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COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW: CHASING THE SPIRIT

Origin: General Secretary, General Council on behalf of the Comprehensive Review Task Group

The General Secretary, General Council on behalf of the Comprehensive Review Task Group proposes:

That the 42nd General Council 2015:

- (1) commit to supporting new ministries and new forms of ministry through an initiative tentatively called “Chasing the Spirit”; and
- (2) direct that ten (10%) percent of annual Mission and Service Fund givings be invested in this initiative, with the United Church to begin work immediately towards implementation of this direction, and for it to be fully implemented no later than 2018.

BACKGROUND:

See pages 13–16 of the Report of the Comprehensive Review Task Group.

COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW: ABORIGINAL MINISTRIES

Origin: General Secretary, General Council on behalf of the Comprehensive Review Task Group

The General Secretary, General Council on behalf of the Comprehensive Review Task Group proposes:

That the 42nd General Council 2015 direct the Executive of the General Council:

- (1) to establish a process to continue conversations with the Aboriginal ministries that form the Aboriginal Ministries Council to build a relationship based on mutuality, respect, and equity, and to report back no later than GC 43;
- (2) to maintain funding for Aboriginal ministries at current levels, to the extent possible, during the next triennium while the conversations continue; and
- (3) to establish a process for developing a model for funding Aboriginal Ministries and Indigenous Justice on a going forward basis.

BACKGROUND:

See pages 17–19 of the Report of the Comprehensive Review Task Group.

COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW: A THREE-COUNCIL MODEL

Origin: General Secretary, General Council on behalf of the Comprehensive Review Task Group

The General Secretary, General Council on behalf of the Comprehensive Review Task Group proposes:

That the 42nd General Council 2015 approve the reorganization of The United Church of Canada from its current four-court structure to a three-council structure consisting of communities of faith, regional councils, and a denominational council as follows:

1. COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

A. *Description:*

A community of faith would be any community of people within the United Church that:

- gathers to explore faith, worship, and serve, including congregations, outreach ministries, faith-based communal living, house churches, and online communities; and
- is recognized as a community of faith within the United Church by the regional council through a covenantal relationship between the community of faith and the regional council.

B. *Membership*

The members of the community of faith would be:

- people admitted to membership by the community of faith, within the guidelines of the denomination, including members of the order of ministry;
- eligible for election to represent the community of faith in the denominational council and regional council;
- entitled to vote on all community of faith matters; and
entitled to extend the right to vote on financial and administrative matters to adherents.

C. *Authority and responsibility*

The community of faith would have authority and responsibility for:

mission

- entering into a covenant with the regional council with mutual responsibilities for the life and mission of the community of faith, and fulfilling its responsibilities under the covenant;
- doing annual self-assessments of the ministry of the community of faith and filing the report with the regional council;

governance and administration

- making decisions about the life of the community of faith, including worship, care, spiritual practice, and learning; local administration, finances, and governance, and local mission, justice, and evangelism;
- meeting at least annually;
- complying with denominational and regional policies;
- buying, selling, leasing, and renovating community of faith property;

spiritual life

- setting policies for membership, and receiving and celebrating new members in the community of faith;
- helping members deepen their faith while exploring their faith journey;

ministry and other leadership

- recruiting, choosing, calling, appointing, and covenanting with ministry personnel and other staff, and ending calls and appointments/covenants with ministry personnel and other staff;
- encouraging members to consider ministry roles a responsibility shared through the whole community of faith;
- recommending to the appropriate body suitable lay members as inquirers, candidates, and licensed lay worship leaders, as and if required under denominational policy;
- ***participation in regional and denominational life***
- choosing one of the ministry personnel serving the community of faith in paid accountable ministry where applicable, and one other member of the community of faith, to represent the community of faith on the regional council;
- funding the cost of sending representatives to the meetings of the regional council;
- choosing one of the ministry personnel serving the community of faith in paid accountable ministry, where applicable, and one lay member of the community of faith, to represent the community of faith on the denominational council;
- funding the cost of sending representatives to the triennial meeting of the denominational council; and
- receiving, dealing with, and forwarding on proposals from members of the community of faith to regional councils.

D. Limitations

All authority and responsibility of the community of faith would be subject to:

- policies set by the denominational council on membership, governance, pastoral relations, property, and any other area within the authority of the denominational council;
- the terms of the covenant between the community of faith and the regional council; and
- the authority of the regional council to assume control of the community of faith in extraordinary circumstances where the community of faith is unable to or refuses to meet its responsibilities or acts outside of denominational or regional policies.

2. REGIONAL COUNCILS

A. Description

A regional council would be a regional decision-making body within the United Church.

B. Membership

The regional council would be composed of:

- one ministry personnel from each community of faith that has paid accountable ministry personnel
- one lay member from each community of faith within the region

C. Authority and Responsibility

The regional council would have authority and responsibility for:

- ***covenanting:***
- recognizing a new community of faith by entering into a covenantal relationship with it;
- entering into a covenant with each community of faith, with mutual responsibilities for the life and mission of the community of faith, and fulfilling its responsibilities under the covenant;
- ***oversight:***
- reviewing and periodically auditing the self-assessments of communities of faith in light of the covenant between the community of faith and the regional council;
- assuming control of a community of faith in extraordinary circumstances where the community of faith is unable to or refuses to meet its responsibilities or acts outside of denominational policies;

- overseeing camps and incorporated ministries in the region;
- *services to communities of faith:*
- providing support, advice, and services to communities of faith in human resource matters;
- providing support, advice, and services to communities of faith in dealing with congregational property;
- creating regional policies for buying, selling, leasing, and renovating community of faith and regional property and the distribution of such proceeds;
- managing regional archives;
- providing leadership training for ministers and lay persons as determined regionally;
- *policy and finance:*
- administering policy set by the denominational council, and setting appropriate regional policy;
- receiving, dealing with, and forwarding on proposals from communities of faith to the denominational council based on denominational policy;
- setting and managing its annual budget and setting any additional regional assessment for any additional services the regional council wishes to undertake;
- participating in determining priorities for mission and ministry work through the Mission and Service Fund;
- meeting at least annually as the entire regional council or through its executive;
- *ministry personnel and others—except to the extent any of the following responsibilities have been otherwise assigned through the United Church’s legislative process:*
- celebrating retirements;
- appointing persons (i) to accompany a candidate on their pathway to ordination or commissioning, and (ii) to make a recommendation to the College of Ministry Personnel as to the candidate’s fitness and readiness for ministry;
- appointing a person (i) to supervise a candidate in an internship, and (ii) make a recommendation to the College of Ministry Personnel as to the candidate’s fitness and readiness for ministry;
- ordaining or commissioning each candidate approved by the College for ordination;
- admitting ministers from other denominations who have been approved by the College for admission;
- readmitting ministers who have been approved by the College for readmission;
- recognizing designated lay ministers; and
- licensing lay members as licensed lay worship leaders.

D. Limitations

All authority and responsibility of the regional council would be subject to:

- policies set by the denominational council on membership, governance, pastoral relations, property, and any other area within the authority of the denominational council;
- the terms of the covenant between the community of faith and the regional council; and
- the authority of the denominational council to assume control of the regional council in extraordinary circumstances where the regional council is unable to or refuses to meet its responsibilities or acts outside of denominational or regional policies.

E. Staffing

Each region would have staff to assist the regional council in meeting its responsibilities:

- staffing would be based on assessments, grants from the Mission and Service Fund, and any other regional income;
- staffing would be based on priorities and needs as determined regionally;

- staff would be hired and managed by a regional secretary who reports to the General Secretary of the denominational council; and
- regional councils with more resources would be free to hire more staff, and sharing of all resources across the church would be encouraged.

3. DENOMINATIONAL COUNCIL

A. *Description:*

The denominational council would be the decision-making body for the United Church as both a denomination and a legal corporation.

B. *Membership*

The denominational council would consist of:

- one ministry personnel from each community of faith that has paid accountable ministry personnel, as chosen by the community of faith;
- one lay member of each community of faith, as chosen by the community of faith;
- the presiding officer or elder of each regional council;
- the immediate Past Moderator;
- the retiring Moderator; and
- the General Secretary of the denominational council.

C. *Authority and responsibility*

The denominational council would have authority and responsibility for:

policy:

- setting policies for the denomination on doctrine, worship, membership, governance, pastoral relations, property, and the entrance to paid accountable ministry;
- making decisions on denomination-shaping issues relating to public witness;
- dealing with proposals received from regional councils;

governance:

- electing a Moderator;
- electing the executive of the denominational council;
- referring all unfinished matters to the executive of the denominational council;
- meeting once every three years in person, with members having the option of participating through electronic or equivalent means;
- meeting more frequently as required by secular law through electronic or equivalent means;
- approving the number and boundaries of regional councils and supporting them;

finance and administration:

- setting a three-year budget framework for the church and determining the assessment of communities of faith for the three-year period;
- assisting communities of faith with the cost of sending representatives to the triennial denominational council meeting by setting a standardized fee for the cost and providing bursaries where needed; and
- maintaining the denominational archives.

D. *Limitations*

This proposal does not affect the limitations that exist at the current time:

- **remit:** the Basis of Union may only be changed through the remit process, which requires the approval of a majority of the presbyteries and also, if the General Council considers it advisable because the change is substantive or denomination-shaping, pastoral charges;
- **membership requirements:** no terms of admission to full membership may be prescribed other than those laid down in the New Testament;
- **freedom of worship:** the freedom of worship enjoyed by churches at the time of union in 1925 may not be interfered with in the United Church;
- **property:** all policy on congregational property adopted by the denominational council must comply with the requirements set in The United Church of Canada Act, 1925.

E. Executive of the denominational council

The executive of the denominational council would be the decision-making body for the United Church between meetings of the denominational council, within the following terms of reference:

- **size:** a fixed number between 12 and 18 members, with the exact number set by the denominational council;
- **membership:**
 - the Moderator
 - the General Secretary of the General Council
 - a representative of the Aboriginal Ministries Council
 - lay members and members of the order of ministry elected by the denominational council based on regional council nominations and the need for named competencies as well as Aboriginal, francophone, racialized, and other diverse voices; and
- **authority:**
 - dealing with all unfinished matters referred to it by the denominational council
 - dealing with all routine and emergency work of the denominational council between meetings of the denominational council
 - establishing standing and other committees, with the chair of each such committee to be a member of the executive of the General Council
 - exercising additional authority and subject to any limitations as set by the denominational council

F. Staffing

The denominational council would have staff to assist it in meeting its responsibilities through:

- staffing based on assessments of communities of faith, grants from the Mission and Service Fund, and other denominational income;
- staffing based on the priorities and needs as determined nationally;
- administering denominational policies;
- providing centralized technical services such as information technology, communication, payroll, accounting, human resources, administration, and pension plan;
- supporting the Moderator; and
- providing leadership in global partnerships and national-level ministry and mission work.

4. CLUSTERS AND NETWORKS

Alongside the structure, there would also be:

- **clusters:** local clusters of communities of faith that would provide community and support for communities of faith and their leaders, and focus on worship, mission, learning, collegiality, and strategic planning; and

- ***networks***: linking people working on specific issues (e.g. supportive housing, intercultural ministry, youth ministry) or for project work (e.g. event planning) that function through the whole church, depending on the issue.

And that the 42nd General Council 2015 approve the elimination of the transfer and settlement processes for members of the order of ministry within the United Church, including the elimination of the General Council Transfer Committee and Conference Settlement Committees;

And further, that the 42nd General Council 2015 authorize a Category 3 remit to presbyteries and pastoral charges to test the will of the church with respect to the reorganization and polity changes set out above.

BACKGROUND:

See pages 20–22 of the Report of the Comprehensive Review Task Group.

COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW: A COLLEGE OF MINISTERS

Origin: General Secretary, General Council on behalf of the Comprehensive Review Task Group

The General Secretary, General Council on behalf of the Comprehensive Review Task Group proposes:

That the 42nd General Council 2015 approve the establishment of a College of Ministers within the General Council [or “denominational council,” if approved through the United Church’s legislative process], based on the following terms of reference, and such other terms as may be set by the General Council [or denominational council]:

A. *Membership*

- Membership in the College would be mandatory for all members of the order of ministry and designated lay ministers serving in paid accountable ministry in congregations and other communities of faith.
- Candidates would be student members.
- Ministers seeking admission from other denominations would be associate members after they have been approved to enter the admission process under denominational policy.
- Congregations and other communities of faith would only be permitted to call, appoint, or hire people who are members of the College when filling ministry positions.

B. *Authority and responsibility*

- The College would have authority and responsibility for:
 - (1) the assessment of candidates, ministers seeking admission from other denominations, and ministers seeking readmission to ministry in the United Church; and
 - (2) the oversight and discipline of ministry personnel and all those described in (1) above, according to policies and standards set by the General Council [or denominational council].
- The Conference [or “regional council,” if approved through the United Church’s legislative process] would remain responsible for the ordination and commissioning of members of the order of ministry and recognition of designated lay ministers.

C. *Governance*

The College would be governed by a 20-member board, with the composition of the board set by denominational policy to include:

- equal number of: (1) ministers whether ordained, diaconal, or designated lay ministers and (2) lay people;
- ensuring representation of each of ordained, diaconal, and designated lay ministers;
- ensuring representation of Aboriginal ministries;
- election of lay persons on a regional basis; and
- election of ministry representatives by their peers on a regional basis.

D. *Structure*

The College would have the following three committees, composed of members of the College Board, with each committee to include at least one minister and one layperson:

- **Admission and Standards Committee:** to assess (1) candidates for ordination or commissioning, and (2) ministers for membership in the College;
- **Complaints Committee:** to assess complaints about ministry personnel, order investigations, order a formal hearing, and determine other appropriate outcomes; and

- **Hearings Committee:** to hold formal hearings of complaints and determine appropriate outcomes. Only the Hearings Committee has authority to place a minister's name on the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary).

And further that the 42nd General Council 2015 authorize a Category 3 remit to presbyteries and pastoral charges to test the will of the church with respect to the establishment of a College of Ministers as set out above.

BACKGROUND:

See pages 23–27 of the Report of the Comprehensive Review Task Group.

COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW: AN ASSOCIATION OF MINISTERS

Origin: General Secretary, General Council on behalf of the Comprehensive Review Task Group

The General Secretary, General Council on behalf of the Comprehensive Review Task Group proposes:

That the 42nd General Council 2015 direct the Executive of the General Council:

- (1) to establish a working group consisting of ministry personnel to consider the idea of establishing an Association of Ministers; and
- (2) to receive the report of the working group and to take appropriate action in response.

BACKGROUND:

See pages 28–29 of the Report of the Comprehensive Review Task Group.

COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW: FUNDING A NEW MODEL

Origin: General Secretary, General Council on behalf of the Comprehensive Review Task Group

The General Secretary, General Council on behalf of the Comprehensive Review Task Group proposes:

That the 42nd General Council 2015 approve the following principles to guide the budgeting process for The United Church of Canada:

- (1) Spend only what is received, which will require at least an \$11 million reduction in spending by 2018 from current 2015 spending levels.
- (2) Determine the number of staff and what they do based on revenues received.
- (3) Use the Mission and Service Fund to fund only ministry and mission activities.
- (4) Fund governance and support services (administration), whether at the Conference/presbytery [or “regional council,” if approved through the United Church’s legislative process] or the denominational level, by assessing communities of faith.
- (5) Share assessments equitably across the whole church. Conference/presbytery [or regional council] would be able to use additional existing resources for regional purposes. Sharing of all resources would be encouraged across the church.

And that the 42nd General Council 2015 authorize a Category 3 remit to presbyteries and pastoral charges to test the will of the church with respect to the change set out in sections 4 and 5 above [funding through assessing communities of faith].

And further, that the Executive of the General Council be directed and authorized to take the actions necessary to finalize and implement the new model based on the above principles, to the extent permissible pending the outcome of this remit.

BACKGROUND:

See pages 30–33 of the Report of the Comprehensive Review Task Group.

COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW: REMITS / MEETING OF THE 43RD GENERAL COUNCIL

Origin: General Secretary, General Council on behalf of the Comprehensive Review Task Group

The General Secretary, General Council on behalf of the Comprehensive Review Task Group proposes:

That the 42nd General Council 2015:

- (1) waive the requirement for 24 months' study and information sharing before the return date of the following remits, in order to allow for an earlier return deadline for presbyteries and pastoral charges:
 - Comprehensive Review: Three Council Structure
 - Comprehensive Review: College of Ministers
 - Comprehensive Review: New Funding Model
 - Comprehensive Review: Change in Governance from The United Church of Canada Act to the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act
- (2) advance the date of the regular meeting of the 43rd General Council from 2018 to September 15, 2017, or such other date named by the Executive of the General Council, so that the results of these remits may then be reported to the General Council and, if the remits have been approved, a decision made whether to enact them;
- (3) direct that the regular meeting of the 43rd General Council be held electronically; and
- (4) authorize test projects for the Three Council Structure and College of Ministers to begin immediately, with participation to be voluntary, and the Executive of the General Council to provide direction for and oversight of the testing.

BACKGROUND:

The four remits listed above are all Category 3 remits, which are remits sent to both presbyteries and pastoral charges.

Under *The Manual*, the return date for a Category 3 remit must be set so that it allows presbyteries and pastoral charges at least 24 months of study and information sharing before the deadline. This requirement ensures that presbyteries and pastoral charges are given an opportunity to learn about the issues raised in the remit and to engage in conversation about them before voting.

For the first three proposals listed above, this objective has already been met. The Comprehensive Review Task Group shared two discussion papers with the wider church on preliminary restructuring and funding concepts in 2013 and 2014 and later made its final report available to congregations and presbyteries along with accompanying material to help them explore the task group's recommendations. An additional period of 24 months' study would be redundant.

The fourth proposal concerns a change that would eliminate the requirement for the United Church to get approval from Parliament to reorganize into a three-council model or for other restructurings in future.

Any policy change approved by a Category 3 remit may only be implemented if enacted by the next General Council. Normally, the General Council holds its regular meeting every third year. It has authority to advance the meeting date to the second year if it considers the circumstances exceptional.

The changes proposed in these remits address serious and urgent financial circumstances facing the United Church. It is critical to know the will of the church on these particular changes as soon as possible to allow for their implementation if approved or, if not, to allow the church to determine another course of action.