

CENTRAL OKANAGAN UNITED CHURCH

MINISTRY PLAN

(August 15, 2023)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Ministry Plan provides a vision for the future of Central Okanagan United Church. The Plan centres on COUC's four areas of ministry: worship, pastoral care, intergenerational ministry, and community ministry. It outlines planned outcomes and priorities for each area and speaks to how we deploy our resources to support these ministries. Undergirding our four areas of ministry is the opportunity each presents to nurture our spiritual growth and well-being as individual Christians and as a caring community.

We at Central Okanagan United Church are called to seek, experience and express God's love together in an open community which embraces diversity and demonstrates by faithful action the love of God through the teachings of Jesus.

Amalgamated in 2021 from three Kelowna United Churches and being joined by Westbank United Church in West Kelowna later in 2023, the congregation numbers some 400 households. Together we represent the United Church of Canada in British Columbia's largest urban centre outside the lower mainland. We acknowledge that we are living on the ancestral, unceded territory of the Syilx Okanagan people. In honouring this relationship, we acknowledge that we are entering a new era in the life of the United Church of Canada.

In the previous century, our denomination's focus was on constructing, owning and operating buildings. This traditional church model is steadily being displaced by new modes of ministry; nonetheless, we know that congregants and those outside the formal church continue to yearn for places to be together, to gather for spiritual, educational and emotional well-being. Central Okanagan United Church has a unique role to play in meeting this need. Where, how and why we gather depends less on which physical spaces we occupy and more on the leadership our church offers through our dedicated lay volunteers and the skilled staff who support us.

All four areas of ministry described in this Plan reflect both our journey inward as a Christ-centred people and our journey outward to help and heal a broken world. With God's help, Christ as our inspiration and the Holy Spirit as our helper, the legacy we aim to leave to our children and future generations is of a model built on love in action. The Plan's intent is that our church serves God and seeks out God within our congregation and within the communities we serve.

We are called to be open, creative, courageous and faithful in our ministry.

“Seek first the kingdom of God and God's righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

(Matthew 6:33)

Overview

The purpose of this Ministry Plan is to convey a vision and direction for Central Okanagan United Church for the next 5-10 years. Beginning with an amalgamation planning process in 2019 and culminating through a series of congregational and broader community consultations undertaken between January and July of 2023, our church has discerned both compelling needs in the broader community for COUC's presence in Kelowna, and a strong desire within our congregation to move in response, through innovation in programs, reaching out to the wider community and partnering, and strategic use of our church's abundant resources.

We also heard voices that need and want us to maintain the health of our current programs, richness of worship experience, care and concern for our congregants, and retaining what has been rich and meaningful in our histories and tradition. Through all, we have discerned in ourselves a deep longing to increase our impact, grow as a congregation, and leverage our physical and financial resources for the sake of the gospel.

This Ministry Plan centres on COUC's four areas of ministry: worship, pastoral care, intergenerational ministry, and community ministry. The Plan identifies key outcomes and priorities for each area, as well as approaches to the deployment of our resources to support these ministries: leadership development, partnerships, staffing and facilities. The Plan also acknowledges and embraces the essential overlaps across the four areas of ministry – overlaps that offer opportunities and challenges for proactive teamwork and consultative leadership.

The Plan is led and guided by a Board/staff policy governance structure that supports the energies and initiatives of congregants and partners, encouraging and enabling ministry in each of the four program areas with appropriate resources, supports, checks and balances (i.e., does this initiative meet our ministry goals, what resources are needed, who is there to see it through?)

The Plan is founded on an acknowledgement that, as a community of faith, Christ calls us to live out the gospel in our daily lives, both individually and collectively as a congregation.

Who we are

In common with the early churches of Paul and the other apostles, our church provides gathering space for spiritual nurture – strengthening us through encounters with Christ's word and through opportunities for relationship-building, teamwork, comfort and service. Our church is a living organism powered by the Holy Spirit, enabling us to breathe in the power of God's love and to breathe out our response to the world around us. Our church connects us with one another and enables others to connect with us.

Unlike the early churches, we do not have to hide from the powers of the world, pursuing our faith in secret. Instead, we can declare our faith openly, not shading our lamps but shining them out to the world. As confident Christians, we seek to grow spiritually and to serve others.

Undergirding our four areas of ministry is the opportunity each presents to nurture our spiritual growth and well-being as individual Christians and as a caring community. Our ministries:

- Help and encourage us to live ethically, grow spiritually, love and care for others, and form trustworthy relationships
- Enable us to discern what it means to be Christ-centred as individuals and as a community
- Engage us to recognize, accept, and nurture our shared belief in God and our desire to respond to Christ's call to service and community

As a community of faith within the United Church of Canada, we are challenged to growth in our faith, ascribing to collaboration and inclusiveness, affirming the covenantal relationship and commitment to who we are as God's people in faith, trust and love.

Our growth into spiritual maturity as Christians and as a church is manifested by:

- living the word we proclaim as active participants in the life of our community,
- welcoming and accepting all,
- creating a place with a sense of belonging,
- meaningfully engaging the congregation and wider community in congregational life,
- encouraging and fostering fellowship events and activities,
- inviting participation of all in every aspect of service and celebration as expressions of our faith
- developing trustworthy relationships with other faith communities
- offering faith rituals, prayers and worship that bind us to the sacred Biblical narratives and covenants that give meaning and spiritual connection to the life, actions, love and sacrificial service of Jesus Christ, who transforms the ordinary water of our lives into lifegiving fruit.

History

Central Okanagan United Church is a newly formed faith community, comprised of the former congregations of First United Church (downtown Kelowna); St. Paul's United Church (historically located in the Mission area of Kelowna); Rutland United Church; and, most recently, Westbank United Church in West Kelowna. The buildings occupied by Rutland (now the Fitzpatrick site) and First (now the Bernard site) remain the property of Central Okanagan, while St. Paul's and Westbank bring financial resources derived from the sale of their buildings. Central Okanagan has, then, historic relationships and congregants from across Kelowna and West Kelowna.

Amalgamation conversations in 2020 (St Paul's, First, and Rutland) and more recently in 2023 (with Westbank) affirmed the congregation's commitment to four key areas of Ministry: Worship, Pastoral Care, Intergenerational Ministry and Community Ministry. Each area is a key component of Central Okanagan's response to call. Upholding United Church of Canada values of Deep Spirituality, Daring Discipleship and Bold Justice, our newly combined congregation desires to build on strength, learn from experience and be open to Christ's call in the community.

Subsequent to amalgamation, as mandated by the United Church of Canada, our church has developed this Ministry Plan. It defines the ministry of this congregation and the resources – our congregants, staff, finances and facilities – needed to support it. Internal congregational

experience and expertise, as well as external community input, have added relevant information and valuable perspectives. The Plan builds on what we have learned and brings a community lens to bear on potential areas of mutual purpose and partnership.

Ministry Profile

Our calling

To seek, experience and express God's love together in an open community which embraces diversity and demonstrates by faithful action the love of God through the teachings of Jesus.

Our values

- We are Christ-centered...our actions reflect joy and compassion
- We are inclusive...valuing diversity, unity, affirmation and a sense of belonging for all
- We are called to serve, learn and grow
- We celebrate in creativity and music
- We honour and work for justice

Our congregation

Numbering about 400 households, we are coming to know each other and establishing a new collaborative, creative and faith-based church family. While three-quarters of our congregants are over the age of 65, our demographic profile includes children and families, youth, and individuals who are active in the workforce and the community. Our congregants bring a wide range of knowledge, skills, experience and resources to support the work of our church. Though we are all at different stages on our faith journeys, we share a dedication to the centrality of love, caring and kindness in making a difference in our world.

As the United Church of Canada's only ongoing presence in the cities of Kelowna and West Kelowna, our church's ministries are mostly city-wide in scope, and include specific programs and services responding to needs at the neighbourhood level, as well as regional, national and international activities extending beyond Kelowna. At the neighbourhood level, downtown Kelowna and Rutland have been our focus since amalgamation, and with an anticipated merger with Westbank United Church, the community of West Kelowna will be added to our program and service portfolio. The development of our on-line capabilities is also enabling us to extend our reach beyond the limits of geography.

Our staff

Our church's four areas of ministry – worship, pastoral care, intergenerational ministry and community ministry – require focused leadership and a significant commitment of time and energy, as well as skillful organization.

Each of our three ministers is assigned leadership responsibility to oversee one of the areas of worship, pastoral care and community ministry, and all three ministers currently share in leading intergenerational ministry. Leadership responsibilities within all four areas include:

- overseeing program design, implementation and evaluation
- engaging, training, coaching and supporting lay leaders and volunteers
- animating activities that cross areas of ministry

- exploring interdisciplinary opportunities focused on the environment and the arts, as well as relationships with like-minded community organizations

Our staff team currently consists of 7.5 full-time or full-time equivalent positions:

- 3.0 FTE ordered ministry personnel
- 1.0 FTE music position shared by three part-time, professional music leaders
- 2.0 FTE administrative support positions shared by three part-time employees who share responsibilities for office management, volunteer coordination, communications, property management, and general administration
- 1.5 FTE positions covering caretaking, general maintenance, technical support for on-line services and facility supervision

Currently, our three ministers share leadership responsibilities for intergenerational ministry. Our need is to call a fourth minister to give focused leadership to this vital area of ministry.

Leadership and Governance

The church's affairs are overseen by an elected governance board accountable to the congregation and the UCC Pacific Mountain Region. With guidance from the ministry staff, administrative and logistical support is delivered by our team of office, technical and communications staff and volunteers. Stewardship activities are organized and delivered by a team of congregational volunteers.

Our facilities

Our church currently owns two properties – one in downtown Kelowna and one in Rutland. In common with many long-established churches within and outside our own denomination across Canada, Central Okanagan United Church faces a key question: *Do we need to be, and can we afford to be, in the business of ministry as well as in the business of property ownership, heritage preservation, development & management; how well do these two businesses align; do the requirements of one inhibit our engagement in the other?*

All our resources, including the facilities we utilize, serve our ministries. In the spirit of reconciliation and environmental stewardship, as well as striving not to overburden those who come after us with encumbrances that divert time, energy and resources away from ministry, the material assets with which God has gifted us must be used strategically to support our ministries.

Each of our four areas of ministry has specific facility support requirements identified in the descriptions that follow. Strategically, none of these requirements are directly dependent on property ownership. Accordingly, a rigorous cost-benefit lens must be brought to bear on the options that best to meet our ministry requirements – present and future.

WORSHIP MINISTRY

Central Okanagan United Church views worshipping together – whether in person or on-line, as foundational to our life and work together as a congregation. Worship services are for all age groups and diversities with an emphasis on inclusive language for God and people and expansive imagery for God. Weekly services are in a hybrid format, in-person as well as live-streamed; they are also recorded for later viewing via links on COUC's website.

Worship, integral to our Spiritual life, is a call to all to live with intention in God's world and is an experience of heart, mind, body and soul. We appreciate worship in many forms, including: 'traditional' Sunday mornings; participating in Wild Church; small group circle settings; walking the Labyrinth; Taize; and sharing the Spirit of Love in family and community pastoral events.

All members of the professional Ministry team, along with the Music Director and music team, share in planning and leading worship services and other worship-related events and activities. Laity (children and youth as well as adults) also participate in leading or contributing to aspects of worship (music, reading scripture, leading prayers, making announcements and participating in interpretive presentations). Music is tied into the theme of lessons and scriptures.

We see music itself as a worshipful/community building and practical arts act. Our congregation participates in and supports four adult vocal choirs, children's choir and handbell choir. We are committed to maintaining and supporting the instruments and spaces that enhance music and are pleased to partner with the community in a program (Song Shine) that uses music as therapy for people who have, quite literally, lost their voices.

Sunday morning worship continues to be a central event in the life of our congregation. To support alignment with a meaningful Sunday School experience for our young people, as well as to enable a complement of worship activities (musical diversity, theological enrichment, learning opportunities and community-building) services typically exceed 60 minutes, extending to 70 or 75 minutes as needed. This Ministry Plan recognizes the centrality and vitality of Sunday morning worship in the life of our congregation and accepts the importance of sharing this time together.

Beyond the Sunday morning experience, we acknowledge the power and potential of other ways to worship as a community; the Sanctuary is not the only venue for meaningful worship. One of the 'growing edges' for our congregation is to explore opportunities for neighbourhood-based, outdoor and small group worship, as well as sharing worship with other communities of faith.

An emerging area of need and opportunity is the role of technology to enable virtual participation in worship. We have begun to employ a range of on-line technologies for worship and we recognize the importance of nurturing increasingly sophisticated approaches for on-line technology.

Priorities

- Support and expand our worship programs with appropriate facilities, technology and staff
- Maintain the scope, variety and quality of worship experiences currently provided by our church, including a diversity of content and opportunities for congregational participation
- Maintain a strong sense of spiritual and social cohesion by linking the worship experience with activities in pastoral care, community ministry and intergenerational ministry
- Musical diversity is a key element to support the worship experience for our congregation
- Be as creative and technologically adept as we can to provide a fullness of the worship experience for those participating on-line
- Move into alternative ways of worship such as person-to-person (interaction-based), outdoor and nature-based, and expanded use of interpretive materials and presentation media (e.g. video; theatre; dramatic readings) that amplify the Gospel message

Outcomes

- Active congregational participation across traditional, alternative and experimental worship
- Broad, diverse reach into the community, welcoming and engaging newcomers into the worship life of the congregation
- Strengthening of relationships and sense of cohesion and belonging among the congregation
- Understanding and appreciation for the concept of 'church' as a community that offers both support and challenge
- Deepened relationships with other faith communities and appreciation for diverse worship experiences and traditions

Supporting actions

Mobilizing partnerships

- Outdoor/nature-based worship events with WildChurch
- Joint services (e.g., summer services; anti-racism services) with neighbouring United Churches, as well as with other denominations and faith traditions
- Engage professional musicians to contribute to worship services
- Recognizing the demand on resources that is required to maintain a sizeable venue to congregate for weekly worship, and the unique challenges associated with owning and operating a protected heritage site, establishment of partnerships with other organizations to use and maintain a sanctuary space is essential. Options may be:
 - Joint use arrangements in the current space or some other facility
 - Transfer of ownership of the current heritage space to a separate heritage preservation organization with COUC leasing back the space it needs
 - Outsourcing venue management services to build a revenue stream from rentals
 - Engaging with UBCO and/or Okanagan College; although UBCO has indicated that its new downtown presence will be entirely self-contained in terms of facilities and services, those may not include a high quality concert/presentation venue.

Leadership development

- In addition to coaching lay worship leaders, recruitment and training of technical volunteers is a vital support activity and can provide opportunities for youth engagement.
- Lay leadership for designated worship activities is encouraged, nurtured and supported, including occasions where ministry staff might not be present. Regardless of the type of worship experience worship leaders are charged with creating a safe space for a diversity of participants and enabling grass-roots groups to explore diverse worship experiences together.
- The challenges and opportunities associated with hybrid represent a growing edge for the congregation. Maintenance of a part-time technology position is essential to support the church's on-line capabilities and enable us to undertake new ways to reach people.
- Congregants have affirmed the centrality of music in the worship experience. Our music team plays an active role in planning for worship services and other ways that music can contribute

to the life of our congregation and other areas of ministry. Quality, diversity, creativity and consistency in COUC's music are highly valued – both within and outside of formal worship.

Facilities

- Centrality of a regular worship facility with easy access both on-line and from all areas of the city is essential. It should accommodate at least 200+ for in-person worship and meet the sophisticated technical support requirements for on-line worship participation. There is a potential interface for pastoral care, as well, to provide specialized assistance to those who require transportation, have mobility, hearing or visual challenges, or who benefit from on-line participation.
- Design, seating, climate control and acoustics must support and encourage congregational participation, including the diversity of music that is integral to the shared worship experience at COUC . The current sanctuary space lacks flexibility in this regard; the worship space must enable a variety of presentational elements and a range of creative expression and participation by the congregation.
- Diversified worship experiences must also be supported that may not require a single centralized facility but may be more localized within our community's geographic areas.
- Whether facilities are owned or leased is not integral to the worship experience; however, continuity and consistency are important for congregational participation with a minimum of distractions.
- Access to the pipe organ supports both traditional and alternate forms of worship as well as concerts and other music programs. The pipe organ is potentially relocatable.

PASTORAL CARE

Pastoral care is an integral part of the work of our congregation. Pastoral care such as hospital and home visits, services in retirement and nursing care homes, and funerals are carried out by our ministerial staff and volunteers. All members of the Ministry staff team participate and provide pastoral care support to congregants and community members as needed. Other staff, as well, play key roles in pastoral care, as they are often the church's first point of contact for individual congregants and the wider community. In a greater sense, pastoral care is woven through all aspects of congregational life as the members come to know one another, develop a sense of belonging, and offer care to one another.

Another key element of pastoral care is to welcome and engage with newcomers to the congregation, helping them to become part of their new church community. Pastoral care also means staying in touch with all congregants – from new to long-standing – and responding to their emerging needs.

Although pastoral care largely supports COUC's own congregants, we recognize and respond to pastoral needs wherever they emerge, including serving those who may have never engaged with a church but who find themselves in acute or emergent situations of personal need. Sometimes

professional training is needed to provide support in these circumstances, and each member of the Ministry staff shares in responding to such instances.

At Central Okanagan United Church, pastoral care extends beyond support services for families and individuals. Pastoral care includes creating opportunities for the congregation to gather and socialize beyond the bounds of formal worship or group work. With the recent amalgamation and the challenges presented by the pandemic, gathering together as a faith community and extending our sphere of relationships with other congregants are vital dynamics for our well-being as a church.

Given the age distribution of our congregants, we anticipate that the need for pastoral care for this demographic will also continue to increase. Also, our anticipated completion of the process to be formally recognized as an Affirming Ministry may bring more LGBTQS+ people into our midst who have unique support needs.

Priorities

- Maintain involvement of ministry staff in conducting pastoral visits, weddings and funerals, providing leadership for pastoral care activities, and mobilizing and supporting the efforts and commitment of volunteers to broaden the reach of pastoral care
- Maintain activities and programs that promote a sense of belonging and connection to the church and among its members
- Move to respond to emerging needs of newcomers and help them connect and feel a sense of welcome and belonging
- Multiply efforts to respond where there are unique needs for programming such as outreach to young adults, university and college students, young families with children, seniors, LGBTQ2S youth, etc.
- Continue to bring a creative and proactive focus to the unique pastoral care needs of those who face particular barriers to their participation in congregational life (e.g., mobility/transportation)
- Given the large size, steady growth and emerging diversity of needs within our congregation, we need to mobilize, organize, train and support more congregants to be active volunteers in pastoral care

Outcomes

- Growing involvement of congregants of all ages in all aspects of pastoral ministry
- Caring support for individuals within the congregation and the wider community who are facing emergent or acute life situations
- Individuals and families form lasting relationships within the church community
- Deepened sense of connection and caring among congregants
- Community members see COUC as a place of comfort, care and nurture, a home in the struggles of life

Supporting actions

Mobilizing partnerships

- Seek partnerships with agencies and engage professionals related to pastoral care (e.g., hospital chaplain, counselling services) to conduct presentations and provide training for pastoral care volunteers

Leadership development

- Maintain pastoral volunteer training that promotes best practices and adheres to duty of care policies of our church and the United Church of Canada
- Facilitate theological reflection on the role of pastoral care in the life of the congregation
- Continue to build awareness among our congregation that all of us as members of our church community have a role to play – large or small – in the delivery of pastoral care

Facilities

- Classroom-style space for in-person training and technological support to provide training and other programs in a hybrid format or Zoom-only setting. These facilities need not be centralized to one location; options exist to rent or borrow space on an as-needed basis within Kelowna's various geographic areas
- Small comfortable space(s) are important for private conversation
- Multi-use space to support large group congregational events and activities supported by a well-appointed and efficient food preparation/service area. Proximity to the weekly worship and Sunday School facilities is an important consideration for the multi-use space
- Use of new and traditional technologies (social media, telephone) are also an important component for 'keeping in touch' with one another

INTERGENERATIONAL MINISTRY

Choosing deliberately to name this ministry as something broader than ministry with children, youth and families, we are committed to maintaining programming with those parts of our demographic while exploring the opportunities for connections and integration beyond them. We see potential for ministry across generations, expanding relationships, cultural learning and helping to build a multi-generational community that appreciates and makes a place for all ages and demographics. We are excited about ways (small groups, studies, retreats, Sunday programming for children, youth group encounters, etc) through which this ministry can offer opportunities for all generations to provoke thoughtful insight into the nature of the divine and how we encounter that which calls us into love.

We see great potential in building relationships in the community around us as a variety of organizations we are already partnered with have a specific and sometimes cross-cultural focus on activities and relationships between and across the generations.

Our aim is to integrate all ages into the life of the congregation, responding to the unique needs and characteristics of our various demographic groups and animating opportunities to develop

rewarding relationships and interactions across demographic lines. These ministries support core values of connection, belonging, community, faith formation, and sharing our spiritual journeys, and ensure that each individual, regardless of age, is respected, honoured, and welcome.

Current programs include weekly Sunday School, activity nights, annual summer camps and youth retreats. Special events feature largely in intergenerational ministries, anchored by intergenerational worship services held around particular occasions in the church calendar. Ongoing opportunities for multiple generations to work side by side in worship, community outreach activities and congregational events are a feature of this area of ministry.

Beyond current programs, there is scope to explore other creative ways to build relationships within and across generations (e.g., camping excursions/retreats; attending events). Facilitating such 'family to family' opportunities is a role our church can play.

Priorities

- The original amalgamation envisions a .7 position being assigned to leadership for this area. The increased breadth of needs and opportunities resulting from expanding COUC's day-to-day geographic reach to include West Kelowna, calls for full-time leadership in this area.
- Recruit or call an individual to provide ongoing leadership for Intergenerational Ministry. For the near term, interim staffing is being considered for this ministry as COUC has not been able to return to pre-pandemic levels of engagement with children and youth and is holding back from moving into potential areas of activity.
- Support faith formation and community connection programs that provide a wide range of learning opportunities (e.g., Sunday School, confirmation classes, Bible study, church retreats, guest speakers and presentations of particular interest to specific demographic groups (e.g., parents of pre-schoolers, new retirees)
- Maintain established programs and move forward with programs and services to actively engage and attract new people from all demographics, including Rutland-based population groups (e.g., university students, new arrivals, young families) and youth in West Kelowna
- Develop cross-cultural cross-generational experiences and relationships with organizations and cultural communities outside of COUC (e.g., BGC; Ki Low Na Friendship Society; Indigenous communities; other Faith traditions, denominations and UCC congregations; etc)"
- Undertake new ways to nurture faith and connection (e.g. "Messy Church" events, youth, teen, and young adult programming
- Animate new ways to invite the neighbourhood and neighbours to participate in church-based activities (e.g., art and music making activities, youth drama, walking club, meditation and labyrinth walks, mid-week family and intergenerational gatherings, pancake breakfasts, family bike rides & hikes)
- Continue to move cross-generational activities out into the community (e.g., camping ministry, Kelowna Pride Festival, University Campus Ministry, social justice advocacy)
- In our internal communications, promote not just events with a specific intergenerational focus but also encourage cross-generational participation in daily congregational life

Outcomes

- Individuals and families form lasting relationships with the church community
- Participation by all demographic groups in congregational life
- Deepened sense of spiritual literacy and faith among congregants
- Growing awareness and appreciation of God in all places and faith traditions

Supporting actions

Partnership-building

- Collaboration with other ministers and ministries is vital, as is exploring how the church might use new technologies and ways of connecting (e.g. social media)
- Engage in program development/delivery with other UCC congregations, other faiths, community Organizations; Indigenous groups, etc.” Seek to engage in particular with groups and organizations that have demonstrated effective intergenerational approaches

Leadership development

- Retreats and faith development sessions
- Sunday School for ages 3 - Grade 7 using *The Whole People of God*, or another appropriate curriculum, that helps facilitate connections between worship and learning
- Adult book and Bible study
- Training youth leaders to lead/assist programs for school-aged children (e.g., ‘Fun Fridays’, Sunday School , summer and March break daycamps)
- Offer and support leadership training opportunities with other community and faith based groups
- Mobilize congregants with ‘grandparenting’ experience as caregivers so that young parents are more able to participate in church activities and programs

Facilities

- Intergenerational ministries make use of a variety of gathering spaces – indoor and outdoor – and have variable and often flexible space and materials requirements.
- Weekly gathering for in-person and on-line Sunday worship represents a valuable opportunity to deliver concurrent child and youth education programs that dovetail with worship participation. Facility requirements to support these programs include multi-purpose areas, nursery and play area for younger parishioners , 6-8 break-out/small group classroom spaces, access to an outdoors area, and support for food preparation/service.
- Neighbourhood-based locations are of particular importance for programs, services and activities with a specific demographic focus. Students from the UBCO’s north campus, for example, will benefit from activities delivered in relative proximity to the campus.
- In-home hosting of small group gatherings has demonstrated potential to build community; these may be geographically based, interest-based, activity-based and needs-based.

COMMUNITY MINISTRY

Community ministry at COUC is clustered into three areas of activity: Social Justice, Education, and Outreach. Illustrations of each are below with a few examples, which are by no means exhaustive:

Outreach (Charity/Aid/Emergent needs)	Education (Equip/Support/Heal)	Social Justice (address Root Cause/Systemic Change)
Thrift Store	Partnerships/interfaith/workshops	Food/Housing Security
Food Pantry/Hot Lunch	Mental Health First Aid	Social Enterprise Development
Referral & Crisis Assistance	Lay Leader & Volunteer training	Environmental Concerns
e.g.'s: support for M&S, Palestinians & El Triunfo, C'tr Okanagan Refugee Cttee)	e.g.'s: information sessions (e.g., <i>94 Calls to Action</i>), guest speakers, newsletter articles; reading circles	e.g.'s: LGBTQ+ advocacy, Reconciliation Working Group, Amnesty Int'l

Our approach to community ministry is based on relationship-building – learning as well as sharing. We are all 'us' – not 'us and them'.

In addition to direct programming activities in the above areas, community ministry is also aligned with COUC's other areas of ministry – pastoral care, intergenerational ministry and worship (e.g., worship services provide opportunities to educate the congregation about particular social justice needs and opportunities in our community; pastoral care may include individual counselling to participants in outreach programs).

We engage with other faith traditions and the wider community to create a community and a world that is just and equitable for all, discerning gaps in how people's physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual needs are being met, and striving to address those gaps. We acknowledge the various approaches and perspectives offered by other faith traditions and cultures and seek to learn from these as well as to share our own.

Community Ministry at Central Okanagan United Church identifies and provides opportunities for congregation members to embark together on paths of reconciliation and renewal with Indigenous people. We are also called to serve those who are marginalized in society, including those denied their humanity because of gender identification, sexual orientation, cultural or racial heritage, socio-economic status, physical and mental health.

Priorities

We acknowledge that our effectiveness and impact as a faith-centred community is through building deep and authentic relationships with people inside and outside our church. We aim to identify and commit the necessary financial, staffing and volunteer resources to support this relationship-building and to use our resources strategically to leverage external resources to achieve our community ministry goals.

We also want to strive to extend the limits of our energies and creativity to engage those who are typically regarded as 'service recipients' to be empowered to be partners in the 'service delivery' process.

Social justice

- Multiply our efforts to engage with other communities of faith and with downtown residents, businesses and organizations in advocating for social justice
- Strengthen community bonds being challenged by the rapid growth and diversification (and sometimes displacement) in our urban populations

- Continue developing and building right and authentic relationships with community members and elders at Ki-low-Na Friendship Society and Westbank First Nation.
- Live with respect in creation, striving for a zero-footprint impact, by using environmentally friendly products. (ie, solar panels, heat pumps...) in constructing any new facility or portion thereof.

Outreach

- Maintain and grow the range of services being provided to Kelowna and West Kelowna residents, and especially those facing life challenges
- Move to respond to new/emerging areas of need, such as the needs of young people living on the street and those with other high-risk living concerns

Education

- Provide training and opportunities for congregants to engage in ‘courageous conversations’ around anti-racism, colonization and white privilege in order to become more effective allies and companions.

Across all three areas of community ministry, we seek to identify and build on existing relationships that congregants have with organizations outside our community of faith (e.g., other faith communities, Kelowna Sunrise Rotary Club, Interfaith Circle, Next Steps on the Path of Reconciliation Working Group, Amnesty International Okanagan, Canadians for Justice & Peace in the Middle East - Okanagan, Metro Community, Ki-low-na Friendship Society, and the City of Kelowna)

Outcomes

- Active congregational engagement in all aspects of community ministry, increasing our understanding of the needs and challenges facing marginalized individuals and developing ongoing, value-added relationships with community residents
- Increased congregational literacy on social justice issues leading to meaningful progress to address societal gaps
- Deepened appreciation for the confluence of traditional indigenous teachings and values with our own
- Strategic use of COUC’s internal assets and capabilities to leverage external resources for outreach, education and social justice
- Deliver new forms of ministry/worship that will respond to the needs and longings of the wider community
- Continue to respond to our call to ministries beyond our local community, supporting refugees and maintaining our contributions to UCC Mission & Service

Supporting actions

Partnership-building

Current

- Member of *Interfaith Circle* where the idea for the *Neighbour to Neighbour* pilot project originated (project is now with UBCO)
- Founding and active member of *Central Okanagan Refugee Committee*
- Partnership with *Canadians for Justice & Peace in the Middle East – Okanagan* to provide learning and action opportunities in support of the Palestinian people, including serving as the regional distribution centre for Palestinian olive oil products
- Partnership with *Amnesty International Okanagan* to host learning events and advocacy actions
- Founding member of *Next Steps on the Path of Reconciliation Working Group*, offering a range of Reading Circles and film screenings in partnership with other churches and community organizations

Potential/targeted

- Become an *Affirming Community of Faith* within the United Church of Canada
- Establish relationships with First Nations elders
- As part of national/international initiatives, expand our advocacy and services to help the dispossessed, the marginalized and the disenfranchised in Canada and worldwide
- Connect with other values-aligned groups and organizations to increase the scope, reach and impact of our programs, services and activities
- Increase our involvement in the *Neighbour to Neighbour* project, especially in Rutland where there are many opportunities to engage with folk from a variety of backgrounds who are struggling to find a sense of community
- Engage with the team at City of Kelowna and their emerging plan to end Homelessness

Leadership development

- Engage, develop and support lay volunteers in leadership roles for the many aspects of community ministry.
- Employ facts-based, well-researched methods to educate ourselves and our neighbours about social justice issues and opportunities to effect positive changes
- Develop our listening and interactive skills, learning to engage in direct and open communication to learn from and to share with our neighbours in need
- Seek out opportunities to share and act on social justice challenges to help those who are dispossessed and those who are marginalized in our local community, as well as in the wider world
- Discern, reflect, and evaluate how best to identify community needs and partnerships, then organize programs and services to contribute to the resolution of those needs

Facilities

- The various geographic areas and neighbourhoods that comprise Kelowna and West Kelowna present different needs for community ministries. These needs are evolving as the city grows, and as other community service organizations reorientate themselves to meet emerging challenges. One emerging trend is the evolution of 'pop-up' facilities that utilize temporary leased spaces rather than permanent property ownership. Another approach that warrants consideration is the deployment of a mobile unit, e.g., a van, as a way to be in community, to re-imagine and re-create church ministry that is not just building-based
- COUC's current facilities in the downtown and in Rutland present challenges in cost, design and logistics in supporting our community ministries. At the downtown facility, work-arounds are in place to accommodate community ministry activities, but the costs and inefficiencies are high, and expansion/remediation potential is limited. The Rutland site is suitably occupied on a full-time basis by a daycare centre, and current space to support outreach and other community ministries is limited. The property has expansion potential on its own or in partnership with other organizations.
- The West Kelowna area does not have a significant centralized core; services are generally distributed lineally in proximity to Highway 97; a diversity of lease arrangements and/or occupancy/use partnerships are an important element to support community ministries in West K.
- For effective support of outreach programs, as well as other church activities, a well-equipped, adequately sized and code-compliant kitchen facility is essential.

MOVING FORWARD...

Assets:

- We have an engaged congregation with many willing participants in all aspects of our ministries.
- We are physically located in the geographic centre of Central Okanagan, within short distance of a multi-ethnic; multi-faith, economically varied and relatively youthful population that has (in community engagement) identified many areas of potential ministry in alignment with our gifts.
- We are also physically located in the downtown area of Kelowna.
- We have attractive properties that, of themselves, offer opportunities for well-funded partnerships in capital development.
- We have enough capital on hand to fund ministry, establish partnerships and seed development.
- We have existing and potential partners in capital development and in Community Service/Ministry
 - Capital
 - Daycare tenant at Fitzpatrick
 - UBC Okanagan at Fitzpatrick
 - Existing church tenants at Fitzpatrick
 - Developers (housing/retail) at Fitzpatrick
 - Developer on Bernard – small community concert venue and housing
 - Secondary developer on Bernard
 - Need for additional daycare space in the downtown
 - Community (throughout Central Okanagan)
 - UBC Okanagan
 - Okanagan College
 - BGC Okanagan
 - Central Okanagan Food Bank
 - Ki Low Na Friendship Society
 - Kelowna Pride
 - Peachland and Winfield UCs
 - Islamic community; Sikh community; Hindu community

Challenges/Opportunities:

- We have buildings that are in need of capital expenditure/we need to make changes to them, are not locked into existing structures.
- We are significantly an aging demographic and sometimes see ourselves as in urgent need of either an infusion of younger members or shifting from an orientation towards expanding ministry to an orientation towards planning for diminished capacity.
- We have wisdom and perspective and welcome youth and enthusiasm.
- We come together after recent histories of trauma around efforts to make budget and/or fulfill a dream; we have survived and can help others as they seek abundance in scarcity.
- We tend to see 'success' in terms of growth in numbers; we are called to see joy in lives influenced by and changed in the light of the gospel of love.

Near-term deliverables

- Recruit or call a fourth minister to provide leadership for intergenerational ministry and assure that our ministry staff are not stretched too thin in meeting our expanding leadership needs across Kelowna and West Kelowna
- Confirm ongoing access to a centrally located worship space in Kelowna that supports meaningful worship experiences for both in-person and on-line participants and enables music to be a significant part of our worship experience
- Procure access to a diversity of gathering spaces and space-sharing partnerships to support customized programs and service delivery in all four neighbourhood quadrants: Downtown, Rutland, West Kelowna and Mission/East Kelowna
- Implement a deliberate, consistent process to engage with and cultivate potential community partners
- Expand leadership training/development activity as a formal aspect within all four areas of ministry and mobilizes the resources of experience and expertise within our congregation
- Establish a realistic fiscal plan wholly focused on supporting our ministries

Next steps

Implementation

- Approve the Ministry Plan (Board, congregation, and UCC Pacific Mountain Region)
- Initiate process to recruit or call Ministerial leadership for intergenerational ministry
- Investigate opportunities for ministry and partnerships in West Kelowna, including potential space sharing opportunities
- Organize exploratory meetings with potential space-sharing partners and/or ownership partners for the Bernard and Fitzpatrick sites
- Adopt a ministry statement encompassing our response to call in the Central Okanagan that can help us to guide and monitor the progress of our ministry together
e.g., “With God as our Guide, Christ as our Companion and the Holy Spirit as our helper, we seek to nurture a healthy, respectful, loving community where all beings are held as sacred companions”
- Task each of our four areas of Ministry to provide the Board and congregation with a detailed two year action plan for 2024 and 2025 identifying program priorities and resource implications, including how we intend to address identified needs across Kelowna and West Kelowna, as well as impact the larger world
- Generate a draft budget for 2024 that conveys how our four areas of ministry will be supported in the coming year

Evaluation

The Church Board will evaluate progress on the priorities and outcomes provided in this Ministry Plan, including the alignment with the congregational values outlined in the Plan. The Board will include the results of its evaluation, along with any recommendations, as part of its annual report presented to the congregation for the Annual Congregational Meeting.

As part of its evaluation process, the Board will consult with Ministry teams and with the congregation for input and feedback.