

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA
MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL
MINUTES
Friday, November 14 to Saturday, November 15, 2025

The 45th Executive of the General Council of The United Church of Canada met from Friday, November 14, to Saturday, November 15, 2025. Moderator, Kimberly Heath, presided.

Voting Members: Nia Bentayen, Michael Blair, M Chorney, Catherine Glover, Wilson Gonesé, Luke Haisa, Kimberly Heath, Carmen Lansdowne, David Leyton-Brown, Kathleen (Kit) Loewen, Thea Sheridan-Jonah, Hillary Van Spronsen, Deepak Nitesh Yohan

Corresponding: Sarah Charters, Cameron Fraser, Adele Haliday, Alan Hall, Springwater Hester-Meawassige, Harry Li, Lori-Ann Livingston, Tyler Lodge, Jennifer Janzen-Ball, Jennifer Henry, Diane Matheson-Jimenez, Japhet Ndhlovu, Luc Noubissi, Carol Owegi, Cheryl-Ann Stadelbauer-Sampa, Nicole Treksler

Guests: Anne Soh, John Prezioso, Shona Fulcher

Regrets: Michael Caveney, Alcris Limongi, Katherine Brittain, Eric Hebert-Daly, Peter Hartmans

Welcome

The Moderator, Kimberly Heath, and General Secretary, Michael Blair, welcomed those gathered for this meeting of the Executive. The Moderator invited the Executive to notice the tensions when one piece of work could have an impact on another.

Constituting the Meeting

The Moderator constituted the meeting in French and English.

"Au nom de Notre Seigneur, Jésus-Christ, seul chef souverain de l'Église, et par l'autorité qui m'a été conférée par le quarante-cinquième Conseil général, I hereby declare this meeting of the Executive of the General Council to be in session for the work that may properly be brought before it, to the glory of God."

Worship

The Moderator Kimberly led worship and read from Psalm 46. She spoke of new life, stepping into God's promises even in chaos, and invited Hillary Van Spronsen to open in prayer.

Territory Acknowledgement and Equity Aspirations

The Moderator invited The Sheridan-Jonah to give a Territory Acknowledgment and invited those present to indicate in the chat the lands on which they were situated for this meeting. In the context of giving the Territory Acknowledgement, Thea spoke to her frustration with current

Approved motion 2025-02-20-041

government policies, which are ignoring and suppressing Indigenous voices, and invited us to reflect on how these policies are being deployed against Indigenous people, and how we can listen to and engage with Indigenous voices. Thea also gave the equity aspirations, noting Luc and Adele are part of the Equity Support Team and that everyone is responsible for making sure this was a place where people felt free to share ideas while feeling supported and safe.

Agenda Overview and Regrets

The Moderator thanked Thea for her words and invited Kit Loewen, Chair of the Governance Committee, to preview the agenda as well as any regrets for the day.

GS08 Opening Procedural and Consent

The Moderator invited the General Secretary to introduce GS08 Opening Procedural and Consent.

Motion: Michael Blair/ Luke Haisa

2025-11-14-019

That the General Council Executive:

1. Approve the minutes of the General Council Executive meeting held September 25-28, 2025.
2. Name Tyler Lodge as Recording Secretary.
3. Receive for information any correspondence to the General Council Executive received since the last meeting of the Executive (sent to the Executive by email and found online).
4. Adopt the agenda for this meeting as circulated, with any changes which may be necessary as the meeting evolves, to be made on the recommendation of the Business Committee.
5. Name as the Business Committee: the Moderator, General Secretary, Chair, Governance Committee, Senior Governance Support Lead and Administrative Assistant Governance Support.
6. Name as corresponding members to this meeting any General Council Officers, Executive Ministers, and Regional Council Executive Ministers who are present; anyone else who may be named by the General Secretary to serve as resource persons to the General Council Executive.
7. Receive for information the following reports:
 - Moderator's Accountability Report
 - General Secretary's Accountability Report
 - Operational Plan Report – Third Quarter 2025

- Pension Board Accountability Report
- Partner Council Report to GCE 2022-2025
- Report from the Pilgrimage of Learning Delegates

8. Approve the following proposals:

- GS15 Clarifying Status and Accountabilities of Ministry Personnel Appointed
- GS19 Amendments to section D.4.1.3
- GS20 Amendments to section D.4.2.3
- GS22 Amendments to section D.4.6.2
- GS23 Amendments to section D.5.3.3 and D.5.3.4
- GS24 Amendments to section I.2.1.1 and 1.2.1.4
- GS25 Amendments to section I.3.1.4-I.3.1.6
- GS26 Amendments to sections D.5.3.4-D.5.3.7
- GS29 Amendments to section D.5.3.2
- NOM03 Recommendations for Appointment

9. Affirm the recommendations in the following Way Forward proposals from General Council 45

- WF36: WOW01 Election of Adherents to Governing Bodies of Communities of Faith
- WF40: HF02 Policy That Meets a Variety of Changes in Communities of Faith

Carried

GS30 Approving the Question for Remit: Membership of Regional Councils

The Moderator invited the General Secretary to introduce GS30 Approving the Question for Remit: Membership of Regional Councils. The General Secretary gave some background to the proposal, noting the work has been ongoing for some time. The 44th General Council supported a change to give people serving as a designated lay minister at the time of their retirement membership in the regional council where they served. A proposal was brought to the last annual meeting of the 44th General Council, and after that, a proposal to authorize a category 2 remit to effect this change was approved by the 45th General Council.

Motion: Michael Blair/ Wilson Gonese

2025-11-14-020

That the Executive of the General Council approve the question for the Category 2 remit as approved by the 45th General Council.

The Question:

Does the Regional Council agree that the Basis of Union be amended to include the following?

6.2 Membership. The Regional Council is composed of:

6.2.3 lay members elected by the Community of Faith;

Approved motion 2025-02-20-041

6.2.4 additional lay members elected by the Regional Council; the total number not to exceed 10 percent of the number of lay members elected under section 6.2.3; and

6.2.5 lay members who at the time of their retirement were designated lay ministers within the bounds of the Regional Council

Carried

Time with the Moderator

At this time, the former Moderator, The Very Rev. Carmen Lansdowne, took the chair, and the Moderator addressed the Executive. The Moderator spoke about connecting with people and churches. She noted how thankful she is for the deep faithfulness of United Church members and that she is looking forward to connecting with more people in the new year, specifically with francophone communities. She spoke to this season of change for her, and feelings of disorientation, as she moves into this new role, and noted her excitement for the new accountability committee for the Moderator and General Secretary. The former Moderator handed the chair back to the Moderator.

KAIROS

The Moderator invited the General Secretary to introduce Shona Fulcher, Director of Operations, at KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives. The General Secretary noted that as The United Church of Canada facilitates KAIROS' financial operations, the church consequently has an obligation under charity law to be aware of the work and endorse the operations of KAIROS. KAIROS is an ecumenical justice coalition, and the United Church participates on its board.

Shona Fulcher outlined the four pillars of the work of KAIROS; Indigenous Programs, Gender Justice, Ecological Justice, and Migrant Justice. There were questions from the Executive. The Moderator thanked Shona for her time and blessed KAIROS as they continue to do their work.

Motion: Hillary Van Spronsen/ Carmen Lansdowne

2025-11-14-021

That the Executive of the General Council move to an *in camera* session to discuss a legal matter. Harry Li, Executive Officer, Finance, Cheryl-Ann Stadelbauer-Sampa, Senior Governance Support Lead, and Nicole Treksler, General Council Legal Counsel, were invited to attend.

Carried

Motion: Catherine Glover / David Leyton Brown

2025-11-14-022

That the Executive of the General Council move out of an *in camera* session.

Carried

Pension Board Accountability Report

The Moderator welcomed the Executive and senior staff back from lunch and reminded them that during the orientation in September, some of the time was devoted to learning about their role with the pension board. She then introduced the Chair of the pension board, Anne Soh, and John Prezioso, Principal, Prescient Compensation Law to present the Pension Board Accountability Report. She also noted Alan Hall, Executive Officer, Shared Services as the senior staff member responsible for this work, and Thea Sheridan-Jonah and Kit Loewen both serve on the pension board.

Anne and John highlighted various aspects of the accountability report and presented both the Terms of Reference for the Executive in its role as the Plan Administrator, and the Pension Plan Funding Policy.

GS10 Terms of Reference for Executive of the General Council in its role as Plan Administrator

Motion: Michael Blair/ Kit Loewen

2025-11-14-023

That the Executive of the General Council approve the Terms of Reference for the Executive of the General Council in its role as the Administrator of The Pension Plan of The United Church of Canada.

Carried

GS09 The Pension Plan of The United Church of Canada Funding Policy

Motion: Michael Blair/ Wilson Gonese

2025-11-14-024

That the Executive of the General Council approve the updated Funding Policy: GS09a Pension Plan Funding Policy.

Carried

Equity Reflections

The Moderator invited Luc Noubissi from the Equity Support Team to offer the equity reflections for the meeting. Luc reminded the Executive of the Equity Aspirations, and reflected on ensuring all voices are heard, and asked the Executive to reflect on the question of who bears the cost of its choices. He noted that there was genuine listening and respect in the meeting today, and that is something that should be celebrated.

Review of Agenda

The Moderator invited Kit Loewen, Chair of the Governance Committee to review the agenda for the next day.

Closing

The Moderator thanked everyone for their hard work during the day's meeting, and the closed the meeting.

Saturday, November 15, 2025

Worship

The Moderator welcomed the Executive and senior staff back for the second day of the meeting and invited Sarah Charters, Executive Officer, Philanthropy and the President of the United Church of Canada Foundation to lead the Executive in worship with a Mission and Service focus. Sarah included an *in memoriam* as part of this worship where the Executive gave time to honour and remember those who have died over the past year. Sarah also noted the current pace of Mission and Service giving, as well as upcoming campaigns.

GS27 GCE Approval of Strategic Direction and Objective

The Moderator invited the General Secretary to introduce GS27 GCE Approval of Strategic Direction and Objective. The General Secretary noted that this is a significant piece of work that will provide a framework to keep the management team accountable to the Executive. The General Secretary, then invited Jennifer Henry, Executive Minister, Organizational Development and Strategy, and Cameron Fraser, Director of Growth and Ministry Development, to frame GS27 GCE Approval of Strategic Direction and Objective.

Jennifer noted that the proposal is asking for approval for the strategic direction; to the statement that was brought before the Executive in September. The proposal is also looking for assent to objectives in the strategic pillars.

There was discussion in the Executive around maintaining the identity of The United Church of Canada, as well as the budget and staff capacity. The General Secretary and staff spoke to our historic identity as an ecumenical and uniting church, and the General Secretary reminded the Executive of WF33: GCE04 Funding Strategic Growth Initiatives that was passed at the 45th General Council, which authorizes up to 10% of Mission and Service giving over the triennium to fund the Growth initiative.

Motion: Michael Blair/ David Leyton-Brown

2025-11-14-025

That the General Council Executive approve:

- a. the Toward 2035 Strategic Direction.
- b. three-year strategic objectives related to Strengthen Invitation, Invigorating Leadership, and Emboldening Justice.

That the General Council Executive direct the General Secretary to make annual plans for 2026-2028 to implement the direction and objectives, aligning staff and financial resources.

Carried

GS16 Approval of the Funding Policy for the Annuity Program

The Moderator invited the General Secretary to introduce Harry Li and GS16 Approval of the Funding Policy for the Annuity Program. Harry gave an overview of the annuity program and the proposed policy. The General Secretary noted part of the strategy to manage deficit in the

Approved motion 2025-02-20-041

budget was the possibility of using funding from the annuity program. Harry Li introduced context to the Annuity Program, and explained the objectives, risk, and valuations. There were a few clarifying questions that Harry answered.

Motion: Michael Blair/ Kit Loewen**2025-11-14-026**

That the General Council Executive approve the Funding Policy for the Gift Annuity Fund as enclosed in the appendix (GS16a Approval of the Funding Policy for the Annuity Program).

Carried**GS17 Approval to utilize the Annuity Fund Surplus for Operating Budget**

The Moderator invited the General Secretary to introduce Harry Li and GS17 Approval to utilize the Annuity Fund Surplus for Operating Budget. Harry gave an overview and presented options for the funding surplus to the Executive. Harry outlined risk and obligation.

There were questions about the sufficiency of the reserve amount, and our obligations, both moral and financial. There were also comments made about reporting back to the Executive annually and during the conversation around this proposal. This point was added to the proposal before the General Secretary moved it.

Motion: Michael Blair/ Luke Haisa**2025-11-14-027**

That the Executive of the General Council

- a. approve the transfer of \$500,000 per year during the 2026-2028 Triennial Budget Cycle from the Annuity Fund to the Operating Budget. For greater clarity, the total transfer amounts to \$1.5 million over the three-year period.
- b. direct the General Secretary to provide annual reporting to the General Council Executive regarding the status of the fund.

Carried**GS18 Approval of 2026-2028 Triennial Operating Budget**

The Moderator invited the General Secretary to introduce Harry Li and GS18 Approval of 2026-2028 Triennial Operating Budget. Harry gave insight into this proposal and advised the Executive that the budget is a tool to help the leadership team use resources well and can be adjusted timely and strategically. Once this budget is approved, the staff team uses it as guidance to cascade into unit budgets. The budget table defines the principles, sets limits on total spending, and establishes assumptions.

Motion: Michael Blair/ Carmen Lansdowne

2025-11-14-028

That the General Council Executive approve the 2026-2028 Triennial Operating Budget as presented, which has been developed in accordance with the budget principles and assumptions approved at the September GCE meeting.

It is further noted that this approved budget does not include financial provisions for proposals that were introduced and supported in the course of the GC45 meeting. The costs and funding requirements associated with those proposals will be assessed and determined by the General Secretary.

Carried

**GS13 Anti-Racism Common Table – Revised Terms of Reference and GS14 Equity and Anti-
Oppression Circle**

The Moderator invited the General Secretary to introduce GS13 Anti-Racism Common Table – Revised Terms of Reference, and GS14 Equity and Anti-Oppression Circle. The General Secretary noted that in 2020 The United Church committed itself to becoming an anti-racist denomination, and as part of this process the United Church established a staff position as the lead to help the church into becoming an anti-racist denomination. As work has grown, the church has expanded to engaging in equity. The General Secretary invited Adele Halliday, Anti-Racism and Equity Lead, to present GS13 Anti-Racism Common Table – Revised Terms of Reference, and GS14 Equity and Anti-Oppression Circle.

Adele presented some background information to the two proposals. She noted that the common table is a previously existing group. The proposal before the Executive includes updated Terms of Reference, which is aligned with Toward 2035, and makes the common table accountable to the Executive. The Equity and Anti-Oppression Circle is a new group that is broadly focused on equity, diversity, and anti-oppression, and is also accountable to the Executive. There was time for small groups to discuss, followed by questions and comments.

GS13 Anti-Racism Common Table – Revised Terms of Reference

Motion: Michael Blair/ Person

2025-11-14-029

That the Executive of General Council:

Approve the Terms of Reference for the Anti-Racism Common Table.

Carried

GS14 Equity and Anti-Oppression Circle**Motion: Michael Blair/ M Chorney****2025-11-14-030**

That the Executive of General Council:

Approve the Terms of Reference for the Equity and Anti-

Carried**GS12 Commitment to the 2nd United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent**

After lunch, the Moderator invited the General Secretary to introduce Adele Halliday and GS12 Commitment to the 2nd United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent. The General Secretary presented a brief background to the proposal and invited Adele Halliday to give some context. Adele noted the particularity around anti-Black racism, the National Anti-Racism Action Plan invites us to understand and act on different forms of racism, and this complements the emerging work on the Apology to the African Diaspora for Legacies of Enslavement (GC45 WF18).

There was time for questions and comments.

Motion: Michael Blair/ Wilson Gonese**2025-11-14-031**

The Executive of General Council agrees to:

- make a clear statement, committing The United Church of Canada to engage with the second United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent,
- explore opportunities for creative and collaborative work on the second Decade: locally, nationally, ecumenically, and globally,
- make connections between the work of the second Decade and The United Church of Canada's apology to the African diaspora for slavery and the legacies of slavery in Canada,
- consider the development of United Church resources and animation tools to enable communities of faith to continue to engage with the second Decade in their local contexts,
- create a United Church advisory committee or working group to accompany the work of the second Decade and its related resources and activities.

Carried

GS21 Amendments to section D.4.3

The Moderator invited the General Secretary to introduce GS21 Amendments to section D.4.3. He reminded the Executive that this proposal was pulled from the consent motion due to the input in the discussion on ChurchX prior to the meeting, around the clarity of the wording. After the Executive met yesterday, the Business Committee went over the new proposed wording together. The General Secretary presented the revised text to the Executive.

Motion: Michael Blair/ Carmen Lansdowne

2025-11-14-032

That the Executive of the General Council approve the following changes to section D.4.3.

The General Secretary sets the number, from time to time, and is responsible for appointing General Council executive minister/officers.

The General Council executive ministers/officers are responsible for:

- a. Specific portfolios as assigned by the General Secretary;
- b. Acting for the General Secretary when required by the General Secretary on a short-term basis; and
- c. Performing other duties as assigned by the General Secretary

Carried

GS28 Approval of Loan to Shining Waters

The Moderator invited the General Secretary to introduce GS28 Approval of Loan to Shining Waters. The General Secretary invited Harry Li to give some background to the proposal. Harry noted that the loan cannot be assessed with traditional commercial lending criteria, as the community of faith has already entered into a contractual agreement with the construction company. Harry explained that if the congregation does not pay, the construction company will remove their equipment, and the United Church will be open to litigation. He noted that this is not a loan to the congregation, but a loan to Shining Waters Regional Council, which does change the risk level. The loan will deplete the Congregational Development Fund; however, this cost heavily outweighs the risk of litigation.

There was time for questions and comments. There was a sense in the Executive that, while this was necessary, it was not a palatable decision. There was discussion about how this can be avoided in the future, and questions surrounding the repayment plan. The General Secretary noted that he has heard the concerns of the Executive, and along with senior staff and Regional Council Executive Ministers, is trying to have a clearer sense of the challenges and reasons that have led to this point, in order to avoid similar situations in the future.

Motion: Michael Blair/ Wilson Gonese.**2025-11-14-033**

That the General Council Executive approve a loan of up to \$2 million to Shining Waters Regional Council, or its regional land trust as appropriate, for Aurora United Church, from the Congregational Development Fund, subject to the transfer of property title to the regional land trust and contingent upon Shining Waters Regional Council and Toronto United Church Council jointly approving an additional \$3 million loan, resulting in a total loan of \$5 million.

That the General Council Executive directs the General Secretary to pause the Congregational Development Fund and review the criteria considering available resources and our strategic goals.

Carried**GS31 Archives Advisory Committee**

The Moderator invited the General Secretary to introduce GS31 Archives Advisory Committee. The General Secretary noted that this was another item that was pulled from the consent motion due to clarity around the language. The General Secretary went through the updated language with the Executive.

Motion: Michael Blair/ Carmen Lansdowne**2025-11-14-034**

That the General Council Executive:

- a. approve the Terms of Reference for the Archives Advisory Committee as laid out in the following appendix, and
- b. direct the General Secretary to work with regional councils and Indigenous Ministries and Justice to populate the Committee

Carried**GS11 Appointment of Partner Council for 2025-2028 Term**

The Moderator invited the General Secretary to introduce GS11 Appointment of Partner Council for 2025-2028 Term. The General Secretary remarked that in his accountability report there is background on the Partner Council, and invited Japhet Ndhlovu, Executive Minister, Church in Mission, to give context to the proposals. Japhet commented that The United Church of Canada is committed to partnering with others in God's mission.

There was time for questions and comments.

Motion: Michael Blair/ Person**2025-11-14-035**

That the Executive of General Council appoint the following seven members to the Partner Council for the 2025-2028 triennium:

- **Ms. Maria Tendai Dendere** is the Director for Humanitarian Services and Diakonia at the **Zimbabwe Council of Churches (Zimbabwe)**. A leader in global ecumenical efforts, Maria co-chairs the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Diakonia Reference Group, the ACT Alliance Southern Africa Regional Forum, and is an active member of Act Alliance Zimbabwe;
- **Ms. Elisabeth Cook** is the Rector (President) of the **Latin American Biblical University (UBL) (Costa Rica)** and professor of Biblical Studies. She has served on the UBL staff since 1990;
- **Rev. Reina Ueno** is the Director of the **Buraku Liberation Center (BLC) (Japan)** of the United Church of Christ in Japan, a member of the National Council of Churches of Japan's Gender Justice Working Group;
- **Mr. Zoughbi Al-Zoughbi** is the founder and director of **Wiam, The Palestinian Conflict Transformation Center (Palestine)** a trainer and facilitator in conflict mediation, writer, human rights activist and lecturer in interdisciplinary fields of conflict mediation and transformation;
- **Silvia Vasquez-Olguin** is the Global Coordinator for Latin America, Gender Justice and Extractivism at **KAIROS Canada (Canada)**;
- **Sarah "Bestang" Dekdeken** is the Secretary General of the **Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA) (Philippines)**, an alliance of 307 of indigenous peoples' and sectoral organizations, and belongs to the Kankanaey-Igorot Indigenous people in the Cordillera region, northern Philippines;
- **Rev. Dr. Kenneth Mtata** is Programme Director for Public Witness and Diakonia for the **World Council of Churches (Global Ecumenical) ministries (Switzerland)**

Carried

Time with the General Secretary

The Moderator invited the General Secretary to outline his report and take questions from the Executive. The General Secretary gave some details on plans for his sabbatical, noting Cheryl-Ann Stadelbauer-Sampa will be acting General Secretary during his time away. He thanked the staff leaders and executive ministers for their hard work on Toward 2035. The Moderator thanked the General Secretary and offered a prayer for his upcoming sabbatical.

Equity Reflections

The Moderator invited Thea Sheridan-Jonah to give equity reflections. Thea remarked on the invitations to use the blue and orange cards, and leaving more time in question period, which lead to the Executive being able to hear from more voices. Thea raised a concern about our decision process, and perhaps staggering the agenda in a way that proposals are not immediately followed by decision-making, as some members of the Executive may need more time to process. The Moderator thanked Thea and the Equity Support Team.

Authorizing the General Council Sub-Executive

Motion: Michael Blair/ David Leyton-Brown

2025-11-14-036

That the General Council Executive authorize its Sub-Executive to deal with the business placed before it by this meeting of the Executive and any emergent business that may arise prior to the next meeting of the General Council Executive.

Carried

Closing Prayer

The Moderator closed the meeting in prayer and thanked the Executive for their hard work over the past two days.

Moderator, Kimberly Heath

General Secretary, Michael Blair