



2024 Strategic Plan Report

Deep Spirituality | Bold Discipleship | Daring Justice



The United Church of Canada / L'Église Unie du Canada



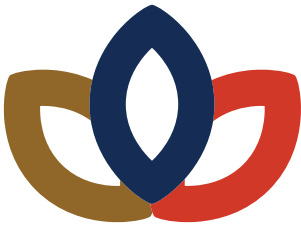
As we live out our church's Centennial, we hear the call to be deep, bold, and daring in renewing our church for the next 100 years.

The General Council Office's Strategic Plan is helping the church realize our Vision, working closely with regional councils across the country. We hope these stories of progress from year two of our plan will engage, inspire, and compel.

Call and Vision

Our Call strives to reflect the core of what The United Church of Canada seeks to be in this time. 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 aims to reflect what the church aspires to be within a 5- to 10-year span.



Call

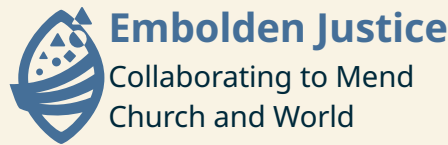
Deep Spirituality
Bold Discipleship
Daring Justice

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

Strategic objectives to guide progress towards the Vision were approved by the General Council Executive. They are focused on the ministry of the General Council Office. Each objective forms part of the operational plan, and is broken down further into initiatives and activities that are accountably tracked and evaluated.



Embolden Justice

Collaborating to Mend Church and World



Invigorate Leadership

Adapting and Innovating for Bold Discipleship



Nurture the Common Good

Equity and Sustainability in Resources



Deepen Climate Integrity

Living Climate Commitments



Strengthen Invitation (Growth)

Humility and Confidence in Sharing Faith



Journeying Indigenous Pathways

Forging Right Relations

You can find the full text of the objectives by going to [Our Call and Vision](#) on [united-church.ca](#) and selecting the link for each strategic objective.



Embolden Justice

Informed by those with lived experience, we join with others in the hard work of bringing about racial and Indigenous justice, and 2SLGBTQIA+ rights, including through Canadian and global partnerships.

The United Church of Canada continues to support global and ecumenical partners in promoting and advocating for the human rights of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals. In Maputo, Mozambique, last August of 2024, delegates from the United Church were honoured to join alongside LGBTQIA+ people and faith leaders from over 10 African countries in a transformative consultation on Human Sexuality and Gender Diversity in the African church.

“Journeying in Love and Compassion on Human Sexuality and Gender Diversity” was led by The All Africa Theological Education by Extension Associate (AATEEA), accompanied by The United Church of Canada and local hosts the Christian Council of Mozambique and LAMBDA Association, the latter of whom advocates for the human rights of LGBTQIA+ people in Mozambique. The event was the fourth regional 2SLGBTQIA+ consultation supported by the United Church since 2017, following previous events in Canada, Colombia, and the Philippines.

Over a four-day consultation, participants engaged in dialogue reckoning with the exclusion, discrimination, and violence, often fueled by

negative religious rhetoric, that members of the LGBTQIA+ community face throughout Africa, and the stigma that may come with declaring oneself an affirming ally. According to the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association, 33 of the 54 African states recognized by the United Nations have laws that criminalize same-sex conduct. Only 9 out of 54 African countries offer legal protection, mainly due to the legacy of colonial laws and religious and politically instigated discrimination.

Our work towards supporting human rights for LGBTQIA+ communities in Africa continues. A two-year grant for \$372,533 between now and November 2026 was recently approved for a collaborative project with AATEEA from the Act Together for Inclusion Fund, funded by Global Affairs Canada and managed by Equitas in partnership with Dignity Network Canada. The grant will support a Human Sexuality and Gender Diversity project consisting of further dialogues in Kenya and South Africa with the participation of delegates from throughout eastern and southern Africa, as well as public engagement and advocacy initiatives.

General Secretary Rev. Michael Blair speaks at the Human Sexuality and Gender Diversity consultation, Maputo, Mozambique.



Credit: Jane Thirikwa/The United Church of Canada



Invigorate Leadership

As we strive to better reflect the diversity and needs of our church and country—current and future—we are developing key resources, experimenting with pilot programs, and reimagining training for leaders to enable them to meet new challenges and possibilities.

As we look forward to the United Church’s second century we’re tending to the next generation of leaders: those who guide the spiritual life of the church today and as it flourishes into the decades ahead of us.

Enter (Re)Generate: the Moderator’s Leadership program. A pilot project to support, challenge, and strengthen 32 United Church ministry personnel leaders of all identities and backgrounds from across the national church, (Re)Generate’s first year in 2024 was a resounding, inspiring success. Participants are being equipped to collaboratively deepen their leadership skills in alignment with the changing needs of the church in the world.

In 2024, the cohort met in January and October at Five Oaks Education and Retreat Centre in Paris, Ontario; an online retreat was hosted in June. Church and community leaders, including the Moderator, have helped participants dig deep and reflect on how they can maximize leadership and organizational strategy to best inspire today’s communities of faith.

“Over the week together we supported one another, were challenged in our thinking and assumptions,

listened deeply to each other and ourselves, and had fun,” said the Rev. Emily Gordon of Leaside United Church, Toronto, on last January’s (Re)Generate residency. “Sometimes in our individual ministry contexts the passion that we carry for what we do can dim under the weight of the day to day demands. Having a space for support, challenge, fun, song, and worship helped brighten my own flame.”

Topics such as change and financial management, fundraising, allyship and advocacy, strategic communications and planning have also been explored. Through capstone projects, participants will apply the knowledge and skills drawn from (Re)Generate into their own ministries.

(Re)Generate is part of The Right Rev. Dr. Carmen Lansdowne’s Moderator’s Flourishing project dedicated to inspiring bold action and ideas that build up our communal sense of belonging and meaning, strengthening the social fabric of the church.

The (Re)Generate cohort continues its journey in 2025 with retreats in January, May and June.

The (Re)Generate cohort at the first group retreat, January 2024.



Credit: Five Oaks Education and Retreat Centre



Nurture the Common Good

Being a national organization can help benefit communities of faith across the country. Administrative efficiencies, effectiveness, and accountability, including by sharing services, frees up time and resources for ministry.

The major ongoing redevelopment of 300 Bloor Street West is the most exciting infrastructure project that the national church is investing in to ensure its future is undergirded by the most efficient, effective, and collaborative operations possible. The future new home of our General Council Office as well as the national offices of the Anglican and Presbyterian churches of Canada, it will be a testament to conscientious resource use and nurturing ecumenical relations.

Located in the downtown Annex-University of Toronto neighbourhood, the development includes a refurbished Sanctuary for Bloor Street United Church, which has existed in varying capacities on the site since 1886, as well as office space for the three denominations, community, and commercial spaces. The floor plans reflect a more efficient and flexible use of physical space for the new offices, and were drafted with input from all three denominations.

The facility will include common meeting spaces and a shared video production studio. A shared archive will be the new home of the United Church archives, which are currently located at a downtown Toronto facility separate from our General Council Office. By sharing its square

footage and specialized resources, the church is ensuring overhead organizational costs will be reduced for decades to come.

The shared space is also an exciting opportunity for the United Church to deepen its relationship with its ecumenical partners. It's a tangible expression of the commitment of all three denominations to collaboration, greater impact in the public space, and increasing the ability to innovate and share ideas.

The building will also include a number of green features to reduce our emissions footprint and deliver a legacy of environmental stewardship for future generations. Electric vehicle infrastructure and bicycle parking will promote low-carbon transportation, and high-efficiency heating and cooling systems and LED lighting throughout the building will reduce energy costs. A stormwater retention will reuse stormwater in washrooms, saving hundreds of thousands of litres of water per year, and wildlife-friendly features will provide habitats for birds and pollinators.

The project is currently under construction, with completion and move-in expected in late 2026.

The Rev. Victor Kim, Presbyterian Church; The Rev. Michael Blair, United Church, and The Venerable Alan Perry, Anglican Church, on site in March 2024.



Credit: Patrick-James Boyd/The United Church of Canada



Deepen Climate Integrity

We offer tools and resources for immediate climate action to help communities and individuals live with respect in creation. Building by building, and coast to coast, we are taking responsibility to reduce our emissions, as we advocate for nation-wide change.

United churches across Canada have been taking on transformative projects to green their buildings, increasing energy efficiency, reducing their environmental footprint, and utilizing savings to benefit their communities. Transcona Memorial United Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba, has taken especially inspiring action, rallying public support to build a resilient, eco-friendly church for the low-carbon future.

In 2022, Transcona Memorial received a \$30,000 grant from the United Church's Faithful Footprints program. Faithful Footprints, delivered in partnership with Faith & the Common Good, provides investments and guidance for churches undertaking decarbonizing projects and climate change-resilience improvements. Transcona's initial project involved replacing three older gas furnaces with two air source heat pumps and an ultra-high efficiency gas furnace as backup.

The following year, Transcona Memorial was able to leverage its deep commitment to sustainability and the church's grant into even more significant public investments. In June 2023, the federal and provincial governments and City of Winnipeg announced a combined additional contribution

of over \$570,000 towards a multi-pronged project, which included improving insulation, installing LED lighting throughout the building, and adding 25-kilowatt solar panels to the church's roof.

Upgrades continued into 2024, and by the summer the church had already seen its carbon footprint cut in half. In total, it's estimated that the project will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 33.2 tonnes per year and building energy consumption by 81.4 percent, amounting to savings of thousands of dollars per year.

The building is also an accessible hub for community groups and programs; organizations including Transcona Girl Guides, the Alzheimer Society of Manitoba, and Transcona Food Bank use the space.

546 communities of faith nationwide, including Transcona Memorial, have connected with the Faithful Footprints program since 2018. Funding has been approved for over 300 retrofit projects, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 5,303 metric tonnes CO₂e in 168 United Church buildings, which is equivalent to the annual energy use of 1,242 homes.

Transcona Memorial United Church's solar panel rooftop.



Credit: Transcona Memorial United Church



Strengthen Invitation (Growth)

We are renewing existing communities of faith, creating new churches, and supporting bolder invitation. The United Church of Canada is not wrapping up; we are ramping up as we enter our next 100 years.

In its first two years of existence, our Growth initiative has been making incredible headway into broadening the United Church's invitation to all. In 2024, it supported the creation of an exciting new ministry formed in collaboration between Sunnybrook United Church, in Red Deer, Alberta, and Red Deer Polytechnic, a college in the same city.

Sunnybrook United has opened a new First Third ministry, dedicated to reaching out to and supporting young people and families in the first third of their lives, wherever their spiritual journeys are, while also supporting a new [Campus United ministry](#).

Both are hosted at the Red Deer Polytechnic campus, and both are breathing vital new life into the spiritual community of the town and raising new voices in the United Church.

"Sunnybrook is incredibly excited about their new First Third Ministry and the support that they can offer to the new Campus United ministry... It felt that the Holy Spirit was guiding the process as many people said, 'Yes' to a new thing they discerned God was doing in their midst," says Growth Animator Rev. Scott Reynolds.

The United Church's goal of creating 100 new churches is also making great strides; 25 migrant and diasporic communities are now on their way to becoming United Church communities of faith. These "church plants" include people from Filipino, Hong Kong, Korean, and African-descent communities who are drawn by our invitation to the table.

One exciting development is the emergence of a group of Swahili-speaking communities in Ontario and Quebec where Issa Winasi, an Ottawa-based faith leader from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), leads church plant activities. Emmanuel United Methodist Church, Winasi's community in Ottawa, whose members come from the DRC, Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda, began meeting weekly for Sunday worship at a member's home during the pandemic.

Winasi's United Methodist Church background eventually made possible the connection with the United Church, through our shared Methodist roots. Winasi has connected churches in Cornwall, Ontario, and Oshawa, Ontario with United Church activities for further growth, as well as an additional emerging community in Gatineau, Quebec.

Members of the Emmanuel United Methodist Church congregation with the Rev. Dr. Junior Smith of Trinity United Church in Ottawa.



Credit: Issa Winasi



Journeying Indigenous Pathways

We recognize and celebrate diverse Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and engaging with theologies and spiritual practices. We are committed to decolonizing church structures, and to partnering with a self-determining Indigenous Church.

Last year's National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering (NISG) was held from November 29-December 2, 2024 in Winnipeg, a spiritually significant and sacred place.

The gathering was called to appoint a new National Indigenous Council (NIC) to govern the Indigenous Church, following the dissolution of the previous NIC in the summer of 2024. Participants held conversations towards developing a shared understanding of faithful leadership and inclusive governance, rooted in Indigenous protocols and traditions.

The NISG began in ceremony. The National Indigenous Elders Council opened the Indigenous Church's Bundle. Moderator Carmen Lansdowne then led a service of Holy Communion. A fire was kept burning throughout the gathering at which participants were invited to reflect and pray. NISG participants were guided through an Indigenous Appreciative Inquiry (IAI) process by Matt LeBlanc, Nichole Forbes, and Elder Terry LeBlanc. As a philosophy, IAI builds on the best ideas and practices of traditional ways of knowing, being, and doing.

However, the NISG decided that it was not ready to appoint a new NIC. They agreed that further work needs to be done to develop an effective model for governance of the Indigenous Church. They asked the National Indigenous Elders Council to provide leadership in developing that model.

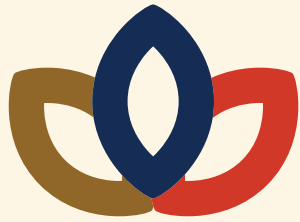
At the gathering, the Elders Council set a path forward for the Indigenous Church. After allowing for time for healing, the Council will come back together to plan for a dreaming/visioning group that includes multi-generational participation from Indigenous communities across the country. The National Indigenous Elders Council will also be expanded to ensure better representation from all regions of the Indigenous Church.

Other priorities in the renewed path include seeking a better understanding of the work of Indigenous Ministries and Justice, gathering and studying documentation from all past iterations of the Indigenous Church to guide the current process, connecting with relevant resource people to help bring clarity to the process, and involving the Community Capacity Development Coordinators in supporting planning and ongoing healing work.

National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering, 2024.



Credit: Joni Shawana/The United Church of Canada



Youth Action Across the Strategic Plan

The bold objectives of our strategic plan lay the groundwork for an equitable, sustainable, inclusive, and thriving United Church of the future. It's constantly inspiring to see the daring action taken by the young people of the church, those who will lead it into the generations to come, across each strategic objective.

Take our [Youth Climate Motivators](#), for instance. For the second year in a row, more than a dozen youth from across Canada spent last summer working with local congregations on climate justice initiatives, raising their voices to garner significant public notice. Motivator Lachlan Duncanson-Hales hosted a climate action event in Sudbury as part of a global day of action on July 22, 2024, emphasizing the urgent need to reduce fossil fuel pollution to limit the Earth's further warming. The Climate Motivator program is presented in partnership with [The GO Project](#).

The church's successful growth into new communities was on full display in the first-ever



The 2024 Youth Climate Motivators.



The 2024 Youth Leadership Animators.

United Church gathering of francophone youth, with over 100 attending for a weekend of worship, workshops, icebreakers, presentations, and panels. Celebrating under the theme of “We are no longer strangers,” the gathering was held in Jouvence, Quebec, from November 29–December 1, 2024. Many attendees came from French-speaking African communities, not only from Quebec's Nakonha:ka Regional Council, but also from Shining Waters and Eastern Ontario Outaouais—regions with fewer francophone communities.

Our [Youth Leadership Animators](#) have been working hard to develop young peoples' participation in the upcoming 45th General Council, to be held in Calgary in August 2025. Also in partnership with The GO Project, the eight youth from across Canada participated in placements over the summer of 2024 in their local communities, aiding them in vocational discernment and leadership development. Along with two coordinators, the Animators met in Calgary in July 2024 to lay the groundwork for

100 young people, at least 50 percent of whom are Indigenous or Racialized, to participate in GC45 as part of Youth Forum.

2024 also saw eight young scholars develop research projects on issues close to their hearts through the Indigenous-Racialized Youth Scholars program. Through creative expression, including poetry and prose, the bright young minds of the church reflected on issues including Canadian history and racism's impacts on their generation, and presented their findings at communities of faith across the country. The program will return this spring, with a new group of scholars sharing their vital perspectives.

Youth from all the above groups, and many more, came together from July 3–7, 2024 to celebrate at Rendez-vous 2024: Audacious Hope, a five-day gathering at Brock University in St. Catherine's, Ontario for youth, young adults, and First Third Ministry Leaders in the United Church and Presbyterian Church in Canada. From vibrant worship to theme presentations and workshops for



Credit: Owen Sheppard/The United Church of Canada

Youth participants at Audacious Hope 2024.

youth and for ministry leaders, to team-building games and dance parties, it was a time of joy, faith, and meaningful connection for the over 450 attendees, and an inspiring vision of the United Church of the future.

These programs have each helped to advance one of the key strategic objectives, but also reflect a strategy for bold youth and young adult engagement across the whole of the denomination.



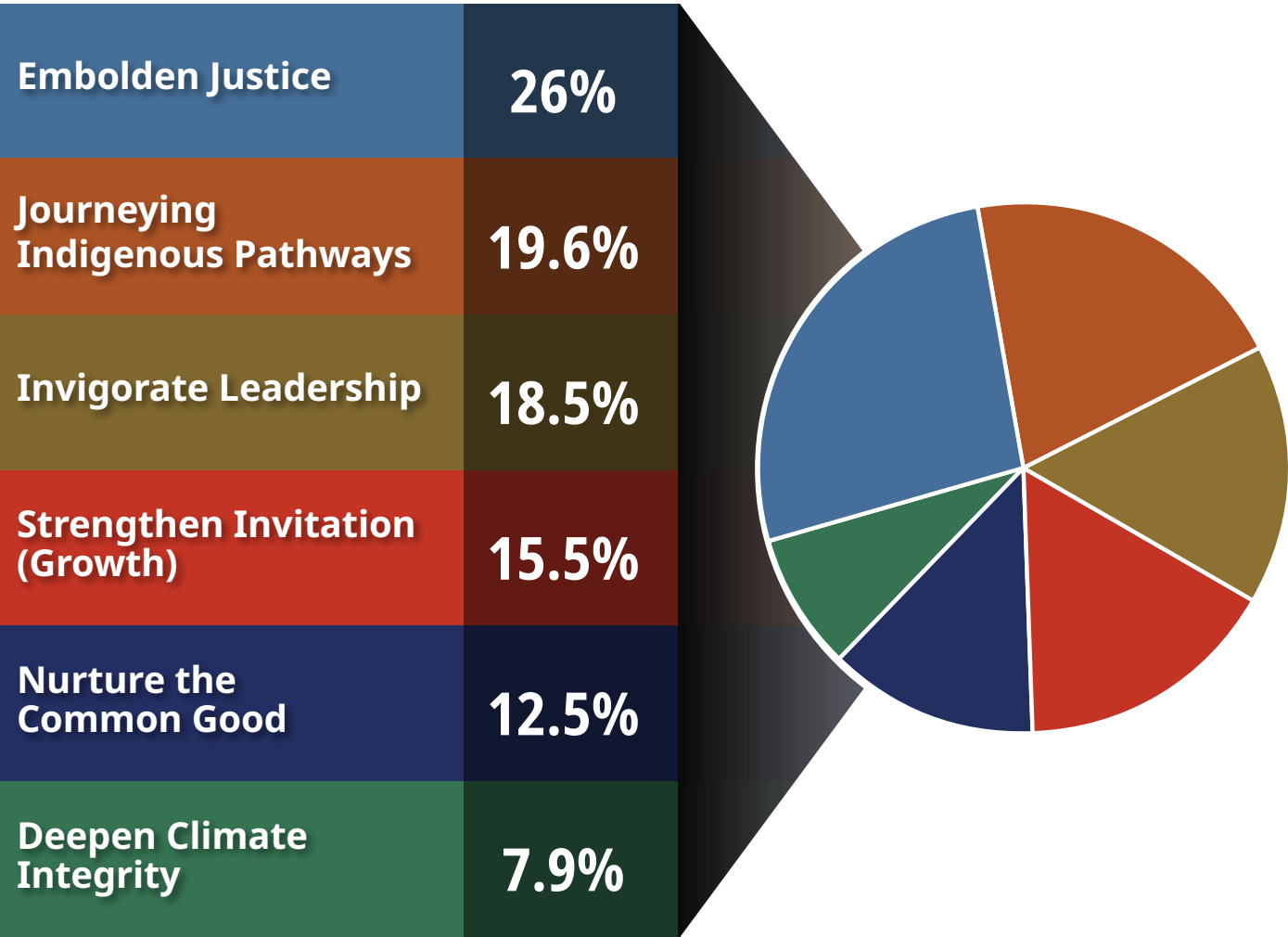
Youth participants at Audacious Hope 2024.

Credit: Patrick-James Boyd/The United Church of Canada

Financials

Operating Budget PLUS Fund Centre Activities

In 2024, the General Council of the United Church dedicated resources (salaries, grants, programs, etc.) from the operating budget to the six areas of the Strategic Plan. In addition, particular areas were supplemented by specialized reserve funds, or fund centres.



For more detail, refer to the audited financial statements that will be available later on united-church.ca (search “financial statements”).

By the Numbers in 2024

- 6 Strategic Objectives 🐟
- 79 Activity Streams ➡️
- 23 Priority Areas (of the 79 Activity Streams) 🎯
- 78% progress on planned Key Results overall* 🔑

Climate objective highest at 87.75% progress on Key Results ⚙️

*Excluding Indigenous Pathways, which reported in a narrative manner.

We are deeply grateful to be able to advance the Strategic Plan, drawing from Mission and Service contributions, assessment, reserve funds, and other revenues.

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that we live, worship, and work on Indigenous lands.

We are committed to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, and recognize that this includes aligning ourselves with the values of living with respect in creation.

We continue living and praying together on this great land, and together we support each other's journey.

This report is available on the Our Call and Vision webpage (united-church.ca/call-vision).

La version française de ce rapport sera disponible en ligne sur la page L'appel et la vision de l'Église Unie (recherchez «appel et vision» sur egliseunie.ca).

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Cover photo: The (Re)Generate cohort at the first group retreat, January 2024. Credit: Five Oaks Education and Retreat Centre