

GENERAL SECRETARY'S ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT (PART C)

Origin: The General Secretary

REPORT ON THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA'S GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

In this section of my report, I will provide an overview and account of the Global Partnership program of the church. Global partnership has been a vital part of the ethos and identity of the United Church in its 100-year history, and in the more than 150 years of its predecessor bodies. It has been a significant driver for the Mission and Service Fund and continues to be a key part of the church's plans for the future. The approach to the program has changed over the years. In 2008, the church reaffirmed partnership as its primary understanding of its relationship with global communities (see *Reviewing Partnership in the Context of Empire*). The last overseas personnel returned home in 2022, and given the challenges of resources, we have reduced the number of funded partners to 79.

Coming out of the review in 2008, the church established the Partner [Council](#) made up of one representative from each of the regions where the church has partners (Asia, Africa, Middle East, Latin America & the Caribbean) plus one person representing a global ecumenical body and one representing a Canadian ecumenical body to accompany the work of the church in its engagement both globally and in Canada.

In November 2023, the Executive of the 44th General Council approved [Radical Accompaniment](#) as the framework for the church's Global Partnership Program. (G69)

Radical Accompaniment directs the church towards decolonizing and deepening relationships with a reduced number of global partners. This is done by implementing specific mechanisms, working in close collaboration with and led by the Partner Council of The United Church of Canada.

The Partner Council named "Radical Accompaniment" as a way of holding in dynamic tension several principles:

- Partnership in God's mission extends beyond financial resource sharing.
- Partnership in God's mission includes the sharing of financial resources as an act of justice and as a tangible sign of solidarity.
- Partnership in God's mission that seeks to decolonize relationships must address questions of power and privilege in decision-making about resource sharing.

The term "Mutual Radical Accompaniment" emphasizes:

- **Mutuality:** The desire to walk together toward transformed relationships.
- **Radical Change:** A fundamental reshaping of partnership engagement to challenge existing models.
- **Accompaniment:** A collaborative approach to transforming partnerships to be more equitable and just.

- The goal to create relationships that are no longer "parent-child" or "donor-receiver" focused but based on mutual respect and collaborative work.

THE CONTEXT OF THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

We have global partnerships with a diverse range of organizations across the continent of Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, as well as global ecumenical bodies, to address injustices in various contexts. The list of partners is found here: [Global Partners](#).

Africa and Middle East

Partners focus on sustainable livelihoods, community access to food, markets, land, and safe water, particularly in the context of land grabbing and resource extraction. They also work for justice and peace. Key areas of focus include:

Denominational and Ecclesial Support: Supporting churches in their broader missions, and advocacy work.

Human Rights: Protecting the rights of women, children, and marginalized communities.

Ecumenical Partnerships: Working with councils of churches and interfaith organizations for peacebuilding and justice.

Community Empowerment: Promoting rural, political, and economic empowerment.

Refugee Support: Providing community development, capacity building, and advocacy for refugees.

Asia

Partners focus on addressing human rights abuses, promoting peacebuilding, advocating for healthy environments in the context of resource extraction, supporting sustainable community development, and addressing food security. They also respond to humanitarian crises. Key areas of focus include:

Interfaith Work: Promoting interfaith understanding and cooperation.

Sustainable Agriculture: Supporting sustainable agriculture and livelihoods.

Women's Empowerment: Providing education, theological training, and advocacy for women.

Anti-Racism: Combating racism and promoting community development.

Indigenous Rights: Advocating for the rights of Indigenous peoples.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Partners work to secure community access to food and sustainable practices, provide education, build and sustain safe water supplies, and promote respect for human rights, including women's and Indigenous peoples' rights, as well as the right to a healthy environment. They also respond to humanitarian crises and advocate for strong development and aid policies. Key areas of focus include:

Theological Education: Providing theological education and training.

Popular Education: Promoting popular education, theological reflection, and community development.

Community Development: Supporting community development, human rights, and ecology.

Indigenous Women's Empowerment: Empowering rural Indigenous women through income-generation projects.

Peace and Reconciliation: Promoting peace, reconciliation, and ecumenism.

Global Ecumenical Partners

The United Church also partners with global ecumenical organizations. These include The World Council of Churches (WCC), ACT Alliance, The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), The World Student Christian Fellowship (WSCF), and Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGFB). These organizations address a wide range of issues, including:

Humanitarian Aid and Development: Providing humanitarian aid, development assistance, and advocacy.

Microfinancing: Providing microfinancing to vulnerable communities.

Communication Rights: Advocating for communication rights and addressing communication needs.

Theology, Justice, and Mission: Supporting theology, justice, church unity, and mission.

Ecumenical Cooperation: Fostering ecumenical cooperation and dialogue.

Student Leadership Development: Empowering and connecting young leaders and promoting positive change.

In summary, the United Church's global partners work on a wide array of issues, all centered around promoting justice, peace, human rights, and sustainable development in their respective contexts, with a focus on empowering marginalized communities and addressing systemic inequalities.

RADICAL ACCOMPANIMENT THROUGH THE SHARING OF RESOURCES

Achievements and Impact

1. What are the most significant achievements of our partnerships over the past three years?

The church has sold the properties it owned in Japan and transferred the proceeds to the partners in Japan to through IBS-Shadan fund. As a result, Asian Rural Institute was able to purchase a bus to support their work. The United Church of Christ in Japan was able to update their office space to improve digital communication and media production. For these, they were truly grateful.

United Church and Canadian ecumenical and civil society resources were pooled to provide the Martin Luther King Memorial Centre in Cuba with critical medical supplies and food assistance for 3800 people, including seniors, people living with disabilities, children, pregnant women, hospital patients, and survivors of climate related flooding. Cuba is currently experiencing its worst economic crisis in over 60 years. As the economic blockade by the USA is tightened, daily life is increasingly difficult due to high inflation, food and transportation shortages, and regular electrical outages. The established partnerships between The United Church of Canada with Cuban ecumenical global partners have facilitated the reinitiation or strengthening of other Canadian church-based agencies' relationships with Cuban partners, increasing support to Cuban partners during this critical time.

In Colombia, partners continue to work to strengthen local leadership for peace, accompany demobilized armed actors and victims of the violence. Over 9 million people have been killed as a result of over 50 years of conflict in Colombia. Of these, over 2 million have been children and 80 percent were civilians. Colombian partners of The United Church of Canada, including the Ecumenical Table for Peace and the Colombian Methodist Church, have actively participated in advancing the commitment to total peace of the current Colombian government, which has been characterized by national, regional, and local dialogue tables between the government and armed actors, with civil society representation serving as key actors. Representatives of the Colombian Methodist Church and the Ecumenical Table have played active roles in regional and local peace dialogue tables in Buenaventura, Cauca, and Antioquia. The Ecumenical Table for Peace participated in national dialogue tables between the government and the National Liberation Army (ELN)—an armed group—as a representative of the “religious” sector. Unfortunately, the total peace process broke down in late 2024.

RADICAL ACCOMPANIMENT: RESPONDING IN TIMES OF CRISIS**Achievements and Impact***1. What are the most significant achievements of our partnership over the past three years?*

From 2023 to March 2025, the Church responded to 30 emergencies, contributing \$1,631,820 in emergency response funds from Mission and Service, emergency response, and appeals fundings. Through relationships with global and ecumenical partners, the Church has responded to major emergencies, including in Gaza, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Philippines, Syria, and Ukraine, as well as lesser-known emergencies that don't receive media coverage. In late 2023 and 2024, the focus was on Palestine and the wider Middle East region because of the escalating violence on Palestine and Lebanon by Israel. The appeal "Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel" focused mainly on advocacy, due to challenges with access and a safe humanitarian corridor. Despite this, our global partner, the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR), continues to respond by providing food, psychosocial support, health care and medicines, including polio vaccinations to children, and non-food items at costly risk to themselves. The United Church of Canada contributed \$276,235 to DSPR's response via ACT Alliance since the start of the bombardment.

The conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo) is a major humanitarian crisis. According to the UN World Food Program, over 700,000 people have been displaced this year, adding to the 4.6 million from North and South Kivu provinces already seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. The loss of life continues to increase to alarming rates. Over 25 million people face acute food insecurity, which will impact women and children the most. Electricity outages are frequent and sustained. The severe lack of access to clean water and sanitation is increasing risks to cholera and incidences of sexual and gender-based violence to vulnerable women and children. In Goma, the Mpox epidemic is another threat, while health centres are facing shortages of medicine and supplies. The high needs and lack of funding are compounded by the suspension of USAID funding, the single largest funding agency globally. With little to no notice to humanitarian agencies, the stoppage has had an immediate impact for humanitarian aid in the DR Congo and surrounding countries receiving displaced people seeking safety. Staff and program cuts have meant that as the number of people seeking help rises, non-governmental organizations won't have the capacity needed to provide life-saving support. As the availability of the internet and electricity allows for, the Global Partnership program staff are in regular contact with global partner Église du Christ au Congo (ECC) through Rev. Dr. Marthe Maleke Kondemo, Secrétaire Général du Département Femmes, Famille et Enfants (DFFE) and colleagues in the emergency response unit SEPRODDIA. ECC is a member of ACT Alliance and is also responding in the ACT appeal [ACT Alliance Appeal – CEA241](#). The United Church contributed \$66,200 in 2023 and 2024 to respond to climate-related disasters and escalating conflict in DR Congo. The United Church also contributed to the DR Congo conflict response through our engagement through the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

2. What stories or case studies illustrate the positive impact of our partnership?

Strengthening Global Partnerships for a Sustainable Future

As the world works toward the realization of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), The United Church of Canada is deepening its commitment to global justice through its framework of Mutual Radical Accompaniment. Through our accompaniment with global partner, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), and through our membership at the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, the United Church is contributing to tangible progress toward these goals. Together, we are addressing immediate hunger and building long-term solutions.

Long-Term Initiatives and Immediate Support

In the districts of Gutu and Bikita, communities face the dual pressures of climate change and acute food insecurity. ZCC works to meet these challenges through a layered approach that bridges immediate relief and long-term sustainability. The *Scaling Up Resilience Project* focuses on addressing systemic barriers to food security, fostering sustainable practices, and empowering local leadership. By equipping communities with tools for climate-smart agriculture, disaster risk management, sustainable livelihoods and gender equality, this project reflects the principles of SDG 2: Zero Hunger, SDG 5: Gender Equality, and SDG 13: Climate Action.

While this work builds towards a long-term solution, we also recognize the urgency of immediate needs. Last year's El Niño weather pattern exacerbated food insecurity, leaving households without adequate supplies during the lean season. In response, The United Church of Canada accompanied ZCC's six-month *Food Assistance Response*. This project is providing critical rations to 2,400 households—12,000 individuals—during this most critical time. Families receive maize meal, beans, and cooking oil, offering stability and sustenance. By addressing immediate hunger while building the skills, infrastructure, and community networks needed for long-term food security, they reflect the interconnectedness of justice, sustainability, and equity. This approach is rooted in the principle that all resources—financial, spiritual, and human—belong to God and are to be shared in ways that prioritize the voices and needs of communities.

RADICAL ACCOMPANIMENT: PEOPLE TO PEOPLE CONNECTIONS

Achievements and Impact

1. *What are the most significant achievements of our partnership over the past three years? What are stories or case studies that illustrate the positive impact of our partnership?*

In September 2024, The United Church of Canada played a lead role with other Canadian civil society organizations in hosting a speaking tour by Ever Hernández, Integrated Water and Sanitation Management Coordinator for the Santa Marta Association for Economic and Social

Development (ADES). The tour initiated at the request of ADES to United Church congregations, universities, and other churches. The Salvadoran Association of Canada grew the network of people in Canada calling for the charges to be dropped against the Santa Marta Water Defenders and raised the profile of the case. As a result of the meetings with key government officials, the Canadian Embassy attended the October trial of the Santa Marta Water Defenders in which they were found innocent. The Canadian government continues to be committed to attend court hearings, including the upcoming politically motivated retrial of the defenders.

From October to December 2024, the United Church supported Tarek Al-Zoughbi, Youth Director with Wi'am: Palestinian Conflict Transformation Centre (in Bethlehem, Palestine) as the Ann Duncan Gray Visiting Scholar, hosted by Emmanuel College. In addition to contributing to the church's November 5, 2024 webinar on Challenging Anti-Palestinian Racism in the Church and in Canada, Tarek contributed to content for the church's advocacy, education and Advent resources, reflecting in an interview on his life and experiences as a Palestinian Christian from Bethlehem. His presence enabled his in-person participation in the Annual Gathering of the United Network for Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel (UNJPPI), enriching the conversations and workshops through the leadership he provided and contributions he made.

RADICAL ACCOMPANIMENT: PUBLIC WITNESS

Achievements and Impact

1. What are some of the most significant achievements of our partnership over the past three years?

The Moderator also participated in an ecumenical [Gaza Ceasefire Pilgrimage](#) to Parliament Hill in Ottawa in May 2024. The United Church participated in the planning, organizing, and implementation of this ecumenical solidarity initiative, with United Church people participating in local Gaza Ceasefire Pilgrimages across the country, many of which took place during Lent of 2023. The mobilization in this effort carried through 2024 into early January 2025 through Take Actions, rallies and protests across the country in solidarity with civil society organizations that pressured the Canadian Government to issue its own statement calling for a ceasefire in July 2024 in a [joint statement](#) with leaders of Australia and New Zealand.

With the commitment to a decolonizing approach to public witness, and to living out bold discipleship and daring justice with Palestinian partners, on October 19, 2024, The United Church of Canada joined in the global movement to challenge genocide against Palestinians and Israeli Apartheid, using the tools of boycott, divestment and sanctions. This prophetic and costly solidarity is led, resourced, and facilitated by Church in Mission staff, working with United Church solidarity networks like United Network for Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel (UNJPPI), ecumenical partners like Canadian Friends of Sabeel (CFOS) and Palestinian solidarity civil society organizations like Independent Jewish Voices Canada. The Just Peace Task Group consulted extensively with Palestinian and Israeli partners and human rights and solidarity

groups from 2018 to 2022. It also consulted with pro-Israel groups among the Canadian Jewish community. This led the Just Peace Task Group to recommend applying a specific set of principles to the church's response to partners' calls for costly solidarity in their 2021 Report to GC43: [In Support of a Just Peace in Palestine and Israel: A Call to Costly Solidarity](#). The Theology, Inter-Church and Interfaith Committee (TICIF) further refined these into the Justice Principles which were [approved for adoption by GC44 in October 2024](#). Implementing these principles has enabled the church to speak prophetically and in a more timely way in response to Palestinian and Israeli partners' calls for solidarity against the genocide of Palestinians in Gaza by the Israeli government, and ongoing apartheid practices towards Palestinians in Israel and in the illegally-annexed Occupied Palestinian Territories of East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

Protection and Accompaniment of Environmental and Human Rights Defenders in Latin America

Latin America remains one of the most dangerous places for human rights and environmental defenders in the world. In the context of rising authoritarianism, decreasing space for civil society, and threats to democracy regionally, partners in El Salvador, Colombia and other partner countries are facing death threats, arbitrary detention, threats to their families and the shutting down of their organizations for their witness to the promise of abundant life, the defense of the most vulnerable, and their ethnic and racial identity. Working alongside partners in Latin America, the United Church has contributed to the safety and security of partners, environmental and human rights defenders, and partner organizations, and in this way contributed to the defense of democratic spaces for civil society voices in increasingly authoritarian and violent contexts. It has:

- Advocated for the release from arbitrary detention of environmental defenders, such as the Santa Marta Water Defenders, with local partners and international civil society networks. The Santa Marta Water Defenders were released from life-threatening jail conditions to house detention.
- Decreased threat levels to partners through online and diplomatic advocacy, public mobilization, and awareness-raising.
- Provided resources and connections for the implementation of safety plans when requested by partners.

The United Church of Canada played a pivotal role in convening Canadian ecumenical and civil society organizations to form the Canada-Cuba Solidarity Network. This amplified Cuban partner calls to advocate to the Canadian government for increased humanitarian assistance, and for the easing of USA sanctions against Cuba. As a result of this advocacy, the government of Canada has been among the first countries at critical points to provide humanitarian assistance for Cuba, although so much more is needed. For example, the Canadian government was among the first to respond to an appeal to provide funding for milk powder for Cuban children in March 2024 and again in November 2024 in the face of Hurricanes Oscar and Rafael.

2024's Good News from the Strategic Plan

What the United Church has been asking for has been supported by Parliament. A comprehensive parliamentary motion was introduced and—despite being watered down—the motion calling for a lasting ceasefire and an end of arms exports to Israel received majority support in the House of Commons. The Global Partner Coordinator liaised in writing with the Member of Parliament who introduced the motion and shared updates with the General Council Office and United Church Champions.

2. What stories or case studies illustrate the positive impact of global partnership?

The United Church is standing in solidarity with the National Council of Churches in Korea as they strive for peace in the Korean peninsula. The United Church supported the Korea Peace Appeal, a global campaign which brought together the peace-making efforts of 370 Korean civil society organizations and 74 international partner organizations to gather over 170,000 signatures on its online petition. United Church members contributed nearly 3,000 signatures. The collected signatures were delivered in October 2023 at the United Nations headquarters in New York to the governments of North and South Korea, the USA, China, and to United Nations leaders.

The United Church of Canada and solidarity partner the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines accompanied Neri Colmenares, a lawyer, human rights activist, and former member of the House of Representatives of the Philippines, in meetings with Canadian MPs and GAC staff persons in October 2024. These meetings were focused on highlighting concerns on Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy, particularly about the Memorandum of Understanding on Defence Cooperation that Canada was about to sign with the Philippines, and its implications on human rights protections.

RADICAL ACCOMPANIMENT: SOLIDARITY THROUGH VISITS AND JOINT PROGRAM PLANNING**Achievements and Impact***1. What are some of the most significant achievements of global partnerships over the past three years?*

In February 2023, accompanied by the United Church and the Partner Council, partners in the Philippines organized the [“Rated-R” Consultation](#) at Union Theological Seminary. It brought 38 people together to share stories and plan new steps to overcome religious-based homophobia and transphobia. Participants were LGBTQIA+ people and allies from The United Church of Canada and partners in the Philippines, India, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Indonesia. That “R” was not a movie classification. Organizers intended it to stand for “radical,” and in the still-evolving church context of Asia, where Christians are a minority in almost all countries, it was. One of the organizers, Lizette Tapia-Raquel of Union Theological Seminary in the Philippines, said, “We seek to radicalize our understanding of religion, to spark revolutions in our diverse contexts and communities toward the celebration of diversity, which has as a common symbol: the rainbow.”

This space is a reminder that we have a God that is committed to us. A God who continues to affirm that the work of love and healing is not done in the world. We have a God that continues to invite us into the wideness of God's love. It is in this love that we act together in great boldness.

2. What stories or case studies illustrate the positive impact of our partnership?

The United Church is grateful for its long-standing partnership with the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) and their appreciation of the late Very Rev. Lois Wilson's incredible act of solidarity and witness. They still remember and appreciate the United Church for its radical accompaniment. In 2024, in the visit to PROK's General Assembly meeting, they presented the United Church with a gift of \$10,000 USD to purchase and install a stained-glass window for our new ecumenical office building on Bloor Street in Toronto.

In May 2024, the Middle East Global Partnership Program Coordinator co-led a solidarity visit to partners in the occupied West Bank together with four Presbyterian Church in Canada colleagues. The importance of partnership and the depth of relationship was palpable, expressed in being together at that moment in time, as Palestinian siblings in Gaza steadfastly stood against a genocide, while their siblings in the occupied West Bank, and globally, witnessed the genocide of their people on social media and live television.

Armenian youth welcomed our solidarity through critical presence, as they lead the struggle to resist the theft of Armenian church properties in East Jerusalem by illegal settlers. They provide a protective presence 24 hours a day, seven days a week, year-round. "Losing this land will put under existential threat the Christian community in Jerusalem," a young leader named Hagop stated "The world needs to understand the very real and present danger of Israel's continued annexation." Palestinian land has been a target since 1948. There are only 4,000 Indigenous Palestinian Christians in the Old City and 8,000 in all Jerusalem. -----

As we navigate a time of rapid change, inequality, and collective harm to the Earth, the framework of Mutual Radical Accompaniment seeks to deepen relationships with global partners in a decolonized and equitable manner. Aligned with the United Church's Strategic Plan (2023–2025), Mutual Radical Accompaniment promotes Bold Discipleship, Daring Justice, and Deep Spirituality in global partnerships.

The Future of the United Church's Global Partnership Program

With changing global contexts, the competition for resources, and the commitment to work at decolonizing our approach, we are committed to ensuring that we have a sustainable, robust and vibrant program going forward. We know that it will look different from the past 100 years, and we know that the people of the United Church and the staff of the church have made significant contributions to the global church. I have asked staff to work with elected members and the Partner Council to begin to develop the future design of a Global Partnership Program that honours the past, builds on its strengths, and anticipates new global realities. I will be reporting at a future meeting of the General Council on its design as it takes shape.