



**The United Church  
of Canada  
General Council**

# **GC40 A Vision for French Ministries in The United Church of Canada**

True Document Date: July 15, 2009

***"The time is right..."***

"The United Church of Canada has inherited a great responsibility as far as French work is concerned. ... The United Church of Canada, which by the grace of God strives to have a share in the building of the Kingdom of God on earth, is faced with the responsibility of trying to help people throughout Canada, of different languages and cultures, to understand each other. From the Baie des Chaleurs to the Queen Charlotte Islands we must be one Church. ...." (UCC Year Book, Vol. II, 1963)

"... That The United Church of Canada commit itself to becoming an intercultural Church, and the intercultural dimensions of ministries be a denominational priority in living out its commitment to racial justice, where there is mutually respectful diversity and full and equitable participation of all, Aboriginal, Francophone, ethnic minority, and Ethnic majority constituencies in the total life, mission, and practices of the whole Church." 39th General Council 2006, Thunder Bay

## **Background**

Ours is a broad vision of The United Church of Canada as a Church called to live out a renewed understanding of the Gospel in our contemporary context. We share a vision of a United Church that serves all populations and cultures that make up the country through relationships that are just, inclusive, and mutually life-giving. From the perspective of renewing our common mission in Christ, we believe in a Church that gives equal space in the Circle - in terms of dignity, value, respect and support - to the various groups that make up

the country and our Church: the First Nations to whom God entrusted the care of this part of Creation; the Francophones whose Protestant roots and witness go back to the beginnings of the French presence in Canada; the various cultural minorities who contribute to our collective cultural richness and who are vulnerable to racism; and the Anglophone majority whose identity is also in transition. It is through interrelationships of mutual support that all of the components and constituencies of our Church *together* will be empowered to transform the Church and renew its witness to the Gospel for the 21st century.

We believe that Francophone Protestants and The United Church of Canada's participation in Francophone society are intrinsic defining elements of our Church's identity. If our Church is to fulfil its calling to be truly contextual, The United Church of Canada must be a *credible* and *engaged* presence in Quebec and in Canada's diverse Francophone communities, actively seeking to understand and support Ministries in French. Our call is that "The United Church of Canada, as a whole, choose to embrace Ministries in French as an integral part of its identity, its mission, its vision for the future; and its strategy of presence and development...". (UMiF) .The last Report to General Council regarding Ministry in French dates back to 27 years ago, in Montreal in 1982. Hence, sharing our little known story and long journey, sets the context for the vision and specific recommendations of the present Report.

# **1. Our History: "We Remember"... the Past in order to Imagine the Future**

## **The Hospitality of First Nations**

Our brother and former Moderator, Stan Mackay, reminds us that in Cree *Kanata* means *Sacred Earth or Holy Ground*.

Ever since the arrival of the first Europeans to this country, First Nations peoples have taught us to show love and respect for our Sacred Earth and for this land that was entrusted to them by the Creator. This love for the land has left a lasting impression on the Francophone populations of this country. Our First Nations brothers and sisters shared their sacred space with us and taught us much about how to live within it. As Francophone Protestants, we remember that our roots in this land go back to these earliest encounters on this *Holy Ground* that also became a land of Refuge for persecuted Huguenots (early French Protestants). We remember the generous hospitality of First Nations peoples. At the same time, we cannot

forget the history of suffering caused by social exclusion, racism and residential schools. All of these memories, as a minority, resonate profoundly within us and today compel us to seek the road to Right Relations with our First Nations brothers and sisters.

The partnership between Aboriginals, Francophones and Intercultural and Diverse Communities in Ministry brings us all together, along with all the other constituencies and peoples that make up our Church, on the road to a Transformational Vision for the United Church of Canada. We believe that this is also a road to hope and renewed mission.

## Our Deep Roots

It is a little-known but well-established fact that the roots of ministry in French can be traced back to the sixteenth century. Through the histories of people such as Jean-François Sieur de Roberval (1534) and Pierre du Gua Sieur de Mons (1604) – the first Governor General - we see that French Huguenots contributed a great deal to the founding of New France (Acadie, Québec, Ontario, Acadia and Western Canada) through their struggle to maintain a diversity of spiritual expressions and establish a society built on the rule of law and on tolerance. From the very beginning, the Bible was read and Reformed Psalms were sung in French in homes and churches from the shores of the Saint Lawrence to the Great Lakes and Louisiana. This thread of French Protestant presence was very strong indeed! In New France as it was the case in Europe, French Protestants were pushed to the margins of society or even denied the right to stay year round. Most were forced, either to live clandestinely, to go into exile in Europe or south of the border, or to seek refuge among Native peoples, where they were sheltered and adopted. This too, we remember with gratitude.

## A New Beginning

It is not until the 1830's - with the arrival and ministry of Madame H. Feller-Odin and others - that we see this French Protestant thread re-emerge and reclaim its visibility. In 1839, the founding of the *French Canadian Missionary Society /La Société Missionnaire Canadienne Française* - a united non-denominational missionary society based in Montreal - marks a new and vigorous beginning for ministry in French. A four dimensional mission strategy that included door-to-door distribution of Bibles and Faith Education material, and the establishing of country one-room schools for the poor, mission posts and congregations, bears fruit among a population long abandoned and hungry for the Gospel. Many

francophone congregations are founded across Canada and in New England during this period. For example, congregations such as Église Unie de Belle-Rivière (1840), Église Unie Saint-Jean (Montreal, 1842), Église Unie Saint-Marc (Ottawa, 1867) and Saint-Paul de Namur (1870) all arise out of this dynamic and transformational French Canadian missionary movement which will also give birth to a network of 98 Francophone missions, pastoral charges, House churches and schools across French Canada. Originally, the *French Canadian Missionary Society* was supported by the members of the Anglophone Congregationalist, Methodist, Presbyterian and Anglican Churches. However, when denominationalism prevails this joint support is withdrawn in 1875. The personnel and assets are divided up among the various groups. From this point on, individual denominations begin competing with one another in the area of ministry in French. This is a dark day that marks not only the breaking up of an ecumenical "Grande Famille" in mission work, but also the fragmentation and division among French Protestants and the beginning of their struggle against decline and marginalization within their respective denominations.

## Great Expectations and Crisis

Nonetheless, in the years preceding the 1925 Church Union, there is renewed hope and enthusiasm among Francophones. Approximately 45 congregations, as many mission posts, a dozen schools – three of which are quite large – and a theological training programme at McGill University from the three participant denominations, embrace Union with great expectations. Francophones are probably the only group to decide unanimously in favour of joining The United Church of Canada. A vote was virtually unnecessary. Francophones saw joining The United Church of Canada as a chance to re-unite the "Great Family" and thus breathe new life into ministry in French within the new born denomination.

However, a couple of years after Church Union, it becomes evident that supporting and developing French and First Nations' ministries is not a priority for the new Church. Schools are closed – except the Institut Évangélique de la Pointe-aux-Trembles. There is less support for mission work and resources for Francophones, and theological training ceases to be offered in French. Public and theological education will be offered in English only. As a result, there will be wide-spread linguistic assimilation of Francophones and the credibility of The United Church of Canada in French Canada will decrease along with its capacity for doing ministry in French. Less than thirty years later, the effects are felt: there is a shortage of pastoral leadership and ministry personnel must be brought in from Europe. This trend will

only begin to be reversed in the 1980's with a resurgence of vocations among French-speaking members of The United Church of Canada. However, despite the early enthusiasm for French work, and the recent increase in vocations, ministry in French in our denomination continues to struggle against slow decline.

## From Decline to Hope

We must also remember, however, that throughout our history as a Church, Anglophones and Francophones have shared in many accomplishments that have been a mutual blessing. We wish to acknowledge these moments with gratitude. Especially since the 1970's, The United Church of Canada has created a number of committees and working groups on French-English relations. These bodies have worked to achieve honest dialogue, mutual understanding and respect, while seeking justice and reconciliation. Most notably, The United Church of Canada has steadily shown clear support for the linguistic, cultural, and socio-political rights of Francophone minorities across the country. The Church supported Acadians in 1980 and again in 2005 in a pastoral letter dealing with the harm caused by *Le Grand Dérangement*- the Acadian deportation of 1755. Support was also shown to Franco-Ontarians, and Métis, and Franco-Manitobans in a request for pardon for Louis Riel (1980). The United Church of Canada also recognized peoples' right to self-determination (1972 and 1980) and mandated a team under the leadership of the Right Reverend Stan MacKay for «Listening to Québécois Québécoises with a New Heart» (1993).

Humbly but consistently, Francophones of The United Church of Canada have played a bridging role as conscience-raisers on the social and ecumenical scene between Francophones and Anglophones, benefiting from, as a minority, their double-identity and their double-solidarity of *Francophones* in a Church which is majority Anglophone and *Protestants* in a society which is majority Francophone and culturally Roman Catholic. The common ecumenical "Christian Pavillon" of Expo 67, The Centre Dialogue (a ministry of ecumenical and social-justice oriented presence, 1980's, Montréal Presbytery) followed by Projet Dialogue-Québec of Montréal and Ottawa Conference (M&O) (1990's), are examples in this regard.

At the regional level, we see the creation of La Zone pastorale francophone (the Francophone Pastoral Zone - 1971, Montréal Presbytery); the creation of Consistoire Laurentien (Laurentian Presbytery) in 1985 (M&O Conference), the Ministries in French Working Group (M&O Conference - 2007) which is a place of inter-Presbytery planning and development. And since

2004, we also celebrate in Maritime Conference and Manitou Conference, as well as in the Winnipeg Presbytery, the development initiatives, interest groups and committees dedicated to the development of Ministries in French. There is new Life!

At a variety of levels, The United Church of Canada has equally sought to equip itself with official bodies to support Ministries in French: At the National Level, *the Working Unit for Ministries in French*/Groupe de travail sur le ministère en Français (WUMF – 1980), followed by the Permanent Committee of Ministries in French/Comité permanent sur les ministères en français (COPERMIF, 1992), and finally, in 2002, the creation of the Unit for Ministries in French/Unité des Ministères en Français (UMiF) which marks a qualitative new support and progress concerning the presence, visibility and impact of Francophone Ministries in the public witness and work of The United Church of Canada.

The creation and presence of UMiF allows a return to the vision, cohesion and support of local initiatives, the building of a new network of Ministries in French and a new collaboration and partnership between Units and their programmes. UMiF facilitates the sensitizing of the General Council on initiatives in French and helps project our Church forward in Francophone milieus. All of these advances would not have been possible without the continued presence and accompaniment of Anglophone sisters and brothers of all cultures who have always known to keep and share a vision of a place for Francophones in the country and the responsibility to develop Francophone Ministries at the heart of our Church's witness.

## Reclaiming Our Place in Ministry and Mission

A triple lack of Vision, of Leadership trained in French, and of Investment in development, has meant steady decline for ministry in French since 1925. Today, French work in The United Church of Canada – a country that has French as one of its two official languages – is reduced to a state of **minimal critical mass** (Additional background information is available for this report. See "Workbook 2 – Appendices - Appendix 5 – Vision for French Ministries" at <http://GC40.united-church.ca/downloads/workbooks>). If we wish to see a strong and vibrant network of ministries and embark on a new mission in French, we cannot lose any more of the ministries and resources that are absolutely essential to this work.

Today, it is our responsibility to say with solemnity, humility and respect that, if The United Church of Canada does not invest in new ministries in French, we believe that in less than ten years, one of the founding constituents of our national Church will cease to exist as a network

of viable ministries. If The United Church of Canada delays in starting up new ministry and mission projects within Francophone communities, we believe that the possibility for renewal will have escaped us because the passage of time will only mean fewer personnel, ever-decreasing numbers, and communities that are less and less viable and less and less capable of responding to the new opportunities that presents themselves.

However, we have faith. One of our elders has said, "We do not believe that we exist to manage the decline of The United Church of Canada, but rather that God has nurtured our resilience and our hope to this day so that, like a few embers, we can rekindle the flame of the Gospel and the mission of God. *'Les Temps sont favorables!'*- The Time is right!"

We also believe that The United Church of Canada – a denomination born out of a great vision of unity, justice and of mission – can still live out its vocation to be a national and contextual Church by embracing in a new way the mission of reconciliation to which God is calling us and by choosing to redevelop ministries in French. In 2006 the General Council adopted a *Transformative Vision* by committing itself to becoming a truly Intercultural Church. This vision will only come to fruition with the active support and full participation of the whole Church with the joint partnership of the new Aboriginal Ministries Council, the Intercultural and Diverse Communities in Ministry Unit, and UMiF.

## **2. Our Context: A new spiritual quest, the Time is Right! It's Time to Act!**

We are living in new times. Our current context is ripe for new presence and mission among Francophones. This mission must be respectful of people and their identities, open, dynamic, and willing to risk new ways of connecting with our contemporaries. Our ministry experiences and research on the topic (*Environics*) show that today many people, and particularly young adults between twenty and forty years of age hold values that combine spirituality, ecology, justice and freedom. And these young adults want to explore those values in an atmosphere that is familial and non-judgemental. In many ways, this is a "new generation" in Canada, one that has virtually no Church experience. Currently, in Quebec, only about 5% of the population attends Church – all denominations combined - a drop of 60% compared to 1965. It is not surprising that today's generation of Quebecers is searching for meaningful spiritual reference points. Studies have shown that similar situations exist elsewhere within Canada's diverse francophone communities. It should also be said that,

although this generation has little or no experience of the Church, they nonetheless have set notions and images about the Church: they see it as being fixed, rigid, narrow, and moralizing.

At the same time, Francophones are expressing a new curiousness and interest in the realm of spirituality and religion. Current research reports as well significant numbers of spiritual seekers in Canada, and in Québec about 20% of the population.

At its best, The United Church of Canada seems to match the expectations of this generation of spiritual seekers. When Francophones, from a growing diversity of cultural background, discover our Church, they are often profoundly touched by the credible alternative that The United Church of Canada offers them: a Church where they find inclusiveness, gender equality, openness and hospitality, freedom to think and to speak, theological diversity, democratic participation, and an option for social, economic and ecological justice. We are constantly experiencing people who come to our congregations "to check us out" and like what they see. As Church, we need to respond and engage at a deeper level and risk new approaches. A number of Francophones decide to stay and rediscover faith. Those who choose The United Church of Canada offer an exceptional testimony :

"The United Church is not aware of the spiritual treasure that it holds. ...Today, I am free to speak, to think and to realize my potential. When there is a need, I can bring my contribution along with other members and my faith is nourished and lived out with discernment." (Marie-Andrée B.)

"At l'Église Unie Saint-Pierre, I feel more at home than I ever felt before" (Nicole H.).

"I found a Church for today's world." (Stéphane G.)

"I am from Newfoundland and I am Anglophone and a candidate for ordained ministry at Église Unie Saint-Jean (Montréal).

During the time that I have been attending the Saint-Jean congregation, I very much appreciated the atmosphere of simplicity and humility in the community. I am not certain, but perhaps this feeling finds its roots in the fact that the Francophone part of the United Church has always been a minority, and therefore,



has more of an experience of marginalization. In this community, I find that there is less fear in facing the process of transformation that is taking place in our Church. Perhaps, when we are used to the idea of being a minority group, we are more ready to accept this call to become the leaven in the dough." (Isaac M.)

«At the age of 20, I left a terrible God; vengeful, dogmatic and stingy.

After 35 years of abstinence from faith, I went into a Church to see if God had changed.

I went to (Église) Saint-Jean (Montréal).

I found there a Word completely different from what I had been taught.

I found openness.

I found good and beautiful people.

I found a beautiful Church (L'Église Unie du Canada).

I found faith.

I found the smile of Jesus.

I am well there and I give according to my talents...» (Jean-Claude L.)

We have before us **significant challenges** that must be taken up if we are to revitalize our mission and our presence in Francophone areas.

We are called to:

- expand our presence by creating new ministries in places with obvious interest and potential for ministry in French. To this end, several options lay before us: exploring a variety of styles and models of ministry; developing or redeveloping congregations, base communities, store front ministry, circuit ministry, ministries linking spirituality and social justice etc.
- present an image of The United Church of Canada that is attractive to Francophones: an image that respects their identity and culture, that is "non-assimilationist", and counters the perception that The United Church of Canada is a Church for the majority Anglophones.
- increase the visibility of The United Church of Canada in French-speaking areas of the country. Creating new ministries, communicating our message, offering training and maximizing effective deployment of Francophone and bilingual leadership are all part of the same mission strategy. The United Church of Canada is little known among Francophones and certainly not known as a "national Church".

We also have **significant** assets :

- a new spiritual thirst in our society that must be seized as a gift and a call from God;
- a French-Protestant identity that is not well-known but that is nevertheless deeply rooted in The United Church of Canada and in Canadian Society;
- a tradition of prophetic and innovative mission that is capable of discerning the signs of the Spirit and of responding to God's call contextually to the present-day spiritual and social questions of people of this country;
- a stream of new vocations to ordained ministry and lay ministry, from a variety of cultural background, expressing both the vitality of our communities of faith and the relevance of the message of L'Église Unie du Canada in the francophone context;
- signs of a renewed enthusiasm in The United Church of Canada for the development of ministries in French. This is particularly the case in the M & O, Maritime and Manitou Conferences but is also true in Winnipeg Presbytery and in other areas across the country. There is also a sincere interest in dialogue, reconciliation, and mission work that is respectful of diverse identities (Additional background information is available for this report. See "Workbook 2 – Appendices - Appendix 5 – Vision for French Ministries" at <http://GC40.united-church.ca/downloads/workbooks>);
- a new willingness to consider ministries in French in the programmes, partnerships and collaborative efforts between Units of the General Council and at Church House;
- the decision to become an Intercultural Church. In the context of relationships of solidarity with First Nations and with the various Cultural Communities and the Majority Church that make up our Church and our country, we have a unique opportunity to highlight the specificity of our Francophone identity and contribution and, in so doing, to thus enrich the identity and the diversity of our Church.

Our vision and our call to the Church is that we *all* embark on a renewed mission – something that we can only do *together* as one denomination and as Body of Christ, diverse but united.

***The time is right*** for a new beginning for mission to Francophones in Quebec and in other parts of the country where there is a significant French-speaking population - most notably, but not exclusively, within the bounds of Winnipeg Presbytery and the M & O, Maritime and Manitou Conferences.

# 3. Our Strategy: New Development for Ministries in French

This Report proposes an integrated strategy and measures for the development of ministries in French that include the following elements:

## 1.0 Human Resources: Rationale

**Theology:** Ministries are a gift from God offered to build up the Church of Jesus Christ and equip it to carry out God's mission in the World. As such, ministries must be used effectively for the strengthening the Body of Christ and its witness serving the world God so loves.

**Vision/Policy Objectives:** To make the best use of Francophone and bilingual human resources by placing them in contexts, congregations or ministries where their gifts , vocation, competence in the language, culture and context will benefit the witness and development of ministries to Francophones.

### ***A Kairos moment to be seized:***

In the last fifteen years, the Church has been blessed with a **notable resurgence in francophone vocations for ministry**, a situation that testifies not only to the vitality of our communities of faith, but also to the fact that the Gospel of Christ as it is presented by The United Church of Canada is a truly life-giving option among Francophones. The difficulty has been that we have had more Francophone vocations than we have ministry in French positions and we have not been able to place French-speaking candidates in favourable contexts. In the context of expressed need for new development, this shows a poor stewardship of the gifts bestowed by God.

As an example, the congregation of Église Saint Pierre in Québec City has seen five of its members trained and ordained to pastoral ministry over the past 13 years. One Lay pastoral minister is presently in discernment. Église Saint Jean currently has one candidate in formation for ministry and two others have expressed their vocation and are in the process of completing the educational prerequisites. Saint James United Church of Montréal also has seen one of its francophone members ordained. Others are also in the process of admission, coming most notably from francophone cultural communities. To the best of our knowledge, only one of these recent ministers has been settled where they may offer a ministry in

French.

Having sufficient Supervised Ministry Education and Settlement sites is essential to the training and effective deployment of Francophone human resources. Currently, there is a critical shortage of appropriate sites. This situation weighs heavily on vocations and seriously hinders the development of ministries in French. Without the possibility for Supervised Ministry Education and new ministry openings in French, some Francophones hesitate or abandon all together the thought of becoming a candidate for ministry. This is a tragic waste of vocation from gifted people that our Church needs to address.

Thus, the Report formulates recommendations relative to:

1.1 Supervised Ministry Education for Francophone and Bilingual Candidates be accessible in French

1.2 Transfer and Settlement of Francophone and Bilingual Candidates for Ministry in appropriate contexts for developing ministries in French

## **2.0 Discernment of Context, Mission, and Call to Ministry: Rationale**

### ***Theology : A Ministry of Hospitality and Accompaniment***

In approaching others, it is Christ we approach. In responding with respect and hospitality to their individual quest, it is to Christ that we respond and, in so doing, we discover the multiple faces of Christ among us. To discover the others that God has placed on our path is also to discover Christ, especially among those with whom he identified: those who are marginalized, vulnerable and neglected (Matthew 25).

***Vision/Objectives*** : The United Church of Canada is invited to see its congregations and ministries as places of hospitality, accompaniment and mission for all. The articulation of this inclusiveness should not be defined by or limited to the language of the majority, but should be expressed minimally in both official languages (in places where there is either a majority or a significant minority of Francophones) and ideally in as many other languages as possible. This is a means of celebrating cultural diversity and multiplying opportunities to encounter others and create welcoming authentic communities.

This spirit of intentional welcome, hospitality, accompaniment and mission must be found in the JNAC process and in the terms of call to ministry.

## **2.1 Making the JNAC Process More explicit with respect to Cultural Inclusiveness in mission statements and strategies**

The spirit of the JNAC process is to help build "authentic communities" by facilitating a process for discerning the call of God to mission in a given ministry context that is at once specific and broad and inclusive.

**Proposals in section 2.1** recommend that in contexts where there is a potential for ministry in French, this information be integrated into the mission statement and job description outlined in extending a call to lay or ordered ministry personnel, that guidelines be developed and that appropriate accompaniment be provided for congregations in this discernment process.

## **2.2 A Mission Perspective : Linguistic and Cultural Competencies for a Call to Ministry**

The Spirit of God is at work in the world and in the communities that surround our Churches. Today, this Spirit is calling us in new ways to build a Church that is diverse, and culturally inclusive and contextual. In order to serve Jesus Christ and the needs of the larger community, the leadership of our Churches must be able to move with ease within their ministry context and possess the linguistic and cultural competencies necessary for exercising a broad and inclusive ministry and developing God's mission. Such requirements are taken for granted for overseas ministry and should be appropriated, when relevant, in the Canadian context. Linguistic and cultural competence have a great impact for the credibility and development of Ministries in French.

**Proposals 2.2** invites congregations and ministries, with the support of Presbyteries and Conferences, depending of their specific context and call to mission, to consider making knowledge of French a requirement for call, and encourage ministry personnel to take appropriate language and cultural training supported by a National continuing education

fund.

## 3.0 Education and Training : rationale

### ***Theology: Discerning the Gifts, Equipping Ministers for contextual Ministry***

God calls us to be part of the ministry of Jesus Christ and gives the Church varieties of gifts for its life and mission in the world, and for the stewardship of Creation. The Church is called to read "signs of the times" in order to faithfully live the Gospel of grace, justice and peace, and to discern the gifts and ministries that are needed to respond to the challenges in a particular time and place.

***Vision/Objectives:*** The *Transformative Vision* of the Church is one of the signs of the times. It is a living out, in our time, of the story of Pentecost and the birth of the Church: where everyone, upon hearing the message in his or her own language, culture and identity, is able to find communion with the living Christ. The Intercultural and Diverse Communities in Ministry Unit rightly emphasizes the diversification of the Canadian population and invites the whole Church to openness, unconditional welcome, and the transformation of our power relations into relationships of respect, justice and love.

In order to do this, The United Church of Canada must be able to count on leadership that is well-prepared for its ministry and mission. In particular, Francophones and people who are bilingual must have access to the kind of contextual theological training that will equip them to develop the various lay and ordered ministries in which The United Church of Canada must be engaged if it wishes to fulfil its vocation and answer the call of God in the Canadian context and beyond..

We recognize that significant progress has been made in this regard in recent decades (most notably with the signing of an agreement between The United Theological College/Le Séminaire Uni and the Université de Montréal with respect to education in French). We must continue to build on this foundation.

***Proposals connected with section 3.0*** recommend that the United Church ensure the existence of a Theological training programme in French, the creation of two courses bearing respectively on the Ministry of supervision and on the history and spirituality of French Canada ( recommended funding).

## 4.0 Development of Cultural and Linguistic

### Competence in French : rationale

**Theology:** God loves us, visits us and journeys with us in Jesus Christ. If we are to live the Gospel by accompanying others on the road, listening to their dreams, comforting those who are afflicted, and calling people to choose a life of abundance and justice, we must speak the language of those with whom we seek to travel and accompany on the way.

**Vision/Objectives:** Ours is a vision of a United Church that can welcome, accompany, respond and witness to all the people of this country, and specifically – although not exclusively – to Francophones, through a network of identified and identifiable individuals, congregations and ministries from across the country.

In our Faith context, we believe that the ability to communicate and relate in French is not simply a social, cultural or political issue or necessity, but an ecclesiological question. It is part of the very **vocation**, identity and mission of The United Church of Canada. Certain key positions and functions within the offices of The United Church of Canada must reflect this reality and offer service and leadership in this regard. There are encouraging signs of good will within the Programmes, Units and offices of the General Council. Our Church needs now to make an intentional effort to ensure that people in selected key positions and official spokespersons can professionally function in both official languages and enable the development and public witness of Ministries in French.

**Proposals connected to section 4.0** recommend the creation of a National fund for French language and culture training for a five year period in addition to an audit regarding linguistic capacities and needs in Church House and selectively identifying positions requiring both French and English.

## 5.0 Creation of New Ministries in French : rationale

**Theology:** The Spirit of God is alive and at work in our society and in our world. This Spirit sows love and hope and calls us to love and care for our brothers and sisters and all of creation so that all may have life...and life in abundance! This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ that we are called to live and to proclaim *together* as Church.

**Vision/Objectives:** The United Church of Canada is called to celebrate a renewed understanding of the Gospel, of our place within the global Church, our mission, and our vocation of service to all of the country's constituent cultures and populations. This celebration of The United Church of Canada's unique identity – an identity that is enriched by the unique identities of First Nations peoples, Francophones, many diverse Cultural communities, and the Anglophone majority – calls all of us together to engage anew in God's mission of seeking and building the Kingdom and its righteousness.

We stated above that Francophone Protestants and The United Church of Canada's participation in Francophone society are intrinsic defining elements of our Church's identity. If our Church is to fulfil its calling to be truly *contextual and national*, The United Church of Canada must be a *credible and engaged* presence in Canada's diverse Francophone communities, actively seeking to understand and support Ministries in French.

To quote former Moderator, Marion Best, "Francophones have not thrived within The United Church of Canada." This does not have to be the case.

The time is right and The United Church of Canada must act now and invest in new ministries in French in order to:

- support the vocations for ministry that have been emerging for more than a decade;
- halt the downward spiral of Francophone congregations and ministries in The United Church of Canada;
- create a viable and vibrant network of Francophone communities and ministries beyond the current *critical mass*;
- discern the signs of the Spirit of the Living God that is generating a new thirst for spirituality among Francophones and seekers of all the communities that make up this country.

We believe that, as a Church, we have arrived at a critical point that is also an opportunity and thus, cause for hope. We, as The United Church of Canada, can choose not to let ministries in French disappear and work together for a new beginning, another chance for the mission that has been ours since the very beginning.

Appendix B (See "Workbook 2 – Appendices - Appendix 5 – Vision for French Ministries" at <http://GC40.united-church.ca/downloads/workbooks>) gives a view of ministries that are either emerging or on hold pending adequate human and financial resources. These budding ministries are fragile and if they are to take root and flourish, we must nurture and support



them. The time is right to invest in our future. **Creating effective and successful new ministries requires not only an act of faith but also financial support spread out over several years.**

We consider that the measures outlined in this report are part of a whole that make up an *integrated strategy* for the development of new ministries.

***The proposal of section 5.0*** sets forth an intentional strategy of gradual and sustained development of 5 new ministries over a five year start up period , capable of having a spiritual, real, concrete, and lasting impact not only on the Francophone sector of our Church, but on the denomination's public witness as a whole. We understand this effort to be within the financial reach of our Church. The Church will need to decide on its priorities.

Jesus also said,

'The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, 27and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, without one knowing how. 28The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. 29But when the grain is ripe, at once one goes in with a sickle, because the harvest has come.' (Mark 4.26-29; NRSV)

God's Grace and Spirit have provided and have kept working in our midst.

The time is now for us to respond.

The kairos–time has come.

L'Unité des Ministères en Français (UMiF)

*The Unit for Ministries in French*

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