



**The United Church
of Canada
General Council**

GC45 Centennial Celebration Committee Report for Summer 2025

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Origin: Richard Bott, Centennial Celebrations Committee Chair

Whatever our ancestors imagined on June 10, 1925, it was likely not what our experience is today. But, perhaps we sell them short. Even a quick read of our history outlines that there were early champions for some of the qualities that have come to define us, such as inclusivity and being justice-seeking, and there were early critics on matters we have come to regret, such as our participation in residential schools. The seeds of our future can be found in our past.

In this year when we mark the 100th anniversary of the formation of The United Church of Canada, we remember our past and commit to planting seeds for the church's future.

The Centennial Committee has been chaired by former Moderator, the Very Rev. Dr. Richard Bott, with the following members appointed to it, Richard Chambers, Colleen Lowrie, Marie-Claude Manga and Denise Weir.

The theme adopted for the Centennial is "Deep, Bold, Daring", drawn from the church's Call and Vision. There are three strands to the Centennial plan with the Committee carrying responsibility for one of these, commemorating the 100th anniversary. The word "commemoration" was selected with intentionality that this year might both celebrate the strengths of the church's past and acknowledge its failings. One way this has happened is through the monthly Centennial newsletters that started in June 2024. Each month has been devoted to a theme that has run through the church's history from the arts to camping to Indigenous ministries to women in the church and so forth. This focus will continue until June 2025 with the last months of 2025 focused on lesser-known stories of the church.

The centennial is framed with worship. On June 9, 2024, the year was launched with worship being livestreamed from Metropolitan United Church, Toronto, a church close to the arena

where the first General Council was held. Our Moderator, the Right Rev. Dr. Carmen Lansdowne, delivered the message, reminding the church of the convictions that led to its formation. In addition to the national service, a resource was provided on the website for communities of faith. The same will be true for June 8, 2025, when the anniversary is celebrated. This service will be livestreamed from Gower Street United Church in St. John's, NL, a tribute to the churches who joined the denomination before they joined the nation! Our guest preacher is Rev. Prof. Dr. Jerry Pillay, the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, noting our place as one of the first united churches. When General Council 45 meets this summer in Calgary, the opening worship will acknowledge the church's Centennial stretching our prayers and praise across this land!

One of the decisions the Centennial Committee made was that they would not script what the commemoration would be for communities of faith but would invite them to mark the anniversary in the way that best suited their context and story. Moderator Carmen prepared a video urging communities of faith to take this moment to connect beyond the congregation with the community. Many different events are listed on the Centennial map on the United Church's website. They demonstrate the creativity of communities of faith. Many thanks to The United Church of Canada Foundation which offered grants to support hosting Centennial events/programs.

The church also undertook the creation of a new musical resource to mark the Centennial. General Council will immerse itself in "Then Let Us Sing", exploring the treasure of international, cross-cultural selections it offers. This work is undertaken by the "Then Let us SING! Development Committee, formerly Sing 2025!, the first of the church's centennial projects. For seven years this committee has been privileged to work with over 100 people, and consulted and collaborated with many more (including sing and share sessions, and the many groups, associations, networks and communities of faith). The committee attempted to build the type of community that we sing about: a community that seeks love, justice, and grace. We prayerful discerned what songs we will sing for this new century of being the church. The final iteration of the Development committee consists of The Editorial Team (lead by Lloyd MacLean) and three subcommittees: Education, Justice, and Ethos (lead by Catherine Faith McLean); Material Curation (co-lead Josh Zentner-Barrett and Maren MacLean Persaud); and Marketing and Animation (lead by Paul Sales). Consultants brought expertise in the fine points of poetry, music, and composition, indexing, and, significantly, digitization. Altogether, the committee and people actively involved number 70 people who faithfully present this collection to the church for the sake of God's glory, love, and justice.

Communities of faith and ministry personnel will receive a special acknowledgement of their contribution to the church's 100 years of faithful witness and ministry.

As we recall our past, we are invited to take up the ministry that led to the church's formation: the commitment to a church for all Canadians. This is the second stream of the Centennial plans. Now we are using new frontiers to reach out to Canadians who do not know us or whose connection to us is in the past through an advertising campaign entitled, "A Place at the Table", <https://united-church.ca/a-place-at-the-table>. This is part of the church's commitment to strengthening invitation.

The third stream invites us to consider the future by planning a legacy gift through the Centennial Fundraising Campaign. This campaign is a resource available to communities of faith. One way of acknowledging the impact and importance of your community of faith is to offer a gift from your estate that will help that community of faith continue to be present and to have an impact on others.

Let us pray that, at this momentous moment in our history, we may commit ourselves anew to Deep Spirituality, Bold Discipleship, and Daring Justice, that 100 years from now our descendants can celebrate the legacy of the seeds we plant.

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