



# **GCE45 GS27 Approval of Toward 2035 Strategic Direction and 2026-2028 Strategic Objectives for November 2025**

True Document Date: November 14, 2025

## **1. What is the issue?**

A study of the future of The United Church of Canada, projecting to 2035 based on the period of 1992-2023, revealed significant challenges in levels of membership, worship attendance, identifiable givers, and Sunday School attendance, as well as a pattern of majority part-time ministry and increasing deficits in congregations. In contrast, an examination of data from 2023 shows that some pastoral charges (@10%) are growing, and as a result of the strategic plan of 2023-2025 migrant communities of faith (approximately 30) are emerging.

Coming to grips with this truth—both decline and growth—has spurred a Spirit-filled commitment to develop a whole church strategy towards a bolder future. [Toward 2035](#) (T2035) reflects an understanding that no one part of the church can manifest this hopeful future alone. We need an overarching shared direction, common principles, and intersecting and coordinated plans, strategies and practices, informed by data, connecting the General Council, regional councils, and communities of faith. The experience of the development and implementation of a General Council strategic plan for 2023-2025 is one of strengthened future-focus and tangible results. It is essential that a 2026-2028 plan be developed, harvesting the gains and learning from the current GCO plan and regional initiatives, broadening to wider church engagement and aligning to the Toward 2035 vision.

## **2. Why is the issue important?**

We hold a conviction, with both humility and confidence, that The United Church of Canada is called to faithful and liberating witness to the risen Christ in our day and time. We are convinced that the United Church continues to be called to live out that witness in community or communities of disciples, coast-to-coast-to coast, retaining the rural and urban character of the current church. With a commitment to a sustained future as a Canadian denomination, the changing nature of Canada requires a stronger commitment to a multi-generational and multi-racial church, living toward our inter-cultural vision. Realizing the vision requires the articulation of a clear strategic direction, reflecting who we wish to be within the 10 years, and confirming strong objectives as to the outcomes of the next three years. Without clarity and planning rigour, compelled by our Call to deep spirituality, bold discipleship and daring justice, and anchored in metrics that provide opportunities for monitoring, evaluation, and adjustment, we will not be able to coordinate our efforts towards impact and results.

### **3. How might the Executive of the General Council respond to this issue?**

The 2023-2025 strategic plan had six priority pillars. It is proposed that we shape Toward 2035 in four key priorities for 2026-2028 to strengthen our focus and impact: Strengthen Invitation (Growth), Embolden Justice, Invigorate Leadership and Journeying Indigenous Pathways. While the latter will move in the manner of and under the direction of the Indigenous church, the first three objectives are being proposed for approval by the General Council Executive following opportunities for the provision of feedback by the GCE in September 2025. In addition, approval for the overall ten-year strategic direction is also required, having incorporated earlier feedback. These areas represent the crucial components of General Council Executive approval, within the broader mandate of the Call and Vision, and provide the framework for subsequent staff work on initiatives and key results (see Appendix two for the intersecting areas of the overall plan). Guided by these areas, by June 30 of 2026, we will have a full 2026-2028 plan aligned with T2035. **It is noted that strategic metrics for the direction and each objective will come to the February 2026 meeting of the GCE for approval, with targets coming to the May meeting.**

**The General Secretary recommends**

**That the General Council Executive approve:**

- a. the Toward 2035 Strategic Direction.
- b. three-year strategic objectives related to Strengthen Invitation, Invigorating Leadership, and Emboldening Justice.

That the General Council Executive direct the General Secretary to make annual plans for 2026-2028 to implement the direction and objectives, aligning staff and financial resources.

## 4. For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council Executive:

Toward 2035 was identified as a key direction by the General Council Executive in November of 2024, with continued confirmation in March of 2025, with the General Secretary asked to make the development of a plan aligned to this direction as a priority. Presentations on T2035 have been made at General Council 45 and across the church in regional meetings, networks, staff groupings and clusters (see Appendix 3). A draft strategic direction and draft objectives came to the September meeting of the Executive and have been revised based on this feedback, with approval now being sought. Metrics for the direction and objective will return to the Executive for approval in February 2026 with targets for the strategic metrics offered for approval in the May meeting.

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