

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

**Strategic Plan 2023–2025**

**Executive Summary  
2023 Operational Plan Report  
Quarters 1 and 2 (January to June)**



## Introduction

*A Call, Vision, and Plan will guide us as we strive to boldly embody the Christian story in this time, filled with certainty of resurrection and hope for new life.*

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*“I love this bold statement... The United Church could be rebuilt upon this statement.” –A grassroots response to the Call*

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The General Council Office developed an operational plan that would reflect the Call and Vision adopted by the General Council in October 2021 and implement the strategic objectives confirmed by the General Council Executive in November 2021. This required not just the creation of content, but the development of systems and processes of detailed planning, reporting, and evaluation, and clarification of lines of accountability. The operational plan uses objectives and key results (OKRs) as the organizing framework.


In alignment with six strategic objectives, staff developed 26 initiatives, broken down into 99 activity streams. 40 of those streams were identified as priority. 13 of those activities were identified to begin only in 2024. Each 2023 activity has an activity lead, with progress tracked monthly, and reports issued quarterly related to key results. The cumulative key results for that strategic objective are a measure of overall objective progress towards the 3-year goal.

**Call**

**Deep Spirituality**  
**Bold Discipleship**  
**Daring Justice**

**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.

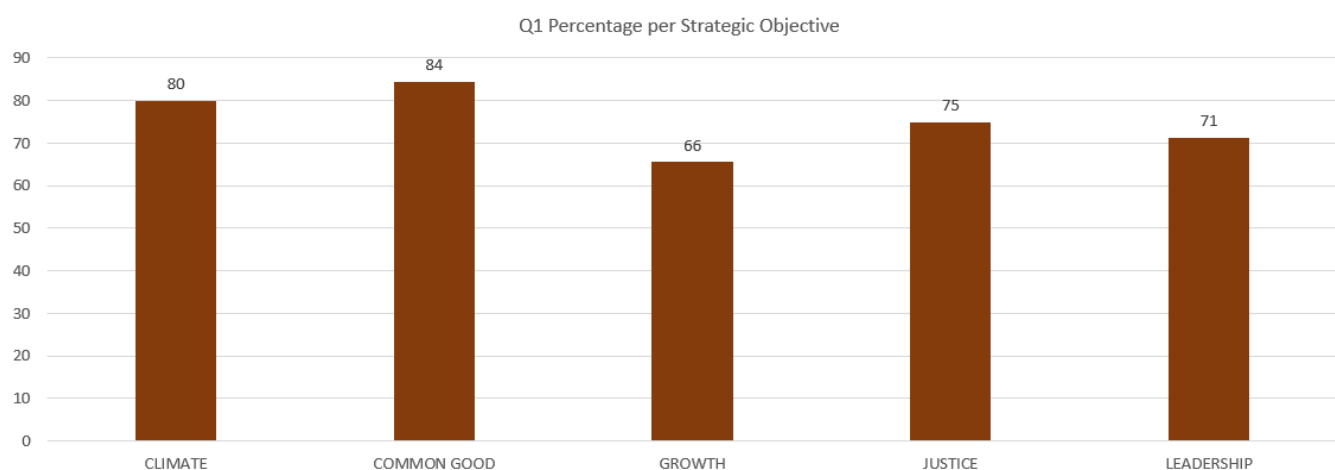


## Q1 and 2: Progress towards Planned Key Results

Averages for each strategic objective area and overall average is calculated from all activated activity streams. Indigenous Pathways is reporting in a narrative manner.

### Quarter 1

**76% is average result for Q1**  
**Progress varies from 84% in Common Good to 66% in Growth**



*The first quarter results of the operational plan showed a strong start, not only in progress on the objectives but significant shifts in ways of working towards greater transparency and accountability.*

Staff are working collaboratively not only in activity teams, or larger strategic objective groups, but also across the operational plan as synergies become clearer. Reporting has begun to enable support and trouble-shooting by accountable leaders, including identifying areas of work that might be combined or moved into 2024.

The vast majority of 2023 activities have been activated. For those that have not, the key challenge is delays in hiring. We overestimated the collective capacity to get new roles developed, posted, and hired in the first quarter. We are working diligently on this and will be able to activate some of the remaining areas of work in the second quarter as we are able to successfully fill positions.

**Of the activated areas, over 30% of the activities have fully met their planned key results for the quarter, with the overall average of 76%.** In the priority area of

**Growth**, work has begun in each of the three streams: *Renew* existing communities of faith; *Create* 100 new communities of faith; *Invite* through galvanizing common identity and reaching out beyond existing members.

With a newly hired Communications Director and a Director of Growth, we should be able better advance planned initiatives. Posting of planned Growth Animators will happen shortly. EDGE resources and capacities are being aligned to the renew objectives, and impressive work has been done to recruit leadership for migrant community of faith development, including holding a first planning gathering. While developing the outreach campaign area has not yet begun, Call and Vision animation across the church is happening through aligning new publishing house books, and developing Call and Vision banners, videos, posters, worship, inspirational and educational materials.

In **Justice**, the team held a successful Indigenous and racialized youth retreat and convened the second global regional consultation "Asian Consultation on Gender and LGBTQ+ Inclusion," which took place in Manila, Philippines, in mid-February. In the **Leadership objective**, the equity, diversity, and anti-oppression training was rolled out and well received by committee chairs. A few challenges have arisen around the Admission matching program, but the team is focused on reducing barriers for communities of faith to participate. And a new Human Resources Information System (HRIS) is a bit delayed, but challenges are being addressed.

In **Common Good**, most of the objectives are in an information gathering or review process to inform a path forward. The exception would be the self-insurance program which is in full operational mode and the fundraising initiative which has launched a couple of campaigns during the fourth quarter. In **Climate**, the first quarter was extremely busy with staff planning for various church Earth Week events and promoting [For the Love of Creation](#) activities to regions, congregations and local networks.

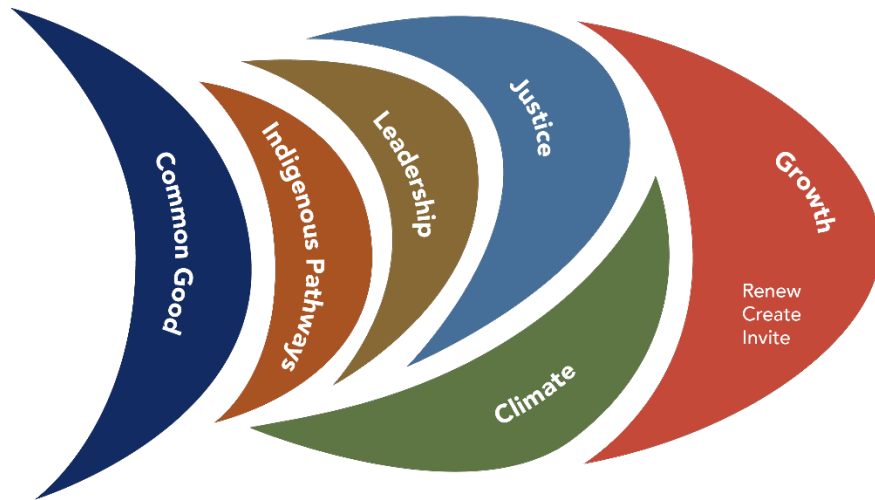
As we begin to see clearly our capacity for quarterly progress, we will be able to improve our planning, staying aspirational but with a healthy dose of realism. One of the most significant factors in failing to meet key result is difficulties for activity leads and team members in letting go of previous work. Workload tools have been developed and Executive Ministers and Managers are continuing to support staff in better focusing on the plan.

With operational plan implementation, there is huge transition in ways of working, through regularizing reporting, and different processes for collaboration. The cross-unit nature of this plan requires changed accountability flows. Overall, we are seeing improvements in breaking down silos and growing alignment. This has required the development of training resources. As we continue to make this transition, including learning and adjusting, we should see more and more capacity to both develop and implement stronger and stronger results.

### **Quarter 1: Indigenous Pathways**

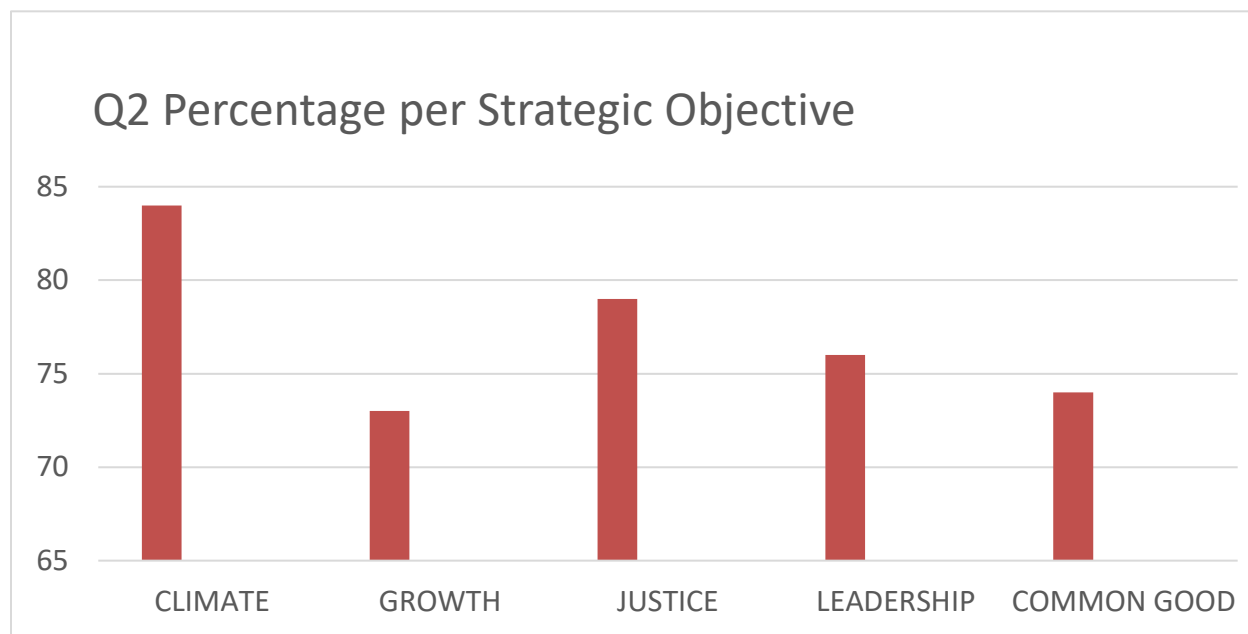
We are stepping further on the concentrated work and planning on our Indigenous Pathway, with a priority on the structure of the Indigenous United Church. The National Indigenous Council (NIC) and the National Indigenous Elders Council (NIEC) have met in their planned

monthly meetings this first quarter of 2023 focusing on the National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering (NISG) 2023. Part of our Indigenous Pathway is to focus on our Indigenous Spirituality. In order for our leadership from NIC and NIEC to start this dialogue, we look to our Sacred Bundle held by our bundle keeper till the next NISG in July 2023 in Edmonton, Alberta. The NIC has been working on the structure recommendations and best appointment processes for a newly appointed National Indigenous Council that will be named at the National Indigenous Spiritual gathering. These are first steps to the process of the Indigenous Pathways and the continuous work that the Indigenous church look forward to creating and living in.



## Quarter 2

**77% is average result for Q2**  
**Progress varies between 84% in Climate to 73% in Growth**



*The Q2 results of the operational plan show consistency with Q1 in making solid progress on the strategic objectives.*

This quarter continues the pattern of determined progress towards key results. While the hard work of change management continues, particularly strengthening focus, project management, and accountabilities, reporting has assisted strategic objective leaders with identifying needed areas of staff support. Reports have also aided in revising key results as required to reflect experience and learning. Six months into this first operational plan streamlining possibilities are becoming clear, with the goal of a smaller number of results-oriented, strategically-aligned, robust activities in 2024.

**Approximately 35% of the activities have fully met their planned key results for this quarter with 100% completion. When we look at all the activities, the average completion of key results in activated areas is 77% (similar to 76% in Q1).**

The strongest area continues to be the **Climate** objective, with sustained action both on our denominational carbon emissions and dedicated climate justice education and advocacy including the release of the [church's second Sustainability Report](#). The [Faithful Footprints](#) program has now reached over 400 communities of faith and will exceed the goal of 500 by 2025, aiming for 1000 by 2030.

This quarter shows improvement in the priority initiative of **Growth**, while still experiencing some delay. As of the end Q2, two of the six Growth Animators have been hired covering the Prairies and the Atlantic regions, while hiring for the remaining four should be done by end of August. In the *Renew* stream, the team continue work on an inventory of key resources and tools available to support renewal, now slated for completion in the fall. The EDGE website has been integrated into the main united-church.ca website, programming is being aligned, staff roles clarified and a new coaching model is being refined to work within the new eco-system of regionally deployed Growth Animators and existing regional staff.

In the *Create* stream of **Growth**, led by Emo Yango, we defined the role of a part time emerging church lead, and hired our first leader dedicated to nurturing a community of faith among Hong Kong immigrants. Three other leads are expected to begin in the fall with three other communities in development, and potentially in need of church leads in 2024. In the intercultural area, two new communities of faith are in process, one reflecting queer folks from Hong Kong and another of Indigenous and racialized young people (18-25). The hiring of a permanent Responsible, Rev. Emmanuel Tehindrazanarivelo, brings focus to emerging francophone communities of faith. Overall, close to a dozen new communities of faith are in some kind of formation process.

Within the context of *Invite*, and linked to advancing ownership of the Call and Vision, at least five spring regional meetings and gatherings included substantive focus on this renewed direction or strategic planning. Regional ownership of the Call and Vision is becoming stronger, with more attention now needed to congregational and individual connection. *MonCredo.org* has had a soft launch to impressive early results and is developing a marketing strategy, including a Montreal launch event, for the fall. A logo has been developed for the Centennial that integrates 100 years, the Call and the Crest.

Despite the high complexity of the projects of **Common Good**, and staff capacity challenges, progress is still being made, including the completion of a critical grants review. An important review of continuing education programming happened in **Leadership**, foundational for evidence-based program development, as well as significant progress on [Leadership Counts](#) and key pilot initiatives.

Critical to this period was also significant advance on the [Moderator's Flourishing Project](#) with intersecting planned initiatives—book club, corporate and public workshops, congregational and theological gatherings, and a leadership program--that help advance our strategies in **Justice, Leadership, Climate, and Growth**.

Seven 2023 activities are still awaiting activation. This is largely due to challenges in hiring for new positions, related to an under-resourced human resources department. We have been able to secure a number of key positions in this quarter, including a key role in 2S and LGBTQIA+ Global Advocacy which will significantly strengthen work on the Justice objective. All remaining positions—related to Growth and Government Relations--are in progress with hiring decisions likely by the end of Q3.

This quarter included the work of making key changes to General Council Units to ensure  
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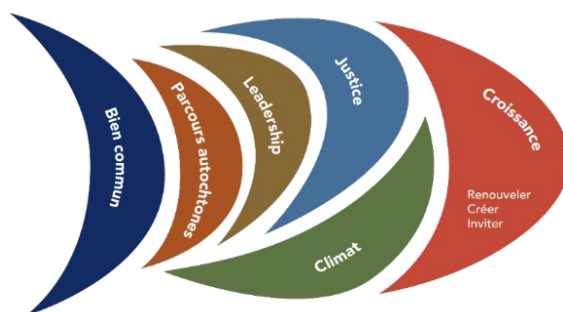
stronger alignment with the strategic plan. While this will show great benefit in the subsequent quarters, it also increased the load on human resources as transitions were managed.

We continue to make progress in the ongoing work of operational plan implementation, with training supporting huge changes in ways of working and overall culture. Leaving behind activities not prioritized in the strategic plan, while increased efficiency in operational work, continues to be an area of focus and challenge. Looking towards 2024, we are further integrating budgeting and operational planning, as well as aligning performance management strategies to our overall objectives.

### **Indigenous Pathways**

As we continue our journey together, we look forward to implementing our Indigenous Pathway within the Strategic Plan. The focus is on the structure of the Indigenous church and what will be the outcome of the GS01 Remit vote March 2024. The National Spiritual Gathering happens in July 27-30, 2023 in Edmonton. The goal is to appoint the new National Indigenous Council (NIC) and add new National Indigenous Elders Council members. We also look at the important work that needs to happen within the Indigenous United Church and our communities, like addressing the national state of emergency of high number of deaths. Other items that affect our identification of our Indigenous spirituality and how we continue to uplift this mandate in the United Church have been placed in our dialogue as well. We have lifted our Sacred Bundle and continue to recognize this piece of our placement and identity as Indigenous Nations and communities of faith to lead us in our place in the United Church. The newly appointed NIC will meet in September to start our work for the next three years and will look forward to meet the GCE in November to engage our equitable relationship and leadership perspectives.

*The National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering was held following the conclusion of this reporting period. However, information on that gathering is accessible [here](#).*





## **Appendix: Strategic Objectives approved by General Council Executive**

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

**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. Accountable: Éric Hébert-Daly and Jennifer Henry. As of August 8, this became Cameron Fraser.

### **Embolden Justice: Collaborating to Mend Church and World**

**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. Accountable: Japhet Ndhlovu

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

**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. Accountable: Jennifer Janzen-Ball

### **Nurture the Common Good: Equity and Sustainability in Resources**

**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. Accountable: Sarah Charters

### **Deepen Integrity: Living Climate Commitments**

**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. Accountable: Erik Mathiesen

### **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. Accountable: Murray Pruden

**For overall information about the planning process—strategic or operational—please contact: [planning@united-church.ca](mailto:planning@united-church.ca)**