

WHAT NEXT?

Creating a plan for our future



On behalf of the Governance Advisory Team, thank you so much for staying.

We know your time is valuable, and the fact that you're here means you care about where UCE is headed.

Your input today is the heart and muscle that will actually make the new Strategic Plan move.

Why are we here?

“You can't blow an uncertain trumpet.”
Theodore Hesburgh

Our Mission Objectives
How we will know we're making progress

Our Shared Ministry Goals
How we will work together

Our Values/Covenant
How we will be together

Our Mission
What work we will do

Our Vision
What we will be

What will we be? VISION
What will we do? MISSION
How will we do it? THAT is today's work.

What's the backstory?

2016 Strategic Plan

Current Strategic Plan adopted in May 2016

KEY FINDINGS

1. Community is key.
2. We crave connection.
3. Many things are already working well at UCE.
4. We've had a rest; now we're ready for action!

FOUR THEMES

- **Searching** for spiritual meaning in our lives
- **Learning** to understand ourselves and others
- **Connecting** to build fair, just, caring communities
- **Serving** each other and our communities near and far

A lot has changed in the world, in Edmonton and at UCE since 2016.

Your feedback in recent surveys and conversations tell us that the foundational elements still work.

So, the changes we're looking at in the Strategic Plan update are not the "WHAT" but the "HOW". To help us contemplate what's next, let's put things in context.

What's the backstory?

External changes

Edmonton trend data tells us:

- City growing rapidly - 5-year population growth =16%
- Population is young - median age = 36.8 years
- 40% identify as a visible minority
- 33% were born outside of Canada
 - 21% arrived between 2016 and 2021
- Edmonton is home to largest number of Indigenous people in Alberta
- New generations face a much bleaker future than those who are now at the end of their careers or in retirement
 - Lack of opportunity, income inequality, climate change

Rapid growth

Young population

Over 1/3 of population visible minority, born in another country

Cultural shift – moving away from “limitless opportunity and optimism” mindset

Last bullet and sub-bullet from UUA trend data

What's the backstory?

External changes

Canadian churchgoing trend data tells us:

- As of 2019, 54% of Canadians said their spiritual beliefs were somewhat or very important to them, a decrease from 71% in 2003.
 - Service attendance by those aged 15 to 24 has been increasing since 2022
- More Canadians engage in private religious activities (e.g., prayer, meditation) at least once a month (37%) than attend group services (23%).
- The group of Canadians who are "spiritually uncertain" (identifying with a faith but not actively practicing) was nearly half (47%) of the population in 2022.

Lots of uncertainty when it comes to anything termed spiritual

What's the backstory?

Internal changes

In the last five years:

- Rev. Brian Kiely retired after 22 years at UCE (January 2020)
- February to August 2020 – Lay-lead services; search committee seeks interim minister
- March 2020 – COVID-19; pivoted to online services only
- Interim minister Lee Anne Washington served UCE August 2020 to May 2021
- In-person Sunday services, with livestreaming resumed January 2021
- 2 Directors of Religious Exploration – William Adair, Oksana Atwood
- Rev. Rosemary Morrison began Sept. 2021 on contract; congregation voted to make her settled minister in March 2023
- Adopted new Vision and Mission statements and a Covenant of Right Relations in November 2022

UCE has weathered an amazing amount of change in the last 5 years

- 3 ministerial transitions
- COVID

What's the backstory?

Actions from 2016 Strategic Plan

Of the 42 current Strategic Plan goals:

- Only 2 not fully completed
 - Revitalize Adult RE Committee
 - Revitalize Ways and Means Committee
- Only 3 just partially completed
 - Offer Our Whole Lives for adults regularly
 - Acknowledge volunteers and share the load
 - Put in place recruitment, training and succession planning for volunteer leaders

- In examining all committees, decided to move to a more “task team” model, so Ways and Means projects have been undertaken by groups of volunteers rather than a committee
- Just waiting now for leaders to be trained and then will begin offering OWL for adults
- More formal acknowledgement of volunteers began (e.g., acknowledgement in services, a volunteer tea, a hosted meal). The acknowledgement in services has continued for service volunteers, but other formal recognition for other volunteers has not continued.
- The plan to recruit and train volunteers and oversee succession planning was written into the Terms of Reference for the Leadership Committee (formerly known as the nominating committee) but has not been implemented.

What's the backstory?

Actions in addition to 2016 Strategic Plan

Since 2016:

- New teams created for Finance, Building and Grounds, Communications and Marketing, Pastoral Care, Right Relations, and Membership
- New policies regarding conflict of interest, volunteer confidentiality agreement, destructive behaviour, safe and caring conditions , conflict resolution, and working with children and youth
- New church database installed
- New HR Policy Manual
- “All hands on deck” effort and “Raise the Roof” fundraiser following furnace/sprinkler system freeze in January 2024
- Roundtables with committee/team leads twice per year to enhance planning and communication

Have shown great resilience and a growth mindset

- New vision and mission
- New covenant of right relations
- New teams and policies
- Soul Matters
- Weathered a freeze up and roof leak

What's the backstory?

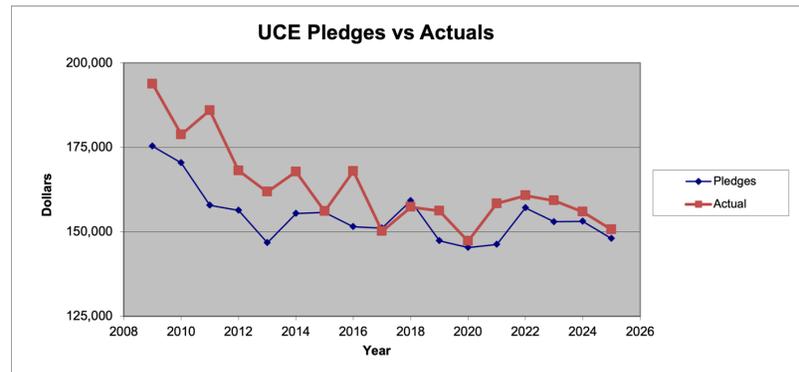
Snapshot comparison

	2016	2026
Membership	182 members*	110 members
Average Sunday service attendance	77	60
Minister	Full time	Full time
Office administrator	20 hours/week	24 hours/week
Director of Religious Exploration	20 hours/week	10 hours/month
Bookkeeper	Contract	Contract
Cleaners	Contract; 3 times/week	Contract; 3 times/week
Total budget	\$300,527 (\$89,400 from full-time renters)	\$331,500 (\$108,000 from full-time renters)

- *This figure may have been inflated as it was taken before the database was cleaned.
- The budget has increased, but not substantially.
- For context, the cost of living allowance (COLA) in Edmonton has increased by 30.1% between 2016 and 2026. UCE's budget has increased by approximately 10%.

What's the backstory?

Canvass overview



- Same story, different view
- Positive: actual giving has continued to exceed pledges

What's the backstory?

Recent congregation input

Conversation, June 29, 2025

- The term *church* is off-putting to some and a barrier to being seen as forward thinking or unique
- The exterior of the church is not welcoming and needs to be beautified
- Greeters were viewed as having a key role
- Wish for Sunday services to become more diverse with guest speakers, guest choirs, and new topics, perhaps with discussion groups after services
- An elevator speech would help
- We need to ramp up the social aspects of UCE in a predictable way

- There will be a question about using the term “church” on the survey. Note that it is NOT asking if we should remove the word church from the name, simply if we should discuss this idea further.
- Elevator speech: Congregants would be comfortable with a short, quick blurb they could "recite". Our friends do not know who we are, and there were many ideas to raise our profile. WORKSHOP on March 22

What's the backstory?

Recent congregation input

HR survey, November 2025

What might best serve UCE needs if we could hire another part-time staff member?

Director of Lifespan Learning	22%
Events Coordinator	22%
Membership Coordinator	15%
Publicity/Marketing Coordinator	15%
Director of Religious Exploration	11%
Volunteer Coordinator	8%
Technology Assistance	6%

- People were asked to mark 3 preferred choices, understanding that a combination of options might also be considered.
- Note that we are intentionally NOT asking about staffing today. We want to figure out what are goals will be first, and then assess what staffing complement we need to reach those goals.

What's the backstory?

Recent congregation input

Survey, December 2024

- **3 Words That Describe the UCE You Would Like Us To Aspire to Be**
(the larger the word, the more times it was mentioned)



- So, BETTER comes out loud and clear, but better how? That's what we're here to figure out.
- Before we move into our discussion, I just want to offer a few points to keep in mind.
 1. While our history is rich, the focus of our discussion today is on the future. We're zooming out to the big picture to decide how we can best serve and grow in the years to come.
 2. When you get to the survey, you'll be asked to rank some possible actions. These actions are optional enhancements, not a complete list of everything that will need our time and energy. We'll still need to maintain basic operations, such as having a board of trustees. [Note: looking for nominees for the board right now – contact Susan or Lynne if you are interested.]

What now?

1. Grab some more salad or ice cream
2. Find a seat
3. Dive into some great conversation!

THANK YOU!

