

COMMUNITIES OF FAITH COMMISSION

Our Commission was given the daunting – yet exciting – task of creating all policies from scratch. When we first met in January 2019, we had a pile of requests to review, but not a single existing policy or directive (other than our mandate as a commission). We took this as a rare opportunity to try to build something brand new – rather than simply updating existing practices and structures. Looking to our scope of authority, we came to understand that the commission had the responsibility for, and authority over, most aspects of congregation life – with the exception of pastoral relations. We quickly discerned that while social and ecological justice work was part of our mandate, our Commission would not be able to robustly support those initiatives in a timely fashion. We supported and were pleased to see a separate Commission created to do just that. Similarly, an intercultural committee was created and placed under our mandate, and we support the creation of a separate Commission that would be dedicated to that important work.

Still, the enormity of the Commission’s mandate soon became clear and we decided we needed to develop a vision, mission and a strategic plan in order to ensure we were faithfully participating in a radical change of how communities of faith are created, nurtured and sustained in The United Church of Canada.

Priorities soon emerged:

- Concrete participation in the denomination’s pursuit of Right Relations, including finding ways of financially contributing to reparations, specifically by allocating portions of the proceeds of sales of property in the region.
- Acknowledging and helping communities of faith address the impact that racism, homophobia, transphobia, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and misogyny has had, and continues to have, on individuals, communities of faith and the region as a whole.
- Identify, nurture, support and encourage innovative new expressions of faith communities.
- Identify, nurture, support and encourage existing communities of faith that are:
 - Offering services and programs in areas that are underserved.
 - Offering innovative and fresh possibilities of discipleship and spiritual growth.
- Assisting and overseeing communities of faith looking to sell and/or redevelop their properties, keeping at the forefront of all such transitions the need to ensure maintaining a faithful and effective United Church presence in the area.
- Helping congregations at the end of the life cycle think about leaving a legacy within the region so that their long years of faithful work can live in on other communities of faith.

Strategy

Since January 2019, we have been focused on creating and sustaining a fresh vision and strategy for the Commission. We know the importance of having a strategic plan in place in order to provide effective leadership and are working on our 1, 3 & 10-year plans along with goals and objectives. We must be intentional about supporting the communities of faith that will be serving communities in essential ways in the coming years. This will require strategically allocating funds from property sales.

We are in the process of mapping the region in such a way that we have information about each of our communities of faith and the communities in which they reside. This valuable information will help us determine our priorities over the coming years.

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