

The United Theological College / Le Séminaire Uni
Report to Regional Councils
October 2020

The United Theological College /Le Séminaire Uni is based in Montreal, Quebec. It is the smallest of the eight theological colleges in Canada that prepare students for authorized ministry in The United Church of Canada. Student enrollment in the M.Div. and other degree programs has varied over the years between 10 and 20 full time M.Div. students. At present, there are 4 Full Time and 5 Part Time students enrolled in the M.Div. program.

In the past year, an additional two-dozen people participated in our continuing education courses in preaching and pastoral care, in formation courses in United Church worship, theology, history, and polity; and in our French-language modules leading to a Licence in Lay Worship Leadership.

Our varied programs and small size allow for an exceptionally diverse community where students receive customized attention in a mutually supportive environment. Our students are from Quebec, Eastern Ontario, and New Brunswick, from Africa, the Caribbean, Asia, and France; they are Anglophone, Francophone and Allophone; a handful grew up in the United Church, the majority come from other denominations, other faith traditions, or no faith.

UTC pays the salaries of two faculty and one administrator. Our *Directrice de formation en français*, now working half-time, is seconded half-time to UTC by the General Council Office who pays her full salary. The college is overseen by a Board of Governors which includes representatives from Nakonha:ka and Eastern Ontario and Outaouais, who are responsible for its strategic direction and governance. The College occupies and owns two floors of a four-storey building on University St. opposite McGill University. In return for an annual contribution of \$17,000 paid to McGill University, our students pay tuition directly to UTC for completing a two-year Bachelor of Theology at McGill's School of Religious Studies. Upon completing a third, In Ministry Year at the Montreal School of Theology, students earn their M.Div. degree and qualify for a United Church *Testamur* (the College's assurance that a student has met the required learning goals for ordination).

Funding for the operation of UTC comes from student tuition, donations and bequests, an annual grant from The United Church of Canada, and occasional project grants. Our investments generate about \$48,000 in scholarships, bursaries, and awards, and a very small amount for operations. In 2020, we received two grants from the Eastern Ontario and Outaouais and the Nakonha:ka Regional Councils amounting to \$20,000. The funds were used to enhance our Strategic Planning process, cover consulting costs, travel and special gatherings, and strengthen communications.

At the end of 2019, an investment made in recent years to extend the financial life of the college was called into question and disallowed by our auditing firm, leaving us with a debt of more than \$500,000 that must be repaid. As a result, our building was put on the market in September 2020 and at the time of writing has not been sold.

Though the COVID pandemic has affected UTC as a community, it has not seriously disrupted our operations. All classes are offered on-line by all parties of the MST. Staff have occasional access to the building though it is not open to students. Given the above, the three top issues that UTC is facing are:

1. **Ensuring the continuity of our mission** – to educate lay and ordained leaders for the United Church of Canada in the multi-cultural and primarily francophone context of Quebec, the geographical area of Eastern Ontario and Quebec, and the demographic “area” of French-speaking Canada. Our vision for educating leaders stresses innovation, adaptability, and an openness to new forms of being church. UTC’s greatest challenge is building the capacity to fulfill its mission, to form people in this distinctive context and for this distinctive ministry.
2. **Identifying the program model(s) and partnership(s) that will most effectively advance that mission.** Despite its small size, UTC occupies a unique place in the spectrum of United Church theological education in Canada. With time and money running short, we are working full throttle to adapt and re-design our program in a way that will meet the leadership needs of Quebec and francophone Canada and continue to educate and form people for ordained ministry in Quebec and Eastern Ontario. Our goal is to offer a sustainable, integrated Program Model that will allow movement from an easily accessible entrance level to structured and certified course work at an intermediate level, to an M.Div. or Diploma in Ministry at the third level, leading to a UCC Testamur. We are actively searching for institutional partners who are able and willing to collaborate with us on this enterprise.
3. **Finding a sustainable financial base that will make it all work.** We anticipate that the proceeds from the sale of our building, once the debt has been settled, combined with what was raised in a fundraising blitz, will leave enough to bridge us to a new future. We have given ourselves to the end of December 2020 to determine if this will be possible.

In order to operate within a balanced budget, UTC is rethinking its current methods of operations and is looking at possible combinations, partnerships and other arrangements to carry out its mission into the future at a substantially reduced cost.

Starting in 2021, UTC is looking at substantially reduced financial support from the United Church of Canada, which is UTC’s largest and most significant annual contributor. In the past few years the United Church has funded UTC in the amount of \$100,000 annually, but they have advised us that this will be reduced by some \$30,000 in 2021. As a consequence, if UTC is to balance its budget, it will have either to find new money to offset the reduced contribution from General Council or reduce even further our current operations.

While the regions of Nakohna:ka and Eastern Ontario and Outaouais have not traditionally been financial supporters of theological education, they have in recent years been the primary beneficiaries of the services and programs offered by our College. As the capacity of General Council to maintain theological colleges across Canada diminishes, UTC would like to explore new ways of partnering with our two main supporting regions to “educate and form courageous, compassionate and innovative leaders for service and ministry in the church and world of tomorrow.”

Respectfully submitted,
(Rev. Dr.) Maylanne Maybee, Interim Principal