

## Vision for Becoming an Intercultural Church

God exists in community, and we are invited to be in community together.

Individually and in community, we do everything through the lenses of our cultures: there is no such thing as a culture-free perspective. Our experiences and understandings are shaped by our cultures. Since we cannot capture the complexity of God through our limited cultural understandings, our understanding of God is limited when we see this God through only one dominant cultural perspective. Instead, our understandings of God and our scriptures can be deepened when we come together, as disciples of Jesus Christ, in all of our differences and diversities to acknowledge intercultural reality and richness.

We strive to become an intercultural church to deepen our understandings and experiences of God and of one another. Within The United Church of Canada, a variety of cultural expressions of faith are affirmed and welcomed. Part of the vision of the intercultural church is to create a space where we can sustain our own cultural identities while also affirming those of one another.

*Intercultural* is described as the call to live together in intentional ways where there is the mutual recognition and understanding of difference through intentional self-examination, relationship building, and equitable access to power; it is also our attempt to respond faithfully to such a call.

### An intercultural church is one that is:

#### **welcoming.** It

- is open, accepting, joyful, and life-giving;
- trusts that God's Spirit opens all to new and different experiences, however challenging, painful, and uncomfortable at times;
- seeks to use inclusive and expansive language in worship and community life, and honours diverse language in policy statements and official declarations;
- maintains a commitment to mutuality, full participation, and radical welcoming as part of the church's mission and ministry.

#### **relational.** It

- affirms, honours, and treasures the God-given differences present in the context of its communities—recognizing that there are a variety of cultural expressions of faith;
- offers a positive vision of community as a whole, with critical engagement within and between cultural perspectives;
- recognizes reciprocal relationships among and between one another, and our responsibilities to live in right relationship with all of creation;
- strives to become a culturally diverse and multilingual community.

**adaptive.** It

- lives with God’s grace enabling it to accept mistakes, and learns and grows from the past;
- opens itself to be vulnerable;
- continually affirms diverse cultural identities to avoid assimilation into dominant cultures;
- is not afraid to engage in transformation of heart, mind, structure, and policy—including continually adapting to change when change is called for.

**justice-seeking.** It

- steadfastly and authentically seeks to share resources, redress power imbalances, and challenge systemic injustices, while seeking full and equitable participation of all—both inside and outside of the church;
- faithfully addresses racism and White privilege;
- recognizes the churches’ complicity in historic injustices and tries to do things differently;
- commits itself to becoming a globally minded, engaged, and justice-seeking community.

**intentional.** It

- seeks to be enriched by different cultural perspectives, and knows that what we hold in common does not deny difference;
- creates spaces for courageous conversations;
- proactively cultivates diverse leadership, particularly within cultural communities that have been historically minoritized and underrepresented;
- engages in self-examination, life-long learning, and reflection through ongoing prayer, education, training, consultation, monitoring, and evaluation of its intercultural engagement.

**missional.** It

- seeks to discern, acknowledge, and embody biblical and theological bases for becoming an intercultural church;
- affirms that the God of mission has a church in the world, and that we—in all our differences—are active participants in God’s mission.

Church in Mission Unit  
The United Church of Canada  
3250 Bloor St. West, Suite 300  
Toronto, ON M8X 2Y4  
Toll Free: 1-800-268-3781  
E-mail: [cim@united-church.ca](mailto:cim@united-church.ca)

“Vision for Becoming an Intercultural Church” was adopted at the Executive of General Council (GCE) in October 2012, as part of the report “Intercultural Ministries: Living into Transformation.”