
SPRING ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The East Central Ontario Regional Council (ECORC) of The United Church of Canada held its spring annual general meeting at St. Paul's United Church and St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church (Bowmanville, Ontario) in two sessions, on Friday, May 23rd and Saturday, May 24th 2025. Registration began at 9 am and the call to order at 10 am. Following session one on Friday, a Celebration of Ministry Service was held at 6:30 pm.

THE FOLLOWING REGISTERED THEIR ATTENDANCE AT THE BUSINESS MEETING

Ministry Personnel (59)

Aruna Alexander, Mark Arnill, Sharon Ballantyne, Elizabeth Boehm-Wilson, Michelle Brotherton, Sharon Campbell-Raymont, Nancy Clarke, Karen Croxall, Elizabeth Cunningham, Jeffery Doucette, Sandra Farrow, Kevin Fitzpatrick, Sherry Fugard, Caroline Giesbrecht, Carol Gillard, Cathy Gradante, Donald Green, Elaine Hall, Jackie Harper, Svinda Heinrichs, Philip Hobbs, Lynda Hodgins, Michelle Hofman, Cordelia Karpenko, Elaine Kellogg, Leslie King, Nancy Lester, Norman Long, Elizabeth Macdonald, Cheryl McMurray, Sylvia Meredith, Jeannette Millar, Donald Misener, David Moore, Kevin Moore, Harold Morgan, Brian Nicholson, Kaitlyn Ostrander, Paul Reed, Stephanie Richmond, Ian Robb, Robert Root, William Service, Karen Smart, Janet Stobie, Calvin Stone, Wanda Stride, Max Ward, Lynn Watson, Ned Wells, Barb Willard, Don Willmer, Jean Wilson, Marybeth Wilson, Nancy Wilson, James R York, John Young, Daniel Yourkevich and Marilyn Zehr.

Lay (66)

Margaret Akey, Victor Alyea, Leanne Ashbridge, Donna Bignell, Adele Boy, Joanne Brown, Donna Budgen, Kelly Cole, Stephen Coles, Kimberly Collins, Paul Cook, Krista Coughler, Luc Coutu, Katy Cox, Terry Deline, Karin DesChamp, Phyllis Elvidge-Bell, Helmut Enns, Peggy Fillier, Ian Finlay, Donna Fulford, Sharon Goulding, Sherry Green, Anthony Griffith, Doreen Hallé, Perry Halls, Paul Hillier, Susan (Sue) Hogan, Carolyn Holmes, Ron Houston, Brian James, Kerri Jebson, Paul R Kneebone, Patricia Long, Scott Lula, Derek Marsellus, Dianne McCracken, Ted Meyers, Peter Miller, Nicolette Mitchell, Joyce Payne, Joyce Payne, Rod Pentz, Elizabeth Pereman, Carol Peterson, Susan Pleasance, Elaner Pound, John Purdon, Khristine Rayner, Catherine Redden, Norman Rice, Marilyn Rodger, Margaret Scott, Katherine Sedgwick, William Sheaves, Susan Shkolnik, Tom Smart, Arthur Smith, Terry Souch, Beth Steinmiller, Kim Teatro, Carrie Thompson, Norma Thompson, Leslee Urquhart, Sharon Woodrow and Sheila-Mae Young.

Candidates serving in an Appointment (4)

Doug Ferris, Siobhan Flynn, Mark Pleasance-Sturman and Ian Wilgus.

Regional Council Staff (9)

Rev. Dr. Susan Garrod-Schuster (voting clergy) Rev. Éric Hébert-Daly (voting clergy) Sharon Hull, Rev. Darren Liepold (voting clergy) Joel Miller, Rev. Tori Mullin, Rev. Caroline Penhale Lukacs, Rev. Rodney Smith-Merkley (voting clergy) and Karen Wilson.

Guests of the Regional Council (23)

Robert Bennett, Raymond Brassard, Nora Darling, Ronald Ewart, Debra Fortin Brown, Jennifer Henry, Patricia James, Jodi Janwin, Jodi Janwin, Janice Meighan, Margaret Merkley, Lisa Norman, Susan Pettersone, Marilyn Robitaille, Alfreda Rupert, Randall Scott, Anne G Smith, Thomas Stobie, Jill Strapp, Patricia Teskey, Glenn Waterman, Kathleen Whyte and Trina Wootton.

Regrets (21)

Stephen Ambury, Sharon Ballantyne, Mary-Margaret Boone, Freda Burns, Kevin Derry, Michelle Down, Catherine Elsdon, Kim Falls, Bruce Fraser, Elizabeth Guillaume-Koene, David King, Kelly Kinkade, Ryan

McNally, Aaron Miechkota, Victoria Moulton, Allan Smith-Reeve, Grace Stanley, Leigh Tamlin, Jennifer Uhryniw, Ralph Werry and Shirley Whitely.

Quorum

This meeting had quorum.

SESSION ONE FRIDAY, MAY 23rd 2025

In-Person Registration/Zoom Meeting Room Opens

Delegates were invited to join the meeting at 9 AM via Zoom and in person at St. Paul's United Church and St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church (Bowmanville, Ontario).

Gathering Music

1. Come in, come in and sit down (VU 395)
2. All Are Welcome (MV1)

Land Acknowledgement /Welcoming to the Land /First Nations Peoples Teaching

- a) **Land Acknowledgment** – Rev. Michelle Brotherton, host congregation Minister, welcomed all to St. Paul's United Church and St. Andrews Presbyterian Church ecumenical shared ministry and led the land acknowledgement: this meeting took place on the traditional territories of the Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg. Rev. Brotherton encouraged all to continue to work towards commitments to listen, learn and work towards justice and truth and reconciliation.
- b) **Welcoming to the Land** – The Indigenous Circle of Friends and Advocates shared First People's ceremonial drumming and singing to welcome delegates to the land.
- c) **Indigenous Teaching** – Pearl Gabona, Métis Elders of Métis Nation of Ontario, shared the history of the ethno-genesis of the Métis in Canada (more information: <https://www.metisnation.org/about-the-mno/culture-heritage/>). Isabel, member of The Indigenous Circle of Friends and Advocates at St. Paul's United Church, shared some of its history and detailed some of the work it has been involved in through previous years (amongst are: responding to Truth & Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action; learning about Residential Schools and missing and murdered and Indigenous women).
- d) **Response to Welcome** – Following these presentations, Steve Coles, Speaker, Council of Elders, thanked and presented Pearl Gabona with a gift on behalf of the Regional Council.
- e) **Welcome from St. Paul's United Church and St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church: House Keeping** – Nancy Dalrymple, Ecumenical Shared Ministry Board Chair, shared some housekeeping details and announced various locations within the Church that could be used for the purposes of the meeting.

Words of Constitution

Stephen Coles, Speaker, called the meeting to order (10:48 AM).

"In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Sovereign head of the Church, and by the authority of the East Central Ontario Regional Council of the United Church of Canada, I hereby declare this annual general meeting duly constituted and to be in session for conducting the business which will properly come before it."

Opening Worship

Rev. Michelle Brotherton, host congregation minister, led the opening worship. The Call to Worship was based on Isaiah 43 and Romans 15. The opening hymn was 'Hope of the World' (VU 25). The Scripture reading was Hebrews 6:1-20. The Sermon, entitled "Anchored in Hope" was shared by Rev. Brotherton and this was followed by the singing of 'My Love Colours Outside the Lines' (MV 138) and 'Jesus call us o'er the tumult' (VU 562). Communion began with the Invitation to the Table, then followed by the Prayer of Great Thanksgiving, the Words of Institution, the Prayer of Consecration, Sharing the Bread and the Cup (to the singing of hymn 'Eat This Bread' (VU 466), the Prayer after Communion, the Benediction and the closing hymn 'Three Things I Promise' (MV 176).

Behavior Covenant and Omnibus Motion

2025-05-23-24-001_OMNIBUS MOTION (Eric Hebert-Daly/Brian James) that the East Central Ontario Regional Council move the following:

1. That the agenda as circulated be adopted;
2. That the minutes of the East Central Ontario Regional Council fall general meeting of November 16, 2024 be accepted as circulated - see **Appendix A**;
3. That the *ECORC Governance Handbook May 2025* and the reference document *Updates to the ECORC Governance Handbook May 2025* be received and accepted as circulated - see **Appendices B¹ and B²**;
4. That the *ECORC Report Book 2025* be received and accepted as circulate - see **Appendices C**;
5. That the Equity Monitor Support Team for this meeting consist of Nancy Clarke and Karen Wilson, (online) and Rev. Kevin Fitzpatrick, Rev. Nancy Wilson, Rev. Elizabeth Cunningham and Deb Fortin Brown (in person);
6. That the Scrutineers for this meeting be Karen Wilson, (online) and Rev. Darren Liepold (in person);
7. That the Discernmentarian/Parliamentarian for this meeting be Rev. Dr. John Young;
8. That the Chaplains for this meeting be Rev. Sharon Ballantyne (online) and Rev. Wanda Stride (in person);
9. That this meeting includes the behavioral covenant – *Holy Manners* and *Virtual Holy Manners*:

Holy Manners

One Voice: Called together by Christ as a community of broken but hopeful believers, striving to be faithful servants of God in our time and place as we offer our varying gifts,

Many Voices: We commit to keeping God at the center of everything we do;

One Voice: We confess, that we have not always lived up our vision of community, we need the Spirit to reorient us, to live an emerging faith, challenging us to live by grace rather than entitlement,

Many Voices: We commit to be truthful in our communications by: speaking for ourselves; and speaking purposefully;

One Voice: We are called as a diverse community of people celebrating our differences;

Many Voices: And so, we commit to honouring our intercultural vision through welcoming the conflict of ideas; making space for the full and equitable participation of all, enabling especially people who are quiet to speak; being mindful of our body language; listening carefully without interruption and separate people from problems;

One Voice: We are called to be bold disciples,

Many Voices: As we live into our call to discipleship we will hold one another to account when we do not keep to our commitments; We will take a future orientation in our discussions and imagination; demonstrate appreciation; And honouring the decisions of the body;

One Voice: We are called to lead in hope with purpose and vision as members of a community held and inspired by God, partnering with God in the mending of the world

Many Voices: So, we commit to keeping the discussion at the table and to be faithful stewards of our time.

All: We affirm that we are Called by God, as disciples of Jesus, to offer leadership to The United Church of Canada as it seeks to be a bold, connected, evolving church of diverse, courageous, hope-filled communities united in deep spirituality, inspiring worship, and daring justice. Amen

In the 2023 Manual (see page 192), the expression Holy Manners is translated as rules of conduct based on respect and benevolence.

Virtual Holy Manner

- use the Chat feature of Zoom appropriately:
 - understanding that speaking in Public Chat is equivalent to speaking out loud in a meeting and is disruptive and rude and should be directed to the Chair of the meeting and used for Points of Order and/ or matters of personal privilege;
 - responding in Chat when invited to do so by the Chair;
 - using direct messaging when desiring or needed to engage with another
- use of transcription not for use outside of the meeting/event.

CARRIED

Announcement

Rev. Ryan McNally, Leading Commissioner invited all General Council 45 Commissioners to meet and eat together at lunch. Rev. McNally also reminded/invited all ministry personal and communities of faith to complete a survey that was put out by the Structural Change Evaluation Steering Group.

Lunch Break

Steve Coles, led Grace before lunch. A catered lunch was served.

Gathering Music

1. Spirit God, Be our Breath (Embracing Change) (MV 150)
2. God of the Bible (Fresh as the Morning) (MV 28)
3. As a Fire is Meant for Burning (VU 578)

Budget Presentation

- see ECORC Report Book 2025 as **Appendix C** (page 15)

Brian James, Regional Council Treasurer, shared a fiscal update for the first quarter of 2025 focusing on the 2025 Administrative and Mission budgets. Mission funding showed a deficit because it was felt that additional funding would be granted to support various ministries; the additional funding came out of the contingency fund (excess and investment income) of the regional council.

Mission and Service and the United Church Foundation Presentation

Glen Waterman, Annual Giving Lead, shared a presentation on Mission and Service, focusing on its history (see video presentation (<https://youtu.be/IHYh0I18810>), what Mission and Service does, resources, stewardship support and The Foundation/Centennial Legacy Campaign. To get additional information and support, attendees were invited to contact:

- For Mission and Service, Glenn Waterman gwaterman@united-church.ca
- For Stewardship, Roger Janes, rjanes@united-church.ca
- For Legacy Campaign, Karen Seunarine, kseunarine@united-church.ca
- If in doubt, contact ms@united-church.ca

Growth Animator Presentation

- see ECORC Report Book 2025 as **Appendix C** (page 20)

Rev. Tori Mullin, Growth Animator, Eastern Ontario and Quebec, directed attendees to the Growth Animator's report in the report book, highlighted specific projects that have taken place within this regional council at congregational level, provided some background information on how the growth department is using data to create models (neighborhood profiles), and invited all to share potential ministry plans for growth.

Nominations Report

- see ECORC Report Book 2025 as **Appendix C** (page 21)

Rev. Svinda Heinrichs, Chair of Nominations, extended thanks and appreciation to all who let their names stand for various positions that were vacant on the various Team of the regional council and the Council of Elders. Svinda reminded that the nominations will open again in the fall and then again in the spring. Svinda presented the following motions.

2025-05-23-24-003_MOTION (Wanda Stride/John Young) that the East Central Ontario Regional Council receive and approve the prayerful recommendations of the Nominations Leadership Team to appoint the following people into leadership positions on ECORC Assembly of Elders and leadership teams for three-year terms, from the rise of the spring 2025 meeting until the rise of the spring 2028 meeting:

Council of Elders

Rev. Michelle Brotherton
Patti James
Ted Meyers

*(outgoing members)

Ned Wells
Patricia Long

Ministry through Property & Finance

Rev. Svinda Heinrichs as chair
Paul Binkley
Arthur Smith

Formation Nurture and Justice

Rev. Paul Reed

Covenant Support

Rev. Don Misener

Sharon Goulding
Rev. Brian Nicholson
Kathleen Whyte

Nominations

Rev. Ned Wells as chair
Rev. Kaitlyn Ostrander

CARRIED

Speaker-Elect (2 year-term)

2025-05-23-24-004 (Svinda Heinrichs/Wanda Stride) that the East Central Ontario Regional Council name Joyce Payne as Speaker-Elect. **CARRIED**

Ted Meyers (Ministry Through Property & Finance) and Bill Sheaves (Covenant Support Team) were thanked for their roles as past-chairs and received gifts on behalf of the regional council.

General Council 45 Commissioners

2025-05-23-24-005_MOTION (Svinda Heinrichs/Wanda Stride) that the East Central Ontario Regional Council follow past precedent from 2021 and vote on a slate of commissioners and an alternate.

2025-05-23-24-006_MOTION (Svinda Heinrichs/Wanda Stride) that the East Central Ontario Regional Council approve the names listed in this slate, which have been chosen based on the criteria of achieving a balance of gender, lay, ordered, and opportunity for first time commissioners, with priority given to Racialized and Indigenous people and those in the LGBTQ+ community, as ECORC's General Council commissioners and an alternate.

Commissioners to General Council 45 (O - Ordered; L - Lay):

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. Brian Ostrander | L |
| 2. Derek Marsellus | L |

Commissioners to General Council 45 (alternate):

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. Phyllis Elvidge-Bell | L |
|-------------------------|---|

CARRIED

Leading Commissioner

2025-05-23-24-007 (Svinda Heinrichs/Wanda Stride) that the East Central Ontario Regional Council name Rev. David Moore as Leading Commissioner. **CARRIED**

Announcements

- *Naming hopes and prayers for the United Church of Canada* to be written on hearts then posted on the wall in front of sanctuary throughout the meeting for all to see. For folks attending online, they could write into the chat and then will be collected for display. A photo was taken and then shared with folks online.

In between announcements *Peace like a River* (VU 577) was sung and incorporated movements.

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- *Rev. Janet Stobie, Author, Motivational Speaker* shared her new book Dipping Your Toes, Too. A portion of the proceeds goes to support the Mission and Service fund.
 - *Marolyn Rodgers, Fair Trade Products* invited all to visit her and purchase fair trade products (olive oils, soap, coffee, chocolates). A portion of proceeds goes to support Mission and Service Fund, Canadian Food Grains and Camp Quin-Mo-Lac.
 - *Pat Gilmour, Paris Books* highlighted Betty Radford Turcott's third book Home to Canaan: A Story of Sisters, Leah and Rachel, The Measure by Nikki D. Erlick and A Two-Spirit Journey: The Autobiography of a Lesbian Ojibwa-Cree Elder by Ma-Nee Chacaby and Mary Louisa Plummer, and All We Need Is Love and a Really Soft Pillow!, by Henry Rocket Reynolds and Peter H. Reynolds

Council of Elders' Report

- see ECORC Report Book 2025 as **Appendix C** (page 7)

Stephen Coles, Speaker, Council of Elders, highlighted the report in the regional council report book, thanked the members sitting on the Council of Elders, and invited them to stand and be recognized. Steve also thanked the work of the Nominations Leadership Team and the staff of the regional council.

Introduction of New Staff Member (Reverend Susan Garrod-Schuster, Acting Pastoral Relations Minister)

Rev. Eric Hebert-Daly, Executive Minister extended thanks and appreciation to Rev. Darren Liepold, who for the past couple of years has been occupying two staff positions, that of Congregational Support Minister and Pastoral Relations Minister. Eric announced that Rev. Susan Garrod-Schuster is the new Acting Pastoral Relations Minister (replaces Rev. Deborah Roi on restorative leave). Rev. Garrod-Schuster was then invited to the front of the meeting space to be covenanted with the regional council in her new role.

Executive Minister's Report

- see ECORC Report Book 2025 as **Appendix C** (page 8)

Rev. Eric Hebert-Daly, Executive Minister referred all to his report in the report book, and announced that as part of one of the goals initiated by the strategic plan, there will be a meeting within the regional council of Chairs of Boards and other leaders of Communities of Faith, and Ministry Personnel, on June 17th at Bridge Street United Church, Belleville to discuss visioning for the Church (this kind of meeting will be the first of its kind within the history of The United Church of Canada).

Nutrition break

A pause in the meeting was had in order for movement and refreshments.

Gathering Music

1. It's a Song of Praise to the Maker (MV 30)
2. Each Blade of Grass (Circle of God) (MV 37)

Covenant Support Team

see ECORC Report Book 2025 as **Appendix C** (page 23)

Bill Sheaves, Chair of the Covenant Support Team, highlighted the team's report in the report book and made a special announcement that the regional council is in need for pastoral charges supervisors. Anyone feeling called to be a pastoral charge supervisor was invited to be on contact with Susan Garrod-Schuster.

Office of Vocation

- see ECORC Report Book 2025 as **Appendix C** (page 19)

Rev. Caroline Penhale Lukacs, Office of Vocation Minister, shared a PowerPoint presentation which highlighted the role of the Office of Vocation and the role of the Vocational Minister. Caroline also reminded ministry personnel of the requirement to submit their annual declarations and complete the boundaries refresher trainings every five years to remain in good standing.

Caroline introduced Douglas Ferris and Timothy Wisnicki as the two candidates for ordination who would make their vows to be ordained to the Ministry of Word, Sacrament and Pastoral Care within The United Church of Canada at the Celebration of Ministry Service later in the evening.

Caroline was appreciated for the many gifts she brings to her role as Vocational Minister.

Thank You to Recent Past members who Served on the Council of Elders

A liturgy of recognition was held for Patricia Long and Rev Ned Wells, honoring their terms of service on the Council of Elders. During the liturgy, Dance with the Spirit (MV 156) was sung.

Covenanting with Council of Elders, GC45 Commissioners and Leadership Teams

Rev. Eric Hebert-Daly, Executive Minister, led a liturgy of covenanting with the newly formed Council of Elders, Leadership Teams and those representing the regional council at General Council 45. Following this liturgy Lord, Prepare Me to Be a Sanctuary (MV 18) was sung.

Announcement

Smudging Ceremony to take place at 7:30 AM.

Grace Before Dinner

Steve Coles led Grace before dinner.

Dinner & Retiree's Celebration

A dinner honoring and celebrating retirees took place in the Hall – see ECORC Report Book 2025 as **Appendix C** (page 48) for the list of retirees.

Celebration of Ministries Service

The Celebration of Ministry Service was held in the Sanctuary of the ecumenical shared space of St. Paul's United Church and St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, situated in Bowmanville, Ontario, and began at 7 PM. The officiants and candidates entered the sanctuary to the processional music of hymn 'Come Touch Our Hearts' (MV 12). Rev. Michelle Brotherton, hosting Minister, welcomed all to this gathering and Rev. Elizabeth Guillame-Koene led the Call to Worship. Rev. Kaitlyn Ostrander led the land acknowledgement, recognizing that this gathering took place on the traditional territories of the Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg. Rev. Eric Hebert-Daly, Executive Minister for East Central Ontario Regional Council invited all to sing the opening hymn 'Come Touch Our Hearts' (MV 12). Doug Ferris, candidate for ordination, lit the Christ Candle and Rev. Brian Nicholson led the Prayer of Approach. Timothy Wisnicki, candidate for ordination, read from the Scriptures: Luke 4:16-22. The anthem 'Order my Steps' was sung by members of St. Paul's United Street United Church. Rev. Jennifer Henry, Executive Minister Organization Development and Strategy, shared a sermon entitled "Leaving, Breathing Hope", which was followed by the singing of hymn 'Spirit God, be our breath, be our song' (MV 150). Patti James led the Offertory, followed by the singing of the Offering hymn 'What Can I do' (MV 191) and the Offertory Prayer. Bill Sheaves led all in the reading of 'Our Affirmation of Faith' and honored Ministry Personnel within the Regional Council who were celebrating anniversaries of their ministry.

Rev. Eric Hebert-Daly, Executive Minister and Steve Coles, Speaker of the Council of Elders led the opening of the ordination. Rev. Caroline Penhale Lukacs, Office of Vocation Minister, presented Doug Ferris and Timothy Wisnicki to be ordained to the Ministry of Word, Sacrament and Pastoral Care within The United Church of

Canada. The Regional Council was asked for its pledge of support and in turn, Doug and Timothy declared their ordination vows. This was followed by laying on of hand and the placing of the stole. After Doug and Timothy were declared ordained, they were presented with a Bible, a certificate, a chalice and paten, and other gifts, and were honored by those in attendance with the singing of hymn 'Halle, Halle, Halle' (VU 958). Following this, the closing hymn to the ordination portion of the service was sung 'Come Holy Ghost' (VU 201). The Ordinands:

Doug Ferris	Ordained to the Ministry of Word, Sacrament and Pastoral Care within The United Church of Canada
Timothy Wisnicki	Ordained to the Ministry of Word, Sacrament and Pastoral Care within The United Church of Canada

The Holy Communion liturgy was led by Rev. Caroline Penhale Lukacs and included the Call to the Table, Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession, the reciting of the Lord's Prayer, the sharing of the elements, the Prayer After Communion, and the singing of hymn 'Be Thou My Vision' (VU 642).

This Celebration of Ministry Service concluded with a closing benediction led by Rev. Darren Liepold, Congregational Support Minister for East Central Ontario Regional Council, followed by the recessional hymn 'We are Marching in the Light of God' (VU 646).

SATURDAY, APRIL 20TH 2024
SESSION TWO

In-Person Registration/Zoom Meeting Room Opens

Delegates were invited to join meeting at 8:30 am via Zoom and in person at St. Paul's United Church and St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church (Bowmanville, Ontario).

Gathering Music

1. I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me (VU575)
2. Will You Come and Follow Me (VU 567)
3. Jesus, You Have Come to the Lakeshore (VU 563)

Announcement

Movement and music 12:30 PM – 1 PM

Gathering Worship

Rev. Darren Liepold, Congregational Support Minister, led the opening worship, which included the Call to Worship, the singing of hymn 'In the Bulb There is a Flower' (VU 703), the reading of Scripture Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, and the recognition of Churches that have closed in the 2024-25 (Little Britain United Church, Kawartha Lakes; St. James United Church, Vroomanton; Baltimore United Church, Baltimore; Northminster United Church, Oshawa; Scugog Island United Church, Port Perry; Maple Grove United Church, Bowmanville; and Whitby Lake St. Peter, Matawaska Churches). This was followed by the singing of 'For All the Saints' (VU 703), the recognition of anniversaries of time served by ministry personnel (see ECORC Report Book 2025 as **Appendix C** (page 53) for listing), In memoriams (see ECORC Report Book 2025 as **Appendix C** (page 51) for listing) with the addition of the following names: Rev. B. R. Bruce Scott (March 22, 1928-December 22, 2023); Rev. H. Lane Douglas (May 17, 1931-January 9, 2025); Rev. Arnold McDonald (October 31, 1934-January 2025); and Rev. Donald Genge (December 26, 1945-April 22, 2025), and this was followed by the singing of hymn 'Bless Now, O God, the Journey' (VU 633). A benediction ended this time of gathering worship.

United Church Women (UCW)

- see ECORC Report Book 2025 as **Appendix C** (page 32)

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Nora Darling, Chair of ECORC UCW, shared highlights of the life of the UCW within the regional council; including celebrating 10th year as an affirming ministry, celebrating the 100th anniversary of The United Church of Canada, raising funds through selling of UCW life membership pins, providing leadership grants, Student Ministry Support Gift, providing support to Camp Qui-Mo-Lac, encouraging UCWs to make memorial donations to the endowment fund (support M&S), raising money for Healing Fund, 65th UCW gathering in Ottawa 2027.

Moderator's Message to East Central Ontario Regional Council

A recorded video message from The Right Reverend Carmen Lansdown, Moderator of The United Church of Canada was shared. This message extended greetings from the General Council office and focused on the upcoming meeting of the 45th General Council in Calgary, Alberta.

Announcement

Rev Dr. Aruna Alexander was congratulated for receiving the Corner Stone Citizen Award for 2025 by the Belleville Chamber of Commerce. In addition, Dr. Alexander was recognized for the gifts and wisdom she has brought to the regional council in her role with the Anti-Racism Forum.

Formation, Nurture and Justice Leadership Team report

- see ECORC Report Book 2025 as **Appendix C** (page 25)

Representatives from each of the Forums spoke (Forum reports are included with the Formation, Nurture and Justice Leadership Team report):

Indigenous Justice and Respectful Relationships Forum

Sharon Woodrow highlighted the Witness Blanket Exhibit. For more information see - www.witnessblanket.ca. All were reminded that September 30th is Day for Truth and Reconciliation Day and to remember the children gone missing to residential schools.

Anti-Racism Forum

Rev. Dr. Aruna Alexander recognized members of this forum and introduced the Anti-Racism Forum survey. Survey responses: Rev. Brian Nicholson shared some of the responses about possible methods for how congregations can approach anti-racism. Rev. Kevin Fitzpatrick shares some responses on what is preventing church from moving forwards. Peggy Fillier shared responses on what more is needed. Sharon Hull, Minister for Spiritual Nurture, Respectful Relationships and Justice with All Ages, highlighted the ECORC Anti-Racism Policy, in particular the necessity for antiracism training to be taken by all lay leaders with the structure of the regional council. Portrait Project: Communities of faith are being encouraged to hang portraits in their buildings of racialized leaders (i.e., Senator Murray Sinclair, Rev. Murray Weetung, The Right Reverend Carmen Lansdowne, Moderator). It was suggested to all to use the photo of Murray Sinclair from his book "Who We Are: Four Questions for a Life and a Nation". Rev. Rodney Smith-Merkey shared words recognizing Murray Weetung. It was shared that there will be a national exhibit "Here From the Beginning" (a history of the Black community within the UCC) – for more information: <https://herefromthebeginning.ca/>. Regional council staff were thanked for their assistance to this forum.

Affirm Forum

Kimberly Collins (Co-chair of the Affirming Forum) shared how the forum helps congregations navigate the affirming process. Upcoming events were shared: Pride events - look to the ECORC newsletter for information;

Next Virtual Coffee Hour is June 7th at 12 ET; Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble annual meeting and conference is July 18 to 20 in Charlottetown, PEI; Community Safety & Care Training.

First Thirds Ministry Forum

Sharon Hull, Minister for Spiritual Nurture, Respectful Relationships and Justice with All Ages, shared about Audacious Hope (youth gathering, including Presbyterian Church); recognized youth who have participated in the Climate Motivators Program; highlighted Gibimishkaadimin, highlighted the Flourishing Event held by the Moderator; the monthly roundtable on zoom with leaders from across Ontario and Quebec; and The Baillie Volunteer Service Awards which is given annually to youth between 13 and 35 years of age. Deadline to apply is June 30th.

Rev. Tori Mullin, Growth Animator, spoke about the Regenerative Work Program and the creation of a web app: Bible Woolies.

Indigenous Justice And Respectful Relations Forum

Rev. Rodney Smith-Merkley, Minister for Respectful Relationship and Indigenous Justice, thanked team members whose terms are ending on Indigenous Justice Forum: Peggy Fillier, Rev. Dr. Aruna Alexander and Rev. Wendy Bullock. Appreciation was extended to Karen Wilson for her communication skills in disseminating information on behalf of the Forums. Rodney also shared about the Aki Gifting Ceremony (ceremonial event celebrating and honoring the Earth (Aki) as a giver of life, and the All Our Relations Land Trust.

Nutrition Break with Playtime/Movement

A pause in the meeting was had in order for movement and refreshments.

Gathering Music

1. Your Love is Amazing (Hallelujah) (MV 26)

Joyce Payne Speaker-Elect

Joyce Payne, Speaker-Elect, introduced herself to the court, and thanked members of the regional council for their support. Joyce brings experience to this role as she has served as president for 2 years in Antler River Watershed Regional Council, and enthusiasm for the road that lay ahead.

Emmanuel College

Andrew Aitchison, Admissions Advisor & Strategic Recruiter, brought greetings from Emmanuel College and welcomed all inquiring minds to consider Emmanuel College for theological education.

General Council Report

Rev. Jennifer Henry, Organizational Development and Strategy, brought formal greetings from Rev. Michael Blair, General Secretary and The Right Reverend Carmen Lansdowne, Moderator. Jennifer introduced the General Council Strategic Plan report with a video message from the General Secretary. The Full report: <https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/welcome-united-church-canada/our-call-and-vision/2024-strategic-plan-annual-report>

Following Jennifer's presentation, a concern was raised about the decision to pause Faithful Footprints grants (because it has gone significantly over budget) – resources are made through assessment and M&S contributions. It is the hope that grants will be re-released when more funds are available and the program runs more efficiently.

Strategic Plan Update

- see ECORC Report Book 2025 as **Appendix C** (page 9)

Rev. Eric Hebert-Daly, Executive Minister, provided an update for each of the activity streams, provided a grade on realizing its objectives, and shared specific recommendations for going forwards (i.e., remove some objectives entirely, or modify them). These details are also listed in the report book. It was highlighted that the lack of volunteers has had the most impact on the results of this interim report. As a result, there is now a shift taking place that focuses on attaining a more encompassing picture of the Church (as a whole) with less focus on the regular business that comes before the Council of Elders (its parts). This new vision will also be informed by data gathered from the *Towards 2035* study. Emphasis was also placed on how the church speaks to intended audiences. Tori Mullin, Growth Animator, invited all Communities of Faith who were interested in the various languages of evangelization to contact her.

Lunch Break

Steve Coles, led Grace before lunch. A catered lunch was served.

Gathering Music

1. Like a Healing Stream (MV144)
2. Pass Me Not, O Gentle Saviour (VU 665)
3. Long Before the Night (VU 282)

Towards 2035 Presentation

Rev. Jennifer Henry, Organizational Development and Strategy, explained that *Toward 2035* is conversation about the current state of the church, with the hope of stirring imaginations and animate the collective will around a vision and strategy for a better future for the church. This conversation looks at the trajectory of the church between 1993 and 2023, and projects its likely trajectory in 2035. It considers trends in membership, giving, Sunday worship attendance, Sunday school attendance, number of pastoral charges, Ministry Personnel, Pastoral Charges served by Ministry Personnel, and sustainability of both denominational and congregational finances. 2035 projections suggest a greater degree of vulnerability.

Despite projections, it is the hope that The United Church of Canada in 2035 will be: “inspired, resilient communities of disciples, rural, and urban, coast to coast, francophone, indigenous, and intercultural, more closely reflecting the diversity of Canada”. Components like, connection, flexibility, innovation and urgency, can support communities of faith; enable local & geographic discernment; engage in cooperative and collaborative experiments; support intercultural; and support first third.

Questions and comments following presentation:

- Reminder about statistical analysis; it not a linear (are presented) but more curved and elongated trend line; however, in this instance, this fact does not change projection trends.
- It is important to also consider data regarding spirituality (it was highlighted that a poll has recently been circulated) Questions to consider: Where are people finding faith, spirituality without community? Why do people go to church, what has encouraged them to stay?
- Growing Communities of Faith seem to have this in common: serving community needs above congregational needs.
- Data: does statistical analysis consider demographic trends (aging populations), activity trends? – It does not.
- Statistical data is not the only data to consider when considering trends (or to be used for trend reversal). What are other ways of for considering trends projections?

Small Group Discussion

Following Jennifer's presentation, attendees were placed into small groups to focus on the following questions:

1. Is there anything about the data that surprised you?
2. Where do you see God doing a new thing?
3. How might you begin to move toward this vision at the sub-regional level?

Gathering Music

1. As a Fire is Meant for Burning (VU 578)

Gowing Forward**June 17th Gathering details**

Rev. Eric Hebert-Daly, Executive Minister, explained how the statistical projections in *Towards 2035* conversation were being shared up to this point (staff leaders at national office, regional council staff and Speaker, Council of Elders); Bridge Street United Church in Belleville will be the final stop for sharing this statistical projections (with Ministry Personnel, church leaders and Congregational Board Chairs (those involved in decision making at the congregational level)).

Vision 2035

Vision 2035 is a working group of Vision Keepers that will use additional data being actively collected to help strategize where, when and how to act. Decisions will be made with a broader view to consider the future (not just immediate impacts). The Vision Keepers will bring recommendations to amend the strategic plan so that it aligns more with the 2035 vision.

Closing Remarks

Steve Coles, Speaker, reminded attendees to return their name tags. Thanks was extended to tech crew, to Saint-Paul's and St. Andrew's Churches, to Rev. Wanda Stride for her music leadership, to the Equity Team, the Chaplains, the Parliamentarian, Rev. Jean Wilson for visual displays, and regional council staff. Rev. Eric Hebert-Daly, Executive Minister thanked Steve Coles in his role as Speaker for this annual general meeting.

Equity Report

Rev. Nancy Wilson and Rev. Kevin Fitzpatrick shared that the Equity Team has already received feedback and shared that an equity scorecard will be circulated with the meeting evaluation to attendees to fill in and return.

Keep in mind going forward: use of pronouns, inclusive language, self-identification, respecting dietary needs, accessibility, designated spaces, using fidget spinners.

Dates of upcoming General Meeting

- June 17th Belleville
- October 25th 2025 Fall Meeting – Alderville, ON

***Proposed Dates Future General Meetings:**

(2026)

- May 1st and 2nd Spring AGM (Trinity United Church, Cobourg ON)
- November 14th Fall General Meeting (Location to be determined).

(2027)

- April 30th – May 1st Spring AGM (Location to be determined).

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- November 13th Fall General Meeting (Location to be determined).

Closing Prayer

Steve Coles closed the meeting with a Prayer.

Adjournment

The Speaker declares that all the business having come before this meeting of the regional council has duly concluded at 4:45 PM.

Closing Music

1. Dance With the Spirit (VU 578)

Steve Coles
Speaker

Rev. Eric Hebert-Daly
Executive Minister

Joel Miller
Recording Secretary

-Appendices-

*All appendices located at:

<https://ecorcuccan.ca/2025-ecorc-spring-annual-meeting-may-23-and-24/>

Appendix A	East Central Ontario Regional Council Fall General Meeting of November 16, 2024
Appendix B ¹	ECORC Governance Handbook May 2025
Appendix B ²	Updates to the EOORC Governance Handbook May 2025
Appendix C	ECORC Report Book 2025