



**The United Church
of Canada
General Council**

GC45 United Property Resource Corporation Report for Summer 2025

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Introduction

The United Property Resource Corporation (UPRC) works with communities of faith, regional councils and other United Church of Canada entities to assist them in making informed decisions about their real estate assets and where possible to repurpose underutilized church spaces to serve broader community needs.

In 2017 The United Church of Canada engaged N. Barry Lyons Consultants Limited (NBLC) commissioned a report and a land inventory. This report provided a road map to establishing both UPRC. The NBLC report outlines the value of the UCC to take a strategic and portfolio approach to property so that property value is retained. “Understanding the nature of the Church’s varied and high valued real estate portfolio, it is NBLC’s recommendation that the United Church seek to integrate greater coordination and professional expertise into a new approach to real estate decision making. This approach should acknowledge the Church’s need to evolve and adapt its ministry, recognizing effective management of real estate assets as a critical contributing factor toward financial sustainability and renewed ministry in perpetuity” (2017 Summary Report NBLC).

UPRC is working on this recommendation. On church sites where development is possible, Kindred Works was created to support the responsible development of rental housing that benefits people and the planet. The church investment of its land into each project allows them to receive a financial return to support their ongoing ministry and make a measurable environmental and social impact. Most church sites are not suitable for development, but

they do provide vital community space for ministry and outreach. Communities of faith nurture not only their members but provide valuable spaces for everyone in their neighbourhood. Community spaces are vital. Through UPRC services, we are protecting that vital community space and ensuring the ongoing legacy of The United Church of Canada in communities across Canada.

Engaging Communities of Faith, Regional Councils and other UCC entities

Since its inception, UPRC has supported over 300 communities of faith. The supports provided to communities of faith range from exploring what is possible to generate revenue in underutilized church spaces, working with communities of faith exploring amalgamation or collaborative ministry, to providing ongoing engagement with the congregations engaged in development with Kindred Works.

Cowan Heights United Church in St. John's, NL needed support as they increased the rent for the afterschool program that operated out of the church. Every year the cost of operating the church went up, but for a variety of reasons, rent stayed the same. UPRC supported the community of faith as they negotiated with the afterschool program. The rent increased by 45% and the community of faith has new appreciation for the value of their property and increased financial sustainability.

St. James United Church in Waterdown, ON wanted to be proactive about their property and generating new sources of income to fund their ministry. They reached out to UPRC who assisted them in upgrading space for a Montessori School while they simultaneously engaged with Kindred Works on a development. The rental revenue from the Montessori school and the revenue generated from investing their land for rental housing will make a meaningful contribution to the long-term financial sustainability of St James ministry.

White Oaks United Church in London, ON benefits from the support of UPRC as they navigate the complexity of a development project with Kindred Works. Development takes time. Depending on the project it can be five or more years. Over the course of the project congregations must make decisions, plan for where they will worship during construction and ensure the congregation is kept up to date. Through it all UPRC is the first point of contact, attending meetings, and assisting with communication strategies.

In addition to supporting communities of faith, UPRC collaborates with regional councils as they make decisions regarding property. Whether it is providing strategic advice, reviewing agreements or updating the region on projects, UPRC assists regions with strategic property decisions. Often leveraging the knowledge and experience of the Kindred Works team.

UPRC works with all levels of the church. Part of the Common Good section of The United Church of Canada's Strategic Plan, is a focus on property. UPRC works closely with the Working Group on Church Property exploring the theological, sustainability, community-oriented, financial, and strategic questions related to church property. This collaboration led to the Church Property Network, a monthly webinar focused on supporting communities of faith in their role as stewards.

Telling our Stories: UPRC Resources

We tell your property stories and so much more. Learn about the church in Northwest River, NL that runs a thrift store that keeps clothes and other items out of the landfill and a place for people to gather. Check out how Sprucedale United Church became the home of the Dragon Fly Cafe. Beyond Case Stories, this bank of resources includes building assessment forms, building usage forms, rental strategies videos, case stories, and great ideas from other organizations. You can learn more by checking out the Vital Intel page on the UPRC website.

Sustaining Legacy & Future Ministry

Regional trusts are established in ten of the sixteen regional councils and play a role in maintaining the legacy of the United Church of Canada and ensuring sites for future ministry. Across the regions there are 29 properties providing benefit to their community and legacy for the United Church of Canada.

Keswick United Church made the difficult decision to disband their congregation. But their church building was well used by the community, and they wanted to find a way for their community continue to use their property. The community of faith and the region made the decision to move the property into the regional trust. It continues to be home to the thrift store set up by Keswick United Church and it is providing much needed space to a daycare. The property now generates a small surplus of revenue each year that helps the Region support other properties.

Merrickville United Church dreamed of their church becoming a space for the performing arts. Shrinking numbers and leadership led the congregation to disband. Working with the community and local municipality it is now home to The PEWs a community hub and event venue on a long-term lease that ensures the property remains within the United Church. The property generates an annual surplus for capital repairs and ensures the use of the building lives into the legacy of the community of faith

The members of St. John's United Church wanted to ensure that their church building continued long into the future. The congregation set up St. John's Foundation for the Arts known locally as ArtsHub Brockville. The unique partnership between St. John's United Church and ArtsHub Brockville allows the church to continue with worship on Sundays at the same time as creating space for the arts. From performance to visual arts to worship, this space is full activity every day of the week. While the property remains in the United Church for future generations.

Future Foundations, Future Possibilities

The work of the UPRC is grounded in faithful stewardship, practical innovation, and a deep commitment to the ongoing legacy of The United Church of Canada. By supporting communities of faith in understanding, maintaining, and repurposing their properties, UPRC helps ensure that sacred spaces continue to serve both spiritual and social purposes in an ever-changing world. Whether through community partnerships, strategic development, or enhanced rental strategies, UPRC ensures that church spaces continue to serve as places of ministry, outreach, and belonging. In collaboration with Kindred Works and other partners, UPRC is not only sustaining the legacy of The United Church of Canada but also building toward a vibrant, community-rooted future. The stories shared in this report are testament to the creativity, resilience, and faithful leadership of communities of faith across the country. Together, through thoughtful property decisions and strategic collaboration, we are nurturing the future of ministry and extending the United Church's legacy of service and justice into the next generation.

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