

## APPENDIX

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## Appendix I

### Governance as Leadership: An Introduction

This framework offers governors and executive staff practical and energizing approaches to enrich non-profit leadership. The central construct in the framework is described in three distinctive yet interdependent “modes” of governance that allow leaders to anticipate and set effective mindsets or mental models to support decision-making, strategizing and imagining possible futures for their organizations. The three mindsets, mental models, or **modes** are:

#### Fiduciary (Type I)

When working in this mode, governors seek to ensure that the organization’s assets are conserved and optimized to advance the mission and vision and that all regulatory and compliance issues are addressed. The focus of Type I/Fiduciary governance is on oversight/monitoring of audits, budgets, assets, investments, funding, facilities; lawful and ethical conduct (compliance with regulations/policies/bylaws/codes), and on CEO/GS performance.

When attending to Type I/Fiduciary issues, governors tend to *look at issues from the inside out*, they focus on **oversight** and act like **sentinels**.

Disposition: Oversight  
Key Questions: “What...?”

#### Strategic (Type II)

When working in this mode, governors seek to ensure that the organization is actively seeking to align its internal strengths and opportunities with external strengths and opportunities to maximize its impact; governors intend to construct consensus about what the strategy should look like while avoiding the operational. In an effective Type II/Strategic mode, board structures, meetings, and information are all designed to facilitate strategic work; form follows function/purpose.

In Type II/Strategic work, governors’ *attention shifts to outside in* (from “conformance towards performance”); they focus on **foresight** and act as **strategists**.

Disposition: Foresight  
Key Questions: “How...?”

#### Generative (Type III)

Working in the generative mode encourages cognitive processes for deciding what to pay attention to, what it means and what is possible in response. Generative thinking produces a

sense of what knowledge, information and data mean; it is a subjective process that illuminates multiple perspectives and dominant frames and allows thinkers to deliberately shift frames to take perspective and see opportunities. In the generative mode, *problem framing* precedes *problem solving*.

As governors work in this mode, they focus on **insight**, they are **sense makers**, interrogating their current reality by acknowledging their preferred frames, *re-framing*, and *anticipating* future challenges facing the organization.

Disposition: Insight

Key Questions: “Why...?”

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## Appendix II

### Consent Reports / Information

#### Moderator's Report to GCE

It hasn't been that long since I wrote a [comprehensive report to the General Council last month](#). In some ways it seems strange to be writing another report to the GCE and to the church so quickly. But I also believe there are a few more themes I want to touch on... maybe we could consider this report an appendix to my GC44 Report last month.

#### Divisions in the World

At the end of October, I served as a delegate from The United Church of Canada to the Caribbean and North American Area Council ([CANAAC](#)) of the World Communion of Reformed Churches ([WCRC](#)). The General Assembly of the area council took place on Grand Cayman Island. The theme was "Persevere in Your Witness" (inspired by the Pauline letter to the Hebrews). The president of the WCRC, the [Rev. Najla Kassab](#), made the difficult and uncertain journey from Beirut to join us in person. By God's grace we also escaped any major tropical storms or hurricanes. With hurricane Rafael approaching the Caymans as I write this report, I feel like we traveled in a bit of a bubble. We were acutely aware of the then-approaching elections in the USA, and while we were there, a comedian at a rally for (now re-elected) President Trump called Puerto Rico a "trash island."

I was challenged by Rev. Kassab's sermon for Reformation Sunday – a service that was livestreamed across the world for the WCRC's recognition of that day. She said that Justice has two daughters: courage and anger. That we need to continue to speak a prophetic word to the world about the injustices and oppressions. *And* we also need to stop the politicking and justification of violence. Referring to the escalating war in the Middle East – a war that directly impacts her ministry, her family and her own body – she said it's no longer about who is right and who is wrong: we simply must stop killing each other. Full stop.

I have generally been fairly silent, institutionally speaking, about the war. In part, because I truly believe that Raja Khouri and Jeffrey Wilkinson are correct in their book: [The Wall Between: What Jews and Palestinians Don't Want to Know About Each Other](#). With enough post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in my own family history, I know in an embodied way that yelling at the other and fighting about who is "right" is rarely productive.

Now with the changing political situation in the US, I struggle to know what the next right move is for us as a church to stand in solidarity with occupied Palestine, and believe that the change in administration in the US government will have catastrophic consequences for both Palestine and Ukraine. We must continue to call on the Canadian Government to uphold its own obligations to hold other nation states accountable under international laws: both human rights & humanitarian laws.

We also anticipate that our own politics are shifting to a more conservative, nationalist stance. Reading books like Ezra Klein's *Why We're Polarized*, Nancy Isenberg's *White Trash: The 400-Year Old History of Class in America*, and Doug Saunders' *Maximum Canada: Toward a Country of 100 Million*, have all highlighted for me the ways in which that nationalism/populism is growing and why. It has long bothered me the way that those in liberal circles have "othered" neighbours and friends who are more conservative. I've quoted sociologist and popular author Brené Brown many times over the past two years: Everyone has a story that will break your heart. And if you really listen, everyone has a story that will bring you to your knees.

I wonder what it might look like to dive a little deeper into the despair and frustration of those from whom we feel divided? I realize that our orientation is to have a preferential option for those made marginal, and we strive – whenever possible – to create systems and spaces of safety. But safety doesn't mean no risk. We can't truly be an intercultural church until we become comfortable with discomfort. And until we become willing to make mistakes, and to listen to understand.

So what would it look like to aspire to build communities where we could start to talk about our differences across radically opposing views? It's possible. Tillich wrote about it a lot in his mid-century political theologies, and his work inspired Martin Luther King Jr. and his dreams for the United States. Our own Adam Kahane in Canada draws on both Tillich and King in his book *Facilitating Breakthrough*, and in his work as a consultant at Rios Partners. If we can't build community with those who are different from us, then I fear we are in for a difficult future – both inside and outside the church. I'm not saying I have *any* idea of *how* to do this, but that I think we should discern as a church how to start to work towards it.

2 Corinthians 2:5-11:

*<sup>5</sup> But if anyone has caused grief, he has caused it not to me but to some extent—not to exaggerate it—to all of you. <sup>6</sup> This punishment by the majority is enough for such a person; <sup>7</sup> so now instead you should forgive and console him, so that he may not be overwhelmed by even worse grief. <sup>8</sup> So I urge you to reaffirm your love for him. <sup>9</sup> I wrote for this reason: to test you and to know whether you are obedient in everything. <sup>10</sup> Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. In fact, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ. <sup>11</sup> And we do this so that we may not be outwitted by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his designs.*

### **Temperance & Gambling**

I'm not sure how many folks read [the excellent article about Online Gambling](#) in last September's issue of Broadview Magazine. I was interviewed by the author, and I'm ashamed to say I had no idea how rampant the problem had become in Canada, especially with online betting on sports and other forms of online gambling. As a denomination with roots in the social gospel, and as a church that is officially anti-gambling, I wonder why we haven't updated our stance on gambling? With our move to a principles-based approach to justice work, it

seems to me we have the framework now for those who are interested in this justice issue to raise it at the provincial and federal levels: we cannot allow our communities and families to be impacted so adversely simply because it makes the government a lot of money.

Likewise, I have always appreciated that The United Church had roots in the temperance movement, with many in the church adopting voluntary temperance and abstinence from alcohol (and other substances). This was in part due to skyrocketing levels of alcoholism during the Great Depression. Our forebears in faith wanted the church to be a safe place for families impacted by overuse of alcohol. While remnants of that remain, and most importantly nearly all United Churches serve juice for communion for accessibility, I also see increased uses of alcohol within and adjacent to the church. Because I've been so open about my own journey with substance use and alcohol, many people talk to me about their own struggles and journeys.

Enough people have expressed to me, especially amongst paid accountable ministry personnel, that they find the rise of social use of alcohol at church to be troubling and/or alienating: spending time with colleagues and congregants outside of formal meetings can feel unsafe for those who wish not to be around alcohol. For several generations the church has felt safe for those who abstain. This is shifting, and is troubling to enough folks that I think it warrants mentioning. I wonder if the use of alcohol is worth the discomfort it causes to those who can't or don't want to be around it? I continue to encourage us to take up Dietrich Bonhoeffer's challenge that we not just be a church that lives with our neighbours, but *for* our neighbours.

### **Governance**

It will be interesting to see how the report of the task group reviewing the restructuring of the church takes shape. My impression, after interacting with folks across the church over the past two years, is that there is generally a sense that folks don't know how the church works, and that maybe the shift from policies to principles adds to an uncertainty about how to "be church" together as a corporate body. For sure on GCE we are also still discerning about what this means for the leadership and stewardship of the church. My general sense is that we are much too focused on the near term. In my experience – governing bodies (whether at the congregational, regional, or denominational level) should be focused on the far horizon – thinking into the future. Often it's been my experience in the church we are working on a 6 month → 1 year timeline, if that. Sometimes longer, but rarely farther into the future than a strategic plan. If we are to effect a turnaround and reorient ourselves to being a church for the world into the future, I think we must struggle to discern what is the right distance of horizon to work towards.

Likewise – it seems to me that there may also be places where we need to engage in self-examination to look at the ways that lines of authority and accountability are defined at all levels of the church. My impression is that our polity still may not provide the clarity or flexibility that we need to be the church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – and that there doesn't seem to

be a lot of agency to make change. The Manual for the restructuring of the church is in some ways a new document, leaving parts of our life as a church unclear or poorly defined. But we are the change we've been waiting for. There is a well-known saying: if you see something, say something. We can propose our own changes and tweaks to this new way of being in the world. Rather than slinging accusations and furthering distrust, which I've also seen happen to some extent, we can live into the best ways of being a conciliar church and work towards the future we want to see in the world.

### **(Re)Generate – Invigorating Leadership**

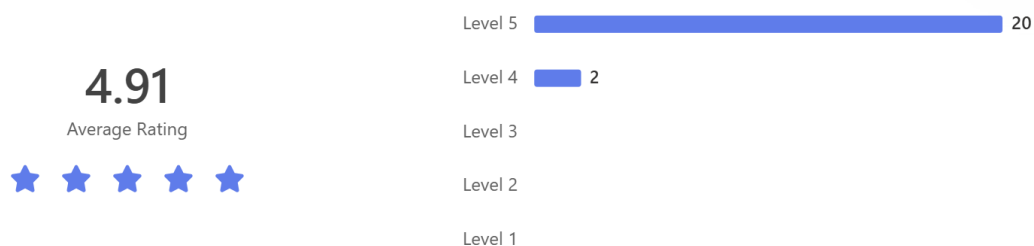
We have now completed the first 3 residencies of the (Re)Generate Leadership Development Program. This continues to be one of the places in my work that brings me deep joy and satisfaction. Here are a few comments from our most recent evaluation:

*"I appreciated the atmosphere of care for one another and deep commitment to learning that was evident. This was partially because we knew each other better and so many of us felt more comfortable risking new things, partly because we were learning strategies for our congregations that we could put into practice in the group (for example offering feedback when something wasn't working for us), and partly because Mimi embodied that kind of care and commitment to learning and so encouraged us to do the same even without saying so. I also appreciated that the organizers had taken into consideration our feedback from January and made changes to the schedule which helped me to feel as if I could fully engage."*

*"[I appreciated] Being together. This group is so optimistic about the church and about the Spirit's presence in our communities and lives. There is a deep power in that for me. I think being led through a process with a facilitator is essential to the group relaxing into the being together and not needing to be "on" in the way we normally are in our communities. Being led by someone else allows us to be honest and open in our sharing, as well as present to one another's stories"*

5. On a scale of 1-5, how valuable and helpful were the discussions and topics covered to support you in your leadership...

[More details](#)



*"I cannot tell you how very, very, very lucky, fortunate, and blessed I feel to have the opportunity to participate in this. It has me thinking about how I can make sure to take advantage of region-offered opportunities in the future, to connect and be and learn and worship with colleagues."*

Over the past year, we have completed three residencies:

1. **Residency 1** (In person at Five Oaks) – January 2024

Facilitated by the Rev. Dr. Danielle Ayana James, [STRAAD Consulting](#):

- a) Reconnecting with Sense of Call
- b) Strategy

- **Residency 2** (online) – May 2024

Facilitated by Moderator Carmen Lansdowne:

- 1. Financial Literacy 101
- 2. Lifecycles of a Nonprofit model
- 3. Sustainability Mindset: calculating the true costs & impact of ministry

- **Residency 3** (In person at Five Oaks) – October 2024

Facilitated by [Mimi Gordon](#):

- 1. Powerful levers of cultural leadership
- 2. Outcomes & Methods (planning tool)
- 3. Communication & Boundaries
- 4. Giving & Receiving Feedback
- 5. Prioritization & People

The final three residences will take place in 2025:

- **Residency 4** (In person at Five Oaks) – January 2025

Facilitated by [Philanthropy Aide](#) / Amanda Burrows (Sarah Charters on the final day)

- 1. Fundraising for communities of faith
- 2. Philanthropic landscape and stewardship support in the UCC

- **Residency 5** (online) – May 2025

Facilitated by Moderator Carmen Lansdowne

- 1. Financial Literacy 200
- 2. Capital Finance
- 3. Facilities Management

- **Residency 6** (In person at Five Oaks) – June 2025

Facilitated by Moderator Carmen Lansdowne, and the Rev. Dr. Jennifer Janzen-Ball

- 1. Presentation of Capstone Projects (Senior staff invited to hear presentations/discuss in person on site)
- 2. Dreaming future resources to invigorate leadership in the UCC

### Children, Youth & Young Adult Ministry

I have a lot to say about this – as spending time with young people in the church was affirmed as a priority for me. I haven't fully formed my thoughts except that I think in most areas (not all – we have some exemplary ministry and leadership), but in *most* areas of the church we just need to DO BETTER. I plan to write my Easter article for Broadview Magazine about this in a more fully formed way.



## GENERAL SECRETARY ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

Origin: General Secretary

*2 Corinthians 3:12 “Therefore, since we have such a hope, we behave with great boldness” (NET)*

### Executive Summary

This is the fourth of the quarterly reports of the General Secretary, General Council, to the 44th General Council Executive. This accountability report is intended to provide the Executive with an overview of the work of the General Council Office.

This report is divided into four (4) sections. The first section deals with the Priority work of the General Council office. Here you will find a report of the **strategic operation plan** and the Bringing the Children Home initiative. In a separate report you will find the report of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter of the yearly strategic plan. The second section is an update of the ongoing programmatic work of the General Council plan. This section includes a report on **Financial Management** and Mission and Service, an accounting of two pieces of work approved by the Executive, and assigned to the Office of Vocation - one of the publications of the Discontinued Service List (DSL) and the other related to the Pastoral Equity; there is also a report of two Justice Advocacy initiatives – Guaranteed Livable Income (GLI) and the 2SLGBTQI+ Apology. The Third section provides information on work from GC44 and planning for GC45. The fifth section identifies some of the risk issues we are managing.

At this meeting we will be engaging in conversation with the various Task and Working Groups that we have established. The Total Compensation Review Task Group and the Task Group on the role of the Moderator and the General Secretary will offer their updates and seek clarifying direction. We will also exercise our role as legal administrator of the Pension Funds when we receive the report for the Pension Board from Board Chair Anne Soh. We will be engaging with reports from the United Property Resource Corporation (UPRC), as well as the Foundation. We will have some decisions to make in relations to the benefit plan.

### Thinking Out Loud

In her 2009 Ted Talk, Nigerian Poet and writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie warns against the danger of a single story (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LmjKUDo7gSQ>). She reminds us that multiple stories are important to gain context and understanding of context. As we do our work together, it is important that we keep in mind the need for multiple stories and perspectives. It is easy as we seek to try and answer the ‘big questions’ to focus on just one story/narrative or perspective. Many things can be true at the same time. Racism continues to be a reality in the church and the church has made great strides in addressing the issues of racism – the 40-day initiative is just one example. The membership of the church is declining, that is a reality, and, in many places, we are seeing new life and exciting energy. We are a product of an ecumenical compromise for the sake of the gospel. We have systems set up that worked well and in some cases are working and many of those system as not working for us in

the current reality. On one level we have a sense that members of the church are disconnected and uninterested in the life of the church, and at the same time 270 people signed up to participate in the governance Townhall.

Governors, we need to hold the opportunity that multiple narratives and stories elicit. We are called to live into the places of uncertainty and nuance. As we deal with the reports and recommendations of the various task and working groups, may we hold the importance of multiple stories.

### **General Council Office Priority Work**

*Strategic and Development Planning:* The Growth Initiative within the strategic plan continues to advance on all three strategies: renew, create and invite. Between July and September, the six regional deployed Growth animators engaged with 134 ministry personnel and 119 existing communities of faith working towards renewal through strengthening invitation. A decision has been made to “pull out” and elevate a unique rural strategy within the broader renewal work, under the leadership of the Rev. Bronwyn Corlett. The number of emerging communities developing among migrant and diasporic continues to grow with an event planned for January 2025 to introduce and welcome these communities and their leadership to The United Church of Canada. A contract has been signed with Media Profile to support our public outreach work over the next two years with a focus on “a place at the table” and opportunities for earned media through public relations.

Communications worked to facilitate a management decision to focus GCO messaging in September and October on four main topics: Thanksgiving Appeal, 40 Days of Engagement in Anti-Racism, Centennial and General Council Executive and Annual Meeting. Data is being collected to assist in evaluating the impact but early indications are that focused messaging and a decrease in overall messages increased engagement. Key to this period was also the development of a General Council website, soon to be launched, which will replace both [generalcouncil44.ca](http://generalcouncil44.ca), The Commons, and upcoming General Council websites. The site has been designed for high usability, with enhanced search capacity, spanning both past and current governance from reports to proposals to records of proceeding.

The new Research and Development Team (Data) has shown significant influence over the past months, including contributing vital data analysis to a key vision and strategy process for the November in-person leadership meetings. They are also assisting with the development of surveys, a pilot project with Eastern Ontario Outaouais and Northern Spirit Regional Councils on “fertile soil” for ministry development, strengthening Faithful Footprints data analysis, and demographic profiles of congregational contexts to support Growth Animators working with communities of faith. In an exciting project, the team has developed regional dashboards for Antler River Watershed, Canadian Shield and Shining Waters regions, pulling data from the Yearbook and presenting it in accessible ways to assist in analysis and action. Development for other regions will follow. A customized dashboard has been completed for Ministries in French (MiF), providing data on existing and emerging

francophone communities, as well as francophone presence in anglophone or multilingual communities, with forecasts up to 2033. Additionally, a similar dashboard to the Antler River Watershed RC is being developed for MiF to aid in data-driven decision-making.

A bilingual Flourishing workshop was recently held in Montréal with the Moderator, in addition to another workshop in Ottawa. Ministries in French are anticipating a francophone youth retreat at the end of November in Sherbrooke. Mon Credo, a web-based outreach strategy, is seeing strong response on paid social content. The recent hire of a bilingual marketing coordinator expands the capacity of the Communications team for bilingual engagement and promotion. In connection with regions, we are exploring strategies to support and coordinate formation for francophone candidates, with particular attention to opportunities for supervised ministry education. The Responsible's recent trip to Western Canada provided an opportunity to connect to existing work being done with francophone communities, and to strengthen contacts and networks with ministries in French across the country.

*The Bringing the Children Home (BCH)* initiative was launched in 2021 and has three components in response to the finding of unmarked burial sites on former residential school properties: (1) financial support for community-led work to identify and honour children who did not return home to their communities from United Church residential institutions; (2) preparation and delivery of digitized records (with finding aids) to affected communities; and (3) archival work to identify and digitize materials not previously captured by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (which had a narrower scope).

The General Secretary and the current and past Moderators have been in conversation with eight communities. We have provided financial support for three community projects and are in active conversation with another community. We have also been humbled to be present at the release of some community research.

The General Council Archives has to date provided digital packages to 24 communities. This represents more than 75,000 pages of documentation and thousands of images. Work continues in both the regional and General Council Archives to uncover and digitize records from hospitals, missions, and congregations, and this is being shared with the communities' requesting materials. (This work is supported in part by the United Church of Canada Foundation.)

The archival work is responsive to the requests of communities and the Office of the Special Interlocutor on Disappeared and Missing Children and Unmarked Burial Sites. This has led, for example, to the prioritization of work on registers and hospital records. Our approach seems to be congruent with the path forward in honouring Indigenous data sovereignty as identified by the Special Interlocutor, and the archival aspect of *BCH* was highlighted in her final report in October 2024.

## **General Council Office Programmatic Work Update**

### **Financial Management**

*2024 Q3 Financial Updates:* The approved 2024 operating budget indicates a \$2.3 million deficit before transfers from reserves. Year-to-date financial results are closely aligned with the budget. Mission and Service (M&S) contributions from congregations and donors remain the primary revenue sources, with \$10.75 million received out of the budgeted \$18.61 million, slightly below the same period last year. Congregational contributions, the top revenue source, typically see 40% of their total arriving in late January or early February, explaining the low year-to-date total. The investment portfolio has performed exceptionally well, achieving a 13.96% return rate for the first three quarters. On the expenditure side, automated reporting and dashboards have been implemented to enhance budget management. Overall, year-to-date spending is tracking close to budgeted amounts.

*2025 Denominational Assessment:* The 44th General Council's annual meeting on October 19, 2024, reaffirmed the Denominational Assessment Rate. The current assessment formula is 4.5% on adjusted revenue and 0.25% of the year-end investment balance, with the first \$100,000 excluded. The 2025 denominational assessments, based on 2023 pastoral charge statistics, have been finalized. In 2023, total revenues from all congregations increased slightly by 0.83% compared to 2024, reaching \$325 million. However, total adjustments saw a significant rise of 19.54%, amounting to \$105 million, leading to a slight decline of 3.98% in total assessment revenue, amounting to approximately \$11.5 million.

*2024/2025 UCC Protect Insurance Renewal:* We continue to collaborate with the HUB team, our insurance broker, on the 2024/2025 renewal process. Despite two major fire claims affecting the claim ratio, the 2024/2025 renewal was approved by the reinsurer and promises significant savings for all participating congregations. We will conduct an in-depth review of the premium changes once the renewal is complete. The letter of credit renewal is approaching, and although we have been urging the front company to ease the requirement, major changes are unlikely.

*2024/2025 D&O Insurance Renewals:* The General Council Office manages several Directors & Officers (D&O) insurance policies. After review and consultation with our broker, we have decided to renew coverage with our existing insurer, Northbridge, due to several key advantages, including continuity of relationship, competitive pricing, high limits, minimal underwriting, and deep knowledge of religious organization claims. Liberty Mutual leads the pension/fiduciary liability insurance for the UCC Pension plan and is very competitive in this area.

*Mission and Service:* The work to raise monies for the Mission and Service of the Church continues strongly. We had a very strong Thanksgiving campaign that showed a 75% increase in donations and over 2.6 times as many donors. We attribute this to the specific theme - various food programs offered by Mission and Service partners as well as prominence in overall communications from the General Council Office. Many of you will have seen that we are

starting to promote the Advent/Christmas campaign with requests to Community of Faith leaders to include a special Mission and Service offering during Advent. We are hoping that Canada Post avoids a strike so that the campaign can proceed in an orderly fashion. However we have plans to mitigate as best we can, any strike and its impacts should that occur. Further we are having good success with the Centennial Legacy Campaign with already \$2 million committed by individuals and families, most of which will benefit Mission and Service either directly or through an endowment. Additionally, we have received a \$200,000 gift for Mission and Service and expect at least one more gift in that range before year end. Both the success with the Legacy Campaign and these wonderful gifts are due to the focus of the team on major gifts.

In work with congregations, there is much good news. One story is from United Heritage Pastoral Charge in Sydney NS who met with Roger Janes, the Community of Faith Stewardship Support Staff for the region a couple of times and Roger helped them create a PAR Campaign with the following results:

- Increased local PAR givers by 23% (26-32),
- Mission and Service PAR givers by 57% (7 to 11),
- PAR local gifts by 16%
- PAR Mission and Service gifts by 52%

This is a typical example of how congregations can increase the resources available for their ministry.

### **Office of Vocation**

*Discontinued Service List:* The matter is still being discussed by the Board of Vocation. The concerns raised by the General Council Executive, legal counsel, and the Church's insurer received extensive consideration. These concerns include:

- c) the ability for types of disciplinary action to be clearly identified, so that it will not be automatically presumed that persons who have been placed on the DSL(D) have been placed there because of sexual misconduct.
- d) a potential increase in the number of complaints leading to a potential rise in insurance premiums

The Board also discussed the understanding of confidentiality, particularly in relation to deliberations related to decisions arising from Formal Hearings, or included in standard MOUs, and what might be considered breaches of confidentiality in this regard. Any such potential breach would be problematic, though the idea of accountability was reaffirmed on behalf of the applicable victims, alongside the validation of the occurrence being officially recognised. A brief mention was made of The United Church of Canada Yearbook, with the shared desire for a separate, intentional location for the discontinued service list information to be readily findable. The distinctions between open, closed, and public hearings were also discussed.

**Pastoral Relations Equity Work:** A comprehensive report, along with an executive summary on this report, have been circulated throughout the various councils of the church. These have generated meaningful discussions and have resulted in people indicating a willingness to be part of the work necessary to ensure that change occurs. This work is part of the Invigorate Leadership objective in the strategic plan. We have contracted with Kimiko Karpoff to draft a proposal on what resources need to be created or compiled, as well as to lead the work of animating the project, which will include developing a plan for educational opportunities with regional councils and communities of faith, along with various position holders across the Church. The work will be guided by a working group, composed of regional staff people with justice, education, and pastoral relations portfolios, who will ensure that it is relevant to the people for whom it is being designed.

### **Justice Advocacy**

**Guaranteed Livable Income (GLI):** Although GLI isn't a strategic priority for the church, and given an active network including former Moderators, staff have continued to provide support, recognizing its historical significance and importance. The United Church of Canada's GLI network has been actively engaging with Members of Parliament to build support for a GLI. In September 2024, the church distributed informational sheets on key justice themes, including the GLI, and sent a letter from the Moderator to all MPs urging support for Bill S-223. Despite these efforts, both related bills, C-223 and S-233, have stalled. Bill C-223 was voted down, while Bill S-233 remains stagnant due to opposition from Quebec MPs and misconceptions about the committee's role.

The GLI network is now reflecting on lessons learned and preparing for a renewed push in the next Parliament. Key factors contributing to the bills' lack of progress include Quebec MPs' opposition to the national framework and a shortage of Quebec representatives within the UCC GLI network. Additionally, some MPs misunderstood the committee's role, believing that details couldn't be altered at the second reading stage.

To move forward, the GLI network is writing to supportive MPs to express gratitude and seek insight into the bills' poor performance, with only 54 votes in favor and 243 against. This feedback will inform future advocacy efforts.

**LGBTQ Apology:** The Task Group has started to test a statement to 2SLGBTQIA+ communities harmed by the Church. This initiative is part of the Church's ongoing commitment to learning, reconciliation, and action. Established in November 2023, the task group crafted a draft "intentional living apology" that pairs words with concrete actions, responding to findings from Iridesce: The Living Apology Project and the 2011 National LGBT Consultation. Feedback is welcome, and town hall meetings will be held this fall to further engage with communities of faith and ensure meaningful action accompanies the apology.

### **Update on GC44 work**

**Total Compensation Task Group Interim Report:** A substantial interim report of findings from the task group's research, consultation and data analysis will be before this meeting. The task

group is seeking direction from the Executive on options for proceeding to recommendations. *Offices of Moderator and General Secretary Review:* An interim report on findings from extensive consultations and emerging directions for recommendations will be before you at this meeting. Some of the recommendations are for decision by this Executive in regard to the aspects of the role of the next Moderator.

*Structural Change Evaluation Steering Group:* The Steering Group is reaching consensus on the scope of the evaluation, outlining the overarching questions and the matters to be evaluated. Research to date has tracked the decisions made and the actions taken with the documentation being collated in our SharePoint system for easy access and permanent record keeping. The Steering Group is currently in the process of recruiting an external consultant to ensure that the material is gathered and the findings reported in as unbiased a way as possible.

The Steering Group anticipates that the bulk of its work will roll out in the initial three months of 2025, slightly later than originally hoped. Shirley Cleave and Ryan McNally have kindly agreed to co-chair the Steering Group and will be joining this meeting electronically to provide an update.

*Centennial Celebrations:* The date and location for the centennial worship service has been confirmed, June 8, 2025, 7:00 p.m. (NDT) at Gower St. United Church, St. John's, NL. The worship team who prepared the service that launched the centennial on June 9, 2024, met with several United Church leaders earlier in October to discuss the focus for this next service. Their guiding questions were:

***What do you believe the United Church needs to hear from God at this moment in time?***

***What do you think will most hold us back from stepping into the future?***

The 2024 and 2025 services are intended as companion pieces.

Members of the General Council Executive were invited to attend either the 2024 or 2025 celebration in person and the other online. The General Council Office will be reaching out shortly with details for GCE members.

*General Council 45:* At its upcoming December meeting in Calgary, the Planning Committee intends to finalize plans for the June and August sessions of General Council.

The church's commitment to diversity is guiding the selection of the last few positions to be filled. The Nominating Committee will bring recommendations to the Executive for:

1. Commissioners referred to in D.1.1.h) as those selected to broaden the diversity of the General Council; and

2. members of the Equity Support Team.

The procedural motion will recommend continuing the process adopted for GC44 that enabled the Equity Support Team to prepare the speakers' list with the goal of ensuring diverse

perspectives can be offered. Whether in person in Calgary or online using the hybrid option, Commissioners will indicate their interest in speaking to a matter through the app being designed for GC. Then the Equity Support Team will post the list of speakers, giving those in person time to reach a microphone before it is their turn. The registration form will invite Commissioners to share information concerning their identities to assist with this process. January 1<sup>st</sup> registration will open, and it will close on February 28<sup>th</sup>.

By mid-November, most Commissioners will be elected. The GCO intends to begin to correspond regularly with them to provide details on how GC will happen, when they will need to be where, what they might do to help offset the carbon cost of travel, and how to prepare for GC. The goal of this correspondence is to connect with Commissioners early and provide both information and a contact that can be of assistance to them in their preparations.

The Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, General Minister and President of our full communion partner, The United Church of Christ in the U.S., has agreed to be theme speaker at GC45, a welcome guest who brings the gifts of her denomination and her leadership along with her extensive experience in global missions and ecumenical relationships.

With all regional councils represented at General Council, the gathering in Calgary will open with our third centennial worship service. The Moderator's theme of Dreams and Visions will then invite the General Council to turn to the future and to make decisions in support of the dream and vision for the church's next 100 years.

### **Risk Management**

We are managing several risk factors as an organization These include:

*300 Bloor Relocation Project:* The City of Toronto has approved adding five floors to the 300 Bloor development, likely delaying UCC's occupancy date. The current office lease ends in February 2026, but the new occupancy date won't be before August 2026. The current landlord has offered a one-year lease extension with an 8% increase, but management is also exploring alternative options for temporary space. This may be an opportunity to achieve a one-time saving, as the current lease expense is close to \$1 million per year. GS106 will provide you with the opportunity to give Management some direction.

*Update on Cybersecurity Initiatives:* The General Council Office is implementing three new initiatives aimed at mitigating cybersecurity risks: penetration testing, an incident response plan, and a tabletop exercise. These initiatives will commence in November. We will continue our ongoing cybersecurity training and periodic email tests. The General Council Office has cyber insurance in place, and a cyber response service is being offered to all congregations. We are confident that these steps will significantly mitigate our exposure to cybersecurity risks.

*National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering (NISG)* is scheduled for November 29-December 2<sup>nd</sup>,

2024. The concerns raised about the suspension of the National Indigenous Council (NIC) and reflected in the proposal NEW05 to the General Council/Executive might continue to challenge the reconciliation efforts of the church

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

## **Strategic Plan 2023—2025**

### **2024 Operational Plan Report Quarter 3 November 2024**



# 2024 Operational Plan Report: Quarter 3

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## Legend:

| Excellent  | Good  | Fair   | Delayed  | Awaiting Activation   |
|--|---|--|--|---|
|  |   |  |  |   |
| Progress on the overall objective or activity is moving along well. Key results per quarter are being met. | Progress on the overall objective or activity continues but not exactly at the rate or in the sequence anticipated. | More significant issues have surfaced related to the overall objective or activity and they are being actively managed towards continued progress. | Something significant has delayed this activity and we are giving attention to discerning the way forward or getting it back on track. | This activity was not planned to begin until a later quarter. |
| 80-100%  | 60-79%  | 50-59%   | Under 50%  |   |

**Bold is for priority activities**

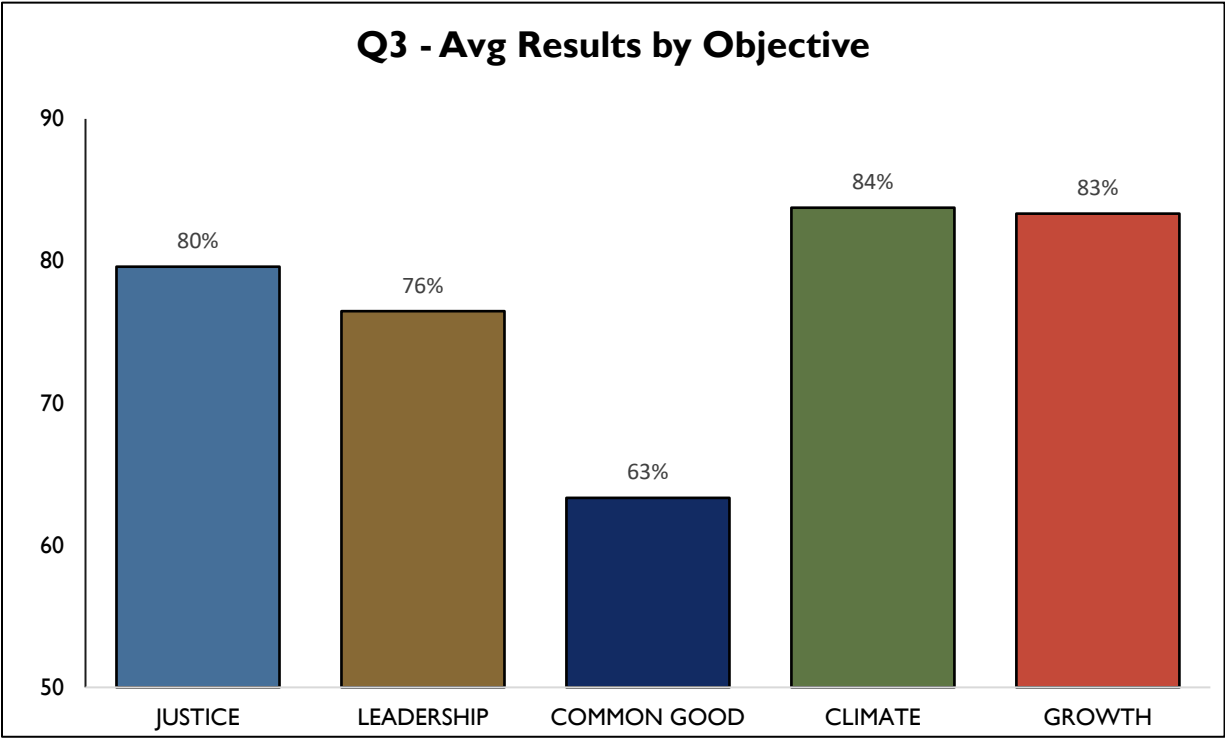
Overall Results:

Chart



| Strategic Objective            | Progress on Key Results |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Strengthen Invitation          | 83%                     |
| Embolden Justice               | 80%                     |
| Nurture the Common Good        | 63%                     |
| Invigorate Leadership          | 76%                     |
| Deepen Climate Integrity       | 84%                     |
| Journeying Indigenous Pathways | Fair                    |

Graph



## Narrative Summary

Our overall progress on key results (Q3 77%) did not drop dramatically in this quarter, rather it held in similar band to earlier progress in the year (Q1 76%; Q2 80%). Staff applied key learnings from 2023 about the challenges of holiday periods affecting quarter 3 and adjusted accordingly. A hold on the level of progress on key results is particularly significant as staff in this period were also engaged in active planning, proposing activities for 2025 aligned with the multi-year initiatives and strategic objectives. Three areas—Climate, Justice and Growth—had over 80% progress against key results, while Leadership was shortly behind at 76%. Common Good, where there are complex infrastructure and technical projects is lower at 63%, but projects are largely moving forward.

While we tend to speak of the Growth Initiative and Department, the overarching objective is to “Strength Invitation” across the church—whether in existing or emerging communities, new ministries or through broad public witness. The Call—deep spirituality, bold discipleship and daring justice—continues to be resonant in helping to animate a hoped-for common identity across the church—making it clearer what we are inviting people and communities to, by depicting a common sense of purpose. The “strengthen invite” strategy is now showing up across all of our efforts within the Strategic Plan, not only those within that key Strategic Objective.

Programmatic planning for 2025 has begun in far better time than in previous years and includes full budget planning. Q3 submissions by staff for 2025 activities, key results, and budget proposals will receive feedback from executive leaders in Q4 and provide an important phase of reconsideration and revision. It is anticipated that the 2025 plan will make further progress towards being more focused, more aligned to the objectives and with stronger orientation towards results. As opportunities to work across the objective areas are realized in Q3, the possibility of even greater collaboration in Q4 and in 2025 are anticipated.

While some greater focus, including letting go of unaligned existing work, is being achieved, it still remains an overall challenge. Particularly related to large technical projects dependencies on staff in overly stretched areas in the General Council Office can cause delays. A further related challenge is a gap in financial resourcing for ambitious projects and initiatives.

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### ***Good News Story***

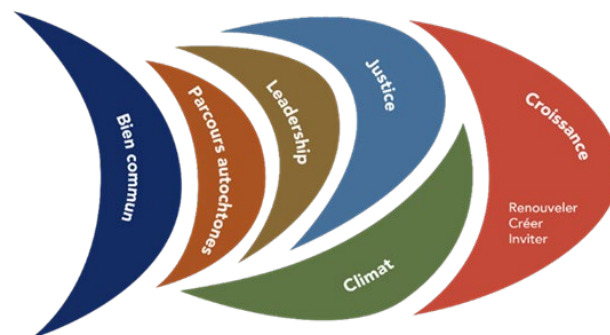
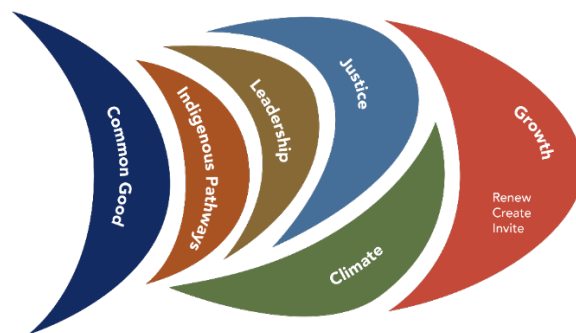
One church tried an “Invitational Sunday” and for the first time felt encouraged by the fact that new people really came! The Holy Spirit was at work inspiring invitations to be made, working in the hearts of those invited who decided to come, and then in the whole group who gathered for worship. One new person approached the minister with the beautiful words, “See you next week!”

*--Rev. Bronwyn Corlett, Rural Ministry Coordinator, Growth Department/Objective*

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## 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 each objective and offers a narrative and numerical summary of overall progress, as well as giving more detailed information as to how each activity in this objective has fared in this quarter. Please note that the numbers reflect progress not to the ultimate three-year goal, but to the planned key results for this quarter. For a further description of an activity, and/or the relevant key results, please contact [planning@united-church.ca](mailto:planning@united-church.ca)



## **Strengthen Invitation: Humility and Confidence in Sharing Faith** **83%**

**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.

### **Accomplishments**

#### **Renew**

Between July-September, the six regionally deployed Growth Animators engaged with 134 Ministry Personnel and 119 Communities of Faith. Growth Animators offered workshops with specific communities on invitation and evangelism. They facilitated planning among congregational leadership teams to create plans to intentional engage in invitation between the fall and Christmas Eve. This included holding special welcome/"invite a friend" Sundays which saw several members not used to speaking about their faith, or inviting people to church, doing so, with a positive result. New [Stewardship Resource Packs](#) are now available for download on the United Church of Canada website. Flourishing Workshops were held in Ottawa and Montréal with 80 and 60 attendees respectively. French interpretation was offered in Montréal.

#### **Create**

A new Migrant church plant program has begun, engaging a Hispanic community in Toronto in partnership with Bloor Street United Church. The Swahili-speaking community developing in Ottawa is also facilitating a satellite group located in Cornwall, Ontario. For Emerging Communities, work is being done to articulate a path towards readiness for Regional Council recognition and a program on governance and administrative coaching support is being developed. This will allow Regional Councils and General Council to enhance collaboration on supporting these communities. An online event to introduce the church plants and their leads is being planned for the new year. The Indigenous-Racialized Youth retreat was held at the Sandy-Salteaux Spiritual Centre with a focus on "deep spirituality." The eight participants in the Indigenous-Racialized Youth Scholars program completed their research and presentations of their findings have been scheduled for the final quarter of this year.

#### **Invite**

This quarter saw a 40% increase in the subscriber base for the Centennial Newsletter. The timeline and resourcing for the Public Relations Outreach Strategy has been developed. MonCredo experimented with paid social content and saw good traction. We have seen that in front of the right audiences, certain groups do appreciate our messaging. Our new marketing coordinator (French speaking) has joined the team and will manage our social outreach. The location for the denominational Centennial service on June 8, 2025 has been finalized and local leaders are working on events to accompany the liturgy. A platform for Communities of Faith to share their own Centennial Celebrations has been created.

## Challenges

Evaluation of renewal work has named the challenges of exhausted leaders and volunteers and engaging in invitational work where there are high levels of anxiety around the future. Attempts to hold challenging realities in ways that empower focused activity are underway. Leaders within growing communities report feeling isolated and long for connection to others with a similar outlook. Consideration into what communities of practices might look like is underway. Within established communities experiencing growth through welcoming immigrant Christians there remains challenges in integrating and acceptance within many established groups. Within migrant French-speaking communities, while growth in numbers is occurring, a need to grow in capacities of administration and governance has been identified. The possibility of governance coaching to work intensively with emerging communities is being explored, but there is a lack of known experts who are available to assist.

## Looking Forward

Growth Animators are identifying resources that would be helpful to create for use by Communities of Faith to get them started in invitational ministry. An internal communications strategy, connected to the Public Relations Campaign, is being developed to bring internal partners onboard in the final quarter of the year. French-speaking ministry outside of the St. Lawrence Valley is being explored and a national francophone/multilingual youth gathering in the final quarter is planned.

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## Good News Story

Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Tehindrazanarivelo, Responsable des Ministères en français...

...voit de bonnes nouvelles dans Le rapprochement et le vivre ensemble de la composante francophone issue des communautés migrantes, et anglosphone issue de la communauté établie, le renouveau du Ministère francophone de Sherbrooke, anciennement Mission francophone de Sherbrooke, et son impact sur la communauté de foi de Plymouth-Trinity, sans oublier l'émergence et l'influx d'une vibrante communauté swahilophone.

...sees good news in: The rapprochement and living together of the French-speaking component from migrant communities, and the English-speaking component from the established community, the renewal of the French-speaking Ministry of Sherbrooke, formerly the French-speaking Mission of Sherbrooke, and its impact on the community of faith of Plymouth-Trinity, without forgetting the emergence and influx of a vibrant Swahili-speaking community.

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| Multi-Year Initiative  | Activity Name                                   | Progress on Key Results |
|--|---|-------------------------|
| RENEW: Strengthen the capacities of existing communities of faith<br>Shift: Increased ability to welcome, attract, retain, transform and send people into the world.   | <b>Tools and Accompaniment for CoFs</b>         | 70                      |
|  | Stewardship for CoFs                            | 90                      |
|  | <b>Moderator's Initiative: Church Workshops</b> | 100                     |
|  | Renewing Francophone Communities                | 75                      |
| CREATE: Gathering learning from our own experience and that of denominations and global partners, create 100 new communities of faith. Shift: Towards vibrant diversity, and intercultural community, transformative in the world. | Online Communities                              | Ended                   |
|  | <b>Regional/Identity Communities</b>            | 70                      |
|  | <b>Migrant Communities</b>                      | 100                     |
|  | Intercultural communities                       | 100                     |
|  | <b>Francophone Communities</b>                  | 80                      |
|  | Diverse Identity Communities                    | Ended                   |
| INVITE: Galvanize common identity and purpose and communicate effectively to the public about the spiritual home or pathways to home in the church. Shift: Towards greater internal connectedness; stronger external outreach.     | Engage with Call and Vision                     | 85                      |
|  | <b>Outreach: Communication Strategy</b>         | 90                      |
|  | Francophone Outreach                            | 80                      |
|  | Centennial Commemoration Project                | 60                      |

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## Good News Story

Unknown to many, folks who have led church plant activities at one point in their lives develop an itchiness to start new church plant activities. In fact, they are always aware of localities where an emerging Community of Faith can be started. Issa, who is an Emerging

Church Lead with the United Church in Ottawa, is one example. Through contacts in Swahili-speaking communities in Ottawa, he was able to identify one potential Emerging Church Lead who lives in Cornwall, and Echasa is now working with us as new Lead for Cornwall.

--Dr. Emo Yango, Migrant and Disapora Coordinator, Growth Department/Objective

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## Embolden Justice: Collaborating to Mend Church and World 80%

**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

### Accomplishments

The social justice team has made significant strides, cultivating just relationships through collaborative efforts in diverse spaces. To drive meaningful change, the team employs innovative strategies, tackles emerging issues, and leverages cutting-edge methodologies. Justice work integrates intersectional frameworks, digital activism, community-led initiatives, and policy reform advocacy, prioritizing inclusivity and dismantling systemic injustices. Below are some highlighted areas of progress during the quarter under review:

#### Anti-Racism

The *I Am A Changemaker* curriculum, designed for church leaders of children ages 6-12, has been found to be effective in engaging children and leaders in anti-racism discussions. The materials have been deemed user-friendly and adaptable for various age groups and include the use of prayer and poetry in enhancing worshipful experiences. The activities of the quarter, a build up from previous work, empowered children who benefited from the resource to see themselves as changemakers. Leaders were offered language and a lens for this work, and courageous conversations among White leaders were fostered, supporting United Church commitments to becoming anti-racist.

One participant remarked the following about the training "A reliable and helpful resource for anti-racism work." Another one said: "Empowered leaders have language to be changemakers."

#### 2SLGBTQI+ Global Commitments

The Human Rights and Gender Diversity consultation held in Maputo, Mozambique in August was an overall success. It brought together 58 persons and great facilitators, with diverse voices and perspectives, to address crucial issues surrounding queer identities in Africa. The gathering successfully fostered trust, connection, openness, and dialogue—exactly what was aimed for. Through powerful speeches, personal testimonies, and impactful discussions, the participants grew in their understanding of why this work is vital for queer people in Africa and the world. Many attendees left inspired, more open-minded, and committed to continuing these essential conversations into the future.

#### Indigenous Justice

Despite significant staffing challenges, progress was stronger than expected, with successes in specific programs and ongoing community engagement. An example of activities that were successful

included *Orange Shirt Day*, *Placing Ourselves in Colonialism* education, and work on Day Schools. Engagement with Communities of Faith, Regions, and other church bodies is done in a manner that honors Indigenous resilience and dignity, fosters reconciliation and healing, and empowers Indigenous self-determination.

### **Radical Accompaniment**

The United Church has been working to show solidarity to five human rights and water defenders who played a key role in El Salvador's 2017 historic ban on metals mining, after they were detained on January 11, 2023. Referred to as the "Santa Marta 5," the men were released to house arrest in August 2023, after spending almost eight months in prison under deplorable conditions. Advocacy solidarity proved a great success with the courts pronouncing an innocent verdict just after the quarter under review.

On July 30th, a Zoom call convened 77 global partners from diverse regions and ecumenical organizations, led by the Partner Council, to explore the concept of "Mutual Radical Accompaniment" and resource sharing. During regional breakout sessions, participants outlined next steps for tailored, context-specific follow-up. Notably, a decolonizing approach is being implemented, abandoning a one-size-fits-all prototype in favor of regionally led discussions, enabling contextualized solutions and processes to emerge, promoting regional ownership and adaptive strategies for social justice and ecumenical cooperation.

### **Challenges**

Regarding work on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, funding constraints on planned initiatives related to Calls to Action 59 and 60, planned through the Canadian Council of Churches-Canadian Interfaith Reference Group, limited the possibilities and pose some difficulties for future progress.

### **Looking Forward**

At one of their recent meetings, the Embolden Justice staff team took part in a participatory workshop focused on the evaluation and impact of justice and qualitative work. Looking forward, the hope is to be able to incorporate some more of the learnings, and related questions, into the ongoing process of development and evaluation.

### **Accountable: Japhet Ndhlovu**

| Multi-Year Initiative   | Activity Name  | Progress on Key Results |
|---|--|-------------------------|
| INDIGENOUS JUSTICE: Address anti-Indigenous racism and White supremacy and make the church and Canada safer and more equitable for Indigenous peoples. Shift: Towards decolonization and increased justice. | TRC Calls to Action                                  | 70                      |
|   | Indigenous Strength Learning Opportunities           | 90                      |
|   | Reparations  | 70                      |
|   | Bringing the Children Home                           | 85                      |
| RACIAL EQUITY: Advance racial equity. Shift: Towards transformed structures and systems and intentional leadership of racialized people.  | Self-defined Healing                                 | Ended                   |
|   | Racial Equity in Housing Advocacy                    | 75                      |
|   | Addressing Antisemitism                              | 100                     |
|   | Anti-Racism Education                                | 90                      |
|   | Addressing White Privilege                           | 50                      |
| 2S-LGBTQIA+ RIGHTS: Enhance 2S-LGBTQIA+ rights including addressing religious-induced homophobia. Shift: Towards integrating and intersecting with other justice issues.                                    | Refugee Sponsorship                                  | 90                      |
|   | LGBTQIA+ Global and Ecumenical Advocacy              | 80                      |
| ECUMENISM: Increase ecumenical collaboration and effectiveness. Shift: Towards stronger impact and reduction in overlap.  | Ecumenical Youth Exchange                            | 100                     |
|   | Stronger Ecumenical Partnership                      | 20                      |
| RADICAL ACCOMPANIMENT: Strengthen accompaniment of global partners. Shift: Towards needs development.   | Financial Sharing                                    | 67                      |
|   | Crisis Response                                      | 80                      |
|   | People to People                                     | 90                      |
|   | Witness  | 95                      |
|   | Visits and Meetings                                  | 100                     |
|   | Roundtables  | 80                      |
| PUBLIC WITNESS: Strengthen presence in the public sphere and effectiveness in advocacy as a denomination. Shift: Towards greater public presence, clearer principles and processes of response.             | Moderator's Initiative: Public Events and Book Clubs | 85                      |
|   | Advocacy: Presence and Methodology                   | 75                      |

## Good News Stories

"I was so happy to teach the *I Am A Changemaker* curriculum to the kids in our community of faith...With such a rich resource, I know it's not a "one and done". We'll be able to revisit and dive deeply again and again focusing on different things each time. This is a reliable and helpful way for a community of faith to engage in The United Church of Canada commitments around becoming an anti-racist church. There is also an in-built opportunity for intergenerational sharing and ways that the children can come away from their learnings as leaders in all of the communities they participate in."

"I was struck by the fact that it started with love and kept on re-grounding in love. That gives a foundation that is strong, faithful and transformational. I found the structure not only useful for this curriculum, but a helpful pattern to consider when doing other work where behaviors need to change. Practically, I found the material very user friendly. It told me what I needed and handouts, etc. were logically located. And... I didn't need to adapt the material in order for it to 'land' with the intended group. It was pitched just right."

*--Leaders who made use of the "I am a Changemaker" Children's Anti-Racism Resource, A project of the Justice Objective*

The United Church is accompanying the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) on a long-term food security project that aims to address food insecurity as a result of climate change and economic shocks in the country. ZCC is working with over 1,300 farmers to train them on climate smart agriculture. They are also providing training on disaster risk management, sustainable livelihoods, savings programs, and advancing gender equality. We are excited to embark on this journey with ZCC.

*--Thivan Hoang, Program Coordinator, Sustainable Development and Humanitarian Response, Church in Mission/Justice Objective*

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## **Invigorate Leadership: Adapting and Innovating for Bold Discipleship** **76%**

**Objective:** Renew a vision of leadership based on the call of the denomination—deep spirituality, bold discipleship and daring justice—and align discernment, recruitment, training, and support of ordered and lay leadership, to this vision.

### **Accomplishments**

Overall, we are starting to see important results in the activity streams for this year, particularly in those that have been in place since 2023. This quarter's reports by activity leads demonstrate that longer-term planning, focus, and ongoing staff dedication are having an impact. For instance, one of the admission ministers who was part of the matching program, and attended an open house event, was offered an appointment because of attending that event. She has started her appointment, and she and the Community of Faith are extremely hopeful about the relationship.

Another highlight is that six co-operative Supervised Ministry Education sites have been identified and are receiving funding. They represent a variety of different approaches from the traditional to the experimental. It is very exciting to have these students begin their active ministry in co-operative settings. There is much to learn from their experiences; this learning will continue into 2025 and 2026.

Within the General Council Office, adoption of the performance management platform has been effective with a significant increase in annual and probationary reviews conducted in 2024. A Performance Improvement Plan has been incorporated. A modified Performance Review Tool was developed for Regions to reflect their contribution to the United Church's Call and Vision.

Multiple programs and leadership development with and for youth and young adults were held over the summer, with ongoing work with youth/young adults in helping shape and plan General Council 45 and continue the longer-term work around leadership development.

### **Challenges**

Some challenges that we are experiencing include insufficient budget and/or worries about insufficient budget, particularly for larger-scale and longer-term projects. In addition, although we reduced the number of key results for Quarter 3, based on our learning from 2023, we still found it a challenge to meet some of the expected results in this quarter. Staff vacation, sabbaticals, and other leaves are among the factors that impacted the work in some areas. And finally, additional testing is needed in some projects, due to some complexities within existing systems.

### **Looking Forward**

In Quarter 4, evaluation of programs and activities will be a primary focus. These evaluations will provide the Leadership Objective team with important data to help refine plans for 2025. In addition, we anticipate the completion of some projects within activity streams, as well as the completion of some activity streams, which will either become operational or will have met their initial goal.

**Accountable: Jennifer Janzen-Ball**

| <b>Multi-Year Initiative</b>  | <b>Activity Name</b>                             | <b>Progress on Key Results</b> |
|---|--|--------------------------------|
| WHOLE PEOPLE OF GOD: Reinvigorate our commitment to the ministry of the whole people of God. Shift: To better coordinated support and resources.  | Whole People of God Training                     | 50                             |
|   | First Third Ministry Leaders                     | 100                            |
|   | Worship Resources                                | 75                             |
|   | Statement of Ministry Review                     | 50                             |
| MINISTRY PERSONNEL: Work to align policy and systems for recruiting, training, authorizing and overseeing ministry personnel with the new Vision. Shift: Leadership development from a program to a mentorship-model (investing in ministers in first 5 years, ministers interested in developing leadership skills, Indigenous church, First Third). | Reimagine Theological Education                  | 100                            |
|   | <b>Cooperative Ministry and Mentorship Pilot</b> | 100                            |
|   | <b>Recruitment-Ministry Personnel</b>            | 90                             |
|   | <b>Appointments for Admission Ministers</b>      | 50                             |
|   | Leadership Counts                                | 100                            |
|   | <b>Moderator's Initiative: (Re)Generate</b>      | 100                            |
|   | Pastoral Relations Equity Animation              | 60                             |
| ELECTED LEADERS: Support the increased diversity and effectiveness of faithful elected leaders. Shift: Towards greater inclusivity and accountability.  | Support Equity Groups in Governance              | 85                             |
|   | Equity and Anti-Oppression Training              | 70                             |
|   | Onboarding Volunteers                            | 75                             |
| STAFF: Strengthen equity, accountability and effectiveness in General Council staff system. Shift: Towards learning culture, alignment, and evaluation against work plans.  | Performance Management System                    | 80                             |
|   | Training: Learning Strategy                      | 65                             |
|   | Equity in Recruitment and Retention              | 50                             |

## Nurture the Common Good: Equity and Sustainability in Resources 63%

**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.

### Accomplishments

One area that saw particular success in the third quarter was fundraising. There is excitement and anticipation around the Centennial Legacy Campaign, evidenced by bequests committed by individuals and a number of congregations and Communities of Faith interested in accessing resources to help engage their communities in creating support for future ministry. This initial success is important in providing examples of how and why people make gifts in their wills and estate plans.

Another activity that had very encouraging results in Q3 was "Technology Best Practices." The purpose of this activity is to give Communities of Faith the tools to use technology to inspire and invite people into engagement and community. The team has cultivated a network of people interested in this area of work and are thrilled at the results. They hosted the first webinar on September 24 with 67 participants in attendance. The topic was "Building a Sound Foundation for Worship" - all about best practices for sound in worship/ministry. At this point, 141 participants have registered on the network.

A final example of the work this quarter, relates to sharing resources across the church. The Digitization process is having great success at moving paper files to digital formats. This ensures that information is more accessible and preserved for future reference more broadly. It improves our ability to share and track information that is important now and will be in the future. Similarly, a pilot test of the "Ask an Expert" communications session in Southwestern Ontario was a success and will be expanded to other Regions over the next year. This, along with the Cross-Country Check-in that is happening in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter also aims to share information and make accurate and relevant communications broadly available. These efforts help us work towards being better connected as a church and sharing best practices and information that will support Communities of Faith as they engage in their ministry.

### Challenges

We continue to face challenges in resourcing. Many of the activities are dependent on assistance from other units, people, or consultants, all of whom are stretched to capacity. This is reflected in a number of the key results being on hold as we wait for support to achieve the deliverables. As we continue to work towards the objective, we need to further adjust expectations on what constitutes reasonable timelines for work to be completed. None of the activities are at risk of not being completed, however, the completion date for many will be 2025 instead of 2024.

## Looking Forward

As we head into the fourth quarter, we continue to consider how best to serve Communities of Faith and share resources across the church. We will be learning from the networks created through a number of activities to determine how best to nurture and support learning and the sharing of learnings. Through the networks, we will also be in conversation about the most pressing needs of Communities of Faith in terms skills, expertise, and specialized roles or programs and how we can support Communities of Faith in addressing those needs.

### Accountable: Sarah Charters

| Multi-year Initiatives   | Activity Names                                 | Progress on Key Results |
|--|--|-------------------------|
| FINANCIAL HEALTH: Remove barriers to congregational financial health. Shift: Towards financial viability and administrative effectiveness.                               | <b>Support to CoFs: Treasurers Plus</b>        | 50                      |
|  | Grant and Donation Portal                      | 25                      |
|  | Technology Best Practices                      | 50                      |
| COLLECTIVE DECISIONS: Strengthen decision making and management of property and resources. Shift: Towards decisions that reflect the ministry needs of the whole church. | Optimize Asset Retention                       | 50                      |
|  | <b>Fundraising: 2025 Anniversary</b>           | 75                      |
|  | Major and Planned Giving                       | 80                      |
|  | Mission and Service Support                    | 50                      |
| SHARED SERVICES: Reduce costs and improve capacity through shared service structures. Shift: Towards administrative efficiencies and effectiveness.                      | Shared Space (300 Bloor Street West)           | 100                     |
|  | Information Management: Marketing and Contacts | 25                      |
|  | Digitization                                   | 100                     |
|  | Licensing Fix                                  | Ended                   |
|  | Improve PAR                                    | Awaiting Activation     |
| ACCOUNTABILITY: Strengthen planning--strategic and operational--and increase accountability. Shift: Towards evidence-based decisions, greater alignment and impact.      | Operational Planning                           | 85                      |
|  | Data Driven Decision Making                    | 50                      |
|  | Transparency                                   | 85                      |
|  | <b>Role and Structure Review</b>               | 75                      |
|  | Legal Capacity                                 | 50                      |

## Deepen Integrity: Living Climate Commitments

84%

**Objective:** Amplify and integrate current initiatives in a bold, hopeful denominational climate strategy that accelerates reductions towards the goal of an 80% decrease in emissions by 2030.

### Accomplishments

In Q3, the church engaged with young people on climate in a few key ways. *Faithful Footprints* participated in *Audacious Hope*, the joint event with The Presbyterian Church in Canada that gathered over 400 young people. This year's Climate Motivators, the twelve young people and the two coordinators hired through a Canada Summer Jobs grant, followed their time at *Audacious Hope* with a session at Five Oaks to plan their projects. Each young person worked with the coordinators and staff resources to make one topic the focus. A wide variety of topics were covered including the energy efficiency of church buildings, maximizing space on church property for food production, and equipping church members to be climate advocates. One of the motivators started to analyze the carbon footprint for General Council 45 which has, in turn, sparked further discussion on how we keep our climate commitments in mind as we plan an event involving extensive travel. This initiative fits with our intention to deepen integrity by putting our own house in order.

### Challenges

Work has started on developing a climate calendar, one that connects the different activities across the objective in a cohesive way and ensures timely promotion of each. We have started to plot events on the calendar and our next step will be to cross-reference and promote.

### Looking Forward

Q4 involves planning for 2025. Work on the 2023-2024 United Church Sustainability Report will get underway and timelines have been outlined for it. The deadline for applications for Canada Summer Grant Jobs has been advanced so that work will also be prioritized.

**Accountable: Cheryl-Ann Stadelbauer-Sampa**

| Multi-year Initiatives  | Activity Names          | Progress on Key Results |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| INTEGRITY: Put our own house in order through reducing church emissions. Shift: Towards broader engagement across the church; towards system change in sectors. | Faithful Footprints     | 85                      |
| VOICE: Raise our spirited voice. Shift: Towards greater public recognition of both the issues and United church leadership in responding.                       | Advocacy on Climate     | 50                      |
|   | Youth Climate Activists | 100                     |
| RECONNECT: Reconnect with the Earth<br>Shift: Towards reawakened and strengthened love for all God's creation   | Eco-Spirituality        | 100                     |

## 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.

Because church-wide fundraising for a retreat for Indigenous Ministers was so successful, this event moved forward in this quarter without any additional need for resources. The retreat provided need sustenance and support for Indigenous ministers working in areas of high crisis and trauma.

The overall focus of efforts in Q3 was planning for a special National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering, now scheduled for November 29-December 2, 2024. This will enable the Indigenous Church to confirm governance structures and representatives and move forward towards the Autonomous National Indigenous Organization, as per the recent remit.

**Accountable:** Springwater Hester-Meawassige Lori Ransom (Acting)

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

| Multi-year Initiatives  | Activity Names                             |
|---|--|
| SELF GOVERNING: Create and develop a fully self-governing Indigenous Church within the United Church. Shift: Towards greater implementation of the Calls to the Church. | <b>Structure: Indigenous Church</b>        |
|   | <b>Funding model: Indigenous Church</b>    |
|   | Indigenous Testamur                        |
|   | Theologies/Spiritualities: Indigenous ways |
|   | Indigenous Youth Leadership                |
|   | New Indigenous Ministries                  |

## Origins of the Plan

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. 2024 began with 78 activity streams. Each 2024 activity stream 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.

## Call



## 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.

**For more Information:**

**[Planning@united-church.ca](mailto:Planning@united-church.ca)**

## PENSION BOARD ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

Origin: Pension Board

### Executive Summary

Under the current governance structure, the Executive of the General Council is the legal Administrator of the Pension Plan of The United Church of Canada (the Plan) and has oversight responsibilities for its operation. To facilitate the conduct of those responsibilities, the Pension Board submits a comprehensive accountability report to the Executive of the General Council at its fall meeting and provides an update at other meetings if substantive events have transpired. The Board trusts that this information will be useful and would be pleased to provide supplemental information at any time.

This report outlines key activities of the Board and its committees since November 2023. The Chair of the Board will discuss this report and be available for questions at the November 2024 GCE meeting.

### Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027

The Board adopted the Strategic Plan in December 2022 which provides guidance and direction to support the long-term sustainability of the Plan in light of potential obstacles and challenges.

During the last year, the Board and its committees continue to oversee the execution of the five objectives of the Strategic Plan with key activities summarized below:

#### Monitoring the Plan's funded position, contributions and benefits

The Board monitors the Plan's funded position, contribution and benefit levels. The Plan continues to be well-funded, which allowed for a benefit increase to members effective January 1, 2024. A valuation of the Plan was conducted at December 31, 2023, which confirmed the strong funded position. This valuation was filed with pension regulators, which will allow up to three years of contribution and benefit stability before the next required regulatory filing.

#### Pension and Benefits Administration Stabilization – PABAS Project

After a four-and-a-half-year implementation process, the new pension and benefits administration system (PABAS) will go live on November 5<sup>th</sup> for administrators with the member portal and self-serve tools rolled out over the next three months. This new state-of-the-art system, co-sourced with TelusHealth, will bring greater efficiency and timeliness to the administration of our plans.

#### Responsible Investment (RI)

The Plan is a leader in religious investor circles. As part of its Strategic Plan, the Board continues to develop and improve its RI efforts around three overlapping activities: engagement, proxy voting, and net-zero emissions by 2050.

### Pension Board's continued efforts to be faithful stewards of the Plan and the Fund

The Board has created two cross-committee working groups to oversee an Asset Liability Study and to create an Enterprise Risk Management framework.

- ε) The Asset Liability Study will analyze Plan assets, liabilities, funded status, and benefit payments under many capital market environments based on expected asset returns, inflation, and their expected volatility. Following completion in Q1 2025, its findings will determine the Fund's target asset mix.
- φ) The Enterprise Risk Management framework will set out principles and procedures to help the Plan to manage anticipated strategic, operational, investment, legal, and regulatory risks, to achieve its objectives.

The remainder of this report provides details on the Plan including membership and appointments and the activities of the Board and its committees. Key items approved by the Board in the last years are summarized in Appendix A.

### **2023 Pension Annual Report and some Fast Facts about the Plan**

The 2023 Pension Annual Report to members was published in Fall 2024. In Appendix B, you'll see "Fast Facts" about the Plan, which were excerpted from that report.

The Plan is mature but stable: we have fewer **active members** (e.g. 3,055 in 2023) than **inactive members\*** (e.g. 6,438 in 2023) but the proportion of active members to inactive members has remained stable over the last few years. When compared to a less mature plan, our Plan is more dependent on investment earnings rather than member and employer contributions to pay pensions.

*\*An inactive member has either begun to receive a pension from the Plan (i.e. a pensioner) or has terminated employment but left their earned pension in the Plan (i.e., a deferred member).*

### **Membership and Appointments**

Members of the Board and its committees are appointed by the Executive in your role as Administrator. Members-at-large are recruited through the regular nominations process. Pension professionals on the Board and Committee are recruited with the use of an external recruiter, interviewed by the Board chair, committee chair, and the Executive Officer for the Plan, and upon recommendation of the Board, considered by the Nominations Committee before coming before you.

The Board and its committees are fortunate to attract and retain a very diverse group of industry experts to these volunteer roles.

### Pension Board

Since the last report, there have been two reappointments and two changes in membership. Anne Soh was reappointed for a second term on the Pension Board as Chair to January 2027. Darwin Bozek was reappointed for a second term on the Pension Board, to June 2027; Darwin

acts as the Pension Board's representative to the Audit Committee. In December 2023, the Board welcomed Thea Sheridan-Jonah as a second representative of the Executive of the General Council. Joanne Wilson decided not to seek reappointment following completion of her second term in June 2024, due to personal commitments. A new member with professional institutional investment experience is currently being recruited.

#### Pension Plan Advisory Committee (PPAC)

There have been three changes to the Pension Plan Advisory Committee's membership since our last report. James Clarkson completed his third and final term on PPAC with the May 2024 meeting. The committee welcomed two new members, Helen Redmond and Corbin MacGillivray, at its September 2024 meeting.

#### Investment Committee

There have been two changes to membership of the Investment Committee since the last report. Andy Greene was approved for another term as Chair from February 2024 to February 2027. Sean Macaulay's third term was extended two years to lead an asset liability study, which will inform how the target asset mix of the Plan is defined.

#### **The Pension Plan of The United Church of Canada, Strategy – 2023 to 2027**

The Strategic Plan, which was approved by the Pension Board on December 8, 2022, is the first such plan for our pension plan and provides guidance for 2023 through 2027. It will help to position the Plan to face potential obstacles and challenges such as plan maturity, reduced number of participating employers, increased member life expectancy, and other risks identified in future studies.

The Strategic Plan contains five key objectives:

- g)** Continue to actively prioritize Plan stability and sustainability
  - h)** Enhance Risk Mitigation
  - i)** Strengthen approaches to active and responsible investment
  - j)** Elevate Plan members' and employers' appreciation for the value of the Plan
  - k)** Enhance and modernize administration to better serve members and employers
- Staff report quarterly to the Board on key results and progress under each strategic objective.

#### ***Objective #1, Continue to actively prioritize Plan stability and sustainability***

Based on the continued strong financial position of the Plan, the Pension Board implemented a benefit improvement effective January 1, 2024, the fifth improvement in a row. In Q4 each year, the Pension Board considers the Plan's estimated funded position as well as interest rates, geo- political and economic factors to determine whether a benefit improvement would be affordable for the following year.

### Valuation of the Plan's funded position

Actuarial valuations are required by regulation every three years unless the Plan has solvency concerns. An actuarial valuation is an appraisal of a fund's assets versus liabilities, using investment, economic and demographic assumptions to determine the funded status of a plan. The usual practice for this Plan has been to perform actuarial valuations every two years rather than at the required three-year intervals.

A valuation of the Plan's funded position effective December 31, 2023, confirmed that the Plan is 121% funded on a going-concern basis (if the Plan continues indefinitely) and 125% funded on a solvency basis (if the Plan were to be wrapped up at that date). Based on the strong results, the Pension Board approved a motion to file the valuation with regulatory authorities, which provides three years of contribution and benefit stability before the next valuation will be required.

The following table gives a summary of the funded position of the Plan from 2019 through to 2023, with estimates to the end of Q2 2024.

|  | <b>Dec. 31, 2021</b><br>(filed valuation) | <b>Dec. 31, 2022</b><br>(estimate) | <b>Dec. 31, 2023*</b><br>(last filed valuation) | <b>June 30, 2024</b><br>(estimate) |
|--|---|------------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| <b>Going Concern Funded Ratio</b>                                      | 119%                                      | 130%                               | 121%  | 123%                               |
| <b>Solvency Funded Ratio<br/>(Percentage funded on Solvency basis)</b> | 122%                                      | 124%                               | 125%  | 131%                               |

\*Includes impact of January 1, 2024, benefit improvement

### Benefit Improvement effective January 1, 2024

Quarterly tests of the Plan's funded position during 2023 revealed strong funded ratios, which facilitated the Board's approval of a benefit improvement effective January 1, 2024.

### Consideration of a Benefit Improvement effective January 1, 2025

The Board continues to monitor the Plan's funded position in light of ongoing political uncertainty and geo-political turmoil. It will consider whether a benefit improvement can be provided at January 1, 2025.

### ***Objective #2, Enhance Risk Mitigation***

One of the goals under Objective #2 is to maintain a diverse investment portfolio that meets risk/return hurdles.

### Statement of Investment Policies and Procedures

The Statement of Investment Policies and Procedures (SIPP) is reviewed by the Investment Committee annually. In December 2023, the SIPP was updated to clarify the process to follow when the Fund is outside target asset mix ranges, and foreign currency hedging.

#### Investment performance of the Pension Fund

In 2023, bond and public equity investments performed close to their benchmark goals, but higher interest rates contributed to negative returns in real estate and private equity investments. As a result, our pension fund rate of return on investment was 8.9%, lower than the policy benchmark goal of 10.0%. However, the positive return is a welcome change from the negative 9.7% return experienced in 2022.

In 2024, returns have been strong despite the backdrop of a possible recession. For the first half of the year, the return was 4.4%, 0.4% above the policy benchmark goal of 4.0%.

At June 30, 2024, annualized returns for one to five-year periods as compared to policy benchmark are shown in the table below. The policy benchmark represents the return on the assets as if they had been passively invested in the policy asset mix.

| For period ending<br>June 30, 2024 | <u>Fund</u> | <u>Policy Benchmark</u> |
|------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| One Year                           | 8.2%        | 9.1%                    |
| Two Years                          | 8.5%        | 8.7%                    |
| Three Years                        | 2.7%        | 2.3%                    |
| Four Years                         | 4.7%        | 3.7%                    |
| Five Years                         | 4.6%        | 4.3%                    |

The Fund exceeded its policy benchmark return over a three-to five-year period. The source of this outperformance can be traced to the Fund's real estate and private equity investments which generated average annual five-year returns of 9% and 14% respectively. However, negative returns in 2023 in these two asset classes caused returns to perform below the policy benchmark on a one and two-year basis. The Fund's above benchmark performance over longer periods was also helped by the 2020 decision to replace the foreign equity investment managers with two new global equity managers that were more balanced from an investment-style perspective, and the 2022 decision to replace the Canadian equity manager.

The market value of the Pension Fund at June 30, 2024 was \$1.51 billion, a \$25 million increase from the market value as at December 31, 2023. Over the first half of the year, investment gains of \$58 million and contributions of \$10 million were offset by pension payments of \$43 million. At June 30, the Pension Fund was 46% (vs target of 45%) invested in Equity, Private

Equity and Real Estate and 54% (vs target of 55%) invested in Fixed Income and Cash. This is within the current bounds of the SIPP but differs from the target allocation by one percent.

In 2023, the Investment Committee reviewed new private debt investments, particularly US allocations. The risk and return profile of private debt is currently attractive compared to publicly traded corporate debt. US allocations are pursued due its large market size which allows for greater company and industry diversification. The Investment Committee approved its first allocation of \$20 million to KKR US Evergreen Direct Lending fund in May 2024. Over the next few years, the Investment Committee will continue to evaluate additional allocations to private debt.

### ***Objective #3, Strengthen approaches to active and responsible investment***

The pension plan executes its responsible investment (RI) responsibilities with **three** overlapping activities: **engagement, proxy voting, and net-zero emissions by 2050.**

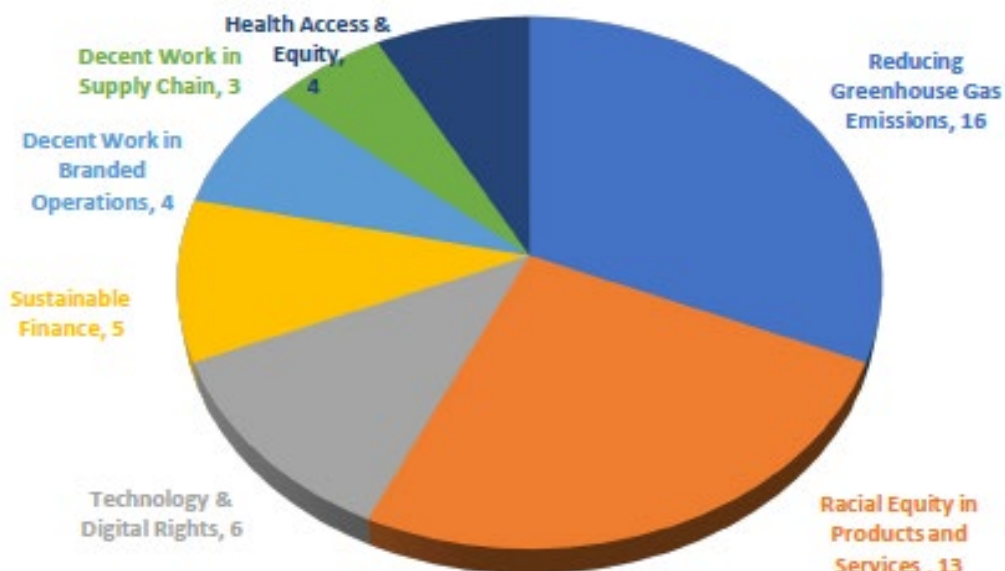
#### Engagement

The cornerstone of the Plan's RI activities is engagement. The Plan engages directly with invested companies on ESG issues using the services of the Shareholder Association for Research and Education (SHARE). Each year SHARE proposes an engagement plan describing issues and companies it plans to address. The Sustainable Investment Working Group (SIWG) and the Pension Board review the engagement plan to ensure it aligns with the Plan's Statement of Beliefs and Guiding Principles and reflects commitments of the United Church. This year, at our request, SHARE added disability inclusion and equality as part of its engagement Plan.

Examples of engagement include:

- λ) Royal Bank of Canada and Bank of Montreal both committed to racial equity audits after facing pressure from shareholders. The pension plan and the church, along with the Atkinson Foundation, provided this pressure through support of shareholder proposals to request audits, organized by SHARE. As Royal Bank and Bank of Montreal have both agreed to conduct a racial equity audit, the shareholder proposals were withdrawn.
- μ) Alphabet (Google) shareholders voted on a proposal, filed by the pension plan, requesting third-party scrutiny of the company's targeted advertising system. The proposal calls for the company to undertake a human rights impact assessment and speaks to the growing concerns surrounding Alphabet's advertising infrastructure's heavy reliance on technology, including artificial intelligence, that has not been subject to a robust human rights due diligence process. The proposal received 47% support from independent shareholders and 18% overall.

In 2023, with SHARE, the Plan engaged with 25 of the 96 companies owned directly by the pension plan, which addressed 51 issues.



### Proxy Voting

The Plan uses a proxy voting agency, Groupe Investissement Responsable (GIR), to vote our shares. The Investment Committee works with GIR to agree to a set of guidelines on how the Plan should vote on issues.

GIR voted on 1,480 proposals at 96 meetings on the Plan's behalf. Overall, the Plan disagreed with a company's management 56% of the time. For shareholder proposals, the Plan voted against management 90% of the time.

A few examples of shareholder proposals that the Plan voted in favour of:

- n)** Shareholder proposal requesting Dollarama to disclose the specific objectives related to its emissions goal and gender equality goals.
- o)** Shareholder proposal that TJX Board of Directors oversee an independent assessment and report to shareholders on the effectiveness of the company's current due diligence to prevent forced labour, child labour, and prison labour in its supply chain.
- p)** Shareholder proposal requesting that Alphabet's Board of Directors carry out an assessment and publish a report describing how it identifies and resolves discrepancies between Alphabet's lobbying activities and its commitments to mitigate climate impact and support the Paris Agreement, which aims to limit average global warming to 1.5°Celsius by 2030.
- q)** Canadian Pacific Kansas City's management sought advisory approval of the company's approach to climate change. The company has pledged to reduce the intensity of greenhouse gas emissions from its locomotives by more than 38% by 2030, compared with 2019. The Plan voted in favour of this management proposal.

### Commitment to Net Zero by 2050

In 2022, the pension plan signed on to the Canadian Investor Statement on Climate Change. Developing milestones to meet the net-zero emissions goals by 2050 is part of the Plan's strategic plan and part of the SIWG's mandate.

So far, the journey to net zero has focused on education and collecting greenhouse gas (GHG) emission data on the portfolio of assets so that we can determine the portfolio's carbon footprint.

Through good investment manager selection and engagement, the Plan's carbon footprint is already below its benchmark.

In terms of the pension plan's investments, the focus is on the financed emissions, which are indirect emissions attributed to financing activities from lending or investing. In both 2022 and 2023, the Plan's financed emissions were less than its benchmark.

The Plan will continue to work towards our net-zero 2050 commitment.

### ***Objective # 4, Elevate members' and employers' appreciation for the value of the Plan***

#### Semi-annual, online pension seminars

Our semi-annual, online pension information seminars provide members and employers information about the advantages and workings of a defined benefit plan and of the United Church Plan in particular. The presentations also enhance members' understanding of the comprehensive nature of retirement planning; this refers to the importance of personal savings and government programs in addition to a pension from the Plan.

#### Newsletters to members and participating employers

Staff continue to build news and resources on [uccbenefits.ca](http://uccbenefits.ca), on [uccbenefits.ca](http://uccbenefits.ca) news, in Connex, and UCC social media.

- Pension news in quarterly e-newsletter Connex
- Employer newsletter to keep participating employers informed about the Plan and implementation of the new administration system

### ***Objective # 5, Enhance and modernize administration to better serve members and employers***

#### Pension and Benefits Administration Stabilization – PABAS Project

The Pension and Benefits Administration Stabilization Project (PABAS) supports the fifth strategic objective by allowing for both the modernization of our administration practices and significant enhancement of the member experience of timely and accurate pension and benefits administration.

PABAS was launched in 2018, when the decision was made to insource administration after nearly twenty years of unsatisfactory experience with third-party outsourcing. Temporary tools for administration of both pension and benefits were developed, a formal search process resulted in the selection of Telus Health (previously Lifeworks) to partner with the Church to implement a “co-sourced” pension and benefits administration solution.

With the decision to terminate administration services by a third-party provider, an in-depth requirements analysis was undertaken by the Pension Board and its Pension Plan Advisory Committee (PPAC). An RFP was issued with the support of a pension consulting firm. Proposals were assessed, shortlisted, and interviewed. Staff conducted site visits with references. The Board selected Morneau Shepell’s Ariel system (Morneau Shepell’s pension administration business was ultimately acquired by Telus Health). An initial three-year implementation plan was undertaken. With COVID and multiple delays, the implementation has taken nearly four and a half years. Such delays are not uncommon in these projects. During this time, extensive remediation of data was undertaken. Staff has confidence in the solution and will continue to partner with Telus Health after the “go-live” in November 2024 as the system beds in and we head toward true stabilization within the “Benefits Centre”.

Throughout, a steering committee comprised of members of PPAC, the Board and staff has overseen the implementation, reporting quarterly to PPAC and to the Board. Staff anticipates an 18-month stabilization period after the November 2024 go-live as the functionality of the system is fully leveraged and the member self-service features adopted. Again, PPAC will provide oversight during this period.

The diligent oversight of the steering committee and professionalism and persistence of staff are to be noted with appreciation.

## Other Activities

### Amendments to the Pension Plan Text since the previous report

Amendment 2024-1 implements the ad hoc pension increase and temporary accrual rate increase effective January 1, 2024, which was approved by Pension Board at its December 6, 2023, meeting.

### Compliance

All administration practices comply with regulatory requirements and the Pension Plan Text. All regulatory filings since the last report were made within the mandated filing periods.

Since the last report to the Executive of the General Council, the Pension Board met five times and the Pension Plan Advisory Committee met five times, and Investment Committee met four times. All the work at the Committee and Working Group levels is reported to the Pension Board for oversight or approval.

### Service Providers

There have been no changes to the pension plan's service providers since the last report.

### **Pension Board Members:** (biographies available on the Benefits Centre site)

Anne Soh FSA, FCIA ICD.D (Chair)

The Reverend Mitchell Anderson, BA(Hons), MBA, MDiv(Hons)

Sharon Aylsworth, BA (Hons)

Darwin Bozek, FCPA, FCGA

Tamara DeMos FSA, FCIA

William Gilliland BA (Hons), LLB, ICD.D

The Reverend Hae-Bin Jung B.Th., MDiv,

MTS Alison McKay BA, BAdmin, CPA, ICD.D

Katharine Preston MBA, B.Eng

Thea Sheridan-Jonah

### **Staff Support:**

The Reverend Alan Hall, Executive Officer, General Council Shared Services

Harry Li, Executive Officer, Finance

**Appendix A**

At Pension Board meetings since the last report, staff and Committee work was reviewed and the following items were approved:

| Meeting Date     | Items Approved by the Board   |
|------------------|---|
| December 6, 2023 | <p><b>r) THAT</b> the Pension Board jointly propose to the Sub-executive of the General Council that: Anne Soh be appointed to a second term on the Pension Board to January 2027 and that she continues as Chair.</p> <p><b>s) THAT</b> on the recommendation of the Sustainable Investment Working Group, the Pension Board support the SHARE 2024 Engagement Plan.</p> <p><b>t) THAT</b> the Pension Board approve the 2024 General Pension Plan Budget.</p> <p><b>u) THAT</b> the Pension Board approve the 2024 Pension Administration Budget of \$3.075 million.</p> <p><b>v) THAT</b> the Pension Board approve the Audit Plan for the 2023 Pension Plan Financial Statements.</p> <p><b>w) THAT</b> the Pension Board approve the simplifying of the presentation of audited financial statements and eliminating note disclosures not required by FSRA as recommended by KPMG LLP.</p> <p><b>x) THAT</b> the Board approve the revised SIPP as recommended by the Investment Committee.</p> <p><b>y) THAT</b> effective January 1, 2024, the Pension Board approve an increase for both active and inactive members, in the same amount as was given in 2020, 2022 and 2023:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ accrual rate of 1.85% (increase of 0.45%) for active members for one year only, and</li> <li>○ 4% increase to pensions of inactive and retired members, subject to Income Tax Act limits.</li> </ul> |

| Meeting Date          | Items Approved by the Board   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <i>March 26, 2024</i> | <p>z) <b>THAT</b> the Pension Board recommend to the Nominations Committee the reappointment of Darwin Bozek to the Pension Board, to June 2027.</p> <p>aa) <b>THAT</b> the Pension Board approve Amendment 2024-1, along with the restated plan text effective January 1, 2024.</p>  |
| <i>June 13, 2024</i>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>THAT</b> the Pension Board recommend to the Nominations Committee, the appointment of Helen Redmond and Corbin MacGillivray to the Pension Plan Advisory Committee.</li> <li>• <b>THAT</b> the Pension Board approve the 2023 audited financial statements of the Plan, for filing with the Financial Services Regulatory Authority (FSRA).</li> <li>• <b>THAT</b> the Pension Board approve the Asset Liability Study Working Group Mandate, as distributed, and</li> <li>• <b>THAT</b> the Pension Board approve an expenditure of \$120K for actuarial services associated with the Asset Liability Study.</li> <li>• <b>THAT</b> the Pension Board approve an expenditure of \$20K for review of expense flow-through arrangement with The United Church of Canada; and</li> <li>• <b>THAT</b> the Pension Board approve an expenditure of \$20K for legal review of the fund documents of KKR Evergreen US Senior Direct Lending fund.</li> <li>• <b>THAT</b> the Pension Board approve an additional \$500,000 to cover any additional costs that may arise before the Pension Board meets in October 2024.</li> <li>• <b>THAT</b> the Pension Board approve the valuation assumptions and results at December 31, 2023, for filing with Canada Revenue Agency and the Financial Services Regulatory Authority FSRA.</li> </ul> |

| Meeting Date     | Items Approved by the Board   |
|------------------|---|
| October 10, 2024 | <p><b>bb) THAT</b> the Pension Board recommend to the Nominations Committee, the reappointment of Kevin Pyo to the Pension Plan Advisory Committee, for a second term to October 2027.</p> <p><i>And</i></p> <p><b>THAT</b> the Pension Board recommend to the Nominations Committee, the following reappointments to the Investment Committee, all for second terms:<br/>Steve Smith, from October 2024 to October 2027; Doug Chau, from February 2025 to February 2028; Deborah Ng, from February 2025 to February 2028; and Adam Buzanis, from May 2025 to May 2028.</p> <p><i>and</i></p> <p><b>THAT</b> the Pension Board recommend to the Nominations Committee, that Nirupa Muthurajah be appointed to the Investment Committee effective September 2025</p> <p><b>cc) THAT</b> the Pension Board approve the updated Code of Conduct, as amended.</p> |

The Pension Board's final meeting of 2024 is scheduled for December 5, 2024.

## **NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT: Discernment Considerations**

### **Originating Body: The Nominations Committee**

As the United Church approaches the ending of the 44th General Council and the start of the 45th, the Nominations Committee is preparing to prayerfully discern the appointment and reappointment of over 200 faithful members for the committees, boards and task groups of the church in the spring of 2025. The Nominations Committee faithfully engages in this work on behalf of the Executive, the General Council, and the Board of Vocation.

This report, and accompanying time at the upcoming meeting, is to share with the Executive the considerations the Nominations Committee uses in carrying-out its mandate, and to deepen the partnership relationship between the Executive and the Nominations Committee.

### **Discernment Considerations**

The Nominations Committee is guided by the practices of spiritual discernment, the needed gifts for the work of the church, and the United Church's commitments to equity, diversity and anti-oppression. The committee is mandated to uphold these commitments through various policies and guiding documents including *Policy 1.08 Committee Membership* and *Policy 2.08 The Nominations Committee*

The United Church's expectations on eligibility, call, gifts, diversity and equity commitments are noted in each call for nominations.

### **Eligibility and Good Standing**

Each person recommended for appointment is understood to be an active participant in The United Church of Canada (or a member for roles where that is a requirement). Regional Councils and the Office of Vocation assist in notifying the Nominations Committee of any relevant concerns. Staff members of the General Council and Regional Council are not eligible for governance-level appointments in a voting capacity. (Exemptions to this where there is no conflict-of-interest between the elected and employment responsibilities may be considered on a case-by-case basis by the General Secretary).

### **Spiritually-Called**

Each of us is gifted by the Spirit and each of us is called into service. Calls are heard in different ways. Each nominee is asked to test their sense of call with two people who might offer them guidance and clarity on whether and how they are called. The Nominations Committee participates in this shared discernment by considering each nominee's expression of their own call, recognizing that people hear and express their call in very different ways. Throughout the Nominations Committee holds itself open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

**Gifts and Skills**

Each member will have skills and experiences that will support the work of the committee, board or other role. Some of these experiences may be directly related, some skills may be transferrable. In the interest of developing future leadership, there is always space for people who have the interest in developing the needed skills and experience through participation on committees and boards. The chair and staff person of each committee assist specifying the needed gifts and skills, and in assessing whether each nominee possesses them.

**Diversity**

Groups are strengthened and decisions are better-informed when a committee includes a diversity of identities and lived experiences. The Nominations Committee gives particular attention to diversity of:

**dd)** geography (Regional Council and urban/rural)

**ee)** gender

**ff)** ministry personnel and laity.

The Nominations Committee tracks and strives to ensure that each group includes diversity within each of these categories. Across the full range of appointments, it seeks to ensure that there is a significant presence of each regional council, ministry personnel of various streams, lay people and different genders. Beyond these tracked diversity categories, the Nominations Committee notes other identities and the lived experiences of each nominee which might diversify and enrich a particular group or the broader community of elected and appointed members.

*Current diversity statistics follow*

**Equity**

The development of the Leadership Counts project assisted the church in lifting up seven specific equity-seeking identities to which the church has made commitments of full participation. Nominees are invited to note whether they hold any of these seven identities.

The Nominations Committee makes note of these identities and brings its attention to strengthening the presence of each of them as possible. The Committee tracks the presence of these seven identities as it conducts its work, while also paying attention to the diversity within these identities.

The Nominations Committee is also mindful of the goal within the Anti-Racism Action Plan to “ensure committee members are not all White.”

*Current equity identity statistics follow*

## APPENDIX: Diversity and Equity Statistics of Current Appointments 562 Appointments (September 2024).

### Diversity: Regional Council

| Regional Council                                   | Appointments | %   | Grouped % |
|--|--------------|-----|-----------|
| Pacific Mountain Regional Council                  | 71           | 13% | 17%       |
| Chinook Winds Regional Council                     | 25           | 4%  |           |
| Northern Spirit Regional Council                   | 29           | 5%  | 20%       |
| Living Skies Regional Council                      | 38           | 7%  |           |
| Prairie to Pine Regional Council                   | 48           | 9%  |           |
| Canadian Shield Regional Council                   | 13           | 2%  | 15%       |
| Shining Waters Regional Council                    | 72           | 13% |           |
| Horseshoe Falls Regional Council                   | 40           | 7%  | 16%       |
| Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council         | 27           | 5%  |           |
| Antler River Watershed Regional Council            | 21           | 4%  |           |
| Eastern Ontario Outaouais Regional Council         | 32           | 6%  | 14%       |
| East Central Ontario Regional Council              | 15           | 3%  |           |
| Conseil Regional Nakonha:ka Regional Council       | 33           | 6%  |           |
| Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Regional Council | 24           | 4%  | 11%       |
| Bermuda – Nova Scotia Regional Council             | 25           | 4%  |           |
| First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council           | 11           | 2%  |           |
| <i>blank</i>                                       | 38           | 7%  |           |

|   | Layperson | Designated Lay Minister | Diaconal Minister | Ordained Minister | Applicant or Candidate | <b>Total: Gender</b> |
|---|-----------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Female (cis or trans)                   | 153       | 5                       | 26                | 127               | 7                      | 318 (57%)            |
| Male (cis or trans)                     | 75        | 1                       | 7                 | 138               | 7                      | 228 (41%)            |
| Gender Queer, Non- Binary or not listed | 3         | -                       | -                 | 6                 | 7                      | 16 (3%)              |
| <b>Total: Ministry Stream</b>           | 231 (41%) | 6 (1%)                  | 33 (6%)           | 271 (48%)         | 21 (4%)                | <b>562</b>           |

### Diversity: Ministry Stream and Gender

### Equity Commitments

Leadership Counts data supplemented with nominations information

|   | Appointments |            | Comparison Benchmarks |                |
|---|--------------|------------|-----------------------|----------------|
|   | Count        | Percentage | Ministry Personnel    | UCC membership |
| Indigenous identity                           | 92           | 16%        | 2%                    | 3.5%           |
| Racialized identity                           | 165          | 29%        | 10%                   | 2.5%           |
| Francophone OR French Ministries              | 55           | 10%        | 5%                    | -              |
| Primary language other than English or French | 77           | 14%        | 9%                    | -              |
| Two Spirit LGBTQIA+ identity                  | 108          | 19%        | 15%                   | 3%*            |
| Young Adult (30 and under)                    | 21           | 4%         | 2%                    | 11%            |
| Disability identity                           | 73           | 13%        | 15%                   | 5%*            |
| <b>One or more equity identities</b>          | <b>330</b>   | <b>59%</b> | <b>41%</b>            | <b>-</b>       |

UCC membership statistics from Canadian 2021 census.

\* denotes statistics from United Church Identities Survey.

## **APPENDIX: Recruitment and Discernment Policies and Guidelines**

### **Policy 2.08 Nominations Committee**

#### **Responsibilities**

2. The Nominations Committee is responsible for reviewing nominations and submitting to the Denominational Council, its Executive, or the General Secretary, as appropriate, recommendations for appointment. In carrying out this responsibility, the committee will
  - 1) reflect theologically on the basis for appointed member participation in the church
  - 2) discern who is equipped to serve
  - 3) develop and test processes for selecting individuals and developing effective groups
  - 4) strive to meet the church's commitments to
    - a) becoming an intercultural church
    - b) the full inclusion of people with disabilities
    - c) developing new and young leadership
    - d) the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
    - e) ensuring that francophone ministries are an integral part of our identity
    - f) any future commitments regarding the appointed leadership of the United Church

### **Policy 1.08 Committee Membership**

#### **Guiding Principles**

2. The guiding principles for recruiting, selecting, supporting and recognizing persons who serve as members of groups are
  1. *Informed by the Spirit* – draws on practices of Christian spiritual formation; facilitates individual and committee, sub-committee or task group discernment
  2. *Accountable to the General Council* – Accepts the responsibility to carry out the nominations process for the General Council according to the mandate and established principles
  3. *Shares Leadership* – Co-facilitated by committee chairs and designated staff in the General Council Office and Conferences
  4. *Open and Transparent* – Clear, detailed and timely information on opportunities, selection criteria and process, and appointments; documented and disseminated through multiple communication channels

5. *Inclusive* – Aspires to balance voices, perspectives and interests while proactively seeking to address inequities; demonstrates an intentional struggle with historic patterns of exclusion
6. *Flexible* – Able to accommodate the variety of work, diversity of interests, and routine to unique circumstances
7. *Continuously Improving* – Through regular feedback and evaluation is able to make changes and adjustments to practices and processes based on key findings

## Selection Procedures

27. Using spiritual discernment practices, the Nominations Committee will

1. review the mandating body request, the expressions of interest and any screening reports
2. consider the diversity of the group with respect to gender, race, ethnicity, age, geography, and vocations, placing special emphasis on those who have been historically excluded from positions of influence and authority,
3. recommend appointments to General Council or its Executive

## Diversity and Equity Statements Communicated on each call for Nominations

### Membership

...The committee is made up of members who reflect the diversity of the United Church, with particular attention to its equity commitments and the presence of both lay people and ministry personnel from across the geography of the church.

### Equity Commitment

In its discernment, the Nominations Committee considers diversity with regards to geography, gender identity and ministry stream, as well as the myriad ways that our lives, cultures and lived experiences make each of us unique. In addition, the committee upholds the church's commitments to the full participation of people with disabilities; youth and young adults; those who identify as Two Spirit or LGBTQIA+; Indigenous; racialized; Francophone or active in French ministries; those who speak a primary language other than English or French; and people from marginalized communities not named here.

Individuals with these identities and lived experiences are encouraged to express interest.

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## **Consent Proposals**

### **GS 108 MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING: MOUNT ALLISON UNIVERSITY AND THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA**

**Origin: General Secretary**

#### **1. What is the issue?**

In the aftermath of church union in 1925, many United Church-related schools and universities obtained an Act of Incorporation either from the Federal Parliament or from the relevant provincial legislature. Because most of the United Church-related theological colleges post-1925 were either a union of existing Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational institutions, or some two of these three, these various Acts of Incorporation were to recognize in law the new reality of these theological schools. A common feature of those initial Acts of Incorporation was that the General Council appointed all the members of the governing boards of the respective colleges. After church union in 1925, Mount Allison University ceased to be a theological college (theological students went to Pine Hill Divinity School in Halifax) but remained a United Church university.

While many of these Acts still state that the General Council appoints a certain number of members of the governing boards, in practice, this has become unrealistic. In the case of Mount Allison University, the former Maritime Conference and now the Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Regional Council, has been consulted about appointments to the governing board. However, in practice, the University has often appointed members with no connection to The United Church of Canada to the two United Church positions on the Board of Regents.

This is not new within the United Church and with its related schools, universities, and theological colleges. With the advent of a United Church presence in multi-denominational theological schools beginning in 1971, the General Council ceased appointing the governing boards of the theological schools. In subsequent years, the General Council ceased such appointments for others of its theological schools. However, in some cases, there is no existing record of any agreement between the School and the United Church by which the United Church ceded its right under the School's Act of Incorporation to appoint some or all the members of the governing board. That is the current situation with Mount Allison University. To ensure that no legal difficulties arise in the future, it has seemed important to develop the Memorandum of Understanding found in the Appendix to this Proposal.

#### **2. Why is this issue important?**

It is a matter of good governance that a variation from the Act of Incorporation should be documented and, thus, agreed to by the United Church. In addition, and very practically, both the Church and the Governing Board of Mount Allison University want to ensure that

decisions the Governing Board has made in good faith, and will make, are not subject to legal questions.

**3. How might the General Council Executive respond to the issue?**

**The General Secretary recommends that the General Council Executive approve the Memorandum of Understanding between Mount Allison University and The United Church of Canada as appended, and authorize the General Secretary and the Executive Minister, Theology and Ministry Leadership, to sign the Memorandum as appended.**

**4. For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council Executive:**

There is no previous history of action on this matter by either the General Council or its Executive, except that the General Council previously appointed members of the Board of Regents of Mount Allison University.

## **GS 109 LIVING INTO OUR CALL AND VISION: A PROPOSAL FOR GLOBAL AND ECUMENICAL PARTICIPATION TO GENERAL COUNCIL 45**

**Origin: General Secretary**

### **1. What is the issue?**

The United Church of Canada has named Radical Accompaniment as the path to living into its commitment to partnership with others in God's Mission, and as a way of living out the Church's Call and Vision. Radical Accompaniment is about critical presence – The United Church being with partners and partners being with the United Church. The participation of global and ecumenical partners in the proceedings of General Council is central to United Church ecclesiology. Partner perspectives are imperative to the United Church as it makes important decisions about its ongoing and envisioned life and work.

### **2. Why is this issue important?**

The participation of Global and Ecumenical partners is one of the ways in which the Church embodies its commitment to mutual radical accompaniment, and to its commitment to the partnership (2008)

### **3. How might the General Council Executive respond to the issue?**

**The Executive of the General Council could**

- a) approve the invitation to 26 Global and Ecumenical to accompany the work of the 45<sup>th</sup> General Council as outlined below:**

**10 Global partner representatives:**

- **6 Partner Council members**
- **1 Global Partner from each region - Asia, Latin America/Caribbean, Africa, and Middle East**

**3 Global Ecumenical representatives:**

- **World Council of Churches**
- **World Communion of Reformed Churches**
- **World Methodist Council**

**2 Global 2SLGBTQIA partner  
representatives 1 Mutual Recognition  
Partner**

**1 Full Communion Partner**

**5 Canadian Ecumenical representatives 2  
Interfaith partners**

**2 Migrant Church representatives**

## **GS 110 PREGNANCY AND PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY CHANGES**

**Origin: General Secretary**

### **1. What is the issue?**

This proposal seeks to update the more-detailed pastoral relations policy using similar language as changes to The Manual I.2.3.1, which are being proposed at this meeting.

### **2. Why is this issue important?**

As the church seeks to use inclusive language in this pastoral relations policy, it's important to ensure that the language used is understandable and not confused with other leaves.

### **3. How might the General Council Executive respond to the issue?**

**The General Secretary recommends that:**

**The General Council Executive adopt the attached updates for revising the Post-Pregnancy, Parental and Partner Leaves (referred to as Pregnancy and Parental Leaves since September 2023).**

### **4. What will be the impact?**

The policy changes in this proposal will be consistent with The Manual and be understandable to those who require the policy.

### **5. How does this proposal help us live into the commitments on equity?**

This proposal helps us to live into our commitments on equity because it changes the policy to use inclusive language that is non-binary.

### **6. For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council**

**Executive: Motion from 44th General Council: GC44 2022-42**

**Motion from the 44th General Council Executive: 2023-09-22-050**

## **GS 111 UPDATING LANGUAGE IN SECTION I.2.3.1**

**Origin: General Secretary, General Council**

### **1. What is the issue? Why is it important?**

The language currently used in section I.2.3.1 Maternity and Parental Leave is outdated because it does not include other gender identities in its definition of parenthood.

Furthermore, there have been additional proposed revisions aimed at adopting more inclusive language that accurately represents those eligible for these leaves and the range of leaves available to them.

### **2. How might the General Council Executive respond to the issue?**

**The General Secretary recommends that the General Council Executive approve the following editorial changes to *The Manual*:**

#### **Current wording:**

##### **I.2.3.1 Maternity and Parental Leave**

Maternity leave is an unpaid leave of absence available to a biological mother on the birth of her child. Ministry personnel taking maternity leave may be entitled to benefits under a government insurance plan. Parental leave is an unpaid leave of absence available to a biological or adoptive parent while caring for a newborn or newly adopted child. Ministry personnel may be entitled to benefits under a government insurance plan.

#### **Proposed wording:**

##### **I.2.3.1 Post-Pregnancy, Parental and Partner Leaves**

Post-Pregnancy leave is a leave of absence available to a person after they have given birth to a child.

Parental leave is a leave of absence available to a parent while caring for a newborn or newly adopted child. Parental leave benefits are available either after the date of the child's birth or the date of the child's placement in the home.

The period of post-pregnancy or parental leave will be subject to the maximums set out by applicable employment law.

Partner leave is a paid leave of absence of 5 days available to ministry personnel when their spouse or partner has given birth to a child or the ministry personnel and their spouse or partner have adopted a child.

FYI: Ministry personnel may be entitled to benefits under government insurance plans.

## **GS 112 AMENDMENTS TO SECTION B.5.4.2 REGARDING THE NOTICE REQUIREMENT FOR COMMUNITIES OF FAITH THAT DO NOT MEET REGULARLY**

**Origin: General Secretary, General Council**

### **1. What is the issue?**

Under section B.5.4.2 of the *Manual*, there is a requirement that notice of a meeting must be read during public worship on two Sundays. This requirement is problematic for communities of faith that do not meet on a regular basis, making it difficult for them to comply with this section.

### **2. Why is this issue important?**

This issue is important because the Manual should reflect the current reality of communities of faith, especially their ability to provide notice when they do not meet as frequently or operate as traditional congregations. By ensuring the governance structure remains practical and relevant for all communities, the amendment addresses the need for appropriate notice periods that account for irregular meeting schedules.

### **3. How might the General Council Executive respond to the issue?**

**The General Secretary recommends the following addition to section B.5.4.2:**

#### **B.5.4.2 How Notice is Given**

**There are different processes for giving notice, depending on the purpose of the meeting. All notices must indicate the purpose of the meeting.**

**a. Community of faith events: This section (B.5.4.2 a) applies if the purpose of the meeting is to**

**i) consider approving a new community of faith profile**

***For information on the community of faith profile, see Pastoral Relations I.1.3.***

**ii) consider approving changes to an existing pastoral relationship**

**iii) consider approving a new pastoral relationship;**

**iv) consider whether to request the ending of an existing pastoral relationship;**

**v) consider amalgamating with one or more congregations;**

**vi) consider disbanding the congregation; or**

**vii) electing or removing members of the governing body.**

***There are additional requirements that must be followed for giving notices of meetings for matters listed in paragraphs (i), (ii), (iii), or (iv) above. See Pastoral Relations I.1.5 and I.3.1.6.***

***See also the pastoral relations resources available from the General Council Office.***

**Notice of the meeting must be read during public worship on two Sundays. After notice has been read on the second Sunday, the meeting may take place on the next day (Monday) or on any day after that.**

**Congregations who regularly worship other than weekly**

**d. This applies to sections a. and c. In cases where a congregation regularly worship other than weekly, notice of a meeting may instead be provided to full members either by mail or electronically. The meeting may take place 14 calendar days after the notice has been sent.**

**4. For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council Executive:**

N/A

## **GS 113 AMEND SECTION B.7.8.5 TO PROVIDE FLEXIBILITY FOR COMMUNITIES OF FAITH AND PASTORAL CHARGES TO ADHERE TO THE REQUIREMENT OF HAVING A MINISTRY AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

**Origin: General Secretary, General Council**

### **1. What is the issue?**

With dwindling membership in communities of faith and pastoral charges, the current governance models are not fully addressing their needs or reflecting their current realities. Specifically, the requirement for each community of faith or pastoral charge to maintain a Ministry and Personnel (M&P) Committee can be challenging. Some communities are addressing this by sharing a single M&P Committee, which has proven to be a more practical solution given the limited number of members and other relevant considerations. These types of approaches should be reflected in the Manual to provide clearer guidance and flexibility for such circumstances.

### **2. Why is this issue important?**

This issue is important, because communities of faith and pastoral charges need flexibility in order to adhere to the current governance structure.

### **3. How might the General Council Executive respond to the issue?**

**The General Secretary recommends the following changes to section B.7.8.5 of the Manual, which are written in red:**

#### **B.7.8.5 Ministry and Personnel Committee**

**All congregations or pastoral charges must have a committee or other body, which may be called the Ministry and Personnel Committee or a different name, with the following responsibilities:**

- a) being available for consultation and support for matters involving the pastoral charge staff;**
- b) overseeing the relationship of the pastoral charge staff to each other and to people in the congregation;**
- c) regularly reviewing the working conditions, responsibilities, and compensation of all pastoral charge staff;**
- d) making any recommendations needed as a result of these reviews to the governing body;**
- e) revising position descriptions of pastoral charge staff as needed;**
- f) conducting annual performance reviews of the pastoral charge staff;**
- g) ensuring pastoral charge staff make use of opportunities for continuing education that they have been given; and**
- h) maintaining close contact with the regional council Pastoral Relations Committee or equivalent.**

***FYI: “This requirement can be met in a variety of ways in conversation with and prior approval of the regional council.”***

***There are resources to assist Ministry and Personnel Committees with their responsibilities. See the Ministry and Personnel Committees resources available from the General Council Office.***

- 4. For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council Executive:**  
N/A

## **GS 114 AMENDMENTS TO SECTION E.2.2 RE: STANDARD OF CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR MINISTRY PERSONNEL**

**Origin: General Secretary, General Council**

### **1. What is the issue?**

In 2023, the Board of Vocation approved “the Standard for Continuing Education for Ministry Personnel,” in which ministry personnel are expected to, at least every three years, nurture and grow their skills in the areas of Deep Spirituality, Bold Discipleship, and Daring Justice. The standard applies to all ministry personnel and is intended to guide them in their planning of their own continuing education and to develop proposals for continuing education for their Ministry and Personnel Committees, if applicable.

### **2. Why is this issue important?**

This issue is important because the *Manual* should reflect this new standard, not in detail, but to direct ministry personnel where they can find more information regarding “The Standard of Continuing Education for Ministry Personnel.”

### **3. How might the General Council Executive respond to the issue?**

**The General Secretary recommends the following addition to section E.2.2, which is highlighted in red:**

#### **E.2.2 Standards for Training, Accreditation and Continuing Education**

**The Office of Vocation is responsible for establishing standards in the following areas, within policies set by the General Council or its executive:**

- a) training and accreditation of ministry personnel;**
- b) admission of ministers from other denominations;**
- c) readmission of people to the order of ministry;**
- d) continuing education, formation, and professional development of ministry personnel; and**
- e) oversight and discipline of ministry personnel.**

**FYI: The Board of Vocation establishes the "Standard for Continuing Education for Ministry Personnel." This standard is designed to assist ministry personnel in developing their own continuing education plans and to develop proposals for continuing education with their Ministry & Personnel Committees. For further details, contact the Office of Vocation.**

### **4. For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council Executive:**

N/A

## **NOM 14 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPOINTMENT**

### **Originating Body: The Nominations Committee**

*All information in this proposal is to be held in confidence pending approval and until all who expressed interest are notified of these decisions.*

#### **1. What is the issue?**

We believe that the Holy Spirit calls us to use our God-given gifts. Our gifts differ, but all are needed. The practices of Christian spiritual formation call on us to practice individual and group discernment in selecting and affirming leaders for the church.

#### **2. Why is this issue important?**

The Executive of the General Council needs to appoint and authorize members to serve on committees and task groups which conduct work on its behalf and as delegates to represent The United Church of Canada. On this occasion, the Executive also has a responsibility to appoint a number of Commissioners for the 45<sup>th</sup> General Council.

#### **3. How might the General Council Executive respond to the issue?**

**The Nominations Committee, proposes that the Executive of the General Council**

##### **1. Appoint the following members with terms as noted:**

###### **Commissioners to the 45<sup>th</sup> General Council**

1. Marilyn Robitaille – Lay Person, East Central Ontario
2. Jamie Hill – Lay Person, Eastern Ontario Outaouais
3. Adekunle Adeniyi – Ordained Minister, Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters
4. Jess Swance – Ordained Minister, Horseshoe Falls
5. Jake Girton – Lay Person, Horseshoe Falls
6. David Whalley – Diaconal, Living Skies
7. George Thurlow – Lay Person, Living Skies
8. Shadia Qubti – Lay Person, Pacific Mountain
9. HaNa Park – Ordained Minister, Pacific Mountain
10. Diane Dwarka – Lay Person, Prairie to Pine
11. Lorraine Anderson – Lay Person, Shining Waters
12. Isaac Kamta – Ordained Minister, Shining Waters
13. Sungmin Jung – Ordained Minister, Western Ontario Waterways
14. Madelani (Mado) Oboo – Lay Person, Nakonha:ka

###### *Alternates*

- Alwin Jayaveera Mabem – Ordained, Eastern Ontario Outaouais
- Erasmus Madimbu – Ordained, Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters
- Andrew Macpherson – Ordained, Pacific Mountain

**Equity Support Team for the 45<sup>th</sup> General Council**

- gg)** Lawrence Muvunzi – Ordained Minister, Canadian Shield
- hh)** Sung Ran Kim – Ordained Minister, Shining Waters
- ii)** Jenni Leslie – Ordained Minister, Eastern Ontario Outaouais
- jj)** Edna Baker-Graff – Lay Person, Shining Waters
- kk)** Cheryl Bear – Lay Person, Pacific Mountain

**Canadian Council of Churches: Faith and Life Sciences Reference Group (December 2027)**

- Yiu Hong (Kyle) Chan – Lay Person, Shining Waters

**Pension Plan Advisory Committee (October 2027)**

*On the joint recommendation of the Pension Board and the Nominations Committee.*

- Kevin Pyo, *specialist*. 2<sup>nd</sup> term

**Pension Investment Committee (as noted)**

*On the joint recommendation of the Pension Board and the Nominations Committee.*

- Steve Smith, *specialist*. 2<sup>nd</sup> term (October 2024 – October 2027)
- Deborah Ng, *specialist*, 2<sup>nd</sup> term (February 2025 – February 2028)
- Doug Chau, *specialist*, 2<sup>nd</sup> term (February 2025 – February 2028)
- Adam Buzanis, *specialist*, 2<sup>nd</sup> term (May 2025 – May 2028)
- Nirupa Muthurajah, *specialist*. 1<sup>st</sup> term (September 2025 – September 2028)

**Treasury Investment Committee (as noted)**

*On the joint recommendation of the Finance Advisory Committee and the Nominations Committee.*

- Andrew Bedeau, *specialist, chair*. 2<sup>nd</sup> term (December 2024 – December 2027)
- Michelle de Cordova, *specialist*, 2<sup>nd</sup> term (November 2024 – November 2027)

**2. Receive for information the following appointments made by the General Secretary to support the work of the General Council Office:**

**Equity Support Team for the 45<sup>th</sup> General Council**

- Franklyn James – Ordained Minister, Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters
- Amy Haynes – Ordained Minister, Chinook Winds
- Ben Ryan – Lay Person, Nakonha:ka

**World Communion of Reformed Churches Regional Assembly (CANAAC), Youth Delegate**

- Kupa Munikwa – Lay Person, Bermuda – Nova Scotia

**4. What will be the impact?**

These appointments are offered with a view to the strategic objective of Invigorate Leadership: Adapting and Innovating for Bold Discipleship. The work that these roles advance varies.

**4. How does this proposal help us live into the commitments on equity?**

In its discernment, the Nominations Committee considers diversity with regards to geography, gender identity and ministry stream, as well as the myriad ways that our lives, cultures and lived experiences make each of us unique. In addition, the committee upholds the church's commitments to the full participation of people with disabilities; youth and young adults; those who identify as Two Spirit or LGBTQIA+; Indigenous; racialized; Francophone or active in French ministries; those who speak a primary language other than English or French; and people from marginalized communities not named here.

Many of those recommended personally hold one or more of these identities. Collectively within this group of 35 nominees, each of the seven equity-commitment identities are named by more than one person. All members of committees and representatives of The United Church of Canada to ecumenical bodies are expected to uphold the United Church's commitments to equity in the roles to which they are being appointed.

Appointments of Commissioners to the 45<sup>th</sup> General Council are made with the mandate to increase the diversity of the body of Commissioners present. The purpose of the Equity Support Team is to assist the United Church in living out its equity commitments in the work and meetings of the General Council

**5. For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council Executive:**

The Nominations Committee discerned these recommendations for appointment by videoconference meeting on November 5.

Appointments of Commissioners are in accordance with The Manual, Section D.1.1 h):

A number of members to be elected by the Executive of the General Council, on the recommendation of the regional councils, for the purpose of ensuring diversity in the General Council after the members listed in paragraph D.1 e) above have been determined to bring the total number of members to 260.

In order to ensure that all Commissioners can begin orientation and preparation work for the General Council together, the Nominations Committee was asked to bring these recommendations forward this fall. Because the precise identities of all of the Commissioners for GC45 are not yet known, Regional Councils and La Table were invited to submit nominations based on the church's equity commitments for the full participation of historically under-represented people. The Nominations Committee additionally took into consideration the tendency over several General Councils for the Commissioner pool to be predominantly female and predominantly Ordained ministers.

The Nominations Committee offers gratitude to all who serve and prays for faith and joy in their appointments.

**The Nominations Committee:** Lynella Reid-James (chair), YongSeok Baek, Katherine Brittain, Allan Buckingham, Jessica Stevenson, Pat Tooley (regrets), Samuel Dansokho (GCE), Richard Bott (GCE), Norm Seli (Board of Vocation liaison). Diane Bosman & Jamie Wilder (staff)

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## Appendix III

### **GS 115 BENEFITS PLAN GOVERNANCE CHANGES**

**Origin: General Secretary**

#### **1. What is the issue?**

In 2023, staff noted that the number of actively working covered plan members in the benefits plan had been declining which is expected to be a long-term trend (GS66). The premiums and claims costs of the plan adjust over time largely in alignment with plan membership. However, much of the plan's administration and overhead costs are relatively fixed, meaning that remaining employers will be expected to shoulder an increasing plan administration cost burden going forward. The plan is in the fortunate position of having significant financial reserves, however these assets have been underutilized and not under the plan's direct control up to this point.

Approval was granted by the Executive of the General Council (GCE) of The United Church of Canada (the Church) to allow the group benefits plan to separate the benefits assets from other treasury assets and manage them with the goal of offsetting up to half of the plan's annual administration and overhead costs through investment returns. GCE also approved the creation of a Working Group to direct the implementation of a funding model to utilize existing financial reserves.

The Working Group was established in Spring 2024 and has been supported by the Church's benefits consulting firm HUB International. The Working Group consists of external volunteers from the actuarial community, members of GCE, and Church staff.

#### **2. Why is this issue important?**

To meet our fiduciary duties to the plan members and the participating employers, the plan's reserves should be managed to best support the plan's continued sustainability.

#### **3. How might the General Council Executive respond to the issue?**

**It is proposed that the Executive of the General Council:**

- **Approve the Benefits Funding Policy**
- **Approve/Incorporate SIPP to Account for Separate Benefits Assets**
- **Leverage Current Providers**
- **Segregate the Benefit Assets from the General Church assets**
- **Establish a Benefits Committee**

The Working Group makes the following five recommendations:

**1. Approve the Benefits Funding Policy**

The Working Group has developed a benefits plan Funding Policy for GCE approval (see Appendix A). The adoption of a Funding Policy is a key part of formalizing the governance of the benefits plan. The document outlines the nature and purpose of the plan, underwriting arrangement, rate setting approach, use and funding of reserves, and what options may be available when the plan is in either a surplus or deficit position.

The Working Group views this version of the Funding Policy as a first step. Through its discussions, the Working Group has identified a number of items that should be further considered or refined in the future. These items include the role of a Benefits Committee (as per recommendation 5), the process for the long term disability cost of living adjustments, options/requirements in the event of either a funding surplus or deficit, and the process for accounting for the plan's assets and transactions. This document is intended to be reviewed and revised on a regular basis as well as in response to major changes or events affecting the benefits plan.

**2. Approve/Incorporate SIPP to Account for Separate Benefits Assets**

While it has been determined that the benefits plan making use of a "stand-alone" SIPP is not feasible at this time, the Working Group has developed a SIPP document suitable for this purpose (see Appendix B). The Working Group understands and acknowledges the role of the Investment Committee and its Investment Policy. To avoid redundancy and ensure compliance with relevant guidelines, the Working Group recommends that the benefits SIPP be reviewed by the Investment Committee and integrated into the Investment Policy to better recognize the interests of the benefits plan.

**3. Leverage Current Providers**

Tasked with the selection of various providers relating to benefits fund management, the Working Group opted to explore leveraging the Church's existing relationships with providers to benefit from reduced fee structures and avoid duplication in various documentation and service provider relationships.

The current investment manager, Fiera Capital, confirmed that the benefits assets can be managed separately and take advantage of the preferred fee arrangement as long as pooled funds are used. Fiera Capital suggested an asset mix that they project to yield higher returns with lower volatility compared to the asset mix currently in place. The Working Group believes this should be investigated further and that leveraging the existing relationship with Fiera Capital would be best for the benefit plan investment manager role at this time.

The Working Group also confirmed that the current custodian, RBC Investor Services, can continue to manage the benefits assets and do so in a separate division under the current fee arrangement. RBC is also the banking service provider to the Church and

the Working Group recommends that this relationship be maintained for the benefits plan.

#### **4. Segregate the Benefit Assets from the General Church assets**

Historically, the benefits assets and reserves have been intermingled with general Church assets. It is important to recognize and appreciate that the assets of the benefits plan are those of participating employers and employees/pensioners, rather than of the Church. To enable proper oversight and monitoring of reserves and funding, the Working Group recommends the segregation of benefits assets from the current arrangement. This would include separating benefits plan assets into a new division with the investment manager and custodian. In the future, the Church may wish to consider separate financial statements for the benefits plan.

#### **5. Establish a Benefits Committee**

Given the complexity of the benefits plan, the Working Group recommends the Church delegate oversight of the benefits plan to a dedicated “Benefits Committee”. A Benefits Committee would be a key component of a more robust governance structure for the benefits plan and those involved with the Benefits Committee would have more specific knowledge, understanding and accountability for the obligations and liabilities of the benefits plan. Forming a Benefits Committee and determining their terms of reference should be expedited given the complexity and importance of some of the other issues concerning the benefits plan. The Working Group also emphasizes the need for a comprehensive education initiative to ensure that members fully understand the plan's complexities.

The Benefits Committee may be tasked with:

- ll)** Regular monitoring and reporting: This includes financial tracking, reconciliation, and frequent reviews of plan performance, as outlined in the Funding Policy.
- mm)** Summary reporting to the GCE: Provide regular updates on plan performance.
- nn)** Increased communication to plan members: Increase understanding and appreciation of the benefits plan by increasing transparency and frequency of communication. This may include an “annual report” outlining the plan’s finances and key decisions and changes.
- oo)** Reviewing and finalizing Funding Policy: As noted in section 4.1, the Funding Policy is recognized as a living document, with certain areas identified by the Working Group for further review by the Benefits Committee once established.

#### **4. For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council Executive:**

The proposal will support GCE in meeting its fiduciary duties to plan members and participating employers by effectively managing the benefits plan and their reserves through a Benefit Committee supported by the draft policies. All will support the benefits plan in meeting its obligations and will reduce the reputational risk and financial risk to the General Council Executive.

Tying this back to fund the plan's administrative expense, implementing the policies will ensure the benefits plan remain affordable for current and future employees and their employers in spite of anticipated decline in membership. Without addressing the issue, the fixed costs would be borne by fewer employers and divert money away from communities of faith and/or benefit provision.

**Is this proposal in response to assigned work – either from General Council or a previous GCE meeting?**

- GS66 GROUP BENEFITS PLANS ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSE FUNDING, November 2023 meeting

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## Appendix IV

### **GCE 04 REVIEW OF THE ROLES OF MODERATOR AND GENERAL SECRETARY**

#### **Origin: Task Group to Review the Roles of Moderator and General Secretary**

#### **1. What is the issue?**

The Executive of the General Council initiated a review of the Offices of Moderator and General Secretary. In November 2024, the task group submitted an interim report with recommendations regarding, in particular, recommendations for changes to the role of Moderator for application to the next (2025) term.

#### **2. Why is this issue important?**

Good organizational practice requires a review of these two significant offices, particularly given the changing context of the United Church and the strategic directions it has set.

#### **3. How might the General Council Executive respond to the issue?**

**It is proposed that the Executive of the General Council:**

**pp) direct the General Secretary to revise the “Nominees for Moderator Information Sheet Issued by the General Secretary under The Manual 2021, D.4.1.1:**

- the second provision allowing two Commissioners to nominate a member be replaced with twelve Commissioners, from at least six regional councils;
- the General Council Office undertake background checks of nominees, including but not limited to police records check, Office of Vocation for ministry personnel, and social media presence, before their nomination is finalized and made public;
- where a matter of concern is identified, it be discussed with the nominee-designate and the nominating council or Commissioners;
- nominees be invited in their presentations to the Council to articulate their understandings of the Call and Vision of the denomination;
- in the event that the General Council adopts these recommendations we recommend these be implemented in this next term.

**qq) direct the General Secretary to provide:**

- intentional and strategic three-year deployment plan of the Moderator by the General Council Office, in consultation with regional councils, to maximize exposure to members of the church and to ministry personnel leadership;
- intentional and strategic deployment of the Moderator to global and ecumenical partners;

- that these deployments be laid out, as much as possible, in advance of a term in an intentional and strategic manner;
  - intentional coordination of engagements and commitments by the Moderator's Advisory Committee, the General Secretary's Supervision Committee, and the appropriate General Council Office units;
  - develop an intentional orientation/transition program focused exclusively on meeting senior staff and regional council executive ministers, time with former Moderators, formation of and time with the Advisory Committee, all for discerning how best and strategically the newly elected Moderator can advance the Call and Vision of the church.
- rr) be the primary agent of the Moderator's Advisory Committee, appointing the chair and two of its members, based on their competencies with strategic deployment of the Call and Vision, a former Moderator and one member nominated by the Moderator;
- ss) direct the General Secretary to:
- develop a position description for the role of Moderator;
  - base performance evaluations for both senior officers on clearly articulated outcomes;
  - provide executive coaching, spiritual and emotional counseling, and rigid time management through the terms of Office;
  - establish a practice of exit interviews by appointees of the Executive upon completion of terms of Office;
  - provide coaching and spiritual and emotional counseling during a transition period after completion of terms of Office.
- tt) consider establishing a Deputy/Associate General Secretary role to be responsible for most operational matters, allowing the General Secretary to focus on strategic delivery of the Call and Vision.

#### **4. For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council Executive:**

Are there comments, affirmations, suggestions you would like to make with respect to this proposal?

**Is this proposal in response to assigned work – either from General Council or a previous GCE meeting? Please list proposal / motion numbers.**

- Manual (2021) D. 4.1.6
- 44<sup>th</sup> General Council Proposals:
  - GCE 08 - Review of the Offices of Moderator and General Secretary (2022-04-30- 205)
  - NIC 01 - Recommendation from the National Indigenous Council for the Task Group to Review the Roles of the Moderator and General Secretary

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## **Appendix V**

### **GS 107 AUTHORIZATION TO RELOCATE TO INTERIM LOCATION PRIOR TO 300 BLOOR MOVE**

**Origin: General Secretary**

#### **1. What is the issue?**

In May 2023, the General Council Executive approved the proposal to authorize the General Secretary to sign a 15-year lease, committing The United Church of Canada to move its offices to 300 Bloor Street West. This also included signing sub-leases with the Presbyterian Church in Canada and the national arm of the Anglican Church of Canada. By May 2024, the United, Anglican, and Presbyterian churches had signed leases to share national office space at the redeveloped site of Bloor Street United Church at 300 Bloor St. West in Toronto. This agreement reflects the churches' ongoing commitment to nurturing ecumenical relationships and cooperation, reducing costs, and lessening their carbon footprint.

As construction progresses at 300 Bloor, staff from the three denominations have been working collaboratively on planning our future office and monitoring the project's status. The occupancy date for 300 Bloor is currently estimated to be in August 2026, but the recently approved addition of five floors might further delay this date. The uncertainty around a firm occupancy date poses significant operational risks to the General Council Office, as the current commercial landlord requires advance notice and only offers extensions on a yearly basis.

Since the lease of the current office expires six months before the estimated occupancy date, the General Council Office needs to establish an interim plan to either renew the lease or move to an interim office location. Although the pandemic is behind us, the hybrid work environment remains, and currently, the office space at 3250 Bloor Street West is significantly underutilized.

#### **Extend 3250 Bloor Street Lease to February 2027**

The landlord has offered an option to renew for an additional year with an 8% increase in rent, until February 2027, and requires confirmation from the General Council Office within the next two months. The lease extension is only available on a yearly basis, which means a total occupancy cost of \$1 million even if the General Council Office moves earlier before February 2027. Given the high occupancy cost, underutilized office space, and inflexible renewal terms, the General Council Office has also explored the option to move to an interim location to realize financial savings and mitigate operational risk.

#### **Relocate to Interim Location Before February 2026**

Given that the current office space is significantly underutilized due to the hybrid work environment and considering the financial challenges and the mandate to "live within our means," the General Council Office has explored the option of moving to an interim location with a smaller footprint that reflects current needs as we maintain the day to day operations.

The staff has considered various options, including office spaces available at the Anglican Church of Canada, the Presbyterian Church of Canada, and other short-term commercial offices and storage facilities. Based on the preliminary assessment, the total costs, including extra moving expenses, storage facilities, and the fit-up of new space, will be significantly lower than the projected lease cost, which is in the range of \$1 million, if renewed with the current landlord.

## **2. Why is this issue important?**

A decision is needed as the current lease term for 3250 Bloor Street West expires in February 2026. The landlord has offered an option to renew the lease for an additional year with an 8% increase in rent, extending it until February 2027. The General Council Office needs to provide confirmation within the next two months.

## **3. How might the General Council Executive respond to the issue?**

**The General Council Executive could**

- a) Direct the General Secretary to explore and assess interim office location options and develop a project plan that is operationally and financially viable, and**
- b) Provided that an operational and financially viable space is found, direct the General Secretary to terminate the current office lease at the end of its term on February 28, 2026.**

## **4. For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council Executive:**

The Executive of the General Council has the responsibility of ensuring that there is a General Council Office (Manual D.5.3.4) The Finance Advisory Committee supports the initiative as it generates significant financial savings and aligns with the mandate of 'live within our means'. The committee highlights that the interim office proposal would significantly mitigate the operational risk by aligning the lease end date with the occupancy date of 300 Bloor Street West. However, the committee also notes that the extra move would add pressure to staff and requires thorough planning. Therefore, they request staff to provide a detailed project plan to ensure that the operational interruption of the General Council Office is minimized.