



The United Church of Canada Overview of Strategic Plan 2022-2025



Introduction

“Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness.” (2 Corinthians 3:12)

Plans are an assertion of hope, not blithe optimism, but genuine tangible hope for a future unseen. This strategic plan points towards a bold, hopeful, sustainable future for The United Church of Canada. This effort is not for the sake of the institution nor only the needs of the communities of faith that make up our legacy and our present. It is because we believe that The United Church of Canada is called to witness in love and justice to the liberating healing Christ risen in this place and time. The plan “at such a time such as this,” (Esther 4:14) is our best effort to disrupt the narratives of decline and despair. Discerning a strong purpose, offering a clear vision, and proposing five interconnected strategic objectives, the plan strives to create the conditions for growth, slowing if not stopping the slide in participation, impact, and finances. The status quo is not an option.

Building on the assumptions of the Comprehensive Review Task Group, this plan imagines communities of faith as more expansive than local congregations, inclusive of camps, education centres, chaplaincies, community and other ministries. It anticipates communities of the future, the shape of which we do not yet know. This plan focuses on the General Council Office (GCO), and its role as enabler, coordinator, connector and identity shaper. Going beyond the GCO, it also offers vision and call statements that invite the whole church into reflection. How might communities of faith and regional councils engage this collective expression of identity and purpose? What complementary plans might flow and connect to this 2022-2025 strategic plan for the GCO? How might we unite around who we could be as Beloved Community—deep, bold, daring, diverse, hope-filled, inspiring—living the Good News that continues to be born in our midst, even in these most perilous times?

Origins and Development

This has been a Spirit-led process of both deep and broad consultation resulting in growing convergence and excitement on the implications of an articulated and inspiring purpose, direction, and plan for The United Church of Canada “at such a time as this” (Esther 4:14).

In light of the earlier restructuring of the church, and in response to two proposals--Leading on *Purpose* and *A Vision to Ground Us*, General Council 43 recommended to its Executive and the General Secretary the development of a common mission and vision for The United Church of Canada. The Executive of the General Council undertook the task. This work also overlapped with the Executive’s desire to establish some clear priorities for the national work of the denomination and the General Council

Office. Following the appointment of the new General Secretary Michael Blair, these pieces of work were brought together into a consultation process leading to the development of a mission and vision for the whole church and a full strategic plan for the General Council office for 2022-2025.

In January of 2021, an advisory Project Team from across the church was formed.

Relevant denominational reports, reflections, and statements were reviewed, and organizational values were confirmed through a process, beginning with joint reflection by the National Indigenous Council (NIC) and the General Council Executive (GCE). In addition, a series of “right relations” commitments were confirmed, understood to be foundational for the development of any plan, such as the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, *Caretakers’ Calls to the Church* and *Becoming an Anti-Racist Church*.

In February and March 2021, work continued to discern context. Six key areas were identified where the current conjuncture was seen to offer challenge but also opportunity. Relevant to this context, three possible directions for the General Council Office were developed. A series of consultations on mission, vision, as well as possible objectives and initiatives for the GCO followed: Moderator’s Town Halls (5); Indigenous Church Circles (4); and virtual focus groups with specific communities across the church and partnerships (23). These virtual gatherings were in addition to a set of focused surveys.

By the end of June, a proposed mission and vision statement had been developed and was being tested with leadership in the church including regional council presidents/chairs, principals of theological schools, and staff leadership. In August, the refined statement was tested with General Council Commissioners through a survey, to strong support. The final proposed statement was brought to the General Council Executive in September 2021, who revised the statement and recommended it to the 43 General Council Recall in October 2021. The statement was approved unanimously. In November 2021, the GCE ratified five strategic objectives for the General Council Office, linked to the approved statements, from which the General Secretary is developing and accountable operational plan. On request of the Indigenous church, the word “mission” was shifted to “call,” in light of the traumatic legacy of the original word.

Foundational to the Plan

The following affirmations, values, and commitments are understood to be foundational to the call and vision statements, and to the GCO strategic plan 2022-2025. The approach offers an important lens through which to view the statements and plan.

Affirmations drawn from our tradition

- Basis of Union
- 1940 Statement of Faith
- A New Creed
- Song of Faith

Values developed with the National Indigenous Council and the General Council Executive

- Christian Faith
- Sacred Story
- Compassion
- Integrity
- Respect
- Community
- Equity
- Reconciliation
- Service
- Humility
- Innovation

Commitments drawn from our Statements:

- To Right Relations with Indigenous Peoples: Reflected in the United Church Apologies and commitments to the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and the *Caretakers' Calls*.
- To Become a Church that is: Anti-Racist, Inter-Cultural, Affirming, Open, Accessible and Barrier-Free, and Functionally Bilingual
- To Live Principles of Partnership in Global and Canadian Solidarity*

*Such as from *Reviewing Partnership in the Context of Empire* (2008), *Canadian Partnership* (2012)

Approach

A vital vibrant future for the United Church relies on the health of each part—national, regional and communities of faith, including in and with the Indigenous church. In a healthy church, the national supports the regions who support

communities of faith as the primary focus of ministry. In approaching implementation of this plan, attention will be given to the roles of each and the positive, supportive interconnections.

Becoming Beloved Community: Call and Vision

The proposed Call reflects the core of what The United Church of Canada seeks to be in this time. While the six words and three phrases stand alone, they also reflect a process through which a deep and grounded faith compels a life of bold discipleship, lived in worship, service, and community, and expressed in the church and world in daring acts of justice.

The vision strives to reflect what the church aspires to be within a five to ten-year span.

Living purposefully into this vision anticipates becoming what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and others called the “Beloved Community,” the ever inbreaking, ever transforming, ever reconciling realm of God, realized in our time.

Call

- Deep Spirituality
- Bold Discipleship
- Daring Justice

Vision

Called by God, as disciples of Jesus, The United Church of Canada seeks to be a bold, connected, evolving church of diverse, courageous, hope-filled communities united in deep spirituality, inspiring worship, and daring justice.

Strategic Objectives for the General Council Office

To guide the General Council Office in moving towards the stated vision, five strategic directions with objectives have been approved by the General Council Executive.

While each objective is expressed as a specific theme, there are strong intersections between each area. Each of the objectives will flow into initiatives and results that will be accountably tracked and evaluated through an operational plan developed by the General Secretary.

Embolden Justice: Collaborating to Mend Church and World

Make meaningful collective progress on Indigenous justice, racial equity, and 2SLGBTQplus rights both in the church and world, while demonstrably deepening bold effective solidarity on other justice issues, through ecumenical collaboration and denominational networking.

Invigorate Leadership: Adapting and Innovating for Bold Discipleship

Renew a vision of leadership based on the emerging call of the denomination—deep spirituality, bold discipleship and daring justice--and align discernment, recruitment, training, and support of ordered and lay leadership, to this vision.

Nurture Common Good: Equity and Sustainability in Resources

Significantly increase denominational capacity and will to make decisions on properties and resources focused on the ministry of the whole church, enhancing equity, sustainability, right relations, and administrative efficiency and effectiveness.

Deepen Integrity: Living Climate Commitments

Amplify and integrate current initiatives in a bold, hopeful denominational climate strategy that accelerates reductions towards the goal of an 80% decrease in emissions by 2030.

Strengthen Invitation: Humility and Confidence in Sharing Faith

Develop and implement effective and connected regional and national strategies, that result in growth within existing ministries, and by seeding and sustaining new ministries and communities of faith.

Indigenous Pathways:

While Indigenous perspectives and initiatives will be incorporated in each of the objectives, there will also be specific initiatives flowing from the work of the Indigenous church.

Strategic Plan of The United Church of Canada 2022-2025

Call

- ### Values
- Christian Faith
 - Sacred Story
 - Compassion
 - Integrity
 - Respect
 - Community
 - Equity
 - Reconciliation
 - Service
 - Humility
 - Innovation



Commitments

- Right Relations with Indigenous peoples.
- Becoming a Church that is:
 - Anti-Racist; Affirming;
 - Open, Accessible and Barrier Free; Intercultural;
 - Functionally Bilingual

Affirmations

- Basis of Union
- 1940 Statement of Faith
- A New Creed
- Song of Faith

Strategic Plan Development Project Team

- Rev. Karlene Brown-Palmer
- Allan Buckingham
- Amy Haynes
- Rev. Beth Hayward
- Rev. Éric Hébert-Daly
- Dea. Richard Manley-Tannis
- Rev. Murray Pruden
- Rev. Michael Blair, General Secretary
- Rt. Rev Richard Bott, Moderator
- Jennifer Henry, Project Manager

**For more information on the 2022-2025 Strategic Plan
or General Council Office Operational Plan**

planning@united-church.ca