



**The United Church
of Canada
General Council**

GC45 Canadian Shield Regional Council Report for Summer 2025

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Origin: Canadian Shield Regional Council

It has been an exciting and challenging time between 2022 and 2025, as the Canadian Shield Regional Council (CSRC) continues to transform from three parts of the church, who had been neighbours structurally. This new northern region has moved from introducing ourselves to becoming partners in ministry as a Northern region.

This has been a challenging 3 years for the regional council, communities of faith, and The United Church of Canada. We continue to walk through post-pandemic realities together. It has taken many months for many communities of faith to recover from the challenges of the pandemic, with many other communities facing a new reality. The pandemic did afford opportunity for many communities of faith to experiment and meet in new and innovative ways by continuing hybrid worship and meetings. Staff and volunteers have worked countless hours preparing, changing, experimenting, and succeeding in continuing as Church in new and creative ways. As an Executive, we have heard stories of sacrifice, perseverance, hope, success and also deep fatigue. We have also heard stories of worry, stress, frustration, struggle, and isolation. As a region and as community, we give thanks and we continue to be on a long journey together; we celebrate the resilience of our churches and the expression of the Gospel. CSRC's regional council Commissions - Property, Support to Communities of Faith, and Pastoral Relations - along with regional council Resource Teams, including Living into Right Relations, Affirm, Youth, Grants, and Finance, have considered, supported, and worked with The United Church of Canada Strategic Plan, in partnership with the Regional Council Executive. Many volunteers have dedicated many hours to support the regional council and its many ministries. We give thanks for the leadership within the CSRC, through communities of faith, Incorporated Ministries, local outreach ministries, and elected officials of the regional council.

Between 2022 and 2025, our Regional Council:

The Canadian Shield Regional Council is very large geographically, with boundaries from Val-d'Or Quebec in the east to Thunder Bay in the west (1,060 km), and it faces significant challenges and opportunities around support of the vastness of the regional council. There is challenge in terms of time and resources for meeting in-person or having volunteers and staff support the work of the regional council in-person. The regional council has depended a lot on connecting via video conferencing, mostly Zoom. The distance also creates a challenge meeting with staff in-person, with staff living throughout the entire regional council. The geography has also created opportunity for creativity in ministry; we have a number of communities of faith that connect via two-way video conferencing on Sunday mornings, sharing worship and leadership between communities of faith. For example, St John's in Marathon, Ontario shares worship with Grace United in Hornepayne, Ontario, a two hour drive apart. Also, pastoral charge supervisors support communities of faith many hours apart in new and creative ways.

Another challenge and blessing within Canadian Shield Regional Council is that approximately 45% of our communities of faith are lay-led and will continue to be lay-led in the future, without paid Ministry Personnel. We celebrate these active communities of faith with strong lay leader worship, supported by Licensed Lay Worship Leaders and retired supply who are connecting to other communities of faith live on Sunday mornings through two-way video link and providing an opportunity for folks to gather together as Church and celebrate and live the gospel. The Canadian Shield Regional Council continues to shift and adapt as worshipping communities to support ministry opportunities now and in the future.

One of the challenges of the CSRC is filling "called" positions within the regional council. Often full-time (and part-time) called positions can remain open for a number of months or over a year or more. The Canadian Shield Regional Council offers wonderful ministry opportunities with many healthy communities of faith that offer a more manageable cost of living in relation to many other parts of Canada. The Regional Council Executive has been working towards formally promoting Canadian Shield Regional Council within the broader church as a place to consider for long-term ministry. The CSRC continues to be a leader in supporting Ministry Personnel who feel called to serve within the United Church. Often this means folks moving to Canada. The inclusion of new Ministry Personnel to The United Church of Canada

has both provided exciting opportunity and learning and also challenges related to cost of moving and transitioning to a new culture and country. Many communities of faith have been delighted that they have been able to call new Ministry Personnel who are committed to their Ministry.

Our regional meeting theme – Upon this Rock – continues. We are now solidly living into our new post-pandemic reality. Staff and volunteers have worked countless hours preparing, changing, experimenting, and succeeding in continuing as Church in new and creative ways. As an Executive, we have heard stories of sacrifice, perseverance, hope, success, and also deep fatigue. We have also heard stories of worry, stress, frustration and struggle. As a region and as community, we give thanks; we continue to be on a long journey together and we celebrate the resilience of our churches and the expression of the Gospel in many new and creative ways. Our pandemic experience raises many questions about how we approach ministry - how we serve each other and our role as a Church in society. Volunteers, music leaders, ministry personnel, camp staff, outreach staff, and congregational support staff have all worked tirelessly.

As a regional council, the region has hosted townhall meetings for both Ministry Personnel and Lay Leaders for support, updates, and education. Our website continues to be a key tool for communication within our regional council. Many local and a few regional networks and local groups have also met to connect, learn, challenge, listen, and work together.

As a regional council, distance can be a barrier to meeting in-person. The region's primary tool for connecting continues to be online gatherings, for both Ministry Personnel and Lay Leaders. Our website/newsletter "Bedrock" continues to be a key tool for communication within our regional council. Many local and regional networks and local groups have also met to connect, learn, challenge, listen, and work together. The Executive also celebrates the significant work of the Regional Council Commissions, Committees, networks/clusters, informal gatherings, UCC folks/Community members, and active UCW groups across the regional council.

A newer resource for connecting regularly in the regional council is "Let's Connect Lay Leader Resources." The regional council offers these events several times a year with a variety of foci. The website offers recorded copies of events as a resource:

<https://canadianshieldrc.ca/communities-of-faith/lets-connect-lay-leader-resources/>

In order to support communities of faith, we celebrate a joint venture of The United Church of Canada, Canadian Shield Region, and St. John's United Church of Canada (Marathon,

Ontario) called the United in Worship project. Through this project, contributing worship leaders and their communities of faith have volunteered liturgies for worship, sermons/reflections, and creative time and energy. The support team adds digital presentations to support the liturgies and video versions of the sermons/reflections, asking that participants always acknowledge the work of the authors and their community(ies) of faith for their generosity and discipleship. They charge a modest subscription fee and in return, communities of faith are well supported with worship material. See more at: <https://www.united-in-worship.ca/>. We are so grateful for the partnership of the United and Learning team with the CSRC and the UCC.

One network, within the boundary of the regional council, is MILC - Manitou Intentional Learning Community. As shared on their website "Manitou Intentional Learning Community creates and sustains opportunities in learning." MILC has its physical and administrative home at St. Andrew's United Church in Sudbury, Ontario. It recognizes and lives a broadly local and global commitment to transformational learning for all members of the United Church and its partners and friends." For more information, please see: <https://www.manitoulearningcommunity.com/>

Festival of Faith 2025:

In June, the Canadian Shield Regional Council, in partnership with Shining Waters Regional Council, will join together for another Festival of Faith for June 13, 14 and 15, 2025 in Sudbury, Ontario. We are excited about the opportunity for folks to gather together in Sudbury for a time to pray, reflect, grow, and learn. This event is open to people beyond our regional council. The Canadian Shield Regional Council is delighted to geographically host this event and we are delighted also by the partnership in planning and funding this event.

The Work of The Regional Executive:

Our Regional Council Executive meets monthly (with the exception of the summer) and does the work of the regional council when our region is not meeting (The Manual 2025 - C.3.1.1). Often the Executive has a very full agenda which includes oversight of the regional Commissions, regional finances, regional policy, the annual regional council meeting, emerging work, and the Executive Minister and staff.

In 2024/25, the Executive spent a significant amount of time considering our ministry now and, in the future, including participation in a joint retreat with the SWRC Executive in the fall of 2024. One of the primary foci of the retreat for our Executive was supporting communities of faith in the next 5 to 10 years and beyond! This theme and work are similar to the Towards 2035 work of General Council. The retreat also spent time focusing and discussing the UCC Strategic Plan - Deep Spirituality, Bold Discipleship, and Daring Justice – as well as focusing on how to support communities of faith and ministry personnel and how do we as a regional council, support each other. The Executive continues this work, in partnership with Commissions and the UCC, especially the UCC growth unit.

Working towards Right Relations, Anti-Racism and Equity:

The United Church of Canada is working towards becoming an anti-racist institution. For the United Church, it means encouraging the General Council Office, Regional Council Offices, communities of faith, and even Canadian society, to pause and reflect. Through the partnership of the United Church, together we offer training, learning opportunities, and discussion groups as part of a strategy of becoming an anti-racist Church. The United Church offers a wide variety of resources, videos, workshops, and printed materials, which provide key support for our Anti- Racism and Equity work of the regional council. The Commissions, Committees, and Resource Teams also support Anti-Racism and Equity work through both policy and education.

In 2021, the Canadian Shield Regional Council celebrated becoming an Affirming Region! We also continue our journey towards living into right relations. The regional council continues to partner with the United Church who offers training, learning opportunities, and discussion groups as part of a strategy of becoming an anti-racist Church. The United Church offers a wide variety of resources, videos, workshops and printed materials to support our work. See <https://united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/anti-racism>

Youth Ministry and Incorporated Ministry:

The pandemic had a major impact on regional youth ministry. In 2024, we hired a new part-time youth Minister to support the work of youth ministry within both Shining Waters Regional Council and the Canadian Shield Regional. Our most recent in-person youth event

was hosted by five regional councils, both in Guelph and Thunder Bay, which included the GC45 Youth Forum contingent. Key youth ministry also continues in CSRC in partnership with the Youth and Young Adult Resource Team, local Communities of faith and local youth networks. Camp McDougall and Camp Duncan provide opportunities for youth ministry. Camp McDougall, along with many dedicated volunteers, plan to offer full camping program in 2025.

Along with our camps mentioned, the CSRC supports a number of Incorporated Ministries and local outreach ministry which support housing, address the challenges for the unhoused, underhoused, food instability, advocacy, justice, community support, and ministry outreach. These local groups and Incorporated Ministries are key leaders within the regional council who expand the ministry of the United Church with many volunteer and staff hours; their ministry is vital.

We celebrate the resilience of our communities of faith and outreach ministries across our regional council and express deep appreciation for their resilience, innovation, and Deep, Bold and Daring discipleship across the Canadian Shield Regional Council. We give thanks for the work of the General Council and the General Council Office.

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