

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

Strategic Plan 2023—2025

Operational Plan Report

Fourth Quarter

February 1, 2024



Operational Plan Report: Fourth Quarter

Contents

Introduction.....	3
Overall Results	4
Activities Distribution and Start.....	6
Progress against Key Results	7
Strategic Objectives	8
Strengthen Invitation: Humility and Confidence in Sharing Faith.....	9
Embolden Justice: Collaborating to Mend Church and World	13
Invigorate Leadership: Adapting and Innovating for Bold Discipleship.....	18
Nurture the Common Good: Equity and Sustainability in Resources.....	21
Deepen Integrity: Living Climate Commitments	23
Journeying Indigenous Pathways: Forging Right Relations	24



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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.

Comments from the November Flourishing
Workshop in Kingston:

*“It is good to have and feel the tangible
support from the National Office.”*

*“Thanks for all your work, and
demonstrating a commitment to ongoing
change...It was a day that made me feel
proud that I’m part of this innovative and
welcoming community of faith.”*

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 fourth quarter of 2023. It precedes a full year report which is pending.

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 Q4 results of the operational plan show the same level as Q3. This lower level from Q1 and 2 shows the impact of the overly ambitious nature of the plan and contributes to more focused operational planning for 2024.

This quarter has held steady at a lower level of key results than in the beginning of the year. We observed the impact on collective capacity of planning for the 2024 operational plan at the same time as completing Q4. Staff in some areas were beginning to turn their attention to confirmed activities and revised key results for 2024. Twenty-three or approximately 30% of the activities 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% (as in Q3).

Climate is the most focused area and therefore also the most successful in meeting its planned key results at 86%. This quarter saw accelerating congregational interest in energy efficiency. Remote participation in COP28 actively engaged climate justice advocates across the country –both within the denomination and across the broader [For the Love of Creation](#) ecumenical network. Youth Climate Motivators continue to be active participants going forward. In just one example a participant “of the 2023 Climate Motivators decided to go to Halton Hills Council and advocate that they not expand a Power Plant. The Council listened to his very good speech and he swayed the vote...he referred to being a Climate Motivator and that he had learned skills during the summer program.”

This quarter’s activities in Justice included the *40 Days of Engagement on Anti-Racism* program as well as the in-person meeting of the Partner Council. Evaluations from that anti-racism program were overwhelmingly positive, indicating how it has stretched people in good ways, deepened theological understandings and encouraged them to action. One participant reported: “The 40 days were a life changing experience for me. I feel I will be more confident living and working in Canada as a racialized person.” While only two of the four members of the partner council were able to attend the meeting due to visa restrictions, engagement with the regions was very strong and resulted in these engaging stories: <https://united-church.ca/news/partner-council-eager-be-immersed-united-churchs-call-and-vision>; <https://united-church.ca/news/partner-council-visits-communities-faith>. One of the highlights of the Indigenous work in Justice were the programs for youth, with reports of rejuvenation and renewal through engagement in healing programs.

The [Moderator’s Flourishing Project](#) was developed and reported in the Justice area in 2023. While requiring a pivot away from the number of corporate events given the lack of audience, there was significant Q4 impact through a strong Kingston-area congregational workshop (with 94 participants) and two successful Mod Squad Book Club events (with 169 total participants). Of

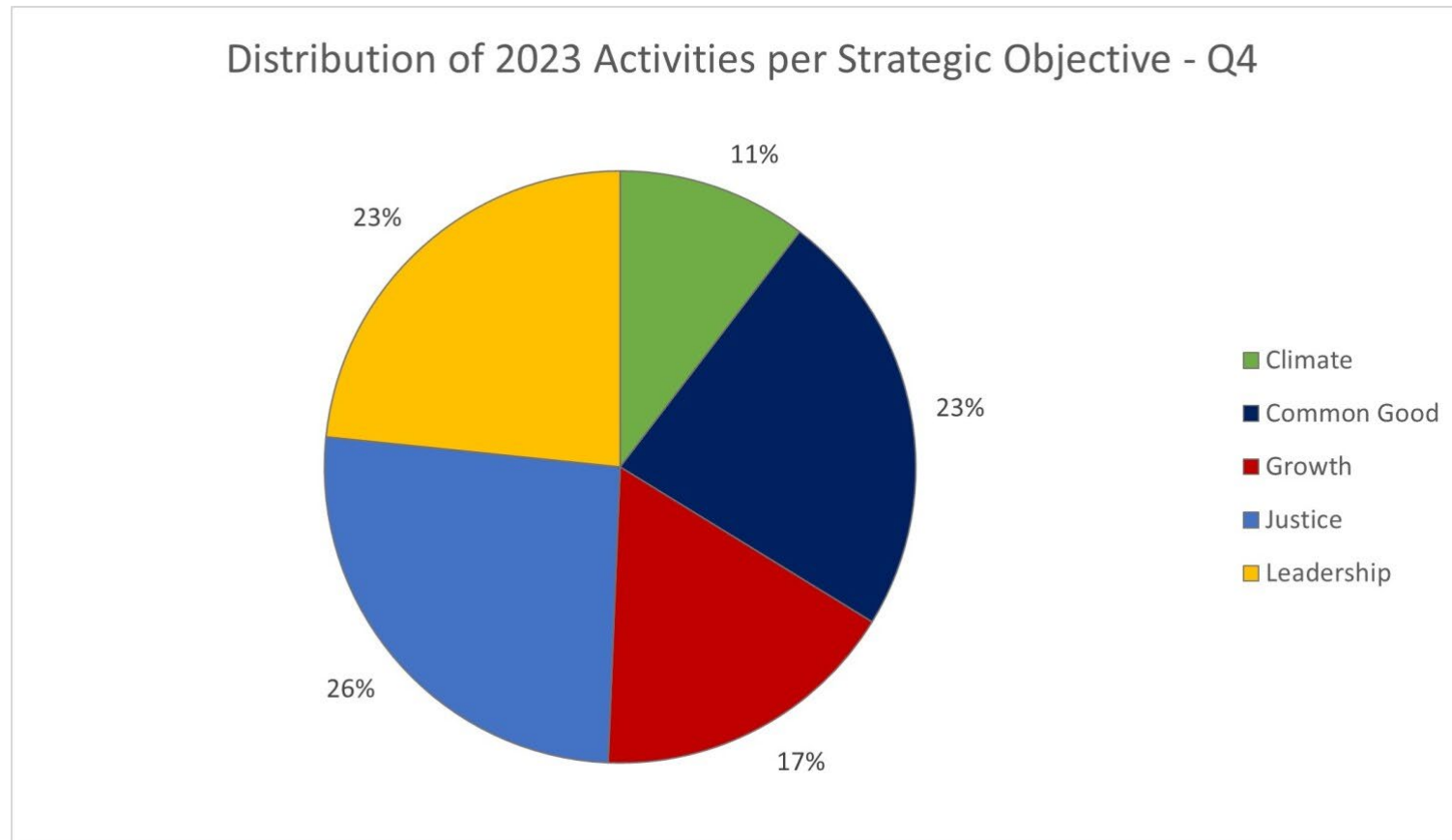
the Kingston workshop, one participant commented: “I deeply appreciate all the preparation and pondering that has gone into the Flourishing workshops along with the passion and excitement with which the team shared the concepts.” Follow up to the first two congregational workshops and the eight planned for 2024 will be done by the newly forming Growth team. This quarter also consisted on intensified planning for first residence of the Moderator’s (Re)Generate leadership training program, which will be lodged in the Leadership Objective area in 2024.

The Leadership area saw strong results in the [Leadership Counts](#) program, beginning traction relating to collaborative ministry, and positive evaluations on Committee’ Equity Diversity and Anti-Oppression (EDA) training: 90% agreed or strongly agreed that training helped them understand how to apply EDA in their committee work. In the Common Good area, the results of strong work on the grants review enabled informed budget discernment in Q4, while a feasibility study conducted in Q4 will help to inform 2024 Q1 decisions on a Centennial fundraising initiative. Work of the Indigenous church continues focused on orienting and supporting leadership in the National Indigenous and National Indigenous Elders Councils as well as initiating exploration of a possible Northern Manitoba Emergency Initiative.

Growth, the most challenging of our areas and our highest priority, had only two Growth animators hired in this period; the remaining four begin their work on January 1. However, the key results had anticipated all animators on board during this period. Nevertheless, resource material for renewal is being honed and harvested for use by the whole of Growth department. Where we have had staff capacity already for almost a year—migrant/diaspora and francophone communities—we see huge progress with over 40 active conversations about possible new communities of faith. Initial conversations with regions have highlighted 21 areas of possible community of faith creation. Communications, which is critical to inviting the public into United Church of Canada efforts and communities, is pivoting from needed work flow strengthening, which created some delay, to more externally-oriented efforts aligned with the strategic plan aspirations.

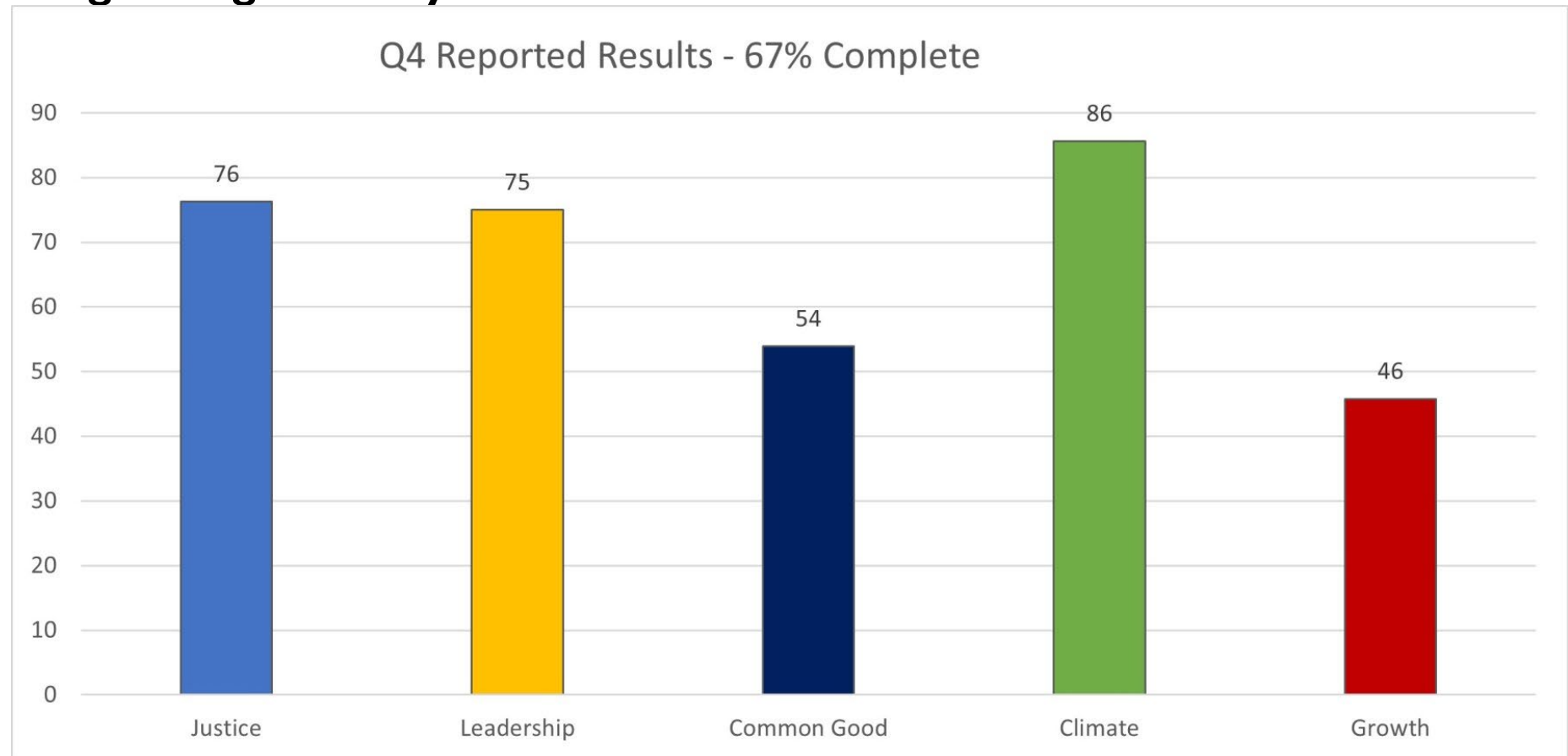
As we turn the corner from 2023 to 2024, we are developing a smaller number of results-oriented, strategically-aligned activities—with the same commitment to meeting the overall strategic objectives, and with stronger budget and performance management alignment.

Activities Distribution and Start



- 2023 Status: 77 of 81 activities as planned in 2023.
- All planned 2023 activities in Climate, Common Good and Leadership got underway
- Of the 4 "not yet activated", three relate to hirings. These have now been completed and are expected to fully impact Q2 of 2024. The final is a capacity problem that has been addressed for 2024.
- Indigenous Pathways is reporting in a narrative manner.

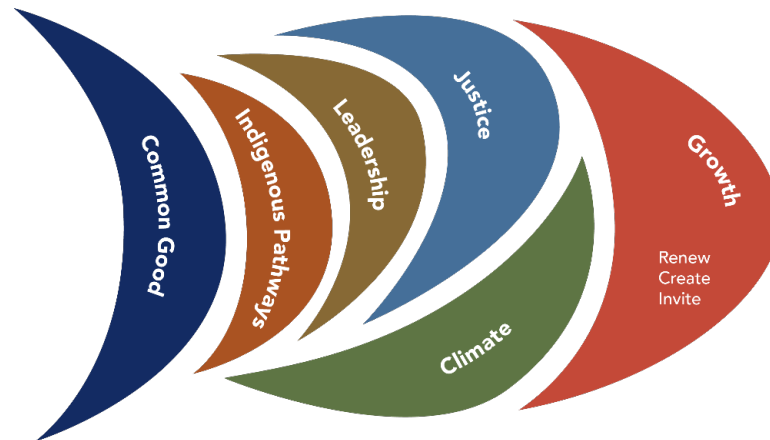
Progress against Key Results



- Progress against key results in Q4 varies from 86% 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 fourth 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

46%

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.

In Q4 the first two Growth Animators began their work. The Very Rev. Jordan Cantwell began working within the Prairie Regions and Rev. Dr. Sharon Ballantyne within United Church of Canada East (UCC East). They have begun connecting with Regional staff and volunteers to create collaborative patterns of working together and identify specific spaces in which they might begin working with Communities of Faith (CoFs). In December the whole Organizational Development and Strategy Unit (ODS) met in person for two days with a specific focus on alignment with the Call and Vision and the Growth Initiative amongst the four departments within ODS (Communications, Growth, Ministères en Français, and Research and Development). The Growth Department spent an additional day on team building, working with the Theological Banquet model, and rooting renewal work in a practice of naming the presence of God in one's own life and story.

RENEW: In this stream, former EDGE materials were modified for direct use with Communities of Faith by the Growth Department. Meetings were held with the former EDGE Coaches to evaluate the coaching program and identify areas for future consideration in accompanying Communities of Faith seeking renewal. The Flourishing Project visited Kingston, ON with a congregational workshop of over 100 participants engaging in hopeful conversations. Growth Department staff met with CoFs in Edmonton and Nova Scotia and offered worship leadership in Southern Ontario. Stewardship resources were successfully migrated to CHURCHx in Q3, and Q3 and Q4 combined registrations for initial courses well exceeded the original goals. Collaboration began between Stewardship staff and the first two Growth Animators which will be extended to the whole team when the others start in 2024.

CREATE: In this stream, two additional contracts were developed with emerging Community of Faith leads in migrant and diasporic communities, one working with Swahili-speaking groups in Ottawa and the other working with various house churches of the Church of Jesus Christ of Madagascar in the towns around Montréal. The Director of Growth visited the two Hong Kong leads as well as one of the Hong Kong sports groups. *Gallery of Faith*, one of the Hong Kong groups, ran a number of events including two Hotpot nights, and a reading on anti-racism with Heather Beamish. Overall, **40 possible sites of new CoF amongst migrant and diasporic and Francophone communities** have been identified, some in very initial stages of conversation. These include global Methodist groups with emerging relationships with The United Church of Canada. Of these, four leadership contracts have been developed, with six additional in consideration for 2024.

Meetings with Regional Councils identified **21 possibilities** where Regional Councils have named their hope to create new Communities of Faith within their priority areas. Meetings were held with Disciples of Christ New Church Ministry about the possibility of shared United Church of Canada/Disciples of Christ church planting. After conversation with the Disability Network, the initiative around creation of community around disability will be expanded to include other identities such as gender expression and sexual orientation.

INVITE: Here, Call and Vision resources have been developed and collected and will be ready for Community of Faith distribution in early 2024. This will happen in partnership with Growth Animators who will work Communities of Faith interested in receiving these resources and engaging with the Call and Vision as a tool to renew their ministry and witness in their community. External Communication strategy work is being aligned with Centennial goals. Challenges in staffing have hindered progress with MonCredo.org and projections from earlier in the year were not met, but with staffing possibilities being rectified there are strong possibilities for revisioning in early 2024. Early work for the Centennial celebrations included the identification of a worship consultant and confirmation of locations for June 9 & 10, 2024 launch activity while other work will take root in earnest in 2024.

We look forward to additional capacity in the beginning of 2024, with the remaining Growth Animators coming on board as well as a Team Lead for Research and Development. Plans for 2024 have been adjusted to reflect learning and emerging opportunities, aligned with regions, and to amplify the strengths of the emerging team.

Accountable: 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.	80
	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.	40

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.	0
NEW03	Create 30 new migrant communities.	100
	Create 7 new intentional, intercultural engagement communities.	100
	Create 5 new francophone communities.	100
	Create 5 new communities aimed at connecting with persons with disabilities.	0
	Advance communion and partnership conversations that enhance the creation and development of communities of faith.	0
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.	25
	Develop MonCredo.org to enhance development and welcome of francophone community in the United Church	25
	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

The work has continued to advance with our targeted goals. We can celebrate the completion of 74% of the activities in Q4 and yet are mindful that transformation is a long-term result, persisting and keeping hope alive. Justice work is inherently controversial, because it aims to change the policies and power structures that make, as well as maintain, unfair structures. To be prophetic for life and dignity is costly. As we invest time and resources in this work, we are mindful of our special charism as a church.

We have said our goal in this area is to “collaborate in spaces where just relationships can flourish for abundant life in the church, Canada, and in global communities.” Collaboration is at the heart of justice work. In the period under review, we witnessed a number of positive collaborative spaces.

Highlights:

RACIAL EQUITY: The church's work on racial equity continues to be guided by the National Anti-Racism Action Plan, which is integrated into the church's overall Strategic Plan. This involves reflecting on the impact of the anti-racism work in the church as a whole. As an example, through the [40 Days of Engagement on Anti-Racism](#), different participants noted how their experience with the 40 Days had been life changing, how they will research and read more, how they will speak up more, or how they feel better placed to live and work in a multi-racial environment. Other participants named their own learning and actions. In the online series *Placing Ourselves in Colonialism*, people in the church were deeply engaged in an experiential form of education for people to learn more about land, their own family ancestries, and the ongoing impact of colonialism. Several participants named concrete ways they would deepen their engagement on anti-racism or decolonization in their communities of faith as a result of being part of the months-long series. In the area of racial equity, there are also increased number of youth involved in anti-racism through the [unique app](#).

The work on countering antisemitism has also been ongoing, through a collaborative effort between the theological schools and the Countering Antisemitism Working Group, which has been a good model. This collaboration includes plans for four theological schools to host four webinars to animate the *Bearing Faithful Witness* resource in Lent 2024, with the intent to help worship leaders examine, and address, Holy Week texts that can have an antisemitic interpretation.

INDIGENOUS JUSTICE: Indigenous young people are being exposed to culturally appropriate opportunities for their individual and communal effectiveness. In the work of self-defined healing, the creation and maintenance of a safe space for Indigenous and racialized peoples continued in small group circles. Confidentiality is key to this, and the group continued to meet about once a month. Another major piece of work was on spiritual violence against Indigenous people now reflected in the operational plan. Regarding *Bringing the Children Home*, making records available in a digital form, including reviewing material not under the purview of the archives' previous TRC-focused projects, has yielded key, relevant information to be digitized starting in 2024.

2SLGBTQIA+ JUSTICE: The Asia Consultation on Gender and LGBTQIA+ Justice held in Manila, Philippines, showed how some churches, councils of churches and seminaries from across Asia are doing the work of listening to 2SLGBTQIA+ people who had previously been shunned, changing the ways they lead, preach, train and engage with the societies around them. Recommendations included continuing dialogue and actions for churches and ecumenical organizations, built on perspectives of faith and prophetic advocacy that recognizes the dignity and spirituality of 2SLGBTQIA+ people, their commitment to the gospel and the need for pastoral accompaniment as part of the people of God.

With the new staff coordinator for 2SLGBTQIA+ justice work in place, the focus moved to establishing systems to align the work with the strategic plan. The apology writing task group moved from plans to implementation; hard work will begin in 2024. There was need to strengthen collaboration with *Affirm United*. This has been achieved by the development of the Memorandum of Understanding which will improve working relationship in the work of promoting 2SLGBTQIA+ rights.

There has been a focus on organizing the African faith leaders' consultation on gender and human sexuality to take place in the summer of 2024. The consultation is aimed at deepening the knowledge of the reality of 2SLGBTQIA+ persons on the African continent. The consultation will contribute to the work of transforming both Church and society through ecumenical and interfaith dialogues, and make proposals in the pastoral and public advocacy areas for inclusion in communities of faith and respect for human rights.

Intentional conversations with six 2SLGBTQIA+ ecumenical and civil society organizations were commenced with a view to collaboration.

OTHER JUSTICE ISSUES:

With ongoing hostilities between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, the prophetic voice of the Church has been tested yet again. It was a period of rough seas in that regard. The General Council Office launched an appeal, which included an advocacy letter writing tool, a

donation opportunity and a call for prayer as well as participating in many advocacy and media actions with faith and civil society groups. In November, the GCE and National Indigenous Council (NIC) wrote a letter to the Prime Minister calling for ceasefire; this brought affirmation and led to several other statements calling for peace. The Principles-based justice guidelines were approved by General Council in October and are now being experimented with. United Church of Canada partners have appreciated the costly solidarity shown to them in the statements and prayers offered. Reciprocity and mutual commitment are essential elements in collaborative justice work and so our commitment to work ecumenically and with civil society on this docket can be noticed.

RADICAL ACCOMPANIMENT—GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP: In the radical accompaniment piece of our ministry, we are happy to report that all global partners were accompanied in their justice seeking-work through confirmation of urgent priorities as identified in Framework and Annual agreements.

Challenges:

With respect to work on *Bringing the Children Home*, we have experienced some slowdowns in the archival work because of staff and contractor availability. The work on antisemitism experienced some delay, in part due to the conflict in Gaza and concerns about how best to continue the particular focus on antisemitism in Christian scriptures and theology, in the midst of a humanitarian crisis in Palestine and Israel. The focus changed on some activities in the last month of 2023 to plan the new activities for 2024 and progress was begun on those new pieces of adjusted activities while others were merged or shifted to other areas of the strategic plan.

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.	85

	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- Capacity problem.
	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.	80
	Following the lead of affected communities and developing trust/mutuality, contribute to increased access and equity in housing for racialized communities.	Not yet activated. Hire completed. Expect progress by Q2 2024.
	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.	40
	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.	50
	Develop an engaging campaign that increases the support of the Canadian government to 2S-LGBTQIA+ refugees in Canada and globally.	Not yet activated. But, hire accomplished. Progress expected in Q1 2024.

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.	90

Invigorate Leadership: Adapting and Innovating for Bold Discipleship

75%

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.

Through Q4, the leadership objective team spent time engaged in individual and collective evaluations of our progress and learnings in 2023. This in turn fed into workshopping key results for 2024 with each other. Overall, the team has made good progress on Q4. Within the overall results, two activity streams have been completed in 2023. In some activity streams, some of the work on the key results for this quarter was slowed, a domino effect from some Q3 key delays due to external factors.

Highlights:

WORSHIP: There is lots of good news this quarter. *Advent Unwrapped* had another engaging season with a large number of subscribers to our newsletter. We released four American Sign Language (ASL) videos this quarter, and are working on five *langue des signes Québécoise* (LSQ) videos to be released in conjunction with the Centennial and *Then Let Us Sing* (TLUS) launch! The *Act/Fast Lenten* book is currently for sale, the result of a wonderful collaborative effort and showing synergies between Leadership and Climate objectives. TLUS has received a grant from the Calvin Institute of \$25000 to help support or educational initiatives around TLUS.

COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY MODELS: We are happy to announce that we have 18 clergy from across the country participating in the first of the collaborative events: Solidarity Circles, a partnership with Vanderbilt Divinity School.

LEADERSHIP COUNTS: We finished the year with the completion of nearly all Q4 key results. We are looking ahead to connecting with more equity networks to share results and gain insights in 2024. It was very affirming for the team to present to the UCCAN Executive Team in November.

RESOLVE: DESIGNATED LAY MINISTRY: This governance piece is complete. Work now has shifted to implementation of the General Council decision in October 2023.

Challenges:

Quarter 4 work slowed down in some areas. In some cases, this was due to some flagging energy and the need for time to be directed towards 2023 evaluation and 2024 planning. In other cases, work was slowed due to staff holidays or external factors.

Learning:

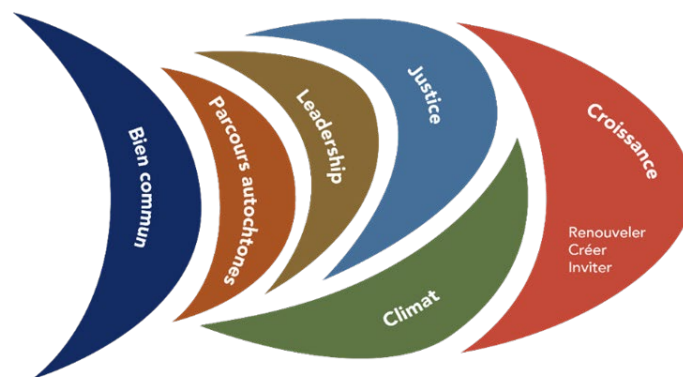
Evaluation of 2023 and planning for 2024 took significant time and energy. Going forward, we now know that there are certain periods in the

work life of the GCO where work on activity streams may be slower. In planning for 2024, the team tried to be realistic about identifying key results for Q3 (summer) and Q4 (General Council annual meeting, planning for the next year, and Christmas holidays). While being realistic, the team continues to be ambitious about key results to move our activity streams, and thus the overall objective, forward.

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.	0
	Intentionally identify young leaders in the church and support their continued development.	100
GCE06; N:ka 01 notes	Reimagine theological education through a process that enables schools to collaborate around the ministry needs of the future.	85
	Collaborate with regional council colleagues and theological schools around collaborative ministry models, including Ecumenical Shared Ministry.	80
	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.	60
	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.	20
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	75

	external advocacy around immigration processes. This might lead to an Admission Matching Commission.	
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Nurture the Common Good: Equity and Sustainability in Resources 54%

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 Common Good objective is designed to support the entire denomination in its financial and administrative effectiveness so that it can focus more fully on ministry and have a solid financial base to work from. To that end a number of activities relate to removing barriers to financial health for communities of faith, others are about resourcing decisions around property, and others related to exploring shared services to increase capacity and decrease the administrative burden on the church.

Highlights include collaborations with [Kindred Works](#) to ensure congregations can access to services; providing relevant, timely information and [support to Treasurers](#) and other specialized roles within communities of faith through regularly scheduled webinars on the [Churchx](#) platform; and providing over \$1M in savings across the church through self-insurance. Other successes include the pilot of a donation service particularly helpful for congregations hosting events and renting out space (contact the Community of Faith Stewardship Support team at called@united-church.ca for more information), and the digitization of numerous archival items that will be preserved for future reference and learning in the church.

Amidst the successes, there have been challenges related to staff capacity as we transition fully to the strategic plan and close out other pieces of work. With a year of transition complete, we anticipate moving forward with the activities that continue and expect that with the experience we now have, we will be able to make good progress on increasing capacity, sustainability, and enhancing equity.

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%.	80

	Integrate granting and donation portals to improve efficiency, transparency, accountability and our ability to tell our story.	0
	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.	75
	Promote, encourage and increase giving in support of denominational work and target a national capital fundraising program for the church's 100th anniversary.	60
	Develop a cross United Church or potentially cross-denomination strategy for information management.	0

Deepen Integrity: Living Climate Commitments

86%

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.

Climate strategy activities for 2023 largely met their goals. Our [Faithful Footprints \(FF\)](#) engagement accelerated post covid with 2023 granting exceeding \$1.55 million for a cumulative total of \$4.5 million. This program has a significant multiplier effect as in addition to requiring matching funds, the FF grant is typically a catalyst and has a multiplier effect of three to four times. It looks as if we will now exceed the goal of 500 congregations engaged by 2025 and so are now aiming for 1000 by 2030, if resources allow.

COP28 participation was the key program for Q4 2023. Although planned for actual attendance, late-breaking staff safety concerns caused us to pivot to virtual participation. The team participated actively and there was good engagement across the country with some media profile. This also served as proof of concept for successful virtual participation for future. The youth Climate Motivator program received positive reviews and is scheduled to continue for 2024 as part of overall climate mobilization efforts.

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

As we end Q4 of the Operational Plan United Church, and within Indigenous Pathways, we have started groundwork towards key areas of focus within the Indigenous United Church. Here are the priorities from our National Indigenous Council, National Indigenous Elders Council, and Leadership Group on the Northern Manitoba State of Emergency.

National Indigenous Council (NIC):

POLICY: There is a need to develop new policies for the United Church that require thoughtful consideration of how to incorporate Indigenous perspectives more effectively, such as into the climate justice discourse. NIC has been approached to help give voice for the proposed policy development on fossil fuels.

The proposed Conflict-of-Interest policy under discussion by the NIC will apply to all members of the NIC, as well as other committees falling under the NIC Umbrella, such as the Healing Fund, Real Property, Mission and Support, etc. The recommendation to include "households" in the policy was added to address situations where extended family members, not traditionally considered part of one's immediate family, share the same living space. The revised Conflict-of-Interest Policy as presented was passed Nov 2023.

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS SPIRITUAL GATHERING (NISG) REMIT VIDEO: A [video](#) from the National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering July 2023, that features the Indigenous Church speaking to its communities about the remit, has been produced. The video aims to inform Indigenous communities of faith about the remit and can also be utilized for non-Indigenous audiences. The initiative is a response to a perceived need for insights into Indigenous perspectives on the remit. This video serves as the first reflection from the NISG on the remit.

NIC & GCE GOVERNANCE RELATIONS: The Indigenous Church's vision, presented in 2022, aims to shift from a mission-based to a partnership-based relationship with the United Church. This envisions an independent Indigenous church capable of autonomous decision-making, symbolized by the Two Row Wampum model. The Remit Proposal (GS-10) aligns with the church's commitment to reconciliation, decolonization, and anti-racism. It establishes a three-court structure, introducing the National Indigenous Council as an equal and parallel entity. The NIC Autonomy placement, once established, will enable the NIC to independently manage its

structural changes, eliminating the need for constant approval from the General Council. This aims to empower the NIC and allow it to evolve without seeking permission.

Both NIC and GCE share questions about future provisions and financial strategies. It is important to acknowledge differences in operational systems and business approaches between Indigenous and non-Indigenous members, including recognition of the church's bureaucratic nature and the matriarchal system in Indigenous communities. Both NIC and GCE agree on the importance of understanding and coexisting rather than changing each other.

Discussions in the Nov 2023 meeting between GCE and NIC created understanding with emphasis on the need for collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous members and recognition of the challenges in bridging the gap between the two systems. There is need for an ongoing relationship with GCE that includes proposal for annual in-person meetings during GCE's November meeting to foster sustained connections and discussions and a mutual understanding of the role of Indigenous culture, stressing the importance of understanding Indigenous culture and mutual respect in building relationships.

National Indigenous Elders Council (NIEC):

THE BUNDLE: Agnes Spence, elder on council, expressed her view to the group that the time has come to unveil and share the bundle to our people. She expressed a desire to share the teachings and significance of the bundle with their community. Agnes explained the meaning behind the symbols and traditions, such as the sacred star in their blankets which represents the direction towards the Creator, and the medicine wheel which symbolizes the Holy Spirit. Agnes Spence stated that when we spin our medicine wheel, we see the letter "X," which represents Jesus globally. She also emphasized the importance of understanding the context behind their traditions, rather than just performing the rituals without comprehension. She emphasized that we can no longer keep our traditions a secret. The NIEC will be looking forward to expanding our reference of the bundle within the United Church.

Northern Manitoba State of Emergency:

With two key areas of focus-- the community and ministers—there has been an initiative to raise funds. For the community, they are exploring opportunities like Norway House and its spiritual centre, with further exploration led by the office of Indigenous Ministries & Justice. The need to support ministers and alleviate their workload was emphasized, with a campaign strategy under consideration. Input from ministers is vital in this process. Efforts will be initiated by the Indigenous Office of Vocation and Office of Indigenous Ministries & Justice, including ministers' retreats. Additionally, there was a discussion about integrating existing programs like the Healing Fund into the broader objectives of the initiative. The aim is to gather more specifics for the next meetings (of the sub-group) within 2024 and plan to create a donor-based funding strategy.

Accountable: Murray Pruden

General Council 43 Proposal	<u>Priority Activities Only</u>
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.*