

DRAFT Strategic Planning Report

2025 and Beyond

Executive Summary

Castlegar United Church is a United Church of Canada Community of Faith with an official membership of 85 people, with an average of 30 and 40 people worshipping on any given Sunday morning, including members and adherents. Over the years, we have been faithful to our mission, regularly evaluating and updating our Guiding Statements, and seeking to be good stewards of the gifts God has given our congregation. This current Strategic Plan seeks to uphold that faithful tradition, responding to our changing circumstances in the church and community and seeking God's call into the future.

This report contains a review of recent strategic planning efforts, our guiding statements and the commitments we make based on them, our strategic objectives, and the priorities we have set based on those objectives. This plan immediately covers the 2025/26 year, with suggestions looking forward for the next 3-5 years, which may be changed or affected by our research priorities.

How This Plan Was Developed

In March 2023, a Committee was struck to begin research for our Strategic Plan: Sandra Foster, Tim Affolter, Irene Furey, Herman Manarin, and Cheryl Swedburg, with John Duckworth serving as Committee Chair. They were particularly looking at ways to address a predicted \$20,000 budget deficit.

After conducting a congregational survey and collecting other information and ideas they recommended that the congregation explore the following options:

- 1) Reduce Spending/Increase Giving
- 2) Explore options for going to $\frac{3}{4}$ time minister
- 3) Sell current CUC building and purchase a smaller property or rent
- 4) Explore shared ministry with the Anglicans
- 5) Explore turning our property into low-income housing / Habitat for Humanity

Committees were then struck to to examine each of these options, and they reported back to the Board with their findings. The Board then carefully and prayerfully considered these reports to discern where the Holy Spirit might be leading Castlegar United Church. General results were as follows:

- 1) Efforts to increase givings were launched as well as a review of rental income, and a Stewardship Plan was produced. Total Operating Receipts rose nearly 6% between 2023 and 2024. Our Budget Deficit in 2024 was \$3,944.
- 2) No viable options for reducing the minister's time were found.
- 3) No sufficient properties to rent or buy were found in Castlegar that would both meet our needs and reduce our costs.
- 4) The Anglicans declined shared ministry discussions, as they were already in conversation with the Anglican church in Trail about sharing ministry.
- 5) Extensive conversation with Habitat for Humanity was held, but in the end, Habitat for Humanity declined. The government announced a large affordable housing project at the site of the Pioneer Arena, which hopefully will significantly reduce the need for privately developed affordable housing.

Another observation that arose during our explorations around the building needs and use, was the impact our building has on community groups. An analysis of building use shows that in 2024, congregational use of the building accounted for only 1/3 of hours of occupation. The remaining 2/3 (or 66%) of the hours of building use were by the wider community, demonstrating the value of hospitality in relation to the church building.

Guiding Statements

Vision Statement:

We envision our church community as vibrant and bold, embodying the reconciling Way of Jesus.

Affirming Statement:

We affirm the inherent value of all life. We affirm that all people of any gender identity or sexual orientation have a place of worship and discipleship in Castlegar United Church.

Values Statement:

We see these values as foundational to who we are:

- Acceptance and Diversity
- Belonging and Community
- Fairness and Advocacy
- Hospitality and Friendliness
- Care and Compassion

Commitments Drawn from Our Statements

1. We set our intention to learn about and experience greater diversity in our Community of Faith, including Affirming action, anti-racism, reconciliation, cultural connections, and interfaith activities; learning in the Light of God.
2. We set our intention to reach out to and advocate for those in need; those wanting the basics of life, those suffering ill health, those dealing with grief, those suffering because of systemic oppression or environmental devastation; loving in the Light of God.
3. We set our intention to build and strengthen community, both within our Community of Faith, and in the wider Castlegar and Kootenay communities; leading in the Light of God.

Strategic Objectives

1. Build and Strengthen our Community of Faith
 - Vibrant worship
 - Small group opportunities
 - Attention to diversity and welcome
 - Excellent pastoral care
2. Build and Strengthen our Community Relationships
 - Sharing our space with the community
 - Denominational, Interdenominational, and Interfaith cooperation
 - Cooperation with secular social and environmental justice groups
 - Community visibility of Castlegar United Church
3. Faithfully Maintain and Improve the Castlegar United Church Facility
 - Regular maintenance and safety checks
 - Heating system replacement
 - Improve Building
4. Financial Stability
 - Consistent Stewardship & fundraising planning
 - Long-term capital savings plan
 - Grant seeking & writing
 - Appropriate rental and other contributions by building users

Priority Plan

Leading Action Priorities for 2025-26

1. Build and Strengthen our Community of Faith
 - Reviving and re-imagining our Pastoral Care Committee
2. Build and Strengthen our Community Relationships
 - Launch an AED community fundraising campaign
3. Faithfully Maintain and Improve the Castlegar United Church Facility
 - Form a Facility Development Research Committee to aid Trustees
4. Financial Stability
 - Improve our bookkeeping system to simplify the Treasurer's job

Supporting Priorities

- Continue with worship, programs, and community partnerships that are working well and that support our guiding statements and commitments
- Explore additional outreach opportunities
- Cultivate strong relationships with the wider United Church of Canada and ecumenical partners
- Improve facility aesthetics and usability with de-cluttering and decorating
- Continue with Stewardship Plan, grant seeking, and fundraising
- Planning and support for the Minister's anticipated sabbatical during the summer of 2026

Monitoring and Evaluation

- The 2025 Board, Volunteers, and Staff will report on these Priorities' progress at the Annual Congregational Meeting
- The new 2026 Board will set priorities for 2026/2027 based on progress to date, feedback from the Congregation and Staff, and any changes to circumstances in the church and community

Appendix

SWAT Analysis Chart for each Strategic Objective