.
- Over 150 people participated in webinars about Then Let Us Sing!
- Many more people have engaged in regional events and training opportunities.

The fruits of the deeper relationships we have attempted to build with networks and key stake holders has been evident in the success of our many educational events for TLUS!

Equity, Diversity, and Anti-Oppression Training:

The response to the EDA e-modules and conversations has been excellent! There has been interest in expanding this training beyond the GC/OV committees to UCC elected representatives, GC Commissioners, the Indigenous Church committees, and the other event participants.

Continuing Education Programming Review:

- Reviewed 52 programs from EDGE, United in Learning, United Fresh Start, LeaderShift and PMRC/CWRC First Third.
- 50% of programming touches “Bold Discipleship”

- 20% of programming connects with “Deep Spirituality” or “Daring Justice”
- 83% of programming is focused on continuing education for lay leaders
- 63% of programming is focused on continuing education for ministry personnel

Youth and Young Adult Survey:

We've had good conversations with youth ministry leaders and some interesting findings with the survey. We are still working to harvest the survey results to assist with developing a framework to reach and connect with youth.

Accountable: Jennifer Janzen-Ball

| General Council 43 Proposal | <u>Priority Activities Only</u> | % 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. | 65 |
| | Collaborate with regional council colleagues and theological schools around collaborative ministry models, including Ecumenical Shared Ministry. | 40 |
| | 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, | 25 |

| | | |
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| | and queer people, including addressing the compensation model. | |
| | 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. | 25 |

Nurture the Common Good: Equity and Sustainability in Resources

72%

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.

The purpose of the Nurturing the Common Good Objective is to create equity and sustainability in resources to support the ministry of the whole church. This Objective has a total of 23 activities of which 6 are deemed high priority, and five are scheduled to begin in 2024. Progress in achieving key results across this Objective has been good. As identified in earlier reporting, as we transition to a new way of working, resourcing continues to be an issue and has slowed or otherwise delayed some activities related to a grant and donation portal and information management development.

In terms of successes, there are several to note. The self-insurance program, has realized the savings forecasted (up to 30% in premiums in some cases), the administrative issues have been resolved, and renewals are proceeding in good order. Support for treasurers and other specialized roles in communities of faith has expanded and there is much anticipation around the tools being offered and developed in support of relieving some of the administrative burden. Good information sharing and identification of knowledge gaps is laying the groundwork for best practice development and sharing in a key area of asset retention. This activity examines how we best 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. The feasibility study for the 2025 anniversary fundraising campaign has begun and work to improve communications about Mission and Service is seeing good results in terms of expressions of generosity across the church.

Accountable: Sarah Charters

| General Council 43 Proposal | Priority Activities Only | % Progress against Key Results |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| GCE07 | Implement a self-insurance program for all church entities. Reduce a significant cost and stressor by 15-30%. | 85 |
| | Integrate granting and donation portals to improve efficiency, transparency, accountability and our ability to tell our story. | 50 |
| | 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. | 25 |
| | Promote, encourage and increase giving in support of denominational work and target a national capital fundraising program for the church's 100th anniversary. | 80 |
| | Develop a cross United Church or potentially cross-denomination strategy for information management. | 25 |

Deepen Integrity: Living Climate Commitments

88%

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.

The overall objective our climate work is to 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. In large measure, we hope to add heft, scale and profile to the existing work of various networks and groups.

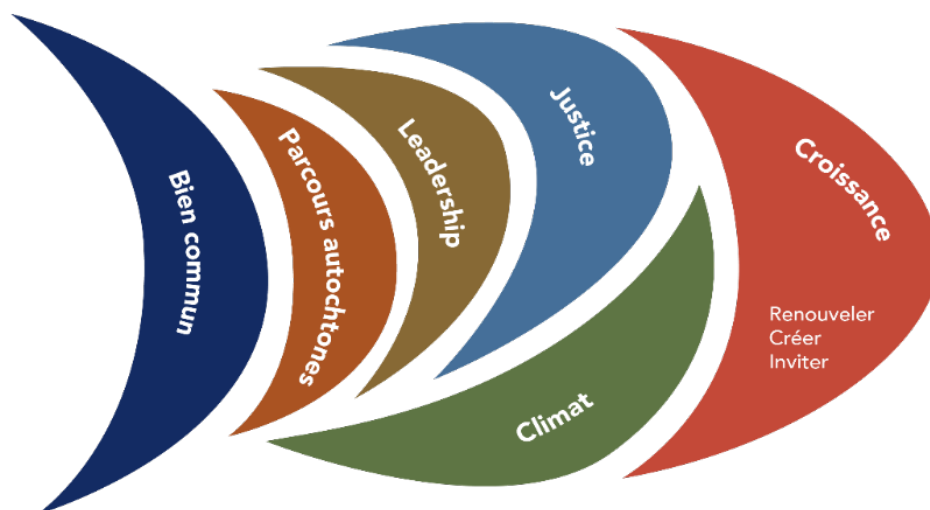
This Objective has eight activities with 2023 goals and two that begin in 2024. Q3 saw the completion of our youth climate activist initiative and much work in preparation for COP28 in December. For both, we attracted very engaged youth and there are indications that many will continue climate advocacy work into the future. Both activities will be evaluated further for scalability and impact. The church also filed a shareholder proposal around climate change adaptation in the food sector and continues to engage with the banks around the funding of fossil fuels. Our ecumenical and network efforts continue and will ramp up again for COP28.

The most tangible outcomes arise from our [Faithful Footprints](#) program which has generated considerable interest and will now exceed the goal of 500 congregations engaged by 2025 and is now aiming for 1000 by 2030 if resources allow. All regions are now engaged and the program continues to build profile and credibility for all forms of climate action.

Accountable: Erik Mathiesen

| General Council 43 Proposal | Priority Activities Only | % 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. | 80 |
|------|--|----|



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.

The National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering was held on July 29-30, 2023 at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. The gathering space and time was significant based on the theme "Our Strong Voices" and the placement of the beaver- a teacher of wisdom. The discussions and workshops gave a fundamental time together to search out some wisdom for actions for our suffering Indigenous communities across Canada. Topics of suicide prevention, testamur, sexual orientation within the Two spirited understanding were some of our topics. The youth came together to lead a panel discussion on the state of emergency calls in our communities. We brought discussion on the "Bringing the Children Home" campaign within the United Church, which is a key part of the Strategic Plan's Justice Objective. And honored our membership, leadership and elders in various ways through the gathering time. We lifted up the new appointed National Indigenous Council and additional members to the National Indigenous Elders Council.

The National Indigenous Council are set to meet in person in Toronto this November to start their work and form some orientation as the new council. With this work they will look to various needs that include the Indigenous church structure, the placement of the current Remit vote and the Strategic plan platform on the Indigenous pathway strategy. At the same time the council will begin their relationship building with General Council Executive in Toronto, as this is the shift and work laid within the process of the Indigenous church structuring as two canoes paddling side by side down the same river.

The National Indigenous Elders Council have continued to meet monthly to invest on their vision of the Indigenous church structure and work within advocacy work on residential school commits of the United church, support to the GCE and the support of our sacred bundle. The council continues to respond to various request from members and groups within the church that come to ask for their support or advice on matters continuously. And will continue to commit their time to support within the structure of the Indigenous church with the National Indigenous Council.

As we look towards the Remit process ending in March 2024, on the General Secretary's proposal on remit omits to the Indigenous church, the Indigenous church is looking to the platform and placement of the various questions and foundation that will need to be committed to as an Indigenous United church. The work towards the Strategic Plan of the United church is now on the vision and work of the Indigenous church with mandating work on the primary plans placed within the Indigenous pathway projection. Some of this focus will be geared on Youth mentorship and our vision of Ministries and training for the Indigenous church.

Our sacred bundle is now being led into our structure and a spiritual pathway for the Indigenous church. We honored the hand off of

our sacred bundle from the late Grafton Antone to the new keeper, the Executive Minister of Indigenous Ministries & Justice office. With the support and guidance of the Elders Council and support from our local traditions and spiritual giftedness, we will ensure our bundle will guide us, befriend us and continue to lead us to what we call ourselves to be on these great lands, people of the Earth.

Further information on the National Indigenous Spiritual 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.*