

# Eastern Ontario Outaouais Regional Council

## Strategic Plan – Interim Report

June 2025

### 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

2024 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 are proposing a review of the plan this fall in light of the *Towards 2035* statistics so that we might more narrowly focus on key outcomes rather than spread ourselves too thinly. 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 help to see more outcomes as 2025 progresses.

### 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 is being combined with the work of the Towards 2035 project and full mapping, congregational health assessments and possibilities for growth will be made available to the new Vision Keepers Team as they help us assess decision-making going forward.

Analysis: B+ This project has actually helped the whole of the church think about data-informed decision-making and it is exciting that we have been part of this, even if the project bled into 2025.

Recommendation Going Forward: Use the Vision Keepers Team to help make decisions on the basis of this rich data.

### 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. We also initiated a 'mystery guest' program that has seen visits to 18 communities of faith so far.

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

Recommendation Going Forward: Throughout 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: In the fall of 2024, 36 neighbourhood profiles produced, 15 communities of faith were working with the Community of Faith Support Minister. So far in 2025, 10 communities of faith have been actively involved.

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 to work with communities of faith that are eager to be innovative and find new ways to be church. Try to ensure that communities know that there are resources available to them so that they do not wait until it is too late.

#### **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: B- There is particular interest in ways of doing cooperative ministry and shared vision and this is where much of the resources are starting to be applied. A formal guide has not been created, but could be established on the basis of a neighbouring regional council.

Recommendation Going Forward: This goal is largely related to activity stream G3 and should be combined with it as they are being done alongside of each other.

### **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: Two new Swahili-speaking communities of faith have begun and found homes in existing United Churches (Riverside United Church in Ottawa and Knox-St. Paul's in Cornwall). Two of the original new ministry ideas are not currently proceeding for lack of available leadership. A Tanzanian community in Gatineau is currently being explored at this time. A community of LGBTQ refugees called God's Beloved has begun its ministry at Kitchissippi United Church.

Analysis: B- We are not quite at the half-way point of our goal for new ministry creation by the end of 2025. It seems unlikely that we will achieve the full goal of 10, but it is highly probable that we might have 5 or 6, which is not bad in the space of two years. We are continuing to seek out new opportunities wherever they may be possible.

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.

### **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 2026 annual report workbook.

Analysis: C – networks have not yet been building their work plans as a way to report on them.

Recommendation Going Forward: Continue to encourage some workplanning at this level and 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. Have attempted to bring together liaisons to help build some understanding of bringing admittands to the region as part of the congregational hiring process, but not yet happened. Have encouraged Search Team Chairs one-on-one.

Analysis: C – 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. Keep trying to do a session with liaisons. See if there is a way to incorporate the work done in our neighbouring regional council (East Central Ontario).

**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. A gathering of rural ministries might be instructive going forward.

**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:

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. Our communications staff person would like to have more intentionality in making a list of social justice stories which can be worked on in advance throughout the year, but will need congregations to communicate this to her.

### **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. While the communication of this program has been minimal to date, the programme was over-subscribed in early 2025 and is currently on hold. We believe that we may have met the 10% goal without having done much publicity.

Analysis: C – still some work to be done in tracking and sharing stories.

Recommendation Going Forward: Sharing stories about the program. Communications staff person 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 so that when the program is relaunched, it can be encouraged once again.

### **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: Communications staff person 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. 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 our meetings.

**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: Events held, orientations organized.

Result: Survey completed, retreat 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 been meeting 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. Regular gatherings are planned for ministry personnel going forward.

Analysis: A-, 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 leadership workshops held and identification of specific areas of assistance.

Result: LLWLs and Sacrament Elders (in six locations) are regularly promoted. We have 45 pastoral charges that are without ministry personnel, so this is a particular area of concern. 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, are trying again in 2025.

Analysis: B-, more to be done here.

Recommendation Going Forward: Using the Keeping in Touch Team to help identify needs and meet those needs. Having deeper conversations coming out of the Vision Keepers Team and data analysis.

### **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 Worshipplude, 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), but Camp Awesome has stopped offering programming. A review of future programming is underway.
- 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. UCC Accreditation Team was approved by the Executive and is scheduled to visit Camp Lau-Ren in the summer of 2025.

- 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 2026 will be held at Brock University again and in conjunction with the Presbyterians going forward. The GCO lead staff person is retiring this year.
- Have discussed and requested support at the YAYA LT for regional meeting programs and Worshiplude. David Sherwin will be stepping down as Chair of the YAYA Leadership Team as of June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

Analysis: B +

Recommendation Going Forward:

- Look to develop retreats for YAYA and YAYA leaders in conjunction with Regional Councils to the east and west.
- Grow leadership team to include YAYA aged participants.
- Complete needs and capacity analysis to provide programming that Camp Awesome once offered.

#### **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: Consultation not yet conducted.

Analysis: Incomplete. This requires volunteer leadership if it is to be done.

Recommendation Going Forward: If no volunteers step forward, this activity stream should be dropped. Towards 2035 may be helping to offer some options for children's ministry and intergenerational community of faith construction.

#### **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.

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

Recommendation Going Forward: Need to continue to build this with the coming online of the Keeping In Touch Team. Develop a survey for congregations to identify their existing strengths and gaps. Consider how this could be best shared with the public.

### **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: An event to be held for the anniversary. Clusters gathering for worship.

Result: A large celebration will be held on June 15<sup>th</sup> and clustered services are happening in multiple geographic areas within our regional council.

Analysis: A. This is fully achieved.

Recommendation Going Forward: Continue to encourage folks to cluster, including in the sub-regional gatherings in the Fall of 2025.

### **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. One new cluster developing in West Ottawa (5 congregations) East Ottawa Cluster presentation at Winter Educational Event.

Analysis: B. In progress.

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. Continue to do education about the benefits of developing a cluster and then offer support to get the clusters up and running.

#### **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: Data-informed communications. Reports provided to lay representatives of the Regional Council so that they can report back to their congregations.

Result: The AGM did not have a summary, but was shared extensively in the newsletter. A summary of the 2024 Fall Meeting was prepared and circulated. We are working on analytics for our website and have a summer student doing work for us to help move some of this work forward. Orientation has not been developed yet, but has begun to be implemented in another regional council.

Analysis: B-. Our communications staff person was significantly involved in the centennial celebration, somewhat to the detriment of other tasks, but much of what we intended to do is moving ahead.

Recommendation Going Forward: Engagement in deeper analysis for the web and email presence of the Regional Council should continue. Orientation should be offered in advance of the Spring AGM in 2026. Regional Council meeting summaries will continue and can be used in annual reports.

**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: Congregations are working together to be more efficient and supportive of one another.

Result: This is happening, in part through the support to communities of faith provided by our Community of Faith Support Minister. The Financial Reviews process was deemed to be impractical and was therefore removed from the workplan.

Analysis: C. There is some movement as it relates to support of congregations.

Recommendation Going Forward: Blend this work with Community of Faith support and encourage discussions about such matters at the Fall Sub-Regional meetings.