

# Eastern Ontario Outaouais Regional Council

## Strategic Plan – Interim Report

November 2024

### Grading:

A = Completely on track, met all measurables

B = Mostly on track, met most measurables

C = Partly on track, some measurables met

D = Little progress

E = No progress

### Overall Assessment

This was a difficult year to begin a highly ambitious strategic plan. With a key staff position vacant (Community of Faith Support Minister), another staff position transitioned (Communications) and the ramping up time, we lost about 9 months of productive time. Since each of the 21 activity streams has multiple activities, it may be that there is not enough volunteer energy to carry out all of the priorities we set for ourselves, so we may need to make some additional assessments going forward. There was good progress on areas of education, communications and justice. We have built some structures and effectively staffed ourselves in a way that will serve the plan well in 2025.

### Activity Stream G1: Fertile Soil Project

Activity: Participate as one of two regional Councils in the Fertile Soil Test project of the General Council Growth Animation program. This is an exercise of using various sources of data to map our region for potential opportunities for growth of communities of faith.

Measurable Outcome Projected: Fertile Soil Project is in full use by the end of 2024.

Result: All data has been identified and compiled, the report and recommendations are currently being composed, the final report will be ready to present to the Executive in January 2025.

Analysis: B – The GCO Research and Development Team had an unexpected workload increase this Fall, including preparing Neighbourhood Profiles for our Tri-Regions which has caused a delay.

Recommendation Going Forward: In January 2025 the Executive will receive the final report and recommendations, and put the findings to use.

### Activity Stream G2: Invitational Church

Activity: Engage in conversation/education on becoming more invitational (evangelism)

Measurable Outcome Projected: Hold three learning events in 2024, engage at least 50 people

Result: Three regionwide events took place (strengthening invitation, evangelism, neighbourhood profiles). 157 people participated in the Winter Education Event, 197 in the AGM and 137 in the Fall Regional Meeting.

Analysis: A – Events were well received and well attended.

Recommendation Going Forward: In 2025 we will continue to make resources available and survey to see what else folks want to learn. Creation of a growth page with the resources easily found.

**Activity Stream G3:** Continue to work with communities of faith in EOORC to offer facilitation in processes that lead to renewal of vision, purpose and identity.

Activity: Work with 15 communities of faith in 2024 • Work with 15 communities of faith in 2025 • Identify ministry strengths and centres of excellence (see Common Good Activity Stream #1) • Share stories of renewal of vision and hope

Measurable Outcome Projected: As of GM, 36 neighbourhood profiles produced, 12 communities of faith were engaged in processes that lead to renewal of vision, purpose and identity.

Result: Several stories of renewal, vision and hope shared.

Analysis: A – Did all we said we would do and there was great take-up.

Recommendation Going Forward: Continue with the goal of 15 more communities for 2025.

#### **Activity Stream G4: Models of Communities of Faith**

Activity: Work with other Regional Councils (in particular East Central Ontario) to develop various models for being a Community of Faith

Measurable Outcome Projected: 10 communities of faith reimaged their ministry model

Result: There are at least 10 communities of faith having conversations about how people are reimaging ministry.

Analysis: A- We are actively trying to reimagine ministry.

Recommendation Going Forward: We recognize that there is interest in how people gather for worship, how Council/Boards are structured, and how ministry might look like in 10 years, but this activity stream may be a bit too general. We should be more specific about these methods of reimaging.

The EOORC executive recommends that the focus be on governance at the congregational level, particularly related to models of congregational leadership and trustees.

### **Activity Stream G5: Create 10 new communities of faith**

Activity: • Continue conversation with 3 possibilities already identified. • Use the data and analysis from the Fertile Soil project to identify by the end of 2024 potential opportunities for new communities of faith.

Measurable Outcome Projected: 10 new communities of faith by end of 2025

Result: Existing congregations are having conversations with emerging ministries about possible shared space/ministry. Two of the original conversations are suspended due to leaders being unavailable, but the Swahili-speaking community is growing and still looking for a permanent home. Tanzanian community in Gatineau and Swahili community in Cornwall are exploring possibilities at this time.

Analysis: B+. We are continuing to explore these, but have three in conversation.

Recommendation Going Forward: We need to consider how we are communicating how people might consider doing this and how they might be supported. Consider some education for the wider church about how newcomers are often looking for a Methodist home, and how we might be more welcoming.

The EOORC Executive would like to ensure that we are also assisting congregations that are not exclusively newcomer congregations. This is, of course, only possible if there is leadership available to begin such communities.

### **Activity Stream J1: Justice Goal Setting**

Activity: Ask networks in EOORC to identify goals so that we may know their work and discover how communities of faith can use the networks as a resource.

Measurable Outcome Projected: By end of 2024, networks will each have a set of goals and priorities for 2025. An annual work plan with identified goals for inclusion in the Annual Meeting Report Book.

Result: Networks are aware of this stream and we believe it will be possible to have something in the 2025 annual report workbook.

Analysis: B – still in progress.

Recommendation Going Forward: Continuing to liaise with networks and offer support as needed.

### **Activity Stream J2: Racial Justice**

Activity: Work to establish a racial justice Leadership Team within EOORC to help racial justice education and action within the church and in the communities of the regional council.

Measurable Outcome Projected: • Create a Racial Justice Leadership Team by the annual meeting in May 2024 that will undermine white supremacy in all its forms in our region. • Actively welcome 3

racialized admittands in our Regional Council by May 2025 • Strengthen the awareness of pastoral relations liaisons and search committees as applications for ministry positions are reviewed.

Result: Initial planning conversations are taking place, a possible gathering of racialized ministry personnel as a starting point is in the works. Promotion of national workshops with potential admittands is happening in our Regional Council. No admittands have been hired yet.

Analysis: D – still much work to be done on the terms of reference, recruitment for this team, and welcoming admittands.

Recommendation Going Forward: This Team should be at least half racialized people. Rename this to an Anti-Racist Leadership Team. Share success stories from places where admittands have worked with communities of faith.

### **Activity Stream J3: Develop more connection with the United Church Rural Ministry Network (UCRMN) to seek guidance and partnership on advocacy for rural issues**

Activity: • Use Fertile Soil mapping data to identify needs. • Support and advocate for the need for the family farm • Provide assistance and advocacy for enabling rural communities to have essential digital services. • Host a first meeting by May 2024 with UCRMN to identify avenues for future support and collaboration

Measurable Outcome Projected: Connection to network established, first meeting held in May 2024.

Result: We are connected with the UCRMN by membership and in early discussion with them. We were unable to hold a first meeting in May 2024, but conversations have begun.

Analysis: C – still work to do to get this going.

Recommendation Going Forward: We need to find champions of this activity stream and seize opportunities to raise our voices on rural issues. Without some identified leadership to take on these justice issues, we may not be able to take this on.

### **Activity Stream J4: Work on increasing United Church visibility and identity in the social justice landscape of the region.**

Activity: • Acquire a United Church of Canada banner, flag and/or signs. • Work towards having a float in the Ottawa and other community Pride Parades in 2024 • Share stories of communities of faith or individuals working in community organizations and projects

Measurable Outcome Projected: Banner acquired, presence and participation increased in pride parades, stories shared.

Result: We acquired a banner which was used in the Capital Pride Parade. We also shared photos of the Capital Pride Parade. Several justice stories were shared throughout the year, including Truth and Reconciliation Day events, peace marches, Multifaith Housing and more.

Analysis: A- Could have been present in other pride parades outside of Ottawa

Recommendation Going Forward: We will purchase a second banner and communicate with communities of faith and networks so that they know these banners are available. It would be helpful to think ahead about communication and organization around Capital Pride, as many people were frustrated to not have the details earlier. Natalie would like to have more intentionality in making a list of social justice stories which can be worked on in advance throughout the year. There is a need to consider a quarterly 'justice focus' so that we are not trying to do everything all at once – and possibly use materials being produced for ECORC.

### **Activity Stream C1: Faithful Footprints**

Activity: Have at least 10% of congregations engaged in Faithful Footprints assessments and programs by the end of 2025.

Measurable Outcome Projected: 10% of congregations by end of 2025

Result: We have a list created, and have reached out to one congregation to begin sharing stories. However, this one has fallen behind.

Analysis: D

Recommendation Going Forward: Start sharing stories about the program and create a strategy. Natalie would appreciate a team to work on this with. Doing a survey of congregations that still have energy issues (oil furnaces, drafty windows) to help identify low-hanging fruit.

### **Activity Stream C2: Reduction of Carbon Footprint**

Activity: Begin to measure the carbon footprint of our events and use 2024 as a baseline.

Measurable Outcome Projected: Within the time period - 2024-2026 - decrease our carbon footprint in our meetings and gatherings by 20%.

Result: Natalie completed a survey to determine baseline emissions for the AGM. She intended to do this for the Fall Meeting, but due to a medical leave was unable to finish this. We looked into the possibility of a bus, which was not feasible for the Fall Meeting but could be a good idea for the AGM. We encouraged carpooling to the Fall Meeting, and although it was not measured, anecdotally a lot of people were carpooling.

Analysis: B

Recommendation Going Forward: Natalie can easily measure the carbon footprint and promote carpooling. However, significantly reducing the carbon footprint is contingent on the advance planning and commitment of the team planning the meeting. Buses need to be booked far in advance and require a team to manage tickets. The geographic location of the meetings (and particularly the AGM) has a huge impact on carbon emissions, as most people do not stay overnight and buses are not feasible for a large number of delegates. However, this has not consistently been a factor in choosing a location for the AGM.

**Activity Stream L1:** Regional Council support and encouragement for various avenues of ministry support and connection.

Activity: • Encourage and promote various initiatives for ministry personnel support and connection, such as peer ministry groups, lunch gatherings, one day retreats, etc. • Pilot an initial multi-day ministry leadership retreat in the fall of 2024 to determine if this is something we should do on an annual basis. • Initiate conversations about an Association of Ministers being formed in EOORC. • Initiate gatherings for groupings of ministry eg. Candidates, retired ministry personnel • Be intentional about welcoming and orientating new ministry personnel into the regional council.

Measurable Outcome Projected: Increase in ministry events, conversations and team established, welcome and orientation program established.

Result: Survey completed, retreat being held in November 2024, Ministry Personnel Leadership Support Team established, day-long gatherings have happened in two areas of our region, ministry lunches have been happening in two parts of the region. A group has met around the issue of retirement planning. The Association of Ministers project is not currently proceeding, but the ministry support team may be meeting that need. Orientation to new ministry personnel in the region, but there is not much movement from outside into our regional council.

Analysis: B+, things are moving well, but some aspects are still coming together.

Recommendation Going Forward: Stay the course.

**Activity Stream L2:** EOORC offer support and connection for lay leaders within communities of faith.

Activity: • Offer workshops for various lay leadership roles - eg. Governance chairs, treasurers, representatives to Regional Council • Develop or make available resources to help with specific situations and realities. • Continue to accredit and promote the resource of Licensed Lay Worship Leaders • Explore the needs for leadership development of lay leaders for communities of faith that do not have ministry personnel for long periods of time.

Measurable Outcome Projected: Lay leaders are trained, increase in number of LLWLs, leadership plan for communities without ministry personnel.

Result: LLWLs and Sacrament Elders (in six locations) are regularly promoted. We have 18 congregations that are without ministry personnel that are not in search. M&P workshops are happening twice a year. Treasurers meetings with the GCO are frequent. Still possibilities to explore on lay support side, awaiting Congregational Support Team. LLWL team had a plan for training in early November, but only 16 registrants so cancelled, will try again in the new year.

Analysis: B-, more to be done when we have clear direction from the support team.

Recommendation Going Forward: Using the congregational support team to help identify needs and meet those needs.

### **Activity Stream L3: Youth and Young Adult Ministries**

Activity: Support and build capacity for youth and young adult (YAYA) ministries for those aged 10 to 35 in communities of faith, clusters, networks and individuals within the Eastern Ontario Outaouais Region Council (EOORC) and Nationally of the United Church of Canada.

Measurable Outcome Projected: • Develop a leadership team to plan and implement an annual Youth and Young Adult retreat and Youth and Young Adult Leaders Retreat in the region. • Grow Camp Awesome to operate two camp locations outside the City of Ottawa boundaries. • Participate in training to develop campus ministry within the region. • Participate in the UCC camp accreditation process and develop policy and guidelines around the practice of equity at camp with the three Camping Ministry boards. • Create and submit a proposal for Rendez Vous 2027 to be hosted in the Region. • Develop a leadership team to plan and implement Regional meeting programs and Worshiplude, growing participation by 20% annually.

Result:

- Developed a leadership team, successfully planned and implemented an annual Youth and Young Adult Retreat, held February 2024. Did not host a Leaders retreat in 2024.
- Camp Awesome provided two camp locations outside of City of Ottawa boundaries (Chelsea, Qc. & Perth)
- Identified opportunities for training within existing Campus Chaplaincies. (uOttawa / Algonquin College)
- Participated in the UCC camp accreditation process. Met with Board members from all three camps and discussed practices of equity at camp. This will need to be aligned with the Accreditation process and requirements. We will need to move carefully to not overstep what is required for the accreditation process and autonomy of our camps. This will take more consideration, having now experienced the accreditation process and understanding it's limits, however I believe there is still room for moving our camps towards further equity but this needs to be done within established relationships and trust.
- Rendez Vous was co-hosted with the Presbyterian church in 2024. This will need to be a discussion with GCO about the possibilities of collaborating going forward. Rendez Vous 2027 in Ottawa is still viable.
- Have discussed and requested support at the YAYA LT for regional meeting programs and Worshiplude.

Analysis: B +

Recommendation Going Forward:

- Look to develop retreats for YAYA and YAYA leaders in conjunction with Sharon and Shanna.
- Grow leadership team to include YAYA aged participants.
- Camp Awesome struggled with logistical issues in growing the program outside of Ottawa, namely staff transportation. It is not possible to grow Camp Awesome outside of Ottawa in its current iteration.
- UCC Camp Accreditation will need to be managed from the Executive with accreditation team members selected and designated for a 3-year term, in order to visit the 3 Regionals camps over the accreditation cycle. There also needs to be a designated report writer and training arranged through ChurchX.
- Meet with Amy Crawford re: Rendez Vous 2027. Being conversation with Presbyterian Colleagues in Ottawa.

#### **Activity Stream L4: Work to Develop Childrens' Ministry in EOORC**

Activity: • Hold a consultation in 2024 to determine the needs for support and development of children's ministry. • Consult with other regional councils, in particular our neighbouring regional councils, to explore possibilities for collaboration.

Measurable Outcome Projected: Consultation held, possible paths to pursue.

Result: No discussions have taken place yet.

Analysis: D – We have not had the resources to put to this, but with the setting aside of Camp Awesome, we may be able to move this consultation forward in 2025.

Recommendation Going Forward: Have our YAYA minister pull people together across the region who are working on family and children's ministry for initial discussions and determine if there is something more that can be done on this file. Based on this, determine if a conversation with neighbouring regions is worthwhile.

#### **Activity Stream CG1: Congregational Support**

Activity: Develop a model of Congregational Support that will be a resource to congregations with selfassessment, discernment and visioning, including operation through times of ministerial vacancy. This model will also need to include ways that the Regional Council can forecast trends and possibilities for collaboration among communities of faith.

Measurable Outcome Projected: • Appoint a working group to propose a model to the 2024 Annual Meeting of EOORC • Implement the model by the end of 2024



Result: A draft terms of reference has been prepared for this work. Recruitment through the Nominations Team will begin after the terms of reference are adopted by the Executive.

Analysis: B-, somewhat delayed by staffing changes.

Recommendation Going Forward: Rename this team to the “Keeping In Touch” Team. Get the team making connections in early 2025 to collect emerging issues and support needs.

### **Activity Stream CG2: Congregational Specialization and Expertise**

Activity: Develop inventory of congregational “expertise” or specialities.

Measurable Outcome Projected: • Build into the model of Congregational Support, a means for identifying the areas for which ministries have existing strengths and/or gaps they can fill while trying not to do everything. • Establish a communications plan that offers the public a clearer sense of what ministry offerings they might find when attending a particular community of faith.

Result: Request made at the Fall Meeting, but not much has come through yet. Need to continue to build this with the coming online of the Keeping In Touch Team.

Analysis: B, awaiting the more detailed work of the Keeping In Touch Team.

Recommendation Going Forward: Identify and deepen our information about our communities of faith with the ultimate goal of setting up a map that helps the public find these areas of expertise across the region so that their spiritual needs might be met. The Keeping In Touch Team will work on this in 2025.

### **Activity Stream CG3: Find ways to gather for inspiration and deepening spirituality.**

Activity: • Hold a large inspirational worship event for the 100th anniversary of the UCC in 2025 • Encourage communities of faith in clusters to gather together and be inspired through worship and prayer.

Measurable Outcome Projected: A successful event with more than 1000 participants.

Result: We have a team working on this project now, but it will obviously be carried out in 2025.

Analysis: A. Date has been chosen, location confirmed.

Recommendation Going Forward: Continue as planned.

**Activity Stream CG4: Find ways to gather for learning and encouragement.**

Activity: • Have sub-regional gatherings as educational events in place of one of the yearly meetings of the regional council. • Encourage clusters to form to work and learn together. • EOORC share stories and possibilities of how clusters are working and the activities that are happening.

Measurable Outcome Projected: have sub-regional gatherings, cluster begin to form and stories are shared.

Result: sub-regional gatherings are planned to happen in the fall of 2025. There may be five or six gatherings. This will be in place of the full gathering of the Region in the fall of 2025. Following the initial gatherings the Region will encourage grassroots organizing of these sub regions and will offer support as needed. EOORC will share stories of how these clusters are working and the activities that are happening

Analysis: C- delayed by staffing changes

Recommendation Going Forward: Explore Pastoral Units Model in NL, do some thinking about where the meetings will be held keeping in mind carbon reduction commitments, access for those in remote areas of the region, who could be champions of the clusters in various areas.

**Activity Stream CG5: Find ways to expand our communication of the work and resources of EOORC.**

Activity: • Ongoing evaluation of the website and newsletter • Offer a summary of EOORC meetings to be shared with members and congregations. • Create a report of the work of EOORC as a template for inclusion in congregational annual reports. • Provide an orientation for new lay representatives to EOORC.

Measurable Outcome Projected: Summaries provided, orientation plan in place

Result: The AGM did not have a summary, but was shared extensively in the newsletter. A summary of the Fall Meeting has been prepared.

Analysis: B – orientation plan is still to be created.

Recommendation Going Forward: Complete an orientation plan and continue preparing summaries for use by communities of faith and their representatives.

**Activity Stream CG6: Explore ways that administrative work of congregations can be supported and shared.**

Activity: • Develop a system for Financial Reviews for congregations to be coordinated. • Continue the pooling of investment option for congregations. • Find ways to help congregations explore sharing of administrative or bookkeeping work.

Measurable Outcome Projected: System for Financial Reviews established, establish ways of sharing workload and resources at the congregational level.

Result: The financial review system used in the past is not practical and does not deliver what was hoped for. Investment pooling continues, but could be better publicized. No work has been done on the pooling of resources at this time.

Analysis: C. Some of this will be achieved when the Keeping In Touch Team has begun its work.

Recommendation Going Forward: We no longer pursue the financial review system given past experience. Use the sub-regional gatherings in the Fall of 2025 as an opportunity to explore shared services at the congregational level and use the Keeping In Touch team to pass along these possibilities.