

**ATTENDANCE**

Attendance

Amanda Barnes, Bob Bennett, Jocelyn Cook, Elizabeth Dawson, Oliver Dingwell, Paula Gale, Faith March-MacCuish, Debra Sparkes Mercer, James Ravenscroft, Roy West (October 12).

**REGRETS**

Regrets

Nancy Mojica-Fisher, Paul Vardy, Gneid Lackey.

**GATHERING AND WELCOME**

Gathering

Amanda Barnes, President, welcomed members to this in person meeting of the Executive, and opened the meeting with prayer.

Welcome

**GRACE AND SUPPER**

Grace  
Supper

The President, Amanda Barnes offered grace.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Call to Order

**QUORUM AND CONSTITUTION OF THE COUNCIL**

Quorum

The President, Amanda Barnes, noted that a quorum was present and constituted the council in the name of Jesus Christ, the head of the church, for all the business that shall properly come before it.

Constitution of  
the Council

**ACKNOWLEDGING THE LAND**

Acknowledging  
the Land

The President began the meeting by acknowledging the land on which we gather. The island of Newfoundland is the ancestral homeland of the Mi'kmaq and Beothuk. We also recognize the Inuit and the Innu as the original people of Labrador. We strive for respectful partnerships with all the peoples of this province as we search for collective healing and true reconciliation.

**AGENDA**

Agenda

**MOTION:** (Paula Gale/Roy West)

That the agenda be adopted as circulated.

**CARRIED**

**OPENING DEVOTIONS**

Opening  
Devotions

The opening devotions were led by Amanda Barnes, President and Faith March-MacCuish Executive Minister. Prayer, responsive readings and a blessing were shared, based on the scripture readings from Micah 6:6-8 and Matthew 22:34-40. Ministry of Music was shared through the hymn *This Day God Gives Me*.

**CHECK-IN**

Check-In

Executive members took time to check-in with each other and reflect on time and experiences since they last gathered.

**GOAL SETTING**

Goal Setting

For the duration of the evening, the Executive entered a goal setting session. The Executive Minister, Faith March-MacCuish, offered readings from the book *Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future* by Margaret J. Wheatley and engaged in deep and thoughtful conversation around the theme phrases "The Practice of Conversation", "Discovering What we are About" and "Willing to be Disturbed". The Executive continued the session with team building exercises and time exploring conversations in smaller groups.

Evening Prayer**EVENING PRAYER**

The evening prayer was offered by President Amanda Barnes.

**October 12, 2023**

Gathering**GATHERING AND WELCOME**Welcome

The President, Amanda Barnes welcomed the Executive back for the continuation of the fall meeting.

Opening Prayer**OPENING PRAYER**

The President, Amanda Barnes offered an opening prayer.

Goal Setting**GOAL SETTING** – cont'd

The Executive Minister continued to lead the members gathered in goal setting exercises. The morning session of the Executive focused on objectives and key results. The Executive engaged in a workshop on strategic objectives and took time to set objectives and key results. The Executive agreed to meet again in order to share the results of this exercise and continue the goal setting priorities for their work.

Break**BREAK**Minutes**MINUTES**

**MOTION:** (Oliver Dingwell/Paula Gale)

That the minutes of the May 31, 2023 meeting of Executive be adopted.

**CARRIED**

Business Arising**BUSINESS ARISING**Vacant Land**Vacant Land**

James Ravenscroft and Roy West updated the Executive that a small committee of representatives from St. James United Church and the region has met, and are willing to continue exploring the opportunity with Kindred Works.

DLM Working Group**Designated Lay Ministry (DLM) Working Group**

The Executive Minister updated the Executive on the working group. A meeting with the group was held on June 23, 2023, to discuss new policies and best practices in the region's relationship with DLM's. General Council is continuing its work to update policies as well. Another meeting of the group will take place in November once the details of the General Council policy is known.

Governance Review**Governance Review**

The Executive Minister update the Executive on this work. Updates from the annual meeting have been incorporated into the Governance document, and this is now to be posted to the regional website.

Goal Setting**Goal Setting**

The Executive have spent some very productive time on this topic over the past two days. The Executive will now look at what capacity we have to continue this work, or where capacity is needed within our structure. It was agreed that the Executive will meet again to continue this work.

Knox-Metropolitan Review**Knox-Metropolitan Review**

The work on this review has been completed on behalf of Living Skies Regional Council.

Congregational Designated Ministers**Congregational Designated Ministers**

The Executive agreed that the May 17, 2023 decision of the Executive will need to be communicated to the region.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

Correspondence

1. **Thank you and Appreciation** – (Appendix A) – letters and notes were received to thank the region for Christmas gifts, support, attendance at events, and anniversary gifts received.

Thank you and Appreciation

2. **John Maich** – letter received, dated June 2, 2023, questioning the role and authority of the region with respect to the George Street United Church property. The Executive Minister reported on the timeline of events that have taken place on the property sale since November, 2021. This has been a very complex file.

John Maich

George Street UC

**MOTION:** (Paula Gale/Bob Bennett)

That we move in camera.

In Camera

**CARRIED**

**MOTION:** (Paula Gale/Bob Bennett)

That we move out of camera.

Out of Camera

**CARRIED**

The Executive expressed their sincere thanks and appreciation to the Executive Minister, Faith March-MacCuish, the Regional Minister, Heather Sandford, Community of Faith Support and Planning Chair, Bob Bennett, and the Division of Financial and Administrative Resources Chair and Secretary, Roy West and Brenda Andrews, for all their work on this file.

The Executive agreed that the President and Executive Minister will work on the response to the June 2, 2023 letter.

3. **Jimmy Pratt Memorial Outreach Centre** – email received from the chair of the centre, regarding the continued use of the George Street property by this group, now that the congregation has disbanded. The Regional Minister will respond to their correspondence.

Jimmy Pratt Memorial Outreach

**REPORTS**

Reports

**FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE RESOURCES**

Finance and Administrative Resources

Roy West, chair, presented the report of the division. The chair presented the options for the future of the George Street United Church property. At a meeting with the congregation, on September 11, 2023, there was strong support for the repurposing of the building. The congregation have a strong sense of contributing to the future work of the wider church.

**MOTION:** (Roy West/Paula Gale)

That Regional Council Executive explore the possibility of the George Street United Church property being used as a Community Centre for United Church social ministries in St. John's.

George Street UC

Social Ministry Centre

**CARRIED**

**MOTION:** (Bob Bennett/James Ravenscroft)

That First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council Executive create a Task Group to investigate future possibilities for the George Street Property, accountable to Regional Council Executive.

**CARRIED**

The Executive Minister, James Ravenscroft and Debra Sparkes Mercer agreed to work on terms of reference, including membership, and reporting; stating that the task group report to each Executive meeting.

Terms of Reference

**GRACE**

Grace

Grace was offered by Paula Gale.

**LUNCH**

Lunch

Reports**REPORTS** - continued

(Debra Sparkes Mercer left the meeting)

Finance and Administrative Resources**FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE RESOURCES** – continued

Roy West, Division Chair, continued the report of the Division. The chair noted that there have been 8 (eight) United Church properties listed for sale since the May Executive meeting.

St. John's- Wesley UC**Wesley United Church**

Wesley United Church has approached the Division for permission to apply for a bank loan and loan from the region in order to complete replacement to their furnace heating system. The \$20,000 (twenty thousand) loan requested from the region has been approved by the Division.

**MOTION:** (Roy West/Bob Bennett)

That First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council Executive approves that Wesley United Church apply for an \$80,000 (eighty thousand) bank loan, to assist with the cost of replacing/retrofitting the furnace.

**CARRIED**CCOPC**Cochrane Community Outreach and Performance Centre (CCOPC)**

A proposal has been received from First Light regarding a future proposal for ownership of the Cochrane Street property. The Executive Minister has responded, reminding them that there needs to be a meeting with the membership and the proposal from First Light needs to be presented and voted on before it comes to the Region for approval, and asking that their timeline of August 31, 2023 be extended. The Executive Minister connected with the congregation of Cochrane Street United Church in June and at that time the membership meeting had not happened. She will connect with them again to see if this meeting has now happened.

Insurance**Insurance Blanket Policy**

The chair updated the Executive on the most recent report from Steers Insurance. The Division chair also reported that they will likely not have a full report regarding the national church insurance proposal available for January, as had been anticipated.

(Roy West left the meeting)  
(Heather Sandford joined the meeting)

Corresponding Member**CORRESPONDING MEMBER****MOTION:** (Debra Sparkes Mercer/Jocelyn Cook)

That Heather Sandford, Regional Minister, be a corresponding member to the October 12, 2023 meeting of the Executive.

**CARRIED**President**PRESIDENT** – Appendix B

(Paula Gale assumed the chair)

The President, Amanda Barnes, presented her report, included in the appendix. The President highlighted some of the work she has completed on behalf of the region. The President thanked the Executive for the privilege of serving the region.

(Amanda Barnes reassumed the chair)

Executive Minister**EXECUTIVE MINISTER**

Faith March-MacCuish presented her report. The Executive Minister has recently returned from sabbatical, where she completed some French studies, has studied some of the research on inclusion of those with disabilities, and has begun an additional course in change management.

The Executive Minister offered special thanks for the Regional Ministers, David Hewitt, Kendall Harrison and Heather Sandford, who each took turns as Acting Executive Minister, and to Jennifer Taylor, Executive Assistant, for maintaining emails and work flow during this sabbatical time. The Executive Minister reported that the sabbatical has been a blessing, and she is very appreciative to the region, divisions, committees, and staff for their support in making this happen.

The Executive Minister also reported that the Moderator has accepted the invitation to attend the annual meeting on June 7-9, 2024. The staff are currently doing site visits and obtaining quotes for the meeting. It was noted that the Regional Planning Team needs a chair to continue this important work.

**UNITED CHURCH WOMEN (UCW)** – Appendix C

United Church Women

Debra Sparkes Mercer presented the report of the United Church Women, included in the appendix. The UCW representative reported that many UCW units have closed, and they are finding difficulty in filling positions on the executives. The annual meeting for East UCW was held at Burry Heights in April, and West was held in June. The National UCW event was held in Mississauga in September. Debra was pleased to report plans are underway to celebrate the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary in July, 2027, with the theme *Hear Our Voice*.

**HUMAN RESOURCES**

Human Resources

Heather Sandford, Regional Minister, presented the report of the Division of Human Resources, on behalf of Paul Vardy, chair. The Regional Minister updated the Executive on the Green Bay South and Whitbourne Pastoral Charges. A conflict facilitator was named, and the conflict resolution processes have taken place. John Roy, facilitator, visited both pastoral charges to perform this work for the region.

**Green Bay South Pastoral Charge**

Green Bay South PC

The conflict facilitator reported that no mediation took place on the pastoral charge, as not all parties were present at the table.

**MOTION:** (Paula Gale/Bob Bennett)

Review File #2023-1012-01

That First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council Executive requests a congregational review of the Green Bay South Pastoral Charge (The Manual J.4).

**CARRIED**

**Whitbourne Pastoral Charge**

Whitbourne PC

The conflict facilitator met with representatives from Whitbourne and Dunville to hear their concerns and what may be causing conflict. After the mediation process, there was agreement about some future planning, including that Dunville invite regional representatives to meet with the congregation of Grace United Church to look at the disbanding of the congregation, and that Whitbourne invite regional representatives to meet with the congregation of Trinity United Church to look at becoming a single point pastoral charge.

**MOTION:** (Paula Gale/Debra Sparkes Mercer)

That Regional Council Executive receives the report of the conflict facilitator, and asks Pastoral Relations to meet with the congregations on the pastoral charge regarding recommendations.

**CARRIED**

**COMMUNITIES OF FAITH SUPPORT AND PLANNING** – Appendix D

Communities of Faith Support & Planning

Bob Bennett, chair, presented the report of the division, included in the appendix. The chair highlighted MAPS in process and introduced the proposal on Pastoral Units, which comes from the Future Directions Committee. The Division are asking for the Executive to endorse the continuation and next steps for this proposal.

Pastoral Units**MOTION:** (James Ravenscroft/Elizabeth Dawson)

That Regional Council Executive approves the proposal Pastoral Units, in principle, for further development.

**CARRIED**

(Heather Sandford left the meeting)

Break**BREAK**General Council Representative**GENERAL COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE** – Appendix E

Oliver Dingwell, General Council Representative, presented the report, included in the appendix. The General Council representative highlighted some of the work of the General Council, including the shared lease agreement by The United Church of Canada with the Presbyterian Church of Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada; the General Council budget (where it was noted that Mission Support Grants to the region will be reduced by \$60,000 (sixty) in 2024); voting on the Indigenous Church remit; and recent decisions from the September General Council Executive meeting. The 44<sup>th</sup> meeting of the General Council will take place on Saturday, October 21, 2023.

Staffing Committee**STAFFING COMMITTEE**

Paula Gale, reporting representative of the Tri-Regional Staffing Committee noted that there have been no meetings since the last meeting of the Executive. The Executive Minister noted that 360 reviews will take place this fall for the Regional Minister, the Executive Minister and the Minister for Children Youth and Young Adults.

Nominations**NOMINATIONS**

In the absence of Gneid Lackey, the Executive Minister noted that there are many vacancies to be filled in the Nominations Report. There are several committees and teams that are not able to function with only one or two members, including the fact that there is no chair for the Division of Regional Council Services and Support.

**MOTION:** (Oliver Dingwell/James Ravenscroft)

That the Regional Council Executive offer work with the Nominations Committee members to review the Nominations process and how best to support the Nominations Committee in their work.

**CARRIED**

Amanda Barnes and Paula Gale offered to help with this work on behalf of the Executive.

Affirm Committee**AFFIRM COMMITTEE**

James Ravenscroft, chair, presented the report of the committee. The committee is currently down to three (3) members and is going through a period of restructuring.

New Business**NEW BUSINESS**General Council Commissioner**GENERAL COUNCIL COMMISSIONER**

First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council has a commissioner to General Council who has since left her ministry position in the region. It was noted that new commissioners are to be elected in 2024.

**MOTION:** (Jocelyn Cook/Elizabeth Dawson)

That Miriam Bowlby remain in the role of General Council Commissioner until the rise of General Council 45.

**CARRIED**

**VISITORS TO THE REGION**

Visitors to the  
Region

The Executive Minister reported that First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council will be one of the host regions of The United Church of Canada Partner Council. The Partner Council will focus on the Call and Vision, reflecting together and learning from each other. Members visiting this region will be hosted by the Regional Minister and Executive Minister the week of October 22, 2023.

**CLOSING WORSHIP**

Closing  
Worship

The President, Amanda Barnes, shared the closing worship, as prepared by Gneid Lackey, and closed the meeting with prayer and a blessing for travel.

**NEXT MEETING**

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Executive is scheduled on January 25, 2024 at 9:30am via Zoom Video Conferencing.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Adjournment

Having no further business, the President declared that the meeting adjourn.

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Rev. Amanda Barnes  
President

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Rev. Faith March-MacCuish  
Executive Minister

Appendix A

CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence List

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*Thank You & Appreciation*

Thank you for the Anniversary Gift & Certificate

Rev. Guy Matthews

Thank you for the Christmas Gift

Mrs. Blanche March

Thank you for the Gift

King Senerpida – Annual Meeting

Rev. Grant Stuckless – Leaving Region

Rev. Nancy Mojica-Fisher – President's Gift

Thank you for the Support

Agnes Pratt Home

Knox-Metropolitan United Church (Review)

Gonzaga High School (Service)

Appreciation to Staff for Annual Meeting

Very Rev. Dr. Marion Pardy



Appendix B

PRESIDENT

**President's Report  
Executive Meeting  
October 11 – 12, 2023**

Thank you again for the privilege to serve as President of First Dawn Eastern Edge Region. I was a little hesitant when Rev. Nancy joyfully offered the President's stole, but it has been a beautiful adventure thus far, meeting people where they are and hearing their joys and concerns.

As I have travelled through the Region, I am overwhelmed by the number of people who have said yes, and continue to say yes every day because of their faith. The outcome is not always what I might wish for the larger church, but there are lots of hard questions being asked and much prayerful discernment happening, and for that I give God thanks.

Over and over, I have witnessed ***courage and bold discipleship***. Communities of faith with the courage to try new things, courage to say 'we are done with this building', courage to name when things need to be reviewed, courage to pray for peace in a broken world, and courage to make difficult decisions. Here's some of my work to date:

May 17 – Executive Meeting

May 28 – Offered greetings at Bethany United Church, Carbonear during morning worship

May 31 – Received Review from Knox Metropolitan United Church, SK

June 25 – Invited to share in the Farewell Service for Rev. Stephanie Rose and the Port Blandford Pastoral Charge. Unfortunately, due to short notice, I was unable to attend.

June 26 – Closure of Trout River United Church, Trout River

June 26 – Closure of St. Andrew's United Church, Woody Point

June 27 – Closure of Wesley United Church, Rocky Harbour

June 28 – Closure of St. Luke's United Church, Musgrave Harbour

July 4 – Offered Condolences at the funeral for the late Rev. Wendy Cronhelm at St. James UC

August 14 – Meeting with Rev. Catherine Stuart in Bonavista

August 20 – Closure of Change Islands United Church, Change Islands

September 11 – Participated in an Interfaith Peace Service at the Basilica, St. John's

September 15 – Invited to attend funeral service for the late Rev. Sidney Newbury in Baie Verte.

Unfortunately, I was not able to attend. Condolences were sent on behalf of the Region.  
September 19 – Zoom meeting with Rev. Julie Brace to discuss the possibility of a Labrador visit.

September 24 – Invited to preach at First United Church in Mount Pearl and assist in dedicating their Peace Garden in celebration of their 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

Respectfully submitted,

***Rev. Amanda Barnes***

Appendix C**UNITED CHURCH WOMEN**

**First Dawn Eastern Edge Region  
United Church Women  
October 2023**

I bring you greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and on behalf of the First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional United Church Women. There are 18 areas within the region of First Dawn Eastern Edge with a current total of 76 units. While the pandemic seems to be over, it continues to be a challenging time for many of our local UCW units. Some of our units have been able to pick up where they left off before the pandemic; hosting afternoon teas, having Friendship Nights and so on. The challenge, now, for some of our locals, is that current members are getting older and there are fewer new members joining UCW. East and West Districts are also finding it challenging to fill positions on our respective Executives.

On October 14-15, 2022, United Church Women from St. John's to Grand Falls-Windsor met at Wesley United Church, St. John's, for a Gathering and to also celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UCW. There was excitement in the air! After 3 long years we were finally seeing each other in person. The theme was "Continuing in Hope". We were so delighted to have three Charter Members with us during the weekend. The weekend consisted of entertainment, Bible Study, guest speaker, and fun time. We were so thankful and blessed to have had the opportunity to come together to have fun, food, and the gift of fellowship. East District held their Annual General Meeting on April 29, 2023 and West District held their Annual General Meeting/Gathering on June 10-12, 2023. Both events had an attendance of 35-40 women.

From September 18-22, I attended the National United Church Women meetings at the Queen of the Apostles Retreat Centre, Mississauga. The theme for the meetings was "Where There's Faith There's Hope. The week consisted of guest speakers on the topics of Social Justice/Environment, Experiencing Joy, and Bible Study. We also had presentations by The Right Rev. Dr. Carmen Lansdown, Moderator and Rev. Michael Blair, General Secretary. We participated in 3 workshops led by members of the UCW Executive. One of the workshops was on the future of UCW which provided much discussion. We ended with Holy Communion and the Installation of our new National President, Barbara Davison. Plans are under way to celebrate the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UCW. It is to be held in the Eastern Ontario Outaouais Region from July 19-23, 2027 with the theme "Hear Our Voice".

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Sparkes-Mercer  
President  
East District United Church Women

*Hope shines as the solitary star. Faith is the inner light. You and I  
Together mirror the Light of Lights, and illumine the pathway home.*

Words: MacLean & Music: Tissandier, 2007

Appendix D

**COMMUNITIES OF FAITH SUPPORT & PLANNING**

**Communities of Faith Support and Planning  
October 9, 2023**

MAPs for approval since our last meeting:

Labrador City

The Following MAPs are in progress:

Nippers Harbour  
Baie Verte  
Bonne Bay  
St. George's  
Coughlan Harbour Grace  
Clarenville-Deep Bight  
St. James  
Pouch Cove

Future Direction in Ministry

We have forwarded copies of a Pastoral Units Proposal for your review and discussion.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bob Bennett

## Appendix E

### GENERAL COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE

#### General Council Representative Report

##### May 2023 – General Council Executive Meeting

###### **Hope Bequest**

At \$9 million, the Lloyd Hope bequest is the second-largest ever received by the national church. An equivalent amount was bequeathed to Fallowfield United, close to where Mr. Hope lived. The GCE agreed to continue the policy of allocating 50 percent to the Foundation and the other 50 percent to supporting reconciliation efforts and Strategic Plan initiatives.

###### **300 Bloor St. West, Toronto**

After a presentation by Erik Mathieson, Executive Officer of Finance, the GCE confirmed that The United Church of Canada will sign a 15-year lease with Bloor Street United Church and subleases with the national office of the Anglican Church of Canada and The Presbyterian Church in Canada. All three denominations are committed to sharing space in 2026, subject to final lease negotiations.

###### **General Council Office Budget**

The General Council Office operating budget includes a structural deficit that will worsen over time if no action is taken. The approved 2023 Operating Budget contemplates a \$4.0 million deficit which includes a \$1.5 million investment in spending directly linked to the strategic plan. The deficit is 10% of annual revenues. This deficit target was recommended by management and approved by governors on the basis of the need for extraordinary action in response to overall church trends and needs. A related commitment was to return to "living within our means" and tackling the deficit in 2024 onwards. The [General Secretary's Report](#) outlined these issues.

The General Secretary invited reflection in small groups on three scenarios around budget decisions for next year. The scenarios included eliminating the deficit over a two-year span, "pulling the band-aid off" through faster deficit elimination, and an approach that is less focused on deficit reduction and more focused on longer-term change.

While no decisions were made, discussion converged around some key perspectives:

- Decisions must take into account challenges facing communities of faith and regions, including recent experiences of restructuring.
- Decisions cannot jeopardize our capacity to be church together.
- Time needs to be given for the Strategic and Operational plans to take root, particularly the Growth initiative.
- We need to support efforts to develop evangelism across the church in a manner consistent with our denominational commitments.
- Any reductions should be aligned with the current plan and strategic in nature rather than "across the board" cuts.
- Creative discussions are needed on cost sharing between denominations and across the church.
- Decisions need to be linked to the long term Vision of the church and not simply a tweaking of the status quo.

**Appendix E** - continued**GENERAL COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE** - continued

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**Remit 1 – Indigenous Church Structure**

The process begun March 15, 2023, and will be completed March 31, 2024. [Information about the remit](#)—which includes a study guide, background materials, as well as voting cards can be found at the link. Regional Councils will be providing learning opportunities at their regional council meetings. So far, we have noticed that most of the initial questions about the remit were logistical ones. Also noting that some folks are wanting more details around what the actual structure of the Indigenous church would look like.

**September 2023 – General Council Executive Meeting****Leadership for the 2020s**

In further work from GC43, five proposals presented to the GCE about eliminating functional distinctions between Designated Lay Ministers and Ordered Ministry were all carried, and will be presented to the General Council for discussion and decision on Oct. 21, 2023. The proposals addressed:

- Current DLMs and DLM candidates;
- A pathway to Testamur;
- The responsibilities of regional councils;
- Future candidates without undergraduate degrees, and finally,
- Those who retired as DLMs.

The proposal strongly urges regional councils to review their practices around eligibility and licensing to people who retired as DLMs, since these are executed unevenly across the country.

**COLA and grant decisions first step in 2024 budget process**

The General Council Executive considered principles related to the 2024 General Council budget, which will be approved in November. These principles include an anticipated budget deficit not to exceed \$3.2 million, with overall grant reductions in the range of \$2.6 to \$3.3 million, following the recommendations of a grants review and global partnership review. Among these grant reductions will be a 25% cut in Mission and Service grants to regions and a 25% reduction to global partner grants.

Other aspects of the budget framework relate to the Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA). The GCE made decisions regarding COLA within a context of addressing competing pressures. Fundamental to the consideration was a commitment to fairly support ministry personnel; deep concern about current pressures on local congregations, and our effort to retain the current and needed staff complement in our regional and General Council offices through 2024.

While the commitment to be a fair and decent employer remains a core value, financial sustainability needs to be factored into how the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) is administered. The GCE decided that, going forward, COLA decisions will be decoupled from the Consumer Price Index (CPI) common index of the previous year, as has been our policy. Although this is a change from an absolute link, CPI will continue to be a factor in the COLA decisions. With the commitment to compensating paid accountable personnel as well and as fairly as possible. The GCE also decided to decouple the General Council staff system from the pastoral relations staff system in decisions regarding COLA.

**Appendix E** - continued**GENERAL COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE** - continued

After deep and thoughtful deliberations, the GCE decided that staff in the General Council system would receive 2% COLA in 2024. Retaining the practice of aligning COLA with CPI this year for staff could have triggered layoffs, or deeper grant cuts.

Ministry personnel will receive 6.3% in 2024, which is in line with CPI indicator. However, the decisions give notice that such an outcome—COLA automatically reflecting CPI—is not to be expected in subsequent years.

The General Council mandated the establishment of a Total Compensation Task Group to look at all aspects of compensation within the church. Its findings, based on data analysis on regional and equity bases and comparisons to other sectors, will help guide future practice as we seek to balance fair, equitable compensation and the sustainability for communities of faith. An interim report was requested, to help guide decisions for 2025, by fall of 2024.

For more information, please see the [2024 Salary and Benefits Schedule](#).

**Pension and Benefits**

Core group health and dental benefits, and life insurance, remain unchanged, except for long-term disability (LTD); the cost of LTD decreased for employees by 10% to 2.33% of pensionable earnings.

**Annual Meeting of the 44th General Council**

The Annual Meeting of the 44th General Council will take place on Saturday, October 21, 2023 and is expected to be about four hours in length. Orientation begins at 1:00 p.m. NT and the business portion will commence at 1:30 p.m. NT.

A learning session will be held in advance of that meeting on Thursday, October 12 beginning at 8:00 p.m. NT. To receive information and allow for discussion regarding:

1. [A proposal regarding recommendations on the Designated Lay Ministry Program \(DLM\) and ordering of DLM ministers;](#)
2. A proposal on property in North Korea, and
3. Background to the proposal on Support for Ministry Personnel Suspended while in a Directed Program.