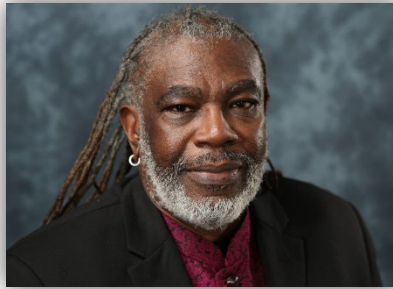


## THE GENERAL COUNCIL EXECUTIVE and GENERAL COUNCIL OFFICE



**Rev. Michael Blair**  
*General Secretary, The United Church of Canada*

On behalf of the Moderator, the Executive of the General Council and the General Council Office, it is my pleasure to share some of the highlights of the ministry of the administrative work of the Church.

### Towards 2035

The 45th General Council Executive, in November 2025, approved a 10-year strategic direction describing a preferred future –

*In 2035: In The United Church of Canada, inspired, resilient, and diverse contextual communities of disciples seek to continue the story of Jesus by embodying Christ’s presence in the world. The church is present and deeply connected, coast-to-coast-to-coast in rural and urban settings, and in ecumenical and global relationships. Guided by hope-filled, adaptive, and effective ministry leaders, the denomination is increasingly multigenerational, multiracial, and intercultural.*

In the broadest of terms, and in diverse expressions across the country, inspired communities embody all aspects of the denominational Call: Deep Spirituality, Bold Discipleship, and Daring Justice. Resilient communities have sufficient stability and sustainability to prevent them from being just one or two crises away from closure. There is a sense of having and being “enough.”

This whole church initiative has become the priority for both national and regional ministry.

The goal of Toward 2035 as a whole church conversation is to orient the collective imagination of The United Church of Canada towards a future that we may join in co-creating, with “God who has created and is creating” and who “has called [us] to witness in love and justice to the liberating, healing Christ risen in this place and time.” Toward 2035 leads us to a hope-filled strategy for a bolder future.

GCO and Regional Council staff and Executive Ministers, and leaders have begun to engage and collaborate around the Toward 2035 (T2035) strategic direction and its priority initiatives. The implementation of the initiatives will begin in 2035.

We encourage you to engage the resources that have been provided and participate in following God in God’s call to be a transforming presence in the world.

The Church we are becoming:

### Reconciliation Toward 2035

The National Indigenous Elders Council (NIEC) has approved a new Reconciliation plan for 2026-2028, including some exciting educational and public witness events in April and May. On May 14, communities of faith across the country are invited to take a stance for justice and against racism by participating in the [Moose Hide Campaign](#), mobilizing against the ongoing national crisis of violence facing Indigenous women, girls, and 2S-LGBTQIA+ people. You can [learn more](#) about virtual and local events, marches and fasts across the country.

### Leadership Counts

The church's continued equity commitments are at a time when broader conversations around diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) have been under attack. As corporations and other institutions cancel their DEI initiatives, or scale them back dramatically, it is becoming clear that engaged work on equity and diversity in church and society is essential.

In this context, the end-of-term [Leadership Counts](#) is now available. Leadership Counts is an ongoing voluntary identity survey for ministry personnel and members of denominational committees. It is based on the United Church's equity commitments. Designed to inform the United Church's strategic plan and anti-oppression work, it reveals the diverse identities of people in leadership roles. This data can help the church consider how it can meet its equity commitments more effectively.

Since the mid-term report was released in 2023, the Leadership Counts staff team held conversations with several groups, gaining insight from data specific to those groups. The report compares identity data from the Leadership Counts surveys and the 2021 Canadian Census. For example, 41% of committee members hold one or more equity identities. For ministry personnel respondents, 46% identify as women (cis & trans), 39% identify as men (cis & trans), and 2% identify as non-binary or gender-queer (no data available for the remaining 12%).

### Becoming an Intercultural Church

As part of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the church's commitment to becoming an intercultural church, we are [offering a course](#) in partnership with the Rev. Dr. Hyuk Cho (VST). This will be an excellent space for to explore intercultural engagement, diversity, theology and what this might mean for their local churches!

### Centennial Legacy Campaign

As part of the centennial celebrations in partnership with the United Church of Canada Foundation, we launched [a legacy campaign](#); we celebrate that, to date, more than \$19M in has been pledged for communities of faith.

### Kairos Palestine II – A Moment of Truth: Faith in a Time of Genocide

In February, the Executive of the General Council endorsed Kairos Palestine's [challenge](#) to the global church representing the call and the cry of Palestinian Christians, who are "living in a time of genocide, ethnic cleansing, settler colonialism and forced displacement." United Church of Canada people,

Communities of Faith and theological schools are urged to engage with Kairos Palestine II for action. [Read the full manifesto](#) on Kairos Palestine's website.

### 46th General Council

The 46th General Council will be hosted by Horseshoe Falls Regional Council and will be held at Brock University in St. Catharines, ON, from July 31-Aug. 4, 2028, with July 30-31 set aside for pre-events and Aug. 5 for post-event. June 3, 10, 17, 2028, have been identified for possible online sessions. Rev. Debora Laforet is chair of the GC46 planning committee. Rev. Dr. Kenji Marui is appointed as Chair of Business, and Rev. MiYeon Kim is Chair of Worship.

### National (Denominational) Office

Despite the news from the Anglican Church of Canada that they are withdrawing from the lease to share space, the Executive has committed to continuing the process of moving to 300 Bloor Street, Toronto (the redeveloped site of Bloor Street United Church). It is anticipated that the new office will be ready for occupancy by the spring of 2027. Given that staff are working remotely, and to reduce costs, the decision was made to leave 3250 Bloor Street West, and to share space with the Presbyterian Church in Canada at 50 Wynford Drive until the move into 300 Bloor St.

### General Secretary Retirement & Recruitment

I have informed the Executive of my intent to retire as soon as a new General Secretary can be appointed. The process is being developed by the Executive to start a search. Moderator Kimberly Heath will chair the search committee with the support of a recruitment firm, selected through an RFP process.

### Cross-Country Check-Ins

The Executive of the General Council meets 4 times annually, February, May, September and November. The Annual Meeting of the General Council happens in October. After each Executive and Annual meeting, you are invited to join with members for the Executive to be in conversation about their decisions. You can find the dates [here](#).

Register on [CHURCHx](#).

Rev. Michael Blair  
*General Secretary General Council*

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**REGIONAL COUNCIL EXECUTIVE CHAIR**

**Dawn Rolke**  
*Chair*

It is with great anticipation that I write my report for the 2026 Prairie-to-Pine in-person meeting. Soon, we will gather in Selkirk as first time attendees, relative newcomers and long-time church volunteers and staff. The meeting we have planned looks wonderful (to me!) and I hope, as one member of the executive and the planning team, that you will drink deeply the opportunities that await you.

For the past six months, along with other Prairie-to-Pine volunteers, I've been living with our 2026 Regional meeting theme: *Deep Spirituality, Bold Discipleship and Daring Justice*. Now granted, this theme is not new. It is the vision, the purpose and the strategic plan of our United Church, coined a few years ago. But how do we give these words life? We will hear how the Rt. Rev. Kimberley Heath plans to animate these statements during her term as the United Church of Canada moderator.

I'm also eager to discuss Toward 2035 again. It has been approximately one year since the T2035 material was released. During that time, I've been in many conversations and workshops about it. You may recall the excellent presentation by Cam Fraser at the 2025 P2P Regional meeting (still available online). I believe that the T2035 vision is helpful, energizing and life-giving to us as a church. I anticipate Shannon McCarthy's presentation at our meeting, where she will share some of her sabbatical learnings and weaves them into the T2035 material.

As for workshops, worship and singing... well, your participation at our Regional meeting will bring all these elements to life.

I want to thank our staff for their commitment and presence over the past year. Whether they are in a lead role or supportive one, each person brings expertise and willingness. They give much of themselves and we are blessed that they keep choosing us, the Prairie to Pine Region, as the place they want to work. We are especially grateful to the staff who have returned from medical leave; our prayers remain with those who are off work for medical reasons.

I also want to thank the P2P Regional Executive for their faithfulness over the past year. It can be less than thrilling to attend a zoom meeting at the end of the day, but our executive does just this. They arrive at meetings prepared and ready to serve God and their church in a quiet, understated, but very important way. Thank you, thank you for your service.

Finally, I want to thank you, the rest of the church. You bring heart to your local faith communities; you volunteer in the regional church and I'm pretty sure you serve in other ways, too. What would we do without you!

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Dawn Rolke*

*Chair*

*Prairie to Pine Regional Council Executive*

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## OFFICE of VOCATION MINISTER



**Rev. Laura Fohse**  
***Office of Vocation Minister***  
***Northern Spirit, Living Skies, and***  
***Prairie to Pine Regions***

This past year has been full... holy work, complicated work, and work that continues to shift as the church itself is changing. At the heart of it all is a simple but important question: *how is God calling people and how do we as a church, notice, nurture, and support that call?*

### **Candidacy Pathway – Walking with Those Exploring Call**

In 2025, **the Prairie Candidacy Board engaged in 28 interviews** with individuals travelling the Candidacy Pathway. There were 30 applicants and candidates connected to the Prairie Candidacy Board – 8 from Northern Spirit, 10 from Living Skies, 4 from Prairie to Pine, and 8 from other regions. Two candidates were engaged in Supervised Ministry Education.

These numbers only tell a small part of the story. Along with each candidate for ministry is a group of committed, faithful people offering support, encouragement, challenges and, sometimes, evaluations. This includes Educational Supervisors, Learning Facilitators, Community of Faith Connections, Lay Support Groups, Circles of Accompaniment, mentors, teachers, and communities of faith.

This is a good time to say a **great, big, love-filled thank you** to those who serve on the Prairie Candidacy Board.

- **Northern Spirit:** Wayne Youngward (co-chair), Kimberly Roy, Mary Annan, Hugh MacGregor
- **Living Skies:** Rick Burton, SunDo Hyun, Aurora Espenant, Keith Hall
- **Prairie to Pine:** Tammy Bleue, Chewe Mulenga, Damber Khadka, Rob Smith (Co-Chair)

Across the wider church, this work continues to evolve. We're seeing more people coming from other denominations, more second-career applicants, people exploring bi-vocational ministry, and many who are newer to the United Church and still finding their way.

### **The Bigger Picture – A Church in Transition**

The Office of Vocation is working behind the scenes to adapt to the realities we're living in.

- There is ongoing work to rethink Supervised Ministry Education, as fewer congregations are able to host traditional placements and new models of ministry are emerging.
- A pilot project exploring cooperative (lay-led, clergy-supported) ministry is underway, recognizing that leadership is becoming more shared and collaborative.
- Immigration challenges are significantly impacting ministers coming from other countries, affecting communities waiting for leadership.

All of these points to a church that is adapting in real time... not always easily, but with intention.

### **Supporting Ministry Personnel**

In addition to candidacy work, I **continue to walk alongside ministry personnel** in many ways: answering questions, navigating transitions like retirement or sabbatical, and helping people find their way through ChurchHub.

I also host a monthly online gathering for candidates and a monthly communion gathering for ministry personnel across the three regions. These spaces are simple but meaningful. They remind us that we are not alone and help connect those being called and journeying as disciples of Jesus.

### **General Council – A Personal Note**

This past year, I had the opportunity to attend General Council in Calgary as a volunteer. It was a gift to be part of that wider gathering... to listen, to learn, and to witness the church trying to discern its way forward together.

One of the important pieces shaping our work right now is the document *Vocations of the Whole People of God*. It reminds us that vocation doesn't begin when someone enters ministry... it begins in baptism. That means ministry is not just something a few people do, leadership is not limited to ordered ministers, and discernment is something the whole church is invited into. This is deeply connected to *Toward 2035* and the future we are trying to imagine together.

### Looking Ahead – Vocational Discernment

A piece of my work moving forward will be focused on **vocational discernment**—and you'll hear more about that in next year's report. For now, I'll simply say this: there is growing energy and curiosity about how we can better **encourage and support people as they wonder about their lives, their gifts, and how God might be calling them**. Not just into ministry roles, but into lives of meaning, service, leadership, and love.

If we can become a church that is really good at noticing gifts, encouraging people, and walking with them into **deeper discipleship and love**... I believe we will live more fully into being the church we are called to be.

Gratefully submitted,



Rev. Laura Fohse  
Vocational Minister

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## GROWTH ANIMATOR



**Rev. Jordan Cantwell**  
*Growth Animator*  
*Northern Spirit, Living Skies, and*  
*Prairie to Pine Regions*

I am delighted to be joining your Regional Gathering again this year as your Growth Animator. My role is to support communities of faith who want to strengthen their invitation, deepen their discipleship, and grow their ministries. I partner with regional staff to address regional priorities and identify potential areas for growth and cooperation. I also respond directly to invitations from communities of faith who want to explore how they can become more effective at attracting and welcoming newcomers, deepening discipleship, and partnering with others in their community.

In 2025, I met with folks from 25 communities of faith in Prairie to Pine. Those engagements took many forms, including conversations with a minister or key lay leader about the future of their congregation, meeting with church leadership teams to identify areas where they could strengthen their invitation and

connection with the wider community, workshops with communities of faith to clarify their vision and purpose as they plan for the future, gatherings with clusters of churches to explore opportunities for collaboration, and more. I also worked with seven communities of faith in Prairie to Pine to support them in participating in the 100 Tables project. This is an initiative of the United Church of Canada to mark our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary and promote community engagement and public outreach at the local level. You can learn more about this initiative and see some of the amazing and creative ways communities of faith connected with their neighbours by following [this link](#). (Scroll down on the page to find stories from individual communities of faith – including three from Prairie to Pine.)

One of the great privileges of my job is that I get to hear about all the faithful and creative ministry that communities of faith are doing and offer support, encouragement and resources to strengthen these ministries. Here is just a small sample of some of the beautiful things that are happening in Prairie to Pine region.

In the southwest corner of Manitoba, the congregations that make up Cornerstone Pastoral Charge are involved in food security initiatives, raising money for the community, operating a thrift store, and providing pastoral support for members of the wider community, as well as church members. They do all of this as lay-led communities of faith. They are currently exploring potential collaboration with other churches in their area to grow and strengthen the ministry they are offering.

Gordon King Memorial in Winnipeg identified a need for a safe outdoor space in their neighbourhood where people could come together for conversation, community meals and ceremony. In consultation with community members, they designed and built a community sharing circle on their property beside the church. This space is intended as a gathering space for the whole community.

St. Paul's in Beausejour is intentional about equipping younger generations for leadership in the church. They understand this requires nurturing a church culture that allows for change and new ways of doing things. They are challenging themselves to become more invitational towards their neighbours, with whom they already generously share their building.

Nine communities of faith in the central part of Winnipeg have been in conversation for over a year about how they can collaborate to serve their neighbours more effectively and robustly. They are practicing a posture of openness and curiosity towards the Spirit, listening for the new thing(s) that God is inviting them to do and be together.

Knox United in Kenora is interested in expanding the ministry they offer with unhoused people in their city. They are exploring creative possibilities for the role their building can play in meeting the needs of this population.

God is calling the United Church to deep spirituality, bold discipleship, and daring justice for the sake of the world God loves. This call is an invitation to imagine a future for the church where inspired, courageous and empowered clergy and lay leaders nurture hope-filled, diverse and resilient communities of disciples to continue the story of Jesus by embodying Christ's presence in their local context, while remaining deeply connected across the denomination. I am inspired by all the ways communities of faith in Prairie to Pine are answering this call.

It has been an incredible privilege to work with so many of you and to hear about what God is already doing through you and the dreams you have for growing the impact of your ministry. As we continue to journey together, I hope that God will expand the number of communities of faith engaged in this work of renewal and growth. I look forward to learning about your ministries, the joys and struggles you are experiencing, the opportunities and challenges facing your community of faith, and where the Spirit is calling you to a future of deep spirituality, bold discipleship, and daring justice.

In faith, hope and love,



Jordan Cantwell

Growth Animator – Prairie Regions

[jcantwell@united-church.ca](mailto:jcantwell@united-church.ca)

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## COMMUNITY of FAITH STEWARDSHIP SUPPORT STAFF



**Sarah Giles**

*Community of Faith Stewardship Support Staff  
Northern Spirit, Living Skies, and  
Prairie to Pine Regional Councils*

Shalom! My name is Sarah Giles, and I serve as the Stewardship Staff person for Prairie to Pine.

Though I have only recently joined the team, covering for Vicki Nelson while she is away on leave, I have been inspired by the commitment, trust, and innate sense of hope that many stewardship committee members share with their Communities of Faith by participating in intentional stewardship conversations and programming.

My role is to serve you and your Community of Faith, and I hope to meet many more of you in the coming months. If you are concerned about the financial viability of your Community of Faith, are dreaming about growing your ministry, or are realizing you haven't spoken about money or generosity in worship for a while, I would love to get to know you! You will be surprised when going through the stewardship resources at how many times you will think "We can do that!" or "I wish I'd known that earlier!"

My contact information is at the bottom of this report—please feel free to reach out any time. Or, if you're ready to dive in, here are some ongoing programs we offer:

**Getting Started in Stewardship** – A 90-minute webinar introducing key stewardship best practices, helping participants view generosity as a spiritual practice rather than an unpleasant chore.

**Stewardship Best Practices** – An in-depth, multi-week, team-based exploration of current stewardship best practices. This program includes practical suggestions, customizable resources, and concludes with a detailed stewardship plan and ongoing coaching to help Communities of Faith achieve their goals.

**Set Up Your Congregational Giving Program** – A two-session program designed to help Communities of Faith plan and carry out a successful stewardship campaign.

**Bequests and Estate Giving** – Two sessions where participants will learn how to establish a Planned Giving program in their church. The sessions cover how to inspire and invite various planned gifts, and how to identify the best ways to express gratitude for these contributions.

You can read more and register for any of these programs on CHURCHx. We also offer congregational stewardship resources, digital and paper, in the following areas: Mission and Service, Congregational Stewardship, United Church Foundation and Planned Giving.

You are invited to explore these materials and opportunities on your own, or to contact me so we can set a time to talk about your Community of Faith's context. You won't regret taking some time to focus on generosity. One participant shared this feedback about the program:

"This course gave me renewed energy to look at Stewardship more broadly and some tools for doing so. Topics were engaging and thought-provoking."

Thank you, Prairie to Pine Region friends. I am so grateful for your spirit, creativity, generosity, and thoughtfulness. I look forward to learning together in 2026.

In gratitude,

*Sarah Giles,  
Community of Faith Stewardship Support Staff  
for Prairie to Pine Region  
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