



**The United Church
of Canada
General Council**

GCE45 GS12 Commitment to the 2nd United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent for November 2025

True Document Date: November 14, 2025

1. What is the issue? Why is it important?

We believe that God is calling The United Church of Canada to commit to engage with the 2nd United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent. This second Decade is running from 2025-2034.

In The United Church of Canada's National Anti-Racism Action Plan (2022-2025), one area of focus has been on education, and to "understand the diverse impacts of colonialism, White supremacy, and racism in our church. This includes, but is not limited to, anti-Indigenous, anti-Black, anti-Asian, anti-immigrant, and internalized racism". A particular focus on anti-Black racism would be consistent with this area.

Further, in the church's anti-racism policy statement, *That All May Be One*, the United Church named four key areas for ongoing work; one of which is: "speak to the world by supporting anti-racism work within broader society". Engaging with the second Decade creates space for this kind of anti-racism work within the church and society.

2. What is happening now?

Some aspects of The United Church of Canada's anti-racism work were codified into policy in the year 2000, with the policy statement *That All May Be One*. Twenty years later, in the year

2020, the United Church made a commitment to becoming an anti-racist denomination, and also named that Black Lives Matter to the United Church.

The United Church did commit to the first United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024), and as a part of that commitment created a program for [Young Black Scholars](#), in 2021. That program later expanded to become the [Indigenous and Racialized Youth Scholars](#) program.

In addition, the United Church has already committed to work on reparations and reparatory justice. In 2025, the United Church agreed to a process for an apology from The United Church of Canada to the [African Diaspora for Slavery and the Legacies of Slavery in Canada](#); the [follow up work](#) related to this apology directly relates to the second Decade.

There is also ongoing work being done on anti-racism broadly, guided by the church's National Anti-Racism Action Plan (which has since been woven into the church's Strategic Plan). This anti-racism work includes a focus on education and action, theology, governance, and systemic shifts within the church as a whole.

3. What is the recommendation?

The Executive of General Council might:

- **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.**

4. Background information:

The first [United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent](#), ran from 2015-2024, and it had as its theme: "Recognition, Justice, and Development." Governments, organizations, institutions, churches and other faith-based bodies also engaged with the decade.

The United Church of Canada, together with full communion partner The United Church of Christ (USA), made a joint commitment to engage with that first Decade as part of the churches collaborative work together. The church's joint commitment to the first Decade was written about in a [Mandate magazine article](#) from Winter 2018, and was also the focus of a [joint video project](#) between the two churches.

In naming that first Decade, the United Nations named on their website that "people of African descent represent a distinct group whose human rights must be promoted and protected."

In the early days of the first Decade, prior to 2020, however, there was limited engagement from people across around the world and within the United Church. For example, [Barbara Reynolds](#), the Chair of the [UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent](#) (WGEPAD), noted that one of the challenges in the first Decade was the lack of political will and lack of investment by countries in the Decade itself. Leadership from within the United Nations have noted that while the first Decade raised some awareness of anti-Black racism, that first Decade did not go far enough to dismantle some of the systemic inequities and human rights challenges faced by Black people globally.

In the initial years of the Decade, within The United Church of Canada, some people named that they did not understand why Black people were named as a distinct group; or why there was a particular focus on anti-Black racism when there are many other forms of discrimination and oppression. There was a marked shift in 2020, when in the midst of COVID, George Floyd was brutally murdered and the global community began to pay attention to what many Black people already knew—the realities of systemic anti-Black racism in Canada and around the world. Globally, around that time, there was also a rise in awareness around anti-racism, and more attention given to Black Lives Matter.

The United Church also then re-focused on anti-racism work: the church made a [commitment to becoming an anti-racist denomination](#) in 2020 (further following up on the already-existing anti-racism policy, *That All May Be One*, from 20 years prior). The church also named how it might [go about its renewed anti-racist work](#) in 2020 and declared that [Black Lives Matter to](#)

[the United Church.](#)

In December 2024, the [United Nations proclaimed](#) that there would be a second International Decade for People of African Descent, which would run from 2025-2034. According to [the United Nations](#), the “Second International Decade is an opportunity to take concrete actions to confront the legacies of enslavement and colonialism, deliver reparatory justice, and secure the full human rights and freedoms of people of African descent worldwide.”

The United Church of Canada is also exploring work on reparations and colonialism, and engaging with the second Decade would give a further opportunity to deepen this work and continue engagement on confronting anti-Black racism in the Canadian and United Church contexts. It would further our commitment to becoming an anti-racist denomination, and offer additional opportunities for faithful reflection, education, and action. In addition, there are opportunities to explore collaboration with the World Council of Churches (who recently held a webinar, about [engaging Christian actors in the second Decade](#)), with United Nations advocacy instruments, with other churches, and with the people of the United Church in reflection and action.

5. How does this proposal help us to live into our church's commitments on equity?

This proposal directly relates to the following church commitments on equity:

- Anti-racism policy, *That All May Be One* (year: 2000)
- Commitment to becoming an anti-racist denomination (year: 2020)
- Becoming an intercultural church (years: 2006, 2009, and 2012)

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