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MODERATOR'S ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

I must begin this report by giving thanks. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve the church as Moderator for the last three years. Every moment has been a blessing. Every step of the way I have felt the prayerful accompaniment of the church, without which I could have done nothing. Words cannot express the depth of my gratitude for the gifts I have received, the ways I have been changed, and the people whose lives have touched mine along the way. Thank you for placing your trust in me and for sharing your faith so generously.

No report can capture the breadth and depth of what you have shared, what I have learned, and how we as a church have grown over these three years. So I will attempt only to offer a smattering of stories and musings, in the hope that they will spark curiosity, conversation, and a desire to dig deeper.

You have told me that the most urgent priority facing our church today is learning how to be good relations. Almost everywhere I visited in our church, folks are seeking ways to heal the brokenness at the heart of relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in this land. Communities of faith are finding creative ways to bridge this divide and deepen connection with their neighbours. Several intercultural canoe trips, youth camps and other events have created space for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people of all ages to learn, share and build relationship together.

As we dream new possibilities for the future, folks are also naming the need for meaningful reparations for past injustices. We will need to bring our best and most creative, justice-seeking selves to this conversation.

As a church, we are just starting to recognize our need for deep, open conversations about race and privilege and how they operate in our church. This will demand great courage and great humility from all of us. Lilla Watson, an Aboriginal woman from Australia, offers this wisdom as we begin: "If you have come here to help me you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

Learning to recognize my own need for liberation has been essential. I do this by listening deeply, with an open mind and heart, to folks who can see what is invisible to me – the ways my thoughts and values have been distorted by colonialism and privilege. Sitting and listening with the Caretakers group, conversations with racialized members of our church, wisdom from Indigenous communities and overseas partners have all helped me become more aware of what needs healing in me. This awareness is painful, disorienting and necessary. As I come to recognize my brokenness, I find myself longing for wholeness. This is the beginning of understanding of what it means to be a good relation.

Among the highlights from these three years are the many youth and young adult gatherings I have attended. If you want to renew your faith and hope and feel excited about where our church is going, I recommend participating in Rendezvous, or the GO Project, or Youth Forum,

or a local youth event, or even the youth group that gathers in your church. I have been inspired and moved by the way young people in our church are creating communities of faith that are safe, courageous, and deeply spiritual. Here is just one of many stories I could share:

On a recent conference visit, I spent a couple hours one evening with youth who were invited to “come and meet the Moderator”. One young woman was celebrating her 16th birthday that day. I asked her why she was here instead of at a birthday party. She said she had come because this is where her friends are, where she feels most comfortable and safe. She spends as much time as she can at the United Church because it is where she knows she is accepted and loved.

This is the kind of community the young people in our church are building with one another! If you know young folks in your area who aren’t connected with the youth and young adult programs in our church, please consider how your faith community can support their participation.

One young adult urged me to share this message with our church. “Please”, she said, “tell people we (young people) are not disinterested in church, just because we’re not there on Sunday morning. My church happens at Wednesday evening bible study and our Saturday evening potlucks and worship. We’re just doing church differently.”

Ecumenical and interfaith relations are central to the United Church’s understanding of ourselves and how we live out our mission. I have been blessed with opportunities to represent our church at many ecumenical and interfaith gatherings. Each of these has caused me to reflect more deeply on what it means to be a true partner in such relationships. I want to share a reflection from my experience at the Anglican General Synod meeting (like our General Council) in 2016:

The Anglican Church was wrestling with the difficult question of whether or not to change their marriage regulations to include same-sex couples. It is a gift to be asked to accompany friends through a challenging moment in their life together. It was a great honour, and a lot of work! I had to continually let go of my own hopes and desires for how the vote would go, and focus instead on holding the gathered community and the whole Anglican Church in prayer. I assured the Synod that the United Church would continue to walk with them in friendship and solidarity, regardless of the outcome of the decisions they made that week. I have reflected often since then on how I am called to practice this kind of compassion in all my relationships – especially where there is conflict. Through this experience, I learned that when we hold one another in love, our disagreements lose the power to divide us, and “opponents” become relatives.

Following the attack on the mosque in Quebec City, I heard an imam share a teaching from the Quran that has stayed with me. He said there is a story in which a student asks the Prophet how we are to respond to oppression. The Prophet replies that when we see oppression, we are to take the hand of our neighbour... when our neighbour is the oppressed person, we take their hand to help lift them up and relieve the burden of oppression... when our neighbour is the

oppressor, we take their hand to hold it back from doing harm to others. I find the beauty and humanity of this teaching very moving. Everyone is our neighbour and needs us to intervene with strength and compassion wherever there is oppression.

These experiences have confirmed for me the importance of building and nurturing relationships with our neighbours of all faiths. This is a calling at which the Kenyan church excels. I was impressed with the extent and depth of ecumenical and interfaith cooperation I witnessed in Kenya. At an interfaith clerics meeting in Mombasa, leaders from many different faith groups met to discuss how they could collectively address the political and social justice concerns that are fracturing their communities and their country. Their level of engagement and commitment to working together for the common good was inspiring.

We have so much to learn from our overseas partners. I did far more international travel in this triennium than anticipated, but every one of these visits opened my eyes to the gifts our partners bring to our relationship. As we practice genuine mutuality in all our relationships, we will be greatly enriched by the wisdom, faith and insights of our global and local partners. We have much to offer, but even more to receive. What a blessing!

An exciting development emerging in our global relationships is the strengthening of connections and collaboration between Indigenous peoples. The Canada-Australia Indigenous Dialogue is one example of how our churches are learning from and supporting one another as we seek justice and healing in our own contexts. One participant from the Australian delegation noted – there is power in hearing your story reflected back to you in the experience of another.

One final reflection...

The time I spent with the Caretakers of Our Indigenous Circle gives me hope as I think about all the changes we are undertaking in the church. At the first meeting of the Caretakers I attended I felt completely overwhelmed by what we were being asked to do. The task was too big... the time was too short... the way forward was too unclear. Yet, in one short year, we went from what felt like chaos, to a courageous new vision for Aboriginal ministries, which has the consensus of the whole Indigenous church. We got there by listening deeply, trusting one another, speaking from the heart, and grounding ourselves in prayer. And by seeing the messiness and uncertainty of the moment, not as obstacles on our path, but as the raw materials God uses for creating something new.

May it be so for us as we seek to be the church in these uncertain times.

Thanks be to God!

Yours in Faith,

Jordan Cantwell
Moderator/Modératrice

Here is a brief description of my visits across the country... a series of events, Conferences, workshops, presentations, worship services and preaching – my way of trying to “quicken the heart of the church” and to hear the stories, hopes, dreams, and concerns of people and congregations in all our conferences. My sincere apologies if I have missed any community in this list. It has been a privilege to have been welcomed so warmly and to have had this opportunity to experience the breadth of what it means to be The United Church of Canada.

British Columbia Conference

BC Native Ministries Meeting 2017

UCW 55th Anniversary

EVOLVE

Windermere Valley Shared Ministry

Prince Rupert United Church

Long House Ministry

St. Andrew’s Pastoral Charge

Harmony House

Mission Site and Residential School, Williams Lake

Vancouver School of Theology

First United Church Community Ministry

Lynn Valley Pastoral Charge

North Lonsdale Pastoral Charge

West Vancouver Pastoral Charge

Dunbar-Ryerson United Church

St. Aidan’s Pastoral Charge

Saskatchewan Conference

Saskatchewan Conference Annual General Meeting 2016

St. Andrew’s College

Prairie Centre Ecumenism 2016

Ecole Victoria School

UNJPPI Annual Meeting 2016

Open Table Dinner Church 2016

Day of Remembrance – Islamic Centre

Reconciliation Saskatoon 2017

Maple Creek Pastoral Charge

Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge, Maple Creek

Camp Shagabec

Preeceville-Sturgis Pastoral Charge

Meadow Lake United Church

Flying Dust First Nation

River Bend Presbytery Meeting

Youth East Vigil

Westminster United Church Youth Group - Humbolt

Carnduff-Alida Pastoral Charge

St. Andrew’s United Church

Gainsborough United Church

Carievale United Church

Alberta & Northwest Conference

Alberta & Northwest Conference Annual General Meeting 2018
Korean/Canadian Panel Discussion 2015 – Avonmore United Church
McDougall Pastoral Charge
Deer Park Pastoral Charge
Robert McClure Pastoral Charge
Symons Valley Pastoral Charge
Red Deer Lake United Church
St. Andrew's United Church
Treaty 7 Day Celebration
An Awkward Conversation In The Church
United On Whyte Pastoral Charge (Pleasantview United Church)
Whitehorse Pastoral Charge
Gaetz Memorial Pastoral Charge
Sunnybrook Pastoral Charge
Indigenous-New Comers Dialogue
Southminster Pastoral Charge
Fort McMurray Pastoral Charge

Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario

Conference Annual General Meeting 2017
Conference Executive Meeting
NEECHI Youth Event - Sandy Saulteaux Centre
Opening of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation
North End Stella Community Ministry
Oak Table community Ministry
Winnipeg Outreach Ministry
Westworth Pastoral Charge
Knox United Church

Manitou Conference

Ministry Personnel Retreat
Manitou Intentional Learning Community Annual Meeting 2017
Commemoration of the 1986 Apology at the Cairn: Laurentian University/ St. Peter's United Church
Manitou Conference UCW
St. Andrew's Pastoral Charge
New Liskeard: St. Paul's Pastoral Charge
Spirit Dancing Presbytery Meeting

London Conference

Youth Forum Pearce Williams Christian Centre
Youth Retreat Camp Menesetung (Goderich)
Skylight Festival
London Conference Annual General Meeting 2016
Tecumseh Pastoral Charge
South Caradoc Pastoral Charge
Avondale Pastoral Charge

Hamilton Conference

Hamilton Conference Annual General Meeting 2018
Southampton and Saugeen Pastoral Charges Bruce Presbytery Meeting

Lion's Head-Pike Bay Pastoral Charge
Silver Spire Youth Event
Eramosa Pastoral Charge

Toronto Conference

Cruxifusion Conference Annual Meeting 2016
Emmanuel College
80th Anniversary of Lydia Gruchy's Ordination
Prayers for Peace - Islington United Church
Humbercrest United Church – Culte en français
Grace United Church
Trinity United Church
Alpha Korean/Bloor Street United Churches
Birchcliff Bluffs United Church
Toronto Southeast Presbytery Office
Toronto Chinese (EM)
Tamil United Church
St. Andrew's Pastoral Charge
Uganda Martyr's United Church
Roncesvalles Pastoral Charge

Bay of Quinte Conference

Living into Right Relations Group – Curve Lake
Cambridge Street Pastoral Charge
Queen Street Pastoral Charge
St. Mark's United, Cannifton Pastoral Charge
Lakeridge Presbytery Youth Event
Port Perry-Prince Albert Pastoral Charge
Trinity United Church

Montreal and Ottawa Conference

Rendezvous 2017 Montreal, QC
Courageous Conversation Gathering
Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble Conference 2016
Montreal City Mission Iftar, Montreal 2016
Worshiplude 2017
Combatting Christian-Based homophobia and Transphobia Globally, Montreal Summit Session
Montreal City Mission
Eglise St. Jean
Camino de Emaus
YAYA Gathering
'Opportunity Knox Bargain Centre' St. Andrew's and Knox United Church
Parkdale United Church
Meet with local UCC Military Chaplains

City View Pastoral Charge, Clergy Retreat
Riverside Pastoral Charge
St. James Pastoral Charge
Ste. Genevieve Pastoral Charge
Sherbrooke: Plymouth-Trinity Pastoral Charges
Eglise St. Pierre
Montreal-Ottawa Conference Office
Trinity United Church
South Stormont Pastoral Charge (St. Andrew's-St. Mark's)
House of Lazarus, Community Outreach Mission
Rural United Ministry

Maritime Conference

Black Loyalists Centre
Trinity United, Mahone Bay
Atlantic School of Theology
Naval Chaplains, Canadian Armed Forces Base, Halifax
Shelburne (Trinity)
Liverpool (Zion) United Church
Yarmouth: Beacon Pastoral Charge
St. Stephen's United Church (Kirk-McColl)
Brookfield United Church
Three Harbours Pastoral Charge (St. John's United Church)
Tatamagouche Centre
Wilmot Pastoral Charge

Newfoundland and Labrador Conference

Spring Meeting of Conference, East and West Districts 2018
Clergy Retreat, 2017
Boyd's Cove Beothuk Interpretation Centre
Happy Valley-Goose
Mud Lake United Church
Northwest River
Fraser Road United Church (Gander NL)
Centennial United Church (Roberts Arm)
Jimmy Pratt Outreach Ministry
VOWR Radio Station
Cochrane Centre
Stella's Circle

All Native Circle Conference

ANCC Executive Meeting (Beausejour)
ANCC Grand Council Youth Reunion (Beausejour MB)
Grand Council 2017 (Pinawa MB)
Maskwacis Samson United Church
File Hills, Wanapakew United Church
Carry the Kettle, Hurricane Hills United Church
Regina Native Outreach Ministry

Fisher River, Stevens Memorial United Church
Gods Lake-Gods River Pastoral Charge
Island Lake: Henry Fiddler Memorial Pastoral Charge (Garden Hill)
Johnston Garrioch Memorial United Church (Cross Lake)
Norway House, Kinosao Sipi Keenanow United Church
Nelson House
Oxford House: Vernon Grieves Memorial Pastoral Charge
Red Sucker Lake United Church
Sandy Lake, ON, Adam Fiddler Memorial United Church
Deer Lake United Church
South Indian Lake, Angus Bonner Memorial United Church
Thompson Outreach
Tower's Island, Norway House
Wasagamach United Church
Keewatin Presbytery Meeting
Grand River United Church
Kahnawake United Church
Toronto Urban Native Ministry
Wasauksing/Shawanaga

British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec (BC On/Qc Congregations)

Quadra Island Pastoral Charge
Haida Gwaii Pastoral Charge
Bella Coola Pastoral Charge
Gitsegukla: Hazelton Pastoral Charge
Kitimaat: First Pastoral Charge
Kispiox Pastoral Charge
Lax Kw'alaams: Anspayaxaw Pastoral Charge
Alderville Pastoral Charge
Cape Croker Pastoral Charge
Wesley Saugeen Pastoral Charge
St. Clair United Church (Amjiwnaang First Nation)
Kanesatake Pastoral Charge
Georgina Island Pastoral Charge
Christian Island Pastoral Charge
Nations Uniting House

Other

Nottawasaga- Aboriginal Ministries Consultation
Native Peoples Retreat – Five Oaks
New Ministers Intentional Learning Community – Five Oaks
Full Communion Celebration (Niagara Falls)
Truth and Reconciliation Final Report Launch – Ottawa
Toronto United Church Council Awards Night
National Aboriginal Spiritual Gathering (Pinawa)

Ecumenical Gatherings

Anglican General Synod 2016

Lutheran General Synod 2017
Peoples Moving Forward Together (Manresa Centre)
Ecumenical Statement/Press Conference regarding TRC #48 (Ottawa)
Bartimaeus Institute

South Korea

General Assembly of the PROK (Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea).

China

China Christian Council Consultation

El Salvador

Ecumenical Conference for Reconciliation and Peace

Jakarta, Indonesia

AMPLIFY Conference (LGBTIQ International Symposium in Jakarta)

Beit Sahour, Bethlehem

The World Council of Churches, 50 Years of Occupation, and the Ecumenical Response

Kenya

Partners Visit

Australia

Canada-Australian Dialogue

United States of America

New York NY

Installation Service for Dr. John C. Dorhauer, The United Church of Christ

Cleveland OH

The United Church of Canada and The United Church of Christ Full Communion Meeting

Baltimore, Maryland

The United Church of Christ General Assembly

Washington DC

ACT Now! Unite to End Racism

MODERATOR'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

The role of the Moderator for The United Church of Canada encompasses an astonishingly wide variety of responsibilities, ranging from serving as the primary spokesperson, to presiding over meetings and worship, to giving sympathetic guidance and counsel, to heartening and strengthening the whole United Church (Manual 4.1.3). Each of these responsibilities is significant on its own, while combined create an awe-inspiring task. According to the Governance Handbook for the General Council, the purpose of the Moderator's Advisory Committee (MAC) is to "provide advice, support and assistance to the Moderator in fulfilling the duties of the office most effectively". Little did we realize the extent to which we would be transformed in the process of fulfilling this mandate as we received the stories, the wonderings, the learning, and the longing for justice that the Moderator encountered in her term.

In August 2015, Jordan Cantwell said "you bet" to the call to offer faith-filled wisdom and leadership to The United Church of Canada in this capacity, which was affirmed by the commissioners to the 42nd General Council 2015 in Corner Brook. Within the first week of her appointment, the Moderator was sent to Korea on behalf of the denomination to represent the United Church to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea and to sign the Mutual Recognition of Ministry Agreement between our two churches. In the few days between the rise of the Council and this flight, she gathered together a group of people from across the church to walk with her intentionally and prayerfully. The voices she wanted to have at the table advising and guiding her represented the commitments she had to walking in right relationship with our Indigenous friends, honouring the wisdom in the voice of young people, and living with integrity as a member of the Intercultural church. This group of virtual strangers collected by Jordan became a close-knit family as we were immensely privileged to participate in this journey with her.

We met three times in person and many times by conference call over the course of the three-year term. The first gathering included a time to establish goals and priorities for the unique way in which she would lead the church, and to help set guidelines for discerning which of the many invitations she would have the privilege to accept. These priorities were:

- Indigenous Justice and Right Relations
- Ecumenical conversation and engagement
- Youth and young adult ministry

It has been the practice of the Moderator to spend at least seven days in each of the 13 Conferences, the precise nature of the official visits to be determined by the individual Conferences and these priorities. I want to express gratitude for the care and attention that the Conference Executive Secretaries and Speaker gave to the priorities of the Moderator in the planning of those visits, as well as assisting in the support for her well-being. The eagerness with which Jordan approached the role and its many opportunities for faithful service very quickly encountered the reality of the task in terms of demands on her time and heart. These

dedicated staff helped lighten some of that reality by ensuring she had adequate space for rest and reflection, as well as accompanying her on these official visits by plane, car and even snowmobile. In addition to these official visits, the Moderator visited numerous communities of faith and gatherings including many events focussed on ministry with youth and young adults, all of which were rich learning experiences for her. A list of all the opportunities she had is appended to her report.

One of the most significant initiatives the Moderator undertook within her named priorities was to issue an invitation to each Indigenous community with a United Church of Canada connection to host her at some point during the triennium, the nature of which was determined in each context. The Moderator's Accountability Report outlines some of the scope of this work, but the piece I wish to acknowledge is the respectful way the Moderator entered each of those visits. She allowed herself to be vulnerable to the sorrow and the hope in those communities as her commitment to building right relationships and continues to share the wisdom and the call to action gleaned from those experiences with the whole church. This commitment also meant that the Moderator was not as available to accept invitations to participate in special occasions marking the life and work of this amazing United Church of ours, which the MAC supported.

Another MAC-supported initiative was discerning the means of communicating the work of the Moderator to the church. Each individual in the role of Moderator has a unique way of engaging the world and Jordan is no exception. Many people wondered what the Moderator was doing, even though we had communicated her priorities to the church, because she was not active on social media and they were unable to track her progress throughout the triennium. This is another reflection on the changing nature of the church, and how it mirrors the changes in society. The humble way that Jordan offered her leadership meant that many of her experiences were known only to the people she was in relationship with at the time. Rest assured, however, our Moderator was extremely busy! As we imagine new ways of being the church together, one of the conversations should be about the way we let each other know the things on our minds and hearts to support our mutual learning and practice of faith.

In addition to the conference visits and engagements with Indigenous communities, the Moderator made several overseas visits in a variety of capacities, again the list of which you can find linked in her report. The consequence of the expectations of travel of this role is that her time with her family was compromised, as it is for all Moderators. I want to acknowledge the deep sacrifice that her partner and daughter made on behalf of The United Church of Canada to continue to support Jordan's faithful dedication and enthusiasm for her call.

The final acknowledgment I wish to make is the contribution of all the staff throughout the church to assist the Moderator in fulfilling her mandate. In all of the Conference visits, support staff enabled the details to be smooth, allowing Jordan to be fully present to the stories being offered. Any time there was a statement or a letter to be written on a topic consistent with the values of The United Church, staff at the General Council Offices provided background and feedback to ensure accuracy and thorough detail. However, the three staff who were members

of the Moderator's Advisory Committee were essential in supporting her role. We were ably advised and counselled by Mary-Frances Denis and Nora Sanders, both with wisdom and experience on what it means to be the Moderator in every word and action, and the subsequent navigation of the multiple, and sometimes competing, demands of the role. In addition, none of this would be possible without the gentle (and sometimes firm) guidance and administrative support of Susan Fortner, who held the memory of requests, visits and experiences, while ensuring Jordan had the rest she needed. It was a gift to work with all of them.

It was a deep privilege and a great honour to accompany Jordan in this way with this circle of faithful and wise leaders. We listened to her stories of hope and sorrow, we offered guidance when she wondered where to establish boundaries, and we prayed together for three years. We were also reminded of the prayers that were being offered across the country to support the ministry of the Moderator which greatly enhanced our role. While the pending changes to the structure of the church will necessitate changes to the concrete ways the mandate of the Moderator is lived out, it will not change the way in which a leader is called forth and chosen to quicken the hearts of the people and strengthen the whole United Church of Canada. Our final gratitude goes to Jordan for prayerfully responding to the call, for inspiring and challenging us to practice our faith in a good way, and for always reminding us that laughter and playfulness are just as important in the work of the faithful.

Tracy Murton, Chair

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the MAC Committee

Jordan Cantwell (Moderator),
Peter Short (Former Moderator)
Mary-Frances Denis (until December 2017, Program Coordinator, Media and Public Relations),
Susan Fortner (Administrative Assistant to the Moderator),
Lauren King (Member),
Étienne LeSage (Member),
Nora Sanders (General Secretary, General Council),
Russell Burns (General Council Representative)

GENERAL SECRETARY'S ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

Origin: General Secretary, General Council

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On the day I sat down to write this report in early April, an article in *The Globe and Mail* included the following sentence, "According to a 2017 Ipsos survey, only 40 per cent of Canadians attend church compared with 63 per cent in 2006." 2006 was the year I was appointed as General Secretary of the United Church, but I am determined not to take it personally. This statistic is just one glaring reminder of the time of change and turmoil that we are living through.

It could be a bit depressing..... and yet I find myself filled with hope.

The theme that the Moderator has chosen for this 43rd General Council, "Risking Faith, Daring Hope" continues a long tradition of the United Church of Canada and our predecessor churches. Faith is a risk. Faith is always a risk. Faith is about the things that are not certain. Faith is about the unseen one, the Holy one, the living presence that our Song of Faith describes as "Holy Mystery". The hope that we dare to have is a gift we have through faith.

Change is nothing new to us either. The United Church of Canada was born out of change. Our forefathers, (yes nearly all were men) who came together in 1925 were responding to changes in their world and their churches. They were all giving up something of their own traditions, coming together in compromise and hope. Some of those attending the founding meeting of the United Church of Canada were going home to close their own church buildings and walk down the street to begin their new worship life in what had formerly been a "rival" church. In the midst of all this change, some of it hard, they made the choice to create a new thing. In the first issue of *The New Outlook* (the *Observer's* predecessor), the editor wrote that the Church,

".... is always in danger of getting into a habit of thinking more of conserving and standing by old methods and statements and formulas than of being friendly to things that are new and living and that, because they are so, speak of change. And a Church out of touch with the life and need of its own time may have certain virtues and excellencies, but it surely has one fatal lack.

Those who are responsible for the naming of this paper must have had some such thoughts as these in their minds. They wished it to be not only sound and Christian and wholesome in its spirit and atmosphere but they wished it to live its life with its eyes open upon a real world of which it was itself a part and in which it had a place and a work to do."

These are good words for our church in 1925 and good words for our church today.

Yes, there is an undeniable sadness about smaller churches, fewer churches, and less energy for some of our time treasured activities..... But remember when the “Emerging Spirit” campaign was launched (in 2006, just before I actually arrived into this role, so I can claim no credit) and it was said over and over again that its success should not be judged by “bums in pews”. That was probably said without a full understanding of what it meant, but to me it seemed right. After all, the point of church is not to sit in a certain place with certain people every Sunday morning, but to encounter our sacred stories in a way so real that we are called to follow Jesus and share his love in the world.

I am fortunate to have found that depth of connection while sitting in pews, but also in so many other settings: in the Explorers group and Sunday School classes I led, in my “cell group” in the Yellowknife United Church, in the “house church” I was part of in Iqaluit, in relationships with young GO Project leaders who billeted with us, in the Refugee Committee at Islington United where love is expressed through a hundred practical details. Being part of a worshipping congregation on Sunday mornings is a big part of who I am, but it is not the sum total of my life of faith. I recognize that for others without the same history of lifelong church attendance, (perhaps especially those of younger generations), genuine encounters with the Scriptures and with faith can be found in other settings. My sabbatical time last year gave me the opportunity to reflect more fully on my own small group experiences, and to hear the stories of others engaged in a variety of ministries. This only strengthened my sense that when we are open to doing things in different ways, we can find ourselves journeying along paths that are deeply fulfilling.

Over the past six years, (three years of study by the Comprehensive Review Task Group, followed by three years of remit discussions, voting, and preparation for implementation), our church has acknowledged that the world around us is changing. We need to either make changes ourselves or wait passively for the inevitable changes to roll over us. One of the things that gives me hope is the willingness of the church (evidenced by the strong results of the remit voting) to enter into change, even when the picture of where all of this will lead remains misty. It is hard to intentionally step into the unknown, even though we unthinkingly do so all the time.

When the Conference Presidents, Presidents-Elect and Leading Elder met in February of this year some were serving in roles that will likely be obsolete after General Council, and some were preparing for roles that will likely be abbreviated and focused on endings. Despite this, the mood of the conversations was practical, hopeful, and grounded in faith. Elaine Beattie, president of Montreal and Ottawa Conference, shared a story of her personal experience of change. It went something like this, “I am an immigrant to Canada. When I arrived in Montreal thirty some years ago I knew where it was on the map, and knew as much about Montreal and Canada as I could learn from reading about it. I was as well prepared as I could be but I did not know what it would be like at all. I did not know what it would smell like, sound like, or feel like. I had to experience the place before I could understand these things. It was hard at first. I had

big adjustments to make. I am so glad that I made those adjustments and came to know this as my home.”

The changes that we are working our way through right now are structural ones. They are important, but only in so far as our structures enable us to be the church that we yearn to be. We want to be a church that shares our living faith with next generations and that makes a positive difference, in the world. I find hope in the opportunity we will have, as we live into new structures, to discern about who and what we are as a church. To chart new paths in how we can share the love of God in our homes, our communities, and our world.

I find hope, too, in the way that we have kept faith at our core, even in the midst of all the distracting discussions about the practical issues and details of structural change. Congregations, camps, youth events, refugee support groups, community ministries, networks, United Church Women’s groups, small groups, campus ministries, and so many others continue to touch people’s lives in real and sustaining ways. We have continued to be a place where people can turn in times of need. There couldn’t be a better example than the prayer offered by the Rev. Brenda Curtis at the vigil in Humboldt as the community struggled to make sense of the deaths of so many who were part of the Broncos hockey team in April’s horrific bus crash.

“Holy and merciful God, as we leave here, help us to know that in times of tragedy when we can see no way through the pain, help us to know we can put our trust and our faith in you. In life, in death, and in life beyond death, you are always with us tender God, encouraging us, loving us, and opening a path of healing for us all.”

Much of the focus as we prepare for this year’s General Council will be on the “Comprehensive Renewal” changes to our structure, and the associated “remit” and “remit implementation planning” work. One of the hardest things during the past three years, and especially the past few months, has been the uncertainty about the future roles of staff colleagues, especially those serving in the Conferences and presbyteries. Their faithful commitment to the work of the church even as they faced the possibility of personal upheaval, has been inspiring. Appended to this report you will find a full report from the Remit Implementation Working Group, which was co-chaired by Alan Hall and Peter Hartmans, and supported with great energy and commitment by David Allen. I am so grateful for the way in which they have led this important work.

In the long story of our church, the Calls to the Church from the Caretakers of the Indigenous Circle may prove to be the most significant change that is coming to the 43rd General Council. This was work that was noted by the Comprehensive Review Task Group as needed, but it was work that they could not do. It could only be done by the Indigenous leadership in the church. The vision the Caretakers offers us, calls us to live more fully into the kinds of relationships envisaged by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action. Being part of a Church that names a commitment

to right relations, and is willing to take concrete steps to honour that commitment, fills me with hope.

We can find hope, too, in our Church's active commitments to intercultural ministries, to our efforts to understand White Privilege, in our continued leadership to recognize and support the rights of LGBTQ2S people wherever they live and in our support for Ministries in French through the possibility of new covenantal relationships. In all these areas, our efforts are imperfect, we have much to learn and much to achieve. I appreciated the title that the Intercultural Ministry Committee of Alberta Northwest Conference gave to the conference they hosted last fall: "An Awkward Conversation". It is indeed awkward to talk about these things, but risking awkward conversations is an important step forward

I remember, that it was just a few weeks after the 42nd General Council that a photo of the body of a dead toddler, a tiny refugee who did not make it safely to a safe shore, jarred the world into realizing the extent of the crisis in Syria. The immediate and sustained response by so many in our United Church communities, and the working connections forged with community partners, has offered us all a taste of church at its best.

As we seek to respond to our world's environmental problems, we repeat the familiar words in the New Creed about "living with respect in creation". We need to make them more than just good words. We can find hope in the commitment to "greening the church" as demonstrated by the March 2018 Executive's approval, of a five-year plan (including financial support to congregations) to reduce the carbon emissions in our church buildings.

As we continue to live into the partnership principles from previous councils, new and continuing partnerships for the United Church of Canada are an exciting element of our lives together these days. Much of our work within Canada, as well as our global work is done with partners on the ground working to improve the lives of people where they live. It's a very different approach than the missionary practice at the time of church union that that focussed on converting people to Christianity. For me, opportunities to visit partners in Korea, China, and Columbia since the last General Council, to welcome church leaders visiting Canada, and to engage with members of the Partner Council, have deepened my understanding of the value of partnership.

We are finding strength and companionship in our Full Communion relationship with the United Church of Christ and in the mutual recognition of ministries agreements with the Presbyterian Church Republic of Korea and the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. Having begun these new forms of relationship with the approval of the last General Council, we are working to develop another Full Communion agreement with the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ. Also important are our relationships with migrant churches, such as those from Ghana, Zimbabwe, and Haiti, who wish to retain something of their own identity while also maintaining a connection with us. Within Canada, we are having discussions with the

Presbyterian Church on the future possibility of sharing office space , and with both Presbyterians and Anglicans about possibilities for sharing services.

The 42nd General Council also directed the establishment of an innovation fund, now called Embracing the Spirit, to support creative work in the new and renewing ministries across the church. This activity, offers a hopeful reminder that even as we mourn the end of treasured ministries that are no longer sustainable, there are exciting new practices and communities of faith emerging.

The new approaches to work and faith at the 43rd General Council are cause for hope too. A new way of doing business is aimed at making room for more diverse body of people, to have a voice. It also aims to have more fulsome discussions of the broader issues involved before the courts discerns what actions to take. I'm excited about the introduction of a Festival of Faith alongside the business meeting. It will remind us that we are a church and that we make all decisions in the context of our faith.

In this, my 12th year serving you as General Secretary, I can say that it remains a privilege to serve God and this church alongside so many staff colleagues, elected leaders, ministers, and dedicated members. I am grateful for all the support and encouragement I have received, and must name in particular the present Moderator Jordan Cantwell and each of her predecessors since 2006, as well as my Supervision Committee, currently chaired by the wise, kind, and faithful Sybil Wilson.

I have chosen to use the report to speak about the broader context of The United Church in these times. You can find more detail on all the work of the General Council Office throughout the triennium through my reports to the General Council Executive, in the "[Commons](#)" section of the United Church of Canada website.

I look forward to hearing from you, and to engaging with your questions at General Council – and you do not need to wait until then. Feel free to be in touch with me any time at nsanders@united-church.ca

I leave you with these words from Roman 15:13:

*"May the God of **hope** fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in **hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit."*

Nora Sanders
General Secretary, General Council

REPORT FROM THE REMIT IMPLEMENTATION WORKING GROUP

Summary: This report provides highlights of the work that has been done and remains to be done if GC43 chooses to enact the remits that have been approved by presbyteries and pastoral charges.

Background: In 2016, the General Secretary appointed a Remit Scenario Planning Working Group to do initial thinking about how the various remits would be implemented if all or some of the remits were enacted. The working group consisted of Alan Hall (General Council office; co-chair), Peter Hartmans (Executive Secretary, Hamilton Conference; co-chair), Executive Secretaries David Allen (Toronto), David Hewitt (Maritime) and Cheryl-Ann Stadelbauer-Sampa (London), and General Council office Executive Ministers/Officers Michael Blair (Church in Mission), Erik Mathiesen (Finance) and Kate Rodd (Communication). Cheryl Jourdain (All Native Circle Conference) and Maggie Dieter (McLeod) (Aboriginal Ministries Council) were available for consultation on the implications of remit implementation on the Indigenous Church. Jane Rounthwaite was retained as a consultant for the initial work; Stephanie Uyesugi provided administrative support.

When the remit vote approved the proposed changes, the Remit Scenario Planning Working Group became the Remit Implementation Working Group. It began its work in July 2017. David Allen transitioned to become Remit Implementation Project Leader; Thivan Hoang was hired as administrative support. Lori Ransom was seconded from the Aboriginal Ministries Council to focus on the Calls to the Church, see below.

Work done prior to GC43:

Indigenous Church

During this triennium, significant work has been done regarding the Indigenous Church's mission and ministry as part of The United Church of Canada. GC43 will receive Calls to the Church; see <http://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/resources/caretakers-indigenous-circle-calls-church.pdf>. Founded on the principles of Indigenous self-determination as articulated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, this document provides a vision for how the Indigenous Church will govern itself and implement the remits, if enacted by GC43, in relationship with the rest of the Church.

United Church of Canada Act

Legal Counsel are working with Parliamentary counsel to develop draft legislation, which would be introduced in the fall of 2018 if the remits are enacted by the 43rd General Council. Senator Peter Harder has agreed to introduce the bill in the Senate, and M.P. Rev. Rob Oliphant has agreed to introduce the bill in the House of Commons. Amendments to provincial legislation will be developed using the federal bill as a model.

Remit 1 – Three Council Model

Most of the working group's work has focussed on the move from a four-court to a three-

council model of church governance.

Boundaries: On September 30, 2017 the recalled GC42 approved the establishment and membership of a commission to determine the boundaries of the regional councils. The commission's interim report was released January 10, 2018; following further consultation, the final report was released February 27, 2018. See the commission's report at <http://www.united-church.ca/news/final-report-regional-council-boundaries>. GC43 will consider a proposal to receive the report of the commission and to thank the members of the commission for their work within a tight timeline.

Consultation with General Council Executive: In November 2017 the working group consulted on a number of matters that would assist future planning.

- The remit used "cooperation" language around property and pastoral relations. The Executive confirmed that cooperation will be as defined in policy statements. See [Cooperation](#).
- The Executive made a statement on how clusters and networks will function within the church. See [GS 71 Clusters and Networks](#).
- The Executive approved two categories of funding for the regional councils. See [GS 69 Funding Categories](#) and [GS 69 Funding Categories PowerPoint](#).
- The Executive made a statement about who has decision-making authority regarding funds currently held by presbyteries, Conferences, financial corporations and extension councils. See [GS 70 Local Resources](#).

Staffing: After the release of the Boundaries Commission's final report, the working group developed a number of staffing models. Feedback resulted in a new staffing model wherein six Executive Ministers would serve two or three regional councils each, with each regional council having a high degree of autonomy in determining other staff. See [staffing models](#). The General Secretary proposed a process, working with regional leadership, for the provisional hiring of Executive Ministers. The Executive Ministers were appointed by the General Council Sub-Executive on March 22, 2018. See <http://www.united-church.ca/news/provisional-executive-ministers-appointed>.

Shared services: In accord with Remit 1, the working group researched a variety of ways in which the Denominational Council level of the church could provide technical services to the regional councils as a way of saving money and increasing efficiency. Areas that were explored included accounting, archives, database and a variety of IT items, etc. Discussion on these items continues.

Transitional work: Presbyteries and Conferences have been requested to provide names of people who are willing to do transitional work to ensure that the regional councils can function on January 1, 2019. These groups will provide advice to the provisionally-appointed Executive Ministers on staffing and shared services. GC43 will be asked to approve the appointment of 16

regional council transitional commissions to enable the necessary work to be done, and to provide a governing structure for the regional councils until they can elect their own governing officials.

Denominational Council Executive: Most of the thinking about the role of the Denominational Council Executive has been done through the Permanent Committee – Governance and Agenda in consultation with other permanent committees. Conferences have been requested to nominate people to serve on the Executive. The Nominations Committee will present names to GC43. Because the Denominational Council will be meeting annually to fulfill corporate requirements for an annual meeting, the Executive will have additional opportunities to be accountable to the Denominational Council.

Remit 3 – Office of Vocation

The development of the Office of Vocation is happening in consultation with various groups: Conference representatives to a consultation in October 2017, ongoing meetings with folk from the Indigenous Church, La Table, current Conference Personnel Ministers and others. The Office of Vocation advisory group has helped shape the direction, along with the Permanent Committee on Ministry, Employment Policies and Services, in particular the nominations process for the Board of Vocation and its committees and the relationship between the Board of Vocation and the candidacy boards referenced in the candidacy pathway remit. A progress report was offered over YouTube Live in May. Print resources are in development.

Remit 4 – Funding a New Model

Additional financial information is being developed and will be distributed in May.

The Permanent Committee on Finance reviewed the processes to be followed if this remit is enacted. All assessment related administration and billing will be done through the Denominational Council office. Pastoral charges will learn of their up-coming assessments by October 15 each year. They will remit electronic payments on a monthly basis. When the latest statistical forms were distributed to the church in early 2018, an assessment calculator was added so church treasurers could calculate the anticipated assessment for the up-coming year. It is anticipated that the assessment level will be set by the Denominational Council every three years at the Denominational Council meeting.

The funding model allocates both assessment and mission and service revenue to the denomination and regions based on four key principles:

1. Greater sharing of resources
2. Clearer delineation of the funding for governance and shared services versus mission and ministry
3. Assured regional income for the first two years
4. Living within our means

It is anticipated that the allocation of resources between the denominational council, regional councils and the indigenous church will be reviewed triennially.

Remit 7 – Candidacy Pathway

A series of webinars on candidacy pathway was offered to the current education and students system in March, clarifying for candidates their process through the transition. Resources are in development. In the light of One Order remit not passing, a pathway for designated lay ministers which parallels the candidacy pathway is being developed.

The Working Group did not spend time on the following remits (remits 2, 5, 6, 8):

Remit 2 – Elimination of Transfer and Settlement: The Basis of Union will be amended if GC43 enacts this remit while the Permanent Committee on Ministry and Employment Policies and Services has developed policy and process proposals for the call and appointment of ministry personnel. Information about this will be shared once it becomes available.

Remit 5 – Ministry Partners within Mutual Recognition of Ministry Agreements: Interim processes had been established by the Permanent Committee on Ministry and Employment Policies and Services. The Basis of Union will be amended if GC43 enacts this remit.

Remit 6 – One Order of Ministry: This remit did not receive the required number of presbytery and pastoral charge votes to allow for enactment by GC43. The Permanent Committee - Ministry and Employment Services and staff are working on the on-going implications of this remit not being approved.

Remit 8 – A Step Towards a New Model of Membership: The Basis of Union will be amended if GC43 enacts this remit.

Work to be done following GC43:

Indigenous Church

Governance: The Aboriginal Ministries Council will make proposals to GC 43 concerning the establishment of the Elders' Council, the new national Indigenous organization, and the future of the National Aboriginal Spiritual Gathering, consistent with Call 5 in the Calls to the Church document. GC 43 also will receive a proposal to extend the term of the Aboriginal Ministries Council to provide for a period of transitional governance of the Indigenous Church until the new national Indigenous organization is created.

Dual Belonging: Call 6 in the Calls to the Church document speaks to the right of Indigenous church communities to choose their relationships within a three-council structure and the right to dual belonging. This means Indigenous communities of faith have the right to belong fully to a regional council, and, to belong fully to a new national Indigenous organization. In keeping with the principle of Indigenous self-determination, the Boundaries Commission honoured a request from the Caretakers of our Indigenous Circle to provide time for Indigenous communities of faith to choose their relationships with the new regional councils. It is expected

that decisions about these relationships will be made by the early fall of 2018 followed by a process of covenanting between the regional councils, the Indigenous Church, and Indigenous communities of faith.

Office of Vocation: Calls 1 to 3 relate to the establishment of the Office of Vocation, the new Candidacy Pathway, and formation for ministry. The Indigenous church will continue to work closely with Ministry and Employment to ensure implementation of these Calls to the Church (see Remits 3 and 7 above for additional information).

Remit 1 – Three Council Model

The recalled GC42 determined that the implementation date will be January 1, 2019.

Staffing: Regional Executive Ministers will work with regional council leadership to finalize staff positions within the regional councils. Current staff who are not continuing into the new structure will receive notice and severance in mid-August. A September gathering is planned for regional council staff, Denomination Council deployed staff, and a variety of Denomination Council staff to focus on being a team that provides support for communities of faith.

Shared services: Administrative staff will be gathered in the late fall to be trained on software and technology. This gathering will assist with coordination amongst the regional councils and the Denominational Council staff and should ensure greater comfort and competence on the various hardware and software.

Transition check-lists: Presbyteries and Conferences have been supplied with check-lists of tasks to be accomplished to ensure an orderly transition to the regional council structure.

Regional council transitional commissions: A proposal to GC43 outlines the roles and responsibilities for the regional council transitional commissions. There will be significant work for them to do in the summer and fall of 2018. The people on these Commissions will be named by regions, and formally appointed by the General Council.

Denominational Council Executive: The Denominational Council Executive will take office January 1, 2019; however, it will meet a number of times during the fall of 2018 for training and planning for how it will function.

Remit 2 – Elimination of Transfer and Settlement

General Council will be asked to adopt new policies for the call and appointment of ministry personnel to communities of faith.

Remit 3 – Office of Vocation

Resources will be finalised for the Office of Vocation. Positions will be filled for both elected members and deployed Office of Vocation ministers (staff). Training will be offered in November. Reviewers, investigators, conflict resolution facilitators will be recruited and

trained. The IT database project which includes a shared data base for use by the Office of Vocation and accessible to ministry personnel continue design and testing.

Remit 4 – Funding a New Model

As noted earlier, pastoral charges will receive their assessment notices by October 15.

Remit 5 – Ministry Partners within Mutual Recognition of Ministry Agreements

The Basis of Union and By-laws will be revised to reflect this change if the remit is enacted.

Remit 7 – Candidacy Pathway

Resources will be finalised for candidacy pathway. Positions will be filled for both elected members and deployed Office of Vocation ministers (staff). Training will be offered in November. Reviewers, investigators, conflict resolution facilitators will be recruited and trained. The IT database project which includes a shared data base for use by the Office of Vocation and accessible to ministry personnel continue design and testing.

No further action required on:

Remit 6 – One Order of Ministry: see earlier note.

Remit 8 – A Step Towards a New Model of Membership

Communication: The working group has spent considerable time communicating about what is happening:

- The United Church's website has information on a regular basis; see www.united-church.ca; search for "remit implementation";
- E-ssentials is sent to every pastoral charge giving highlights of the most recent activities;
- A remit implementation newsletter is sent out every couple of weeks; individuals can sign up for these regular updates;
- A postcard was included in the January Infopac letting people know how to get information;
- A webinar about the work of the Boundaries Commission happened in January, followed by additional webinars in the spring and fall on other topics;
- Half-page ads in *The Observer* have been running every month since January and will continue to do so until December;
- People can gather news from Facebook and Twitter;
- A dedicated e-mail address was set up at remits@united-church.ca so people can submit their own questions; this e-mail address is included on virtually all of the communications that has been sent out.

EXECUTIVE OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

Origin: Moderator, General Secretary, and Chairs of Permanent Committees

The Executive of the General Council has met seven times this triennium, including a brief meeting right after the end of the 42nd General Council to welcome the new Moderator and appoint a Sub-Executive for any necessary business arising before the first full meeting of the Executive in November 2015. Of the remaining six meetings, three were held in-person and three by video-conference call. The use of video-conference technology has been a significant innovation that has enabled cost-savings, reduction of our carbon foot-print and care of our members' time commitments. This approach has offered new ways to engage that have enhanced our in-person meetings and preparation for meetings as well. The minutes of the Executive meetings have been shared with the church through Web postings throughout the triennium and can be found at commons.united-church.ca.

The following notes offer other highlights of the Executive's work as offered by the permanent committees and the Aboriginal Ministries Council.

Aboriginal Ministries Council

The Aboriginal Ministries Consultation has been a significant focus of the Aboriginal Ministries Council throughout this triennium. The framework for this conversation was approved by the General Council Executive in November 2015. In March 2016 The United Church of Canada implemented the norm, principles and standards of the United Nations. This statement was the framework for the Caretakers of Our Indigenous Circle, a group of Indigenous leaders from across the church, who carried out the process of consultation that resulted in the document entitled ***Calls to the Church***. The document was affirmed by Indigenous participants at the 2017 National Aboriginal Spiritual Gathering.

Later in the fall of 2017 the Caretakers sent a statement to the Boundary Commission asking for time to define, design, and understand the implications of changes for Indigenous Communities of Faith. The statement communicated the consensus within Indigenous community to move in the direction of fully belonging to both a Regional body and a National Indigenous Body; and, how the Indigenous church has just begun to explore the implications of developing, in partnership with Regions, covenants that are relevant and contextual. The statement also flagged how Regions may need to be made aware that covenant making will be part of their formational work.

The *Calls to the Church/Remit Implementation Project* is a process to design and implement:

1. The nine calls outlined in the *Calls to Church* report;
2. A communications strategy;
3. The development of proposal(s) emerging from the *Calls to the Church*; as well supporting documents/resources for General Council 43.

Cheryl Jourdain, Speaker, All Native Circle Conference and Maggie Dieter (McLeod), Executive Minister, Aboriginal Ministries and Indigenous Justice are staff leads, overseeing the project. They are supported by Lori Ransom, Indigenous Justice and Residential School Animator who has been seconded to the position of *Calls to the Church/Remit Implementation Project Manager* for a six-month period, which commenced October 16, 2017.

The Real Property and Capital Plan Task Group, a working Group of the Aboriginal Ministries Council, continues to take steps toward implementing the Real Property and Capital Plan. The plan outlines these

objectives: a) review assessments of properties and update reports for the purpose of determining priorities; b) support communities of faith in the development of a vision statement that expresses their ministry; c) develop and implement a communication; d) build capacity for communities of faith to identify contractors and trades workers; e) upgrade the physical state of real property in accordance to local cultural values with respect to safety, comfort, and aesthetics; f) consult with communities of faith, stakeholders, and partners to determine which buildings need to be safely demolished; g) build capacity for communities of faith to assume responsibility for the management and operations of the property; h) create opportunity for the church and communities of faith to gain a deeper understanding of real property title within the various communities.

Project approvals totalled \$187,000 in 2017. The anticipated total for 2018 projects is \$250,000. The Task Group is scheduled May 5-6, 2018 in Kahnawake, QC.

The focus of this meeting is a review of policies and to consider implications for the implementation of the ***Calls to the Church*** of the document.

A National Aboriginal Spiritual Gathering was held in July of 2017 in Pinawa, Manitoba. For several decades, Indigenous Communities of Faith have gathered nationally to discuss matters of self-determination, spirituality, and their relationship with The United Church of Canada. This gathering, in addition to considering and affirming the Caretakers Report, included learning opportunities through and Education Day, a presentation on workplace equity, institutional racism, and cultural competency by Dr. Shauneen Pete of the University of Regina, and the presence of representatives of the Uniting Church in Australia through the Moderator's Canadian-Australian Dialogue on Reconciliation.

Permanent Committee on Finance

Members of the Committee continually repeat the mantra that “financial resources are tools to accomplish our mission.” This committee's role is to enable elected members to have a clear understanding of finances in order to enhance their decision-making. Thus, throughout this term, the committee used these principles to guide its work:

1. Ground ourselves theologically.
2. Provide clarity in a concise manner.
3. Focus on the future.
4. Recognize that we are being called to do things differently.

The triennium began with the realization that it was necessary to continue cost reduction efforts while devoting considerable time and effort to the financial aspects of remit modelling and implementation scenarios. Consequently the committee devoted much of its time helping shape the design and underlying financial principles of Remit 4, in addition to dealing with regular financial monitoring and oversight duties. With the approval of the remits, even more time was focused on implementation planning. While we continue to face the reality of declining revenues, operating results were generally better than expected due to strong investment returns and expense management. In an unexpected development, a landlord inducement led the General Council Office to reduce its environmental and financial footprint by 60% in 2017, consolidating to one open-concept floor with greatly improved digital capacity and overall efficiency. The committee has been meeting electronically for many years but we were pleased to see this method expanded to include the recall of General Council to deal with a few hours of business and for the General Council Executive to also meet this way and achieve significant savings in cost but also staff and volunteer time. On a more operational note, interest rates for national loan programs were reduced, we now set aside 50% of bequests for the long term benefit of the church,

external financial audits report continuous improvement in controls and we switched the national UCC Protect insurance program to a new carrier to lower costs. As the triennium closes, we are able to report that the church is better positioned to manage the financial changes ahead including provision for restructuring costs and change management considerations such as assuring region core revenues for a time.

The Committee has continued to focus on philanthropy. Congregational stewardship programs were strengthened over the triennium and regionally deployed staff roles increasingly focused on supporting congregational stewardship and Mission & Service giving—to inspire, to ask, and to thank. While core giving continues to decline in proportion to membership, we believe the rate of decline has slowed and each year in the triennium giving exceeded our conservative budget assumption. A key design element in Remit 4 was the commitment to devote Mission & Service giving exclusively to mission and ministry. Looking forward, the focus will continue to be on increasing participation.

At beginning of the triennium, the Treasury Investment Committee implemented the General Council directive to divest of Carbon 200 equity holdings. Through our ongoing relationship with SHARE and relationships with other like-minded groups, the church has returned to its leadership role in the Canadian faith community as activist shareholder. Key areas of focus include climate change, free and informed consent of Indigenous peoples, and human rights concerns.

The Finance Committee reminds commissioners to be particularly cognizant of the need to plan for financial uncertainty and variability as well as cost reduction during a period of unprecedented change for our church.

Permanent Committee on Governance and Agenda

The role of the Governance and Agenda Committee is to assist in developing and refining the structures, policies and procedures that facilitate the work of the General Council and its Executive to enable the church to carry out our role in God's mission.

Meeting Planning and Management:

The Committee:

- Considered best practices to enable effective conversations at General Council and General Council Executive. This included considering consensus and other decision-making models with the result of a new business model, making use of technology to enable advance conversations and exploration of topics through video conference.
- Managed the transition to online Executive meetings and the full online meeting of recalled meeting of the 42nd General Council.
- Kept theological reflection, worship and intercultural considerations in front of the Executive in its decision-making.

Governance:

The Committee:

- Assisted the Executive in setting and managing priorities.
- Developed and maintained resources for the use of the Executive including, policy handbook, resource handbook, member directory and online document repository (the Commons), and intercultural lens.

- Planned for potential remit implementation with recommendations around establishing the Boundaries commission, a new Denominational Executive, governance requirements and policies for three council model.
- Drafted various governance policies related to the new three-council model.
- Assisted the General Secretary to define objectives and ends for the Comprehensive Renewal Implementation.

Permanent Committee on Ministry and Employment Policies and Services

The many components of the work of The Permanent Committee on Ministry and Employment Policies and Services in this triennium overlap and some have time-lines stretching over several triennia of survey, research, test and, now, provisionally implementation. All are focused on faithful discernment, calling forth and equipping, healthy and sustainable engagement, and on-going support and supervision. The overall objective of all is the nurturing of effective leadership and healthy pastoral relationships.

Discerning, Calling Forth and Equipping:

The Committee has benefited from greater analysis of ministry personnel demographics to understand the personnel needs of the church and the choices ministry personnel are making about retirement. Both help inform recruitment practices. With the passage of the candidacy pathway remit, attention has been given to understanding the learnings from the pilot Conferences, informing the development of new policies and the integration of the pathway into an Office of Vocation. The Committee also undertook an extensive review of policies for admitting ministers from other denominations, learning from current experience and by the work of the Migrant Church Working Group.

Engaging:

The work of the Effective Leadership and Healthy Pastoral Relationships project is the culmination of 17 years of studies and tests of pastoral relations processes and oversight and discipline policies. The findings of the tests across the church have informed the proposals for implementing the candidacy pathway and for new pastoral relations processes necessary because of the elimination of transfer and settlement. A report on this work is included with these meeting materials. The Committee has also developed new policies for the re-engagement of ministry personnel drawing a United Church pension that conform to income tax and pension regulations while also responding to the needs of these ministry personnel and the church. The personnel records resource is being updated. This is an important part of building a user friendly data base and covenant hub to support the work of both the Office of Vocation and the new pastoral relations process.

Supporting and Supervising:

The development of the Office of Vocation in anticipation of the remit being enacted has been a major part of the work of the Permanent Committee, drawing on the experience of the Effective Leadership and Healthy Pastoral Relationships tests. The comprehensive compensation model for ministry personnel completes its three-year roll out in July of this year and a review of pastoral charge cost of living group assignments in light of changing real estate values has been completed. Group benefits are reviewed annually by the Committee. In order to comply with the General Council 42 resolution to amend the disability policy, the Restorative Care Plan was successfully extended to employees of existing participating employers and to those Mission Units, Outreach Ministries and other ministries.

The Sexual Abuse Prevention and Response Policy was reviewed and revisions adopted in a new Sexual Misconduct: Prevention and Response Policy and Procedures. Police records check procedures were also

reviewed and revised. A working group has been researching the concept of an association of ministers. It is expected to report to the Committee in the fall.

Paid accountable ministry in The United Church of Canada is both a vocational response to a sacred call and a profession with standards of practice and ethical obligations. Ministry personnel serve in all aspects of our church's life, in the regular pastoral, liturgical, and education roles, public witness and governance. We give thanks for their call and for their commitment to ministry in this denomination.

Permanent Committee on Programs for Mission and Ministry

The Permanent Committee on Programs for Mission and Ministry has been experimenting with alternative ways of engaging their work. Over the course of the triennium the committee has had three face to face meetings, alternating each face to face gathering with electronic meetings. The committee made a commitment early in its mandate this triennium, to use a consensus decision making process; it also experimented with the new decision making framework which will be used at the 43rd General Council

The importance of reconciliation and living into right relationships was a key framing of the work of the committee this triennium. The Committee hosted two workshops with the help of the Aboriginal Ministries Circle to explore the significance of the churches commitment to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in the programmatic life of the church. In addition, building on civil society discourse of *Black Lives Matter*, the committee hosted a workshop on White Privilege and subsequently, made recommendations for a similar workshop for the Executive of the General Council and for the development of a white privilege working group. The committee also carved out a space for a 'order of the day' to reflect on issues of gender and racial justice as it continues its journey to live into the church's commitment to becoming intercultural. The order of the day allowed the committee to attend to the questions: "who is affected by the decision being made?" and "notice who is missing?"

A significant piece of the work emerging is the related to global migration and the displacement of peoples. The Migrant Church working group has done some critical work to move us beyond just working with migrant church communities to engaging with the factors that contribute to the over two hundred million persons on the move globally. The committee has developed some principles to guide this work into the future.

The Permanent Committee continues to benefit from the presence of Global Partners who accompany its work. We have benefited from the contributions of Horacio Mesones representing the Latin American & Caribbean partnership program and Rev. Min Heui Cheon/Rev. Dr. Sungkook Park representing the Asia partnership program. The committee's accompaniment of the Partner Council has also been transformative.

The program work of the Permanent Committee is broad, interconnected, and complex. Some work items continue to be implemented with staff, working with a variety of networks. The following are some of the ongoing pieces of work that the committee has engaged with over the triennium: Children's Ministry Strategy, Education Centres and Lay Education Strategy, Faith Formation, Unsettling Goods Campaign and Peacebuilding in Palestine Israel, The Living Apology Project, Ministries in French, the Vision Fund, a Global LGBTQI2+ Consultation and the Property Renewal work done through EDGE. The committee has grounded its work in worship, study, and community-building as it seeks to live into its identity and ministry as "the people of God."

Theological Reflection and Intercultural Work

In doing its work throughout the triennium, the Executive has been guided by worship, prayer, and theological reflection. We are grateful for the theological reflections provided at the Executive meetings by Connie Den Bok, John Young, Quinn Caldwell (from the United Church of Christ), Cheryl Jourdain and Bill Smith. The Executive has also been guided by the church's commitment to become an intercultural church and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We offer appreciation to those who assisted the Executive to keep these lenses in their work and decision making, including those serving with the UN Declaration Task Group and Jennifer Henry from KAIROS for her educational work with the Executive on White privilege.

ABORIGINAL MINISTRIES COUNCIL REPORT

Origin: Aboriginal Ministries Council Report

Executive Summary

The Aboriginal Ministries Council is responsible for being a decision-making body taking direction from the National Aboriginal Spiritual Gatherings, and preparing and proposing work to the Executive of the General Council.

During its first meeting of the triennium, members of the Aboriginal Ministries Council (the Council) expressed their gratitude for the church's ongoing steps toward right relationship with Canada's Indigenous Peoples. Coming out of the 42nd General Council in Corner Brook, Newfoundland, there were questions of how the decisions made there would impact our denomination and the Indigenous church. The Council noted the complexity of this time where apprehension about upcoming changes co-exist alongside the hope that is in reconciliation.

At their February 2018 meeting, the Council shared memories of the late Rick Balson, Executive of the General Council representative. They gave thanks for his service and for the relationship he developed with the Council.

The 2015–2018 Aboriginal Ministries Council membership:

- British Columbia Native Ministries: Marie Dickens; Lori Lewis; Lawrence Sankey, Co-chair
- All Native Circle Conference: Russel Burns, All Tribes Presbytery; Janet Sigurdson, Plains Presbytery; Norma General-Lickers, Great Lakes Waterways Presbytery; Beatrice McPherson, Keewatin Presbytery
- Ontario and Quebec Native Ministries: George Montour (Chairperson); Susan Gabriel; Gabrielle Lamouche; Tricia Monague
- Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre: Lee Claus; Stan McKay
- Executive of the General Council: Rick Balson
- Executive Minister, Maggie Dieter (McLeod)
- Past members: Richard Balson, Executive of General Council Cascade (term start: Aug-15 - end: Jan-18); Gilbert Jackson, British Columbia Native Ministries (term start: Aug-15-end: May-16); Wanda Montour, Ontario and Quebec Native Ministries (term start: Aug-12 - end: Apr-17); Grant Queskepow, Keewatin Presbytery (term start: Aug-15 end: May-16)

Aboriginal Ministries Consultation

The Aboriginal Ministries Consultation has been the significant focus for the Indigenous church throughout this triennium. The recommendation for the consultation arose out the Comprehensive Review Task Group report and the decision that followed at General Council 42, acknowledging that more time was needed for decision-making about future structures of Aboriginal ministries. The framework for the consultation process is outlined in GC42–CR2. It included a call for a small group of members of the Executive of General Council to be present to the process as listeners. This group came to be known as the Accompaniers.

The first consultation (March 31–April 3, 2016) began with The Right Reverend Jordan Cantwell, along with representatives from the Council, delivering a statement on the church's response to

Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action #48. This call points to a framework for reconciliation grounded in the "principles, norms, and standards of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples (UN Declaration)." An honour song offered by Misty Creek drummers and singers from Christian Island First Nation marked this foundational moment in the church's journey toward reconciliation. The broken chalice, a significant symbol at the Living into Right Relations event in 2008, and the trowel that was used to lay new stones at the Sudbury cairn in 2009 were placed in a central area of focus as a reminder of the church's shared history and faith.

As the process evolved, a group of Indigenous leaders, known as the Caretakers of Our Indigenous Circle, carried forward a process of consultation that resulted in the document entitled *Calls to the Church*. Indigenous participants at the 2017 National Aboriginal Spiritual Gathering (NASG) affirmed the document.

In the fall of 2017, the Caretakers sent a statement to the Boundaries Commission requesting time to define, design, and understand the implications of changes for Indigenous Communities of Faith. It communicated the consensus to move in the direction of fully belonging to both a Regional body and a National Indigenous body. The Indigenous church has just begun to explore the implications of developing, in partnership with Regions, covenants that are relevant and contextual. There was recognition that Regions will need to be made aware that covenant making with Indigenous Communities of faith will be part of their formational work.

Also in the fall of 2017, the *Calls to the Church/Remit Implementation Project* began a process to design and implement: a) the nine calls outlined in the *Calls to the Church*; b) a communications strategy; c) the development of proposal(s) emerging from the *Calls to the Church*; and supporting documents and resources for General Council 43.

Cheryl Jourdain, Speaker, All Native Circle Conference and Maggie Dieter (McLeod), Executive Minister, Aboriginal Ministries and Indigenous Justice have overseen the project. They are supported by Lori Ransom, Reconciliation and Indigenous Justice Animator, who has been seconded to the position of *Calls to the Church /Remit Implementation Project* Manager. The Project Manager works in collaboration with the Remit Implementation Task Group, the Office of Vocations Task Group, and other groups within the Indigenous church.

Throughout the months of January to March 2018, six caucus groups were organized for communicating with Indigenous Communities of Faith about the *Calls to the Church*. Members of the Caretakers of Our Indigenous Circle provided leadership at each caucus group. Seventy-two (72) people from thirty-six (36) Communities of Faith attended one of six caucus groups: urban Indigenous church members; Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre students and staff; British Columbia Native Ministries; Keewatin presbytery; Ontario-Quebec Native Ministries and Great Lakes Waterways presbytery; and Plains and All Tribes presbyteries.

A common theme was articulated by one of the participants: "It's not that we don't want change, we want to understand." Much time was spent discussing the subject of "dual belonging" (Call 6) and the relationships to be formed with the new regional councils, if the remits are adopted by General Council 43. Concerns were raised to ensure a strong Indigenous voice is heard within the regional decision-making bodies of the church; at the same time, opportunities were identified to

work collaboratively with regional councils on reconciliation, the implementation of the UN Declaration, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. The importance of prayer and ceremony in covenant making with the new regional councils was lifted up repeatedly.

At the time this report was being written, a timeline and frequently asked questions on the implementation project was being developed. It will be the first of many communiqués to be widely distributed and discussed within the many parts of the church, particularly Indigenous Communities of Faith.

Indigenous Real Property

The Real Property and Capital Plan Task Group, a working group of the Council, continues to take steps to implement the Real Property and Capital Plan. The plan outlines these objectives: a) review assessments of properties and update reports for the purpose of determining priorities; b) support Communities of Faith in the development of a vision statement that expresses their ministry; c) develop and implement a communication plan; d) build capacity for Communities of Faith to identify contractors and trades workers; e) upgrade the physical state of real property in accordance to local cultural values with respect to safety, comfort, and aesthetics; f) consult with Communities of Faith, stakeholders, and partners to determine which buildings need to be safely demolished; g) build capacity for Communities of Faith to assume responsibility for the management and operations of the property, and; h) create opportunity for the church and Communities of Faith to gain a deeper understanding of real property title within the various communities.

In October 2016, the Council engaged with the All Native Circle Conference's (ANCC) Council on Sharing to determine a path for working together to implement the plan. At that time, the Council also indicated its intention to invite non-Indigenous Presbyteries and Communities of Faith to consider directing a portion of proceeds from the sale of church properties to the Indigenous Real Property Fund as a gesture of reconciliation. In doing so, providing a tangible way for Communities of Faith to engage in reparation.

In 2017, real property projects totalled \$187,000. The anticipated total for 2018 projects is \$250,000. The Task Group met fact-to-face May 5-6, 2018 with a focus to review current policies and consider implications related to real property and the implementation of the *Calls to the Church*.

Reparation and Reconciliation

The Council has begun a discussion on the topic of reparation in the context of reconciliation within the United Church. At the forefront of this conversation is the question, "How can there be equity for Indigenous Peoples?" In light of the destruction of language, culture, society, and spirituality there is much to repair. Reparation goes beyond addressing the sharing of resources. The presence of the church within our communities is an expression of reparation. It signals a relationship. Further reparation is not charity. It must be understood to be at the very heart of the church's mission to restore dignity to all.

A wider conversation is needed within the whole church. Society continues to see Indigenous peoples as burdens. How will the church move from a history of oppression to shared life? Is the church prepared to allow reparation to affect its theology?

2017 National Aboriginal Spiritual Gathering

For several decades, Indigenous Communities of Faith have gathered nationally to discuss matters of self-determination, spirituality, and their relationship with The United Church of Canada. This gathering, currently known as the National Aboriginal Spiritual Gathering, took place in July 2017 at the Wilderness Edge Resort and Conference Centre on the Treaty One Territory (Pinawa, Manitoba). It was preceded by an Education Day.

The Gathering hosted the Moderator's Canadian-Australian Dialogue on Reconciliation. The encounter explored common experiences of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples through initiatives like apology making, and truth and reconciliation commissions.

Dr. Shauneen Pete, an educator from Saskatchewan, presented on her experiences working within academic institutions on issues of workplace equity, institutional racism, and cultural competency. Connections were made on these issues and the work of reconciliation. She encouraged the church to engage leaders and Communities of Faith in educational initiatives related to Indigenous history and current issues.

The next National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering will be held in August 2019 at the Geneva Park Convention Centre, the traditional territories of the Williams Treaties (Orillia, ON), to mark the inauguration of the new National Indigenous Organization.

Anniversary of the 1986 Apology

In 2016, the United Church recognized the 30th Anniversary of the 1986 Apology. The church remembered, too, the Indigenous church's response, *"that the Apology is not symbolic but that these are the words of action and sincerity."*

Along with 30 years of living out the apology, the church had the 94 Calls to Actions released by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in June 2015, which were described as a road map for reconciliation. The question to be asked of the church is: is it ready to say what it believes reconciliation to be, and why it has such hope in it? Future generations wait to hear a response.

The Sudbury Cairn

In the spring of 2015, all parties that have an interest in the cairn began to maintain a unified file to capture the many aspects of it. The various parties (Aboriginal Ministries Council; All Native Circle Conference; Committee on Indigenous Justice and Residential Schools; Manitou Conference; Sudbury Presbytery; Laurentian University; and United Church Archives) met in December 2015 to discuss the development of protocols on ceremony, routine care, maintenance; improvements, landscaping, signage and access; as well as education and the preservation of the history.

In March 2013, the Council made recommendation to improve the site by displaying the new Crest and solar lighting. The Council names that reflecting Indigenous culture renewal is an important consideration for future developments.

Community and Leadership Development

Leadership development remains a priority for the Council. Canada's Truth and Reconciliation process revealed an urgent need for spiritual and emotional healing. New awareness of the urgency to equip ministry personnel and lay leaders to serve in these challenging contexts has arisen. Ministry personnel need competencies in counselling and ongoing continuing education particularly in the areas of trauma, boundary training, history, and culture.

The church must begin to imagine options for Communities of Faith that have not had ministry leadership for an extended period. A conversation about how communities understand their relationship with the United Church will be a helpful starting point. This involves regular community visits and contact by Aboriginal Ministries staff.

Recruitment and support of individuals considering ministry with Indigenous communities must be in place. There has especially been a dramatic decline in Indigenous candidates for ministry in Ontario and Quebec since the Francis Sandy Theological Centre closed. A discernment and recruitment event was held at Nations Uniting (Ohsweken, ON) in May 2017 in partnership with the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre and Nations Uniting. Three enquirers, each with an Elder support person from their community, participated. The Council supports the ongoing delivery of this program.

The Council also heard concerns for ministers serving Indigenous Communities of Faith in Ontario and in Quebec who are unable to attend the annual spring retreat at Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre. The need for continuing education for non-Indigenous ministry personnel is a particular concern. To this end, a minister's gathering to deepen understanding of ministry in Indigenous communities and Indigenous ways of practicing spirituality and theology took place at Five Oaks Education and Retreat Centre in October 2017. This event will be offered annually with financial support and direction from the Council.

Visiting Indigenous Communities of Faith to strengthen relationships through listening is a priority for The Right Reverend Jordan Cantwell's term as Moderator. Aboriginal Ministries staff supported the Moderator in this initiative by accompanying her on these visits and following up on issues identified during the visits.

The Native Peoples Retreat celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2016. Historically, participants from Aboriginal communities of faith in Ontario and Quebec have gathered at Five Oaks (Paris, Ontario). The gathering includes programs on faith development and cultural renewal for all generations. Nations Uniting, with the support of Aboriginal Ministries staff, assumed administrative and planning responsibilities for the Retreat starting in 2017.

Youth Development

In the fall of 2016, Marlena Squash, an Indigenous young adult from British Columbia, offered her insights as to how the Indigenous church might engage youth and young adults. She affirmed that the church can be a place of welcome and acceptance. She reported that many youth and young adults in First Nation communities feel there is no community for them to belong. There are many who are seeking to discover their gifts. Marlena reminded the Council that all youth come with story and vulnerability. As she has become more involved with the church, she has noticed patterns at church meetings - they were very much the same. She offered a challenge to the church to move forward and take action.

The Youth Leadership programs ensure that programming is relevant and culturally appropriate for Indigenous youth through a variety of initiatives: Neechi (Cree for “friend”) is a joint initiative between Aboriginal Ministries and the Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario; Wampum is an initiative between Aboriginal Ministries and Five Oaks. Both were created in response to the adversity that affects many Indigenous young people. Neechi and Wampum assist in the healing process of mending broken relationships by supporting the non-Indigenous youth in developing healthy attitudes towards Indigenous peoples and space for Indigenous youth to learn about their culture. Both Neechi and Wampum happen every summer for youth between the ages of 14-17.

Many Youth and Young Adult (YAYA) leaders within the church are designing and delivering reconciliation programming for youth, however, it is not always done effectively. The Youth Leadership Coordinator and YAYA Leader at British Columbia Conference delivered training at the 2017 Youth and Young Adult Regional Gathering. Sessions on white privilege, lived realities of Indigenous young people, and pathways to reconciliation are examples of some of the workshops that were offered. *Got Reconciliation* programming was designed to build on leader’s abilities to offer programs that are safe and welcoming.

The Youth Leadership Coordinator ensures that Indigenous youth have the opportunity to attend various events that will help them overcome adversity and grow into strong Indigenous leaders.

Healing Programs

The Healing Fund was initially planned to be a five-year fundraising and educational campaign (1995-1999) to address the legacy of the Indian residential school. The Healing Fund continues to be one facet of the church’s ongoing reconciliation initiatives. On average, it grants \$300,000 per annum to Indigenous communities and organizations who are seeking to deliver healing, language and cultural programs. Efforts have been underway to establish strategies for new efficiencies in the granting process, promotion of the fund, and to amend the guidelines to reflect the principles of the UN Declaration.

The Alvin Dixon Memorial Bursary Fund celebrates the life and work of the late Alvin Dixon, an Elder and leader in the church who passed in 2014. Alvin’s contributions to the church include chairing the Committee on Indigenous Justice and Residential Schools, and serving as a member of the Aboriginal Ministries Council and the Executive of the General Council. This endowed fund held by The United Church of Canada Foundation will support educational initiatives for Indigenous

students. The fund was seeded by a one-time grant of \$31,000 from the 2014 unspent Dorothy Jenkins Trust Fund. The Council has set a goal to raise \$100,000 to the fund before inviting applications for bursaries.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG): Aboriginal Ministries and Indigenous Justice staff offered a webinar in May 2015 with Dr. Dawn Lavell-Harvard, Interim President of the Native Women's Association of Canada, and April Eve Wiberg, Coordinator of Stolen Sisters in Edmonton. There were twenty-four (24) participants; sixty-one (61) registered for the event and have subsequently viewed the taped version. Many participants expressed a renewed commitment to deepen their understanding of the issuing surrounding MMIWG.

The Healing Programs Coordinator attended the National Inquiry on November 21-23, 2018 in Saskatoon, SK, to stand in solidarity with the families of the Missing and Murdered and to witness the National Inquiry process. Members of the Council were also encouraged to attend public forums at the National Inquiry nearest them. Four members were able to attend the following forums in late 2017: Russel Burns in Edmonton, AB; Janet Sigurdson in Saskatoon, SK; Gabrielle Lamouche in Malotienam, QC; and Lee Claus in Thunder Bay, ON. Council members and staff provided an account of their experiences at the National Inquiry through blogs and social media.

The Healing Programs Coordinator also reached out to local Indigenous communities and United Church networks where the National Inquiry was located. Several agencies and ally networks were contacted in Edmonton, Saskatoon, and Thunder Bay. The focus of the outreach was to connect on aftercare programs. The Friendship Centre in Saskatoon opened their space for families to access a variety of support services. The Women Walking Together, an Indigenous Women's Missing and Murdered Advocacy Group in Saskatoon, also received support by holding a round dance to honour the families. During the round dance, the Mayor of Saskatoon recognized The United Church of Canada for its work in supporting the families.

LGBTQTwo Spirit Global Consultation

The Executive Minister, Aboriginal Ministries and Indigenous Justice participated in the LGBTQTwo Spirit Global Consultation held in Geneva Park (Orillia, ON) in November 2017. LGBTQTwo Spirit issues have been all but absent on the Indigenous church's agenda. In part, the cause of this disconnect is a result of the colonial views, practices, and policies that church and government imposed upon Canada's Indigenous Peoples, most which devalued Indigenous ways of being. Tragically, a harmful legacy remains for many individuals, families, and communities. The Council understands this transformative ministry of consciousness raising will require a great deal of courage. There are no illusions that this can or will happen tomorrow. The Council supports the promotion of a dialogue within the Indigenous church that explores how this consciousness-raising might be present at meetings and spiritual gatherings, and what the implications are for ministry formation.

Proposal for transmission to General Council 43:

AMC 2 – Implementation of the Calls to the Church

Calls to the Church document: <http://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/resources/caretakers-indigenous-circle-calls-church.pdf>

CARETAKERS OF OUR INDIGENOUS CIRCLE CALLS TO THE CHURCH

PREAMBLE: THE WORDS BEFORE ALL OTHER WORDS

The Indigenous ministries of The United Church of Canada have been about the work of ministry since the beginning in 1925 with roots in the 19th Century work of Methodist and Presbyterian ministries. 2018 marks the 193rd Anniversary of the Grand River Methodist Mission. This long history has seen bright beginnings and dark days and is poised on the brink of a Kairos moment as it faces the future.

Indigenous people have met regularly over many decades and held deep and ongoing conversations about matters relating to our Indigenous work and our relationship with the United Church. We have been evolving, struggling, adapting and growing since that time and even losing ground too. We do not want to lose the gains we have achieved through the years in any future developments.

Canada's Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration): The TRC Calls to Action embrace of the UN Declaration. The United Church adopted the UN Declaration and reported how their policies in reference to their Indigenous constituents reflect this on March 31, 2016. As the church implements this framework for reconciliation it has committed to developing mechanisms to report on its progress. The UN Declaration is about establishing and maintaining respectful relationship, Indigenous self-government, and Indigenous land rights in their traditional territories. This means the Indigenous faith community must exercise a truly Indigenous self-determination and possess a sustainable land-based support.

The Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples has been embraced by the United Church. The Right Rev. Jordan Cantwell, 42nd Moderator has noted the obligation to ensure "our policies, practices, and programs align with the "principles, norms, and standards" of the Declaration. The United Church has apologized for its colonial application of the policy of assimilation and acknowledged its impoverishment by the rejection of an Indigenous understanding of spirituality. It is the desire to live into right relations with a repentant church and pursue the original Indigenous desire for friendship, peace and the strength that comes from respect that the following calls are made. May they be received in the spirit of reconciliation in which they are made.

We Will Say What Indigenous Ministry Is

British Columbia Elder Alberta Billy said, "We have our own way of doing things." Other Elders have said the same thing especially when there was a conflict with the expectations of the broader western church. This is where colonial policies and procedures have worked against the Indigenous community. Our Elders have cried out for our own churches, leaders, training programs, and support systems.

We, the Indigenous ministries and communities of faith of The United Church, declare that we will tell our own story of what ministry means for us. We will decide for ourselves who we are, who constitutes our ministries groups and practices. Colonialism took community control away from us

and placed it in a colonial center of authority. Recovery from colonialism is our path moving forward. We will determine an Indigenous Testamur, a training program for ministry preparation, that will help our leaders be competent as the healers and helpers our communities are crying out for. We will recruit and oversee the development of our ministry training students and assist their placement and support in our communities.

We Will Do Indigenous Theology

Our own Indigenous understanding of the Christ story is what we need. We are Indigenous nations, tribes, confederacies with clans and Elders. Creator has placed us in our sacred lands and taught us to harvest the food just as the first humans in the Bible. Our ways, of seeing and being in this earth, are much like the Hebrew people. We can hear creation and have learned from all our relations, the animals, the water folk, the plant families, our mother the earth, etc. We hear in the groaning of the earth the sufferings of Christ. We feel the preciousness of life and the sanctity of love in our communities and lands.

Part of our work will challenge the colonial vision of Jesus and western theology. Our Indigenous languages, ways of life, spiritualities, and connection to our traditional lands will be restored. We are finding our own spirituality and Indigenous understanding of Jesus and his work in our communities. We will see through our eyes who Jesus is and decide for ourselves what this means for us as ministries and communities of faith. We are thankful for our roots in the work of the church in our past but we will shape our future through our own perspectives. The Spirit gives us authority to do this and we will listen to our siblings in the larger community of faith.

We Will Say Who We Are

The concept of identity is a complicated issue within Indigenous communities. The very notion of being an "Indigenous" person is a European construct. Prior to European contact, the people of Turtle Island identified themselves as members of their own tribes, nations, or communities. Inter-marriage was common and many children were "mixed-blood" as a result of this, yet accepted in their communities. Many nations have always practiced traditional adoptions, self-determining who is part of their communities.

With European contact, these many nations and tribes became lumped into one homogenous group known as "Indigenous, Aboriginal, or Indian". This has caused Indigenous people to be viewed as a single nation, erasing the reality of many nations with different social, cultural, and spiritual beliefs and traditions. Eurocentrism introduced identity politics based on race, blood quantum, and what people look like. This raises the question of whether being Indigenous is a racial, ethnic, cultural, legal, political, or genetic identity. Blood quantum, which serves no other purpose than to limit, and eventually, eradicate Indigenous identity is in direct opposition to the traditional notion of Indigeneity being one's connection to the land, culture, and recognition within a tribe, nation, or community.

We affirm that Indigenous people and Indigenous communities of faith will self-determine who is part of the Indigenous church.

A Healing Church

Our “roots” as Indigenous peoples, are what the Creator has made us to be. We are embracing who we are as Creator made us. The Indigenous church will be an instrument of healing our identity and a place of renewal of our cultures. Our roots have been broken by colonialism and we will restore them.

Wounds came from being told we are wrong and the loss of language and culture. Our recovery from these negative influences means that we must have a process that is trauma-informed. We won't be healed by a western medical model but a trauma-informed approach. It is not helpful to treat people who struggle with addictions as criminals, but rather we must take a healing approach. The colonial system has been dehumanizing for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. We will expand our work from the end of life to the beginning of life. We will restore the whole circle of life: infancy and childhood, youth, adult and Elder stages.

We will maintain right relations with the broader United Church and educate them about our need to Indigenize our work and decolonize what continues to harm us. We do not want to experience the feeling of exclusion at the table of decision or have our concerns minimized by others. We will teach you who we are, what our values are, and place into practice how we want to work among ourselves and with others. We have faith that the Spirit of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit, the evidence of creation, and the love of God will move us forward on the road of true reconciliation so that we can know “the beloved community” of “All Our Relations.”

The Earth is Our Provider

The earth is our ground of being. The earth is our Mother. The earth is our sustenance. The earth is our Eden. Creator made us from our Mother the Earth. Access to the earth has been stolen from us and others now eat from her provisions. We have been marginalized and separated from our own lands. It was stolen from us by a false Doctrine of Discovery. This doctrine was repudiated by the United Church. We must return to the provisions of the land. The land will sustain us as it has for millennia.

Furthermore, our traditional territories are not equivalent to reserves that were created and maintained by the colonial Indian Act. Many urban¹ Indigenous Peoples are still living in their traditional territory even though they no longer live, and perhaps may have never connected, on reserve. Indigenous spirituality is not confined to buildings, but is connected to the land. The United Church is asset rich. Rich in land and properties. These lands were stolen by false promises in treaty negotiations. We meant to invite settlers to our lands and that we would share it. It would feed us both. But we are cut off from the land. Justice in land matters must be about reparations and not only apologies. Reconciliation is not just heads and hearts that feel bad but hands and feet that do tangible good. Selling church properties is a matter of Indigenous land justice or injustice. We are grateful for every effort churches, presbyteries, Conferences, and the General Council have done to give back to the Indigenous ministries when churches decommission and properties are sold. May this justice flow like a river.

¹ The word “urban” lacks the diversity envisioned by the urban Indigenous Caretakers. By “urban”, we mean those who have left their home communities, as well as those who have been born and raised in villages, towns, and cities across Canada, some willingly and some against their will.

Calls to the Church

1. Concerning an Office of Vocation: We Remember, We Say

- *Remembering all the meetings in our history where Indigenous and missional clergy met to fellowship, pray together, strategize and minister among Indigenous peoples;*
- *Affirming our support for all clergy ministering in our Indigenous communities;*
- *Acknowledging the need for clergy accountability in Indigenous communities;*
- *Acknowledging the need to limit harm done unintentionally or otherwise by clergy in our Indigenous faith communities;*
- *Knowing ministry in our Indigenous communities often differs from that in non-Indigenous communities;*
- *Supportive of evaluating and dealing with ministerial matters with Indigenous values and processes;*
- *Mindful of the UN Declaration's call for Indigenous self-governance and adequate resources to achieve this;*
- *Affirming the Indigenous community's right to determine our own ministry personnel;*

We, the Indigenous faith communities of The United Church of Canada, as an expression of the United Church's adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, call for:

- A. The establishment of an Indigenous office or department within the Office of Vocation so that ministry personnel in our communities have services provided by people who are knowledgeable of Indigenous ways of being and working,**
- B. That this office or department have an advisory group that is engaged in the development Indigenous ministry policy.**

2. Concerning Indigenous Ministry Formation Accompaniment and Oversight: We Remember, We Say

- *Acknowledging the success of supportive and sensitive Indigenous accompaniment and oversight in the Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre (DJSRC) and the Francis Sandy Theological Centre (FSTC) programs and partnership with All Native Circle Conference, Presbyteries and communities of faith;*
- *Recognizing these student resources have continued in the program of Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre, the amalgamation of DJSRC and FSTC;*
- *Recognizing the struggle of Indigenous students in the non-Indigenous United Church system through lack of understanding of Indigenous ways;*
- *Acknowledging the success of the Councils on Learning in overseeing Indigenous students in ministry training;*
- *Recognizing the vast educational requirements to ensure a proper level of support, encouragement and guidance for Indigenous students in non-Indigenous churches, presbyteries, and conferences;*
- *Recognizing the value of Indigenous language and cultural competency in Indigenous ministry training;*

We, the Indigenous faith communities of The United Church of Canada, as an expression of the United Church's adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, call for:

- A. Students accepted for ministry training have community of faith and Elder support;**
- B. Continued strong Indigenous oversight of Indigenous ministry students in training from the community of faith to regional and national Indigenous groups with appropriate overseers who are suited to the student and their Indigenous ministry context;**
- C. A clear pathway for students and Indigenous communities of faith to follow in accompanying and overseeing Indigenous ministry formation;**
- D. Ensuring the accompaniers and overseers are primarily Indigenous people experienced in the work of ministry and have resources adequate to provide sufficient oversight (meeting at least yearly);**
- E. Ensuring that non-Indigenous accompaniers and overseers have the Indigenous orientation education required of those working in Indigenous communities;**
- F. Ministry training be provided in Indigenous communities and urban settings, as is feasible;**
- G. Providing support following Testamur to ensure a good transition into ministry life;**
- H. Ensuring that a trauma-informed approach be taken in the ministry training program, accompaniment, and aftercare of all students and ministry personnel.**

3. Concerning Indigenous Communities of Faith Approved Ministry Placement: We Remember, We Say

- *Remembering Elder and first Indigenous Moderator of the United Church the Very Reverend Stan McKay Jr.'s words, "Given the trend of the church and cut backs, full-time paid accountable ministry is not going to be our future."*
- *Remembering the success of previous graduates of DJSRC and FSTC in non-traditional "ministry" placements;*
- *Recognizing that many Indigenous communities and educational authorities are not really interested in training church leaders;*
- *Acknowledging the call from our Indigenous communities and support of educational authorities for healing arts training for Indigenous students, as in: trauma recovery, intergeneration effect of trauma, counseling, and other therapies and means of wellness that comes from Indigenous ways;*
- *Realizing the ministry call of Jesus was to "heal the broken hearted, recover the sight of the blind, set the captive free and proclaim the time of equity and freedom" and that this call is answered by students in ministry training;*
- *Recognizing the relational Indigenous community ways and the need to expand what "ministry" means as was the successful Presbytery-approved ministry placements outside of the church;*
- *Remembering the great Six Nations educational work done by Nations Uniting in responding to the land claim conflict in Caledonia, Ontario in 2006;*
- *Valuing the great work being done in the Indigenous LGBTQ-2SA+ community;*
- *Affirming our future lies with Indigenous youth and all the great work being done among and by them;*

We, the Indigenous faith communities of The United Church of Canada, as an expression of the United Church's adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, call for:

- A. **Indigenous community and region approved ministry placements options outside of the church context;**
 - B. **Agencies outside of the church to be educated to work cooperatively in assisting the Indigenous ministry formation companions to supervise these placements;**
 - C. **Programs to be established to provide clinical, helping and healing skills for ministry students, and, community development and networking;**
 - D. **Reporting to and celebration from the church concerning this work of ministry students in such placements.**
4. Concerning Indigenous Testamur: We Remember, We Say
- *Acknowledging the ill-fit and sometimes even harm from some well-meaning but poorly prepared ministers working in our Indigenous faith communities;*
 - *Remembering the 1970's Indian Ministry Training Program;*
 - *Remembering the dreams and hope of our elders Dr. Jessie Saulteaux and Mr. Francis Sandy to have our own Indigenously trained ministry leadership for our communities;*
 - *Remembering the establishment of Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre (DJSRC) in 1984;*
 - *Remembering the establishment of Francis Sandy Theological Centre (FSTC) in 1987;*
 - *Remembering the work of the Wabung process that was the foundation for the amalgamation of DJSRC and FSTC into the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre (SSSC) as the National Aboriginal ministry training school of The United Church of Canada in 2011;*
 - *Acknowledging the fundamental linguistic and cultural differences in the Indigenous communities of faith in The UCC;*
 - *Committed to the dignity affirmed in the United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous People including the right to self-determination on our own Indigenous terms and in keeping with our own Indigenous spiritual values;*
 - *Convinced by our Elders that a fundamentally differing approach, structure and value system is what Indigenous faith communities are calling for and need for a healthy recovery of community and sustainability;*
 - *Believing that when the United Church of Canada's policy conflicts with Indigenous community values that community values come first;*

We, the Indigenous faith communities of The United Church of Canada, as an expression of the United Church's adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, call for:

- A. **The establishment of an Indigenous Testamur (a required completed program indicating that a person is suitably trained for ministry in The Indigenous United Church of Canada) that recognizes unique Indigenous competencies needed to work in our communities;**
 - i. **That this Indigenous Testamur be determined by the Indigenous faith communities of the United Church with consideration for all the geographic and linguistic differences across Canada;**
 - ii. **That in this Indigenous Testamur it is recognized that Indigenous communities of faith are free to determine how they respond to all Indigenous issues and that**

- outside authorities will not impose their values on the local community;**
- iii. **That Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre be entrusted with overseeing the completion of this Indigenous Testamur;**
 - iv. **That this Indigenous Testamur contain components to ensure competency in non-Indigenous United Church communities;**
 - v. **That this Indigenous Testamur provide training for The United Church of Canada's order of ministry including ordination, commissioning, designated lay ministry or other expressions of Indigenous ministry approved by the Indigenous communities of faith (urban included);**
- B. **The currently accepted United Church Testamur to contain components to ensure cultural competency and safety when working in Indigenous and other cross- cultural settings;**
 - i. **That this curriculum be included in the continuing education requirement for ongoing accreditation for ministers within the United Church;**
 - ii. **That all United Church ministers be educated in this curriculum in their continuing education;**
 - C. **Ministry personnel serving in Indigenous communities of faith will require ongoing culturally appropriate oversight and support, equipping them to deepen ministry skills in the context of Indigenous ministry;**
 - D. **For coordinated development of Indigenous theological resources to support the needs of Indigenous communities of faith and education on Indigenous matters for the United Church.**
5. Concerning a National Indigenous Organization for Support and Fellowship: We Remember, We Say
- *Remembering The 1980's national Aboriginal ministry consultations that eventually became the current National Aboriginal Spiritual Gathering;*
 - *Remembering Keewatin Presbytery as the first Indigenous presbytery in The United Church of Canada in 1982;*
 - *Remembering the establishment in 1982 of the National Native Ministries Council in The United Church of Canada to oversee the work of the first National Native Ministries Coordinator, Rev. Stan McKay Jr.;*
 - *Remembering the local work that led to the formation of All Tribes, Plains, and Great Lakes presbyteries that were the basis of All Native Circle Conference;*
 - *Remembering the historic establishment of All Native Circle Conference, the first Indigenous conference and one that crossed colonial boundaries in 1988;*
 - *Remembering the establishment of BC Native Ministries, in 1988;*
 - *Remembering the establishment of Ontario Quebec Native Ministries in 1989;*
 - *Remembering the establishment of the Aboriginal Ministries Council and its staff the Aboriginal Ministries Circle at General Council Office and beyond in 2008;*
 - *Remembering all the Ecumenical gatherings over the decades;*
 - *Knowing urban Indigenous ministry often differs from that in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities;*
 - *Remembering that according to the 2006 Census, more than half of people identifying themselves in some way as indigenous reside in urban areas; and*
 - *Believing the time has come to foster and support the creation of more urban Indigenous ministries;*

We, the Indigenous faith communities of The United Church of Canada, as an expression of the United Church's adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, call for:

A. A National Indigenous Elders Council:

- i. **with equitable representation from across the country;**
- ii. **Elders who are lifted-up by communities;**
- iii. **with a minimum number of face-to-face meetings.**

B. A National Indigenous Organization:

- i. **comprising various kinds of members like Elders, youth, strategic thinkers, knowledge keepers, and carriers of the history;**
- ii. **members who are lifted-up by the Indigenous communities of faith; including those in urban settings;**
- iii. **with a minimum number of face-to-face meetings;**
- iv. **with a national Indigenous ministry support staff team:**
 - **ministry facilitating staffing to serve all the Indigenous communities of faith;**
 - **distributed equitably across the nation to serve all Indigenous communities of faith;**
 - **with a minimum number of face-to-face meetings.**
- v. **Continued opportunities for the gathering, working together, and supportive work of all the Indigenous faith communities in the United Church, including a National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering, as well as regional and cluster gatherings. These gatherings will honour the cultural and linguistic regions of the Indigenous communities;**
- vi. **That this office organization support a national network of urban Indigenous Ministries.**
- vii. **When we meet, we will honour the local protocols (as determined by the local communities of faith) and we will honour our Elders.**
- viii. **Strong communications strategy and resources necessary to accomplish the work of a national Indigenous organization.**
- ix. **Strengthened relationships between the Indigenous communities of faith and the rest of the United Church with requested Indigenous representation provided for in all aspects of the United Church;**
- x. **Education of all United Church personnel, programs and groups in Indigenous history, culture and contemporary issues to strengthen relations with Indigenous communities of faith and the United Church and to reignite the spiritual, cultural, holistic and healing renewal of whole church.**

6. Concerning Belonging: We Remember, We Say

- *Remembering that during the formation of the first all Indigenous Keewatin Presbytery in 1982 our Elders said we are drawing aside to find ourselves and then we will be back;*
- *Affirming that the Indigenous communities of faith desire to remain a part of The United Church of Canada;*
- *Appreciating our long history of Indigenous ministry that pre-dates the formation of The UCC;*

- *Desiring to live into right relations with The UCC and to find out what the apologies of 1986 and 1998 mean;*

We, the Indigenous faith communities of The United Church of Canada, as an expression of the United Church's adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, call for:

- A. For the right of Indigenous church communities to choose their relationships within a three-court structure;**
 - i. The right to dual belonging;**
 - ii. To fully belong to a regional body, and;**
- B. To fully belong to a national Indigenous body;**
- C. That urban Indigenous ministries be recognized as communities of faith with the same rights and responsibilities.**

7. Concerning Indigenous Community Leadership and Consensus Building; We Remember, We Say

- *Thankful for our predecessors who embarked upon a path that was radical, inclusive, progressive, and courageous for its time. And, that like every generation who's understanding of what it means to be inclusive is ever evolving we realize that our predecessors had a limited and flawed understanding of what it means to be inclusive And, that by recognizing this past we seek to heal relationships that have been broken and to forge new relationships in the future.*
- *Remembering the legacy of the Indian Methodist heritage work prior to the start of the UCC with the first Methodist church at Six Nations in 1822;*
- *Remembering that not all Indian Methodist churches joined the United Church in 1925;*
- *Remembering the legacy of Indian Presbyterian heritage work prior to the start of the UCC;*
- *Remembering all the elders, men and women, youth, and children of our Indigenous communities of faith who began, nurtured and supported the work of the church in their communities;*
- *Recognizing the omission of Indigenous faith communities in the establishment of The United Church of Canada in 1925 and the corrective measures taken in Ottawa in 2012 at General Council 41 to amend the Basis of Union to include this history and legacy;*
- *Acknowledging the redesign of The United Church of Canada's crest to include the four colors of many Indigenous communities and the Mohawk phrase "Akwe Nia'Tetewá:neren" meaning "All My Relations" at General Council 41 in Ottawa in 2012;*
- *Wanting to live in right relations with The United Church of Canada on our own Indigenous terms;*
- *Honouring our Elders who have long stood up for our people in The United Church of Canada from the very beginning;*
- *Remembering the Indigenous community consultations in gatherings and Indigenous communities of faith;*
- *Recognizing the need to honour each Indigenous cultural territory and community of faith in their own decision making processes;*
- *Wanting to ensure a grassroots leadership in making change in the Indigenous communities of faith;*

- *Remembering that Indigenous consensus is not a simple ideal where every single person must agree before the community moves ahead but that individuals also consent to the overwhelming support of decisions and chose to be gracious and not undermine them, even though they may not fully agree with the larger community;*

We, the Indigenous faith communities of The United Church of Canada, as an expression of the United Church's adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, call for:

- Consensus decision-making in the Indigenous faith community be honoured by ensuring enough time (as determined by the Indigenous community) is afforded for community discussion before major issues are decided upon;**
- Resources to help the communications necessary for Indigenous communities of faith to arrive at consensus regionally and nationally;**
- The national church to incorporate Indigenous community of faith input into all its programs, departments, divisions and works.**

8. Concerning Sustainable Support: We Remember, We Say

- *Realizing the Doctrine of Discovery rests on the illegitimate claims of Christian superiority in the Papal Bulls of 1453, 1454 and 1493;*
- *Understanding that the 1793 Royal Proclamation rests on the Doctrine of Discovery and is the basis of colonial claims to underlying radical title to Indigenous lands;*
- *Remembering that the United Church repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery;*
- *Realizing that the sale United Church properties involves Indigenous claims to the land.*
- *Realizing that the UN Declaration is a framework for reconciliation that includes these principles: Indigenous peoples right to participate in decision-making; right to land and resources; and right to self-determination.*
- *Recognizing that a significant number of Indigenous Peoples now dwell in urban communities;*

We, the Indigenous faith communities of The United Church of Canada, as an expression of the United Church's adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, call for:

- Equitable distribution of Mission and Service Funds keeping in mind the whole Indigenous community across the country;**
- A policy be developed to that would ensure there is a percentage of the proceeds of property liquidation allocated to Indigenous ministry and justice work**
- Any properties turned over to Indigenous communities be brought up-to-code before they are transferred;**
- Financial decisions that affect Indigenous communities of faith be determined by the Indigenous communities;**
- Relational connections between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities of faith and Regions be encouraged to continue. Local engagement and support of Indigenous work is valuable and needs to increase;**
- Adequate resources (i.e. financial support, staff, and space, etc.) be included to address the needs of urban Indigenous ministries.**

9. Concerning sexual orientation and diversity: We Remember, We Say

- *Remembering that gender diversity is a revered part of our heritage before colonization;*
- *Realizing that the role of 2-Spirit people in ceremonies and spiritual practices remains relevant to the overall well-being of all our communities;*
- *Recognizing that many LGBTQ2A+² Indigenous people leave their home communities because of intolerance introduced by the colonizers;*
- *Realizing that many LGBTQ2A+ young people are at high risk for suicide;*
- *Remembering the policy that was passed at General Council 40 which: “affirms the participation and ministry of trans people, and encourages all congregations to welcome trans people into membership, ministry, and full participation;”*

We, the Indigenous faith communities of The United Church of Canada, as an expression of the United Church’s adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, call for:

- A. Educational resources that will invite and assist Indigenous communities of faith to support LGBTQ2A+ members and youth;**
- B. That the United Church of Canada through its health benefit coverage plan continue to support employees and their families who are transitioning gender.**

Caretakers Member List

Ray Jones, BC Native Ministries

George Montour, Aboriginal Ministries Council

Lawrence Sankey, Aboriginal Ministries Council

Janet Sigurdson, Council of Learning, All Native Circle Conference

Bernice Saulteaux, Leading Elder, All Native Circle Conference

Susan Beaver, Great Lakes Waterways Presbytery

Robert Patton, Chair of Council on Sharing

Marlene Lightening, General Council Representative, All Native Circle Conference

Gloria Cook, All Native Circle Conference

Evelyn Broadfoot, All Native Circle Conference Alternative

John Thompson, Sandy Saulteaux Spiritual Centre, Chair of Board

Martha Pedoniquotte, Ontario and Quebec Native Ministries

Lee Claus, Aboriginal Ministries Council, Sandy Saulteaux Spiritual Centre Board member

Teresa Burnett-Cole, Urban Indigenous – Ottawa

RW Hoekstra, Urban Indigenous – Edmonton

Staff:

Maggie McLeod, Executive Minister, Aboriginal Ministries and Indigenous Justice

Cheryl Jourdain, Speaker, All Native Circle Conference

Adrian Jacobs, Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre

Lisa Anwar, BC Native Ministries

² LGBTQ2A+ is a place-holder that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and transsexual, queer, asexual, 2-Spirit and everyone else! The understanding behind the acronym is that sexuality and gender are fluid and not limited to male and female.

CARETAKERS OF OUR INDIGENOUS CIRCLE CALLS TO THE CHURCH

PREAMBLE: THE WORDS BEFORE ALL OTHER WORDS

The Indigenous ministries of The United Church of Canada have been about the work of ministry since the beginning in 1925 with roots in the 19th Century work of Methodist and Presbyterian ministries. 2018 marks the 193rd Anniversary of the Grand River Methodist Mission. This long history has seen bright beginnings and dark days and is poised on the brink of a Kairos moment as it faces the future.

Indigenous people have met regularly over many decades and held deep and ongoing conversations about matters relating to our Indigenous work and our relationship with the United Church. We have been evolving, struggling, adapting and growing since that time and even losing ground too. We do not want to lose the gains we have achieved through the years in any future developments.

Canada's Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration): The TRC Calls to Action embrace of the UN Declaration. The United Church adopted the UN Declaration and reported how their policies in reference to their Indigenous constituents reflect this on March 31, 2016. As the church implements this framework for reconciliation it has committed to developing mechanisms to report on its progress. The UN Declaration is about establishing and maintaining respectful relationship, Indigenous self-government, and Indigenous land rights in their traditional territories. This means the Indigenous faith community must exercise a truly Indigenous self-determination and possess a sustainable land-based support.

The Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples has been embraced by the United Church. The Right Rev. Jordan Cantwell, 42nd Moderator has noted the obligation to ensure "our policies, practices, and programs align with the "principles, norms, and standards" of the Declaration. The United Church has apologized for its colonial application of the policy of assimilation and acknowledged its impoverishment by the rejection of an Indigenous understanding of spirituality. It is the desire to live into right relations with a repentant church and pursue the original Indigenous desire for friendship, peace and the strength that comes from respect that the following calls are made. May they be received in the spirit of reconciliation in which they are made.

We Will Say What Indigenous Ministry Is

British Columbia Elder Alberta Billy said, "We have our own way of doing things." Other Elders have said the same thing especially when there was a conflict with the expectations of the broader western church. This is where colonial policies and procedures have worked against the Indigenous community. Our Elders have cried out for our own churches, leaders, training programs, and support systems.

We, the Indigenous ministries and communities of faith of The United Church, declare that we will tell our own story of what ministry means for us. We will decide for ourselves who we are, who constitutes our ministries groups and practices. Colonialism took community control away from us

and placed it in a colonial center of authority. Recovery from colonialism is our path moving forward. We will determine an Indigenous Testamur, a training program for ministry preparation, that will help our leaders be competent as the healers and helpers our communities are crying out for. We will recruit and oversee the development of our ministry training students and assist their placement and support in our communities.

We Will Do Indigenous Theology

Our own Indigenous understanding of the Christ story is what we need. We are Indigenous nations, tribes, confederacies with clans and Elders. Creator has placed us in our sacred lands and taught us to harvest the food just as the first humans in the Bible. Our ways, of seeing and being in this earth, are much like the Hebrew people. We can hear creation and have learned from all our relations, the animals, the water folk, the plant families, our mother the earth, etc. We hear in the groaning of the earth the sufferings of Christ. We feel the preciousness of life and the sanctity of love in our communities and lands.

Part of our work will challenge the colonial vision of Jesus and western theology. Our Indigenous languages, ways of life, spiritualities, and connection to our traditional lands will be restored. We are finding our own spirituality and Indigenous understanding of Jesus and his work in our communities. We will see through our eyes who Jesus is and decide for ourselves what this means for us as ministries and communities of faith. We are thankful for our roots in the work of the church in our past but we will shape our future through our own perspectives. The Spirit gives us authority to do this and we will listen to our siblings in the larger community of faith.

We Will Say Who We Are

The concept of identity is a complicated issue within Indigenous communities. The very notion of being an "Indigenous" person is a European construct. Prior to European contact, the people of Turtle Island identified themselves as members of their own tribes, nations, or communities. Inter-marriage was common and many children were "mixed-blood" as a result of this, yet accepted in their communities. Many nations have always practiced traditional adoptions, self-determining who is part of their communities.

With European contact, these many nations and tribes became lumped into one homogenous group known as "Indigenous, Aboriginal, or Indian". This has caused Indigenous people to be viewed as a single nation, erasing the reality of many nations with different social, cultural, and spiritual beliefs and traditions. Eurocentrism introduced identity politics based on race, blood quantum, and what people look like. This raises the question of whether being Indigenous is a racial, ethnic, cultural, legal, political, or genetic identity. Blood quantum, which serves no other purpose than to limit, and eventually, eradicate Indigenous identity is in direct opposition to the traditional notion of Indigeneity being one's connection to the land, culture, and recognition within a tribe, nation, or community.

We affirm that Indigenous people and Indigenous communities of faith will self-determine who is part of the Indigenous church.

A Healing Church

Our “roots” as Indigenous peoples, are what the Creator has made us to be. We are embracing who we are as Creator made us. The Indigenous church will be an instrument of healing our identity and a place of renewal of our cultures. Our roots have been broken by colonialism and we will restore them.

Wounds came from being told we are wrong and the loss of language and culture. Our recovery from these negative influences means that we must have a process that is trauma-informed. We won't be healed by a western medical model but a trauma-informed approach. It is not helpful to treat people who struggle with addictions as criminals, but rather we must take a healing approach. The colonial system has been dehumanizing for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. We will expand our work from the end of life to the beginning of life. We will restore the whole circle of life: infancy and childhood, youth, adult and Elder stages.

We will maintain right relations with the broader United Church and educate them about our need to Indigenize our work and decolonize what continues to harm us. We do not want to experience the feeling of exclusion at the table of decision or have our concerns minimized by others. We will teach you who we are, what our values are, and place into practice how we want to work among ourselves and with others. We have faith that the Spirit of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit, the evidence of creation, and the love of God will move us forward on the road of true reconciliation so that we can know “the beloved community” of “All Our Relations.”

The Earth is Our Provider

The earth is our ground of being. The earth is our Mother. The earth is our sustenance. The earth is our Eden. Creator made us from our Mother the Earth. Access to the earth has been stolen from us and others now eat from her provisions. We have been marginalized and separated from our own lands. It was stolen from us by a false Doctrine of Discovery. This doctrine was repudiated by the United Church. We must return to the provisions of the land. The land will sustain us as it has for millennia.

Furthermore, our traditional territories are not equivalent to reserves that were created and maintained by the colonial Indian Act. Many urban¹ Indigenous Peoples are still living in their traditional territory even though they no longer live, and perhaps may have never connected, on reserve. Indigenous spirituality is not confined to buildings, but is connected to the land. The United Church is asset rich. Rich in land and properties. These lands were stolen by false promises in treaty negotiations. We meant to invite settlers to our lands and that we would share it. It would feed us both. But we are cut off from the land. Justice in land matters must be about reparations and not only apologies. Reconciliation is not just heads and hearts that feel bad but hands and feet that do tangible good. Selling church properties is a matter of Indigenous land justice or injustice. We are grateful for every effort churches, presbyteries, Conferences, and the General Council have done to give back to the Indigenous ministries when churches decommission and properties are sold. May this justice flow like a river.

¹ The word “urban” lacks the diversity envisioned by the urban Indigenous Caretakers. By “urban”, we mean those who have left their home communities, as well as those who have been born and raised in villages, towns, and cities across Canada, some willingly and some against their will.

Calls to the Church

1. Concerning an Office of Vocation: We Remember, We Say

- *Remembering all the meetings in our history where Indigenous and missional clergy met to fellowship, pray together, strategize and minister among Indigenous peoples;*
- *Affirming our support for all clergy ministering in our Indigenous communities;*
- *Acknowledging the need for clergy accountability in Indigenous communities;*
- *Acknowledging the need to limit harm done unintentionally or otherwise by clergy in our Indigenous faith communities;*
- *Knowing ministry in our Indigenous communities often differs from that in non-Indigenous communities;*
- *Supportive of evaluating and dealing with ministerial matters with Indigenous values and processes;*
- *Mindful of the UN Declaration's call for Indigenous self-governance and adequate resources to achieve this;*
- *Affirming the Indigenous community's right to determine our own ministry personnel;*

We, the Indigenous faith communities of The United Church of Canada, as an expression of the United Church's adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, call for:

- A. The establishment of an Indigenous office or department within the Office of Vocation so that ministry personnel in our communities have services provided by people who are knowledgeable of Indigenous ways of being and working,**
- B. That this office or department have an advisory group that is engaged in the development Indigenous ministry policy.**

2. Concerning Indigenous Ministry Formation Accompaniment and Oversight: We Remember, We Say

- *Acknowledging the success of supportive and sensitive Indigenous accompaniment and oversight in the Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre (DJSRC) and the Francis Sandy Theological Centre (FSTC) programs and partnership with All Native Circle Conference, Presbyteries and communities of faith;*
- *Recognizing these student resources have continued in the program of Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre, the amalgamation of DJSRC and FSTC;*
- *Recognizing the struggle of Indigenous students in the non-Indigenous United Church system through lack of understanding of Indigenous ways;*
- *Acknowledging the success of the Councils on Learning in overseeing Indigenous students in ministry training;*
- *Recognizing the vast educational requirements to ensure a proper level of support, encouragement and guidance for Indigenous students in non-Indigenous churches, presbyteries, and conferences;*
- *Recognizing the value of Indigenous language and cultural competency in Indigenous ministry training;*

We, the Indigenous faith communities of The United Church of Canada, as an expression of the United Church's adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, call for:

- A. Students accepted for ministry training have community of faith and Elder support;**
- B. Continued strong Indigenous oversight of Indigenous ministry students in training from the community of faith to regional and national Indigenous groups with appropriate overseers who are suited to the student and their Indigenous ministry context;**
- C. A clear pathway for students and Indigenous communities of faith to follow in accompanying and overseeing Indigenous ministry formation;**
- D. Ensuring the accompaniers and overseers are primarily Indigenous people experienced in the work of ministry and have resources adequate to provide sufficient oversight (meeting at least yearly);**
- E. Ensuring that non-Indigenous accompaniers and overseers have the Indigenous orientation education required of those working in Indigenous communities;**
- F. Ministry training be provided in Indigenous communities and urban settings, as is feasible;**
- G. Providing support following Testamur to ensure a good transition into ministry life;**
- H. Ensuring that a trauma-informed approach be taken in the ministry training program, accompaniment, and aftercare of all students and ministry personnel.**

3. Concerning Indigenous Communities of Faith Approved Ministry Placement: We Remember, We Say

- *Remembering Elder and first Indigenous Moderator of the United Church the Very Reverend Stan McKay Jr.'s words, "Given the trend of the church and cut backs, full-time paid accountable ministry is not going to be our future."*
- *Remembering the success of previous graduates of DJSRC and FSTC in non-traditional "ministry" placements;*
- *Recognizing that many Indigenous communities and educational authorities are not really interested in training church leaders;*
- *Acknowledging the call from our Indigenous communities and support of educational authorities for healing arts training for Indigenous students, as in: trauma recovery, intergeneration effect of trauma, counseling, and other therapies and means of wellness that comes from Indigenous ways;*
- *Realizing the ministry call of Jesus was to "heal the broken hearted, recover the sight of the blind, set the captive free and proclaim the time of equity and freedom" and that this call is answered by students in ministry training;*
- *Recognizing the relational Indigenous community ways and the need to expand what "ministry" means as was the successful Presbytery-approved ministry placements outside of the church;*
- *Remembering the great Six Nations educational work done by Nations Uniting in responding to the land claim conflict in Caledonia, Ontario in 2006;*
- *Valuing the great work being done in the Indigenous LGBTQ-2SA+ community;*
- *Affirming our future lies with Indigenous youth and all the great work being done among and by them;*

We, the Indigenous faith communities of The United Church of Canada, as an expression of the United Church's adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, call for:

- A. **Indigenous community and region approved ministry placements options outside of the church context;**
 - B. **Agencies outside of the church to be educated to work cooperatively in assisting the Indigenous ministry formation accompaniers to supervise these placements;**
 - C. **Programs to be established to provide clinical, helping and healing skills for ministry students, and, community development and networking;**
 - D. **Reporting to and celebration from the church concerning this work of ministry students in such placements.**
4. Concerning Indigenous Testamur: We Remember, We Say
- *Acknowledging the ill-fit and sometimes even harm from some well-meaning but poorly prepared ministers working in our Indigenous faith communities;*
 - *Remembering the 1970's Indian Ministry Training Program;*
 - *Remembering the dreams and hope of our elders Dr. Jessie Saulteaux and Mr. Francis Sandy to have our own Indigenously trained ministry leadership for our communities;*
 - *Remembering the establishment of Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre (DJSRC) in 1984;*
 - *Remembering the establishment of Francis Sandy Theological Centre (FSTC) in 1987;*
 - *Remembering the work of the Wabung process that was the foundation for the amalgamation of DJSRC and FSTC into the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre (SSSC) as the National Aboriginal ministry training school of The United Church of Canada in 2011;*
 - *Acknowledging the fundamental linguistic and cultural differences in the Indigenous communities of faith in The UCC;*
 - *Committed to the dignity affirmed in the United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous People including the right to self-determination on our own Indigenous terms and in keeping with our own Indigenous spiritual values;*
 - *Convinced by our Elders that a fundamentally differing approach, structure and value system is what Indigenous faith communities are calling for and need for a healthy recovery of community and sustainability;*
 - *Believing that when the United Church of Canada's policy conflicts with Indigenous community values that community values come first;*

We, the Indigenous faith communities of The United Church of Canada, as an expression of the United Church's adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, call for:

- A. **The establishment of an Indigenous Testamur (a required completed program indicating that a person is suitably trained for ministry in The Indigenous United Church of Canada) that recognizes unique Indigenous competencies needed to work in our communities;**
 - i. **That this Indigenous Testamur be determined by the Indigenous faith communities of the United Church with consideration for all the geographic and linguistic differences across Canada;**
 - ii. **That in this Indigenous Testamur it is recognized that Indigenous communities of faith are free to determine how they respond to all Indigenous issues and that**

- outside authorities will not impose their values on the local community;
- iii. That Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre be entrusted with overseeing the completion of this Indigenous Testamur;
 - iv. That this Indigenous Testamur contain components to ensure competency in non-Indigenous United Church communities;
 - v. That this Indigenous Testamur provide training for The United Church of Canada's one order of ministry including ordination, commissioning, designated lay ministry or other expressions of Indigenous ministry approved by the Indigenous communities of faith (urban included);
- B. The currently accepted United Church Testamur to contain components to ensure cultural competency and safety when working in Indigenous and other cross-cultural settings;
 - i. That this curriculum be included in the continuing education requirement for ongoing accreditation for ministers within the United Church;
 - ii. That all United Church ministers be educated in this curriculum in their continuing education;
 - C. Non-Indigenous ministry personnel working in Indigenous communities to be under probation for at least 5 years or until the Indigenous community of faith decides otherwise;
 - D. For coordinated development of Indigenous theological resources to support the needs of Indigenous communities of faith and education on Indigenous matters for the United Church.
5. Concerning a National Indigenous Organization for Support and Fellowship: We Remember, We Say
- *Remembering The 1980's national Aboriginal ministry consultations that eventually became the current National Aboriginal Spiritual Gathering;*
 - *Remembering Keewatin Presbytery as the first Indigenous presbytery in The United Church of Canada in 1982;*
 - *Remembering the establishment in 1982 of the National Native Ministries Council in The United Church of Canada to oversee the work of the first National Native Ministries Coordinator, Rev. Stan McKay Jr.;*
 - *Remembering the local work that led to the formation of All Tribes, Plains, and Great Lakes presbyteries that were the basis of All Native Circle Conference;*
 - *Remembering the historic establishment of All Native Circle Conference, the first Indigenous conference and one that crossed colonial boundaries in 1988;*
 - *Remembering the establishment of BC Native Ministries, in 1988;*
 - *Remembering the establishment of Ontario Quebec Native Ministries in 1989;*
 - *Remembering the establishment of the Aboriginal Ministries Council and its staff the Aboriginal Ministries Circle at General Council Office and beyond in 2008;*
 - *Remembering all the Ecumenical gatherings over the decades;*
 - *Knowing urban Indigenous ministry often differs from that in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities;*
 - *Remembering that according to the 2006 Census, more than half of people identifying themselves in some way as indigenous reside in urban areas; and*
 - *Believing the time has come to foster and support the creation of more urban Indigenous ministries;*

We, the Indigenous faith communities of The United Church of Canada, as an expression of the United Church's adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, call for:

A. A National Indigenous Elders Council:

- i. **with equitable representation from across the country;**
- ii. **Elders who are lifted-up by communities;**
- iii. **with a minimum number of face-to-face meetings.**

B. A National Indigenous Organization:

- i. **comprising various kinds of members like Elders, youth, strategic thinkers, knowledge keepers, and carriers of the history;**
- ii. **members who are lifted-up by the Indigenous communities of faith; including those in urban settings;**
- iii. **with a minimum number of face-to-face meetings;**
- iv. **with a national Indigenous ministry support staff team:**
 - **ministry facilitating staffing to serve all the Indigenous communities of faith;**
 - **distributed equitably across the nation to serve all Indigenous communities of faith;**
 - **with a minimum number of face-to-face meetings.**
- v. **Continued opportunities for the gathering, working together, and supportive work of all the Indigenous faith communities in the United Church, including a National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering, as well as regional and cluster gatherings. These gatherings will honour the cultural and linguistic regions of the Indigenous communities;**
- vi. **That this office organization support a national network of urban Indigenous Ministries.**
- vii. **When we meet, we will honour the local protocols (as determined by the local communities of faith) and we will honour our Elders.**
- viii. **Strong communications strategy and resources necessary to accomplish the work of a national Indigenous organization.**
- ix. **Strengthened relationships between the Indigenous communities of faith and the rest of the United Church with requested Indigenous representation provided for in all aspects of the United Church;**
- x. **Education of all United Church personnel, programs and groups in Indigenous history, culture and contemporary issues to strengthen relations with Indigenous communities of faith and the United Church and to reignite the spiritual, cultural, holistic and healing renewal of whole church.**

6. Concerning Belonging: We Remember, We Say

- *Remembering that during the formation of the first all Indigenous Keewatin Presbytery in 1982 our Elders said we are drawing aside to find ourselves and then we will be back;*
- *Affirming that the Indigenous communities of faith desire to remain a part of The United Church of Canada;*
- *Appreciating our long history of Indigenous ministry that pre-dates the formation of The UCC;*

- *Desiring to live into right relations with The UCC and to find out what the apologies of 1986 and 1998 mean;*

We, the Indigenous faith communities of The United Church of Canada, as an expression of the United Church's adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, call for:

- A. For the right of Indigenous church communities to choose their relationships within a three-court structure;**
 - i. The right to dual belonging;**
 - ii. To fully belong to a regional body, and;**
- B. To fully belong to a national Indigenous body;**
- C. That urban Indigenous ministries be recognized as communities of faith with the same rights and responsibilities.**

7. Concerning Indigenous Community Leadership and Consensus Building; We Remember, We Say

- *Thankful for our predecessors who embarked upon a path that was radical, inclusive, progressive, and courageous for its time. And, that like every generation who's understanding of what it means to be inclusive is ever evolving we realize that our predecessors had a limited and flawed understanding of what it means to be inclusive And, that by recognizing this past we seek to heal relationships that have been broken and to forge new relationships in the future.*
- *Remembering the legacy of the Indian Methodist heritage work prior to the start of the UCC with the first Methodist church at Six Nations in 1822;*
- *Remembering that not all Indian Methodist churches joined the United Church in 1925;*
- *Remembering the legacy of Indian Presbyterian heritage work prior to the start of the UCC;*
- *Remembering all the elders, men and women, youth, and children of our Indigenous communities of faith who began, nurtured and supported the work of the church in their communities;*
- *Recognizing the omission of Indigenous faith communities in the establishment of The United Church of Canada in 1925 and the corrective measures taken in Ottawa in 2012 at General Council 41 to amend the Basis of Union to include this history and legacy;*
- *Acknowledging the redesign of The United Church of Canada's crest to include the four colors of many Indigenous communities and the Mohawk phrase "Akwe Nia'Tetewá:neren" meaning "All My Relations" at General Council 41 in Ottawa in 2012;*
- *Wanting to live in right relations with The United Church of Canada on our own Indigenous terms;*
- *Honouring our Elders who have long stood up for our people in The United Church of Canada from the very beginning;*
- *Remembering the Indigenous community consultations in gatherings and Indigenous communities of faith;*
- *Recognizing the need to honour each Indigenous cultural territory and community of faith in their own decision making processes;*
- *Wanting to ensure a grassroots leadership in making change in the Indigenous communities of faith;*

- *Remembering that Indigenous consensus is not a simple ideal where every single person must agree before the community moves ahead but that individuals also consent to the overwhelming support of decisions and chose to be gracious and not undermine them, even though they may not fully agree with the larger community;*

We, the Indigenous faith communities of The United Church of Canada, as an expression of the United Church's adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, call for:

- Consensus decision-making in the Indigenous faith community be honoured by ensuring enough time (as determined by the Indigenous community) is afforded for community discussion before major issues are decided upon;**
- Resources to help the communications necessary for Indigenous communities of faith to arrive at consensus regionally and nationally;**
- The national church to incorporate Indigenous community of faith input into all its programs, departments, divisions and works.**

8. Concerning Sustainable Support: We Remember, We Say

- *Realizing the Doctrine of Discovery rests on the illegitimate claims of Christian superiority in the Papal Bulls of 1453, 1454 and 1493;*
- *Understanding that the 1793 Royal Proclamation rests on the Doctrine of Discovery and is the basis of colonial claims to underlying radical title to Indigenous lands;*
- *Remembering that the United Church repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery;*
- *Realizing that the sale United Church properties involves Indigenous claims to the land.*
- *Realizing that the UN Declaration is a framework for reconciliation that includes these principles: Indigenous peoples right to participate in decision-making; right to land and resources; and right to self-determination.*
- *Recognizing that a significant number of Indigenous Peoples now dwell in urban communities;*

We, the Indigenous faith communities of The United Church of Canada, as an expression of the United Church's adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, call for:

- Equitable distribution of Mission and Service Funds keeping in mind the whole Indigenous community across the country;**
- A policy be developed to that would ensure there is a percentage of the proceeds of property liquidation allocated to Indigenous ministry and justice work**
- Any properties turned over to Indigenous communities be brought up-to-code before they are transferred;**
- Financial decisions that affect Indigenous communities of faith be determined by the Indigenous communities;**
- Relational connections between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities of faith and Regions be encouraged to continue. Local engagement and support of Indigenous work is valuable and needs to increase;**
- Adequate resources (i.e. financial support, staff, and space, etc.) be included to address the needs of urban Indigenous ministries.**

9. Concerning sexual orientation and diversity: We Remember, We Say

- *Remembering that gender diversity is a revered part of our heritage before colonization;*
- *Realizing that the role of 2-Spirit people in ceremonies and spiritual practices remains relevant to the overall well-being of all our communities;*
- *Recognizing that many LGBTQ2A+² Indigenous people leave their home communities because of intolerance introduced by the colonizers;*
- *Realizing that many LGBTQ2A+ young people are at high risk for suicide;*
- *Remembering the policy that was passed at General Council 40 which: “affirms the participation and ministry of trans people, and encourages all congregations to welcome trans people into membership, ministry, and full participation;”*

We, the Indigenous faith communities of The United Church of Canada, as an expression of the United Church’s adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, call for:

- A. Educational resources that will invite and assist Indigenous communities of faith to support LGBTQ2A+ members and youth;**
- B. That the United Church of Canada through its health benefit coverage plan continue to support employees and their families who are transitioning gender.**

Caretakers Member List

Ray Jones, BC Native Ministries
 George Montour, Aboriginal Ministries Council
 Lawrence Sankey, Aboriginal Ministries Council
 Janet Sigurdson, Council of Learning, All Native Circle Conference
 Bernice Saulteaux, Leading Elder, All Native Circle Conference
 Susan Beaver, Great Lakes Waterways Presbytery
 Robert Patton, Chair of Council on Sharing
 Marlene Lightening, General Council Representative, All Native Circle Conference
 Gloria Cook, All Native Circle Conference
 Evelyn Broadfoot, All Native Circle Conference Alternative
 John Thompson, Sandy Saulteaux Spiritual Centre, Chair of Board
 Martha Pedoniquotte, Ontario and Quebec Native Ministries
 Lee Claus, Aboriginal Ministries Council, Sandy Saulteaux Spiritual Centre Board member
 Teresa Burnett-Cole, Urban Indigenous – Ottawa
 RW Hoekstra, Urban Indigenous – Edmonton

Staff:

Maggie McLeod, Executive Minister, Aboriginal Ministries and Indigenous Justice
 Cheryl Jourdain, Speaker, All Native Circle Conference
 Adrian Jacobs, Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre
 Lisa Anwar, BC Native Ministries

² LGBTQ2A+ is a place-holder that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and transsexual, queer, asexual, 2-Spirit and everyone else! The understanding behind the acronym is that sexuality and gender are fluid and not limited to male and female.

COMMITTEE ON INDIGENOUS JUSTICE AND RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS REPORT

Origin: Committee on Indigenous Justice and Residential Schools Report

Executive Summary

The Committee on Indigenous Justice and Residential Schools was established by the Executive of the General Council in 1998. Its mandate, renewed and expanded in 2010, is to:

- a) Co-ordinate all aspects of the issues related to Indian residential schools, including the legal, pastoral, communications, alternate resolution possibilities, healing and reconciliation initiatives, and financial planning;
- b) Assist the church to live out its apologies through theological reflection and through education and advocacy for Indigenous justice issues including but not limited to land, rights, treaties, the impacts of colonialism, and racism;
- c) Work in partnership with the Aboriginal Ministries Council and collaborate with Kairos, ecumenical partners and Indigenous organizations;
- d) Make full reports, and recommendations as required, to the General Secretary and each meeting of the Executive of the General Council.

In all its work, the Committee is guided by the church's Apologies of 1986 and 1998, and the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015). This report captures highlights of this triennium's work.

The Committee reports to each meeting of the Executive of General Council, maintains the [Reconciliation and Indigenous Justice](#) section of the United Church website, issues an electronic newsletter, "Living into Right Relations," and has a [Facebook page](#). A separate [website](#) provides information on all of the residential schools that the United Church operated.

The Committee meets twice a year, sometimes in community to connect with local residential school survivors and churches. In the past triennium, the Committee met in Toronto, Winnipeg, Morley, Alberta, and by teleconference. We gratefully acknowledge the significant contributions of former member Vic Wiebe, who had to step down for family reasons in 2017; honorary Elder Murray Whetung, who has been unable to travel; and former staff person Cecile Fausak, who retired in 2016 after 13 years' service to the General Council.

Membership

All Native Circle Conference: Norma General-Lickers and William Snow

BC Native Ministries Council: Barbara Wilson and Ray Jones

Ontario/Quebec Native congregations: Martha Pedoniquotte and Ken Albert

Executive of General Council representatives: Cathy Anderson and Norm Seli

General Secretary, General Council: Nora Sanders

Moderator (ex-officio): Jordan Cantwell

Staff Support: Executive Minister of the Aboriginal Ministries Council: Maggie Dieter (McLeod);

Reconciliation and Indigenous Justice Animators: Sara Stratton and Lori Ransom; GCO

Archivist: Nichole Vonk; Program Support: Erin Parsons

Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA)

In May 2006, The United Church of Canada became a signatory to the largest settlement agreement in Canadian history as a result of its role in the Indian residential school system. The other parties were former students, the Assembly of First Nations, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Government of Canada, the Anglican Church of Canada, the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and the Corporation of Catholic Entities, a legal body representing 51 Catholic orders and dioceses which operated schools.

The Settlement Agreement was implemented in September 2007 and contained five pillars: Common Experience Payment (CEP), Independent Assessment Process (IAP), a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), funds for Commemoration, and funds for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF).

In terms of implementation, Common Experience Payments have been made; almost all of the claims that went forward under the Independent Assessment Process have been dealt with; commemoration activities have been supported; funding was provided to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation to extend its mandate; and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has concluded, with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation established to house its history.

The Settlement Agreement is not yet closed and representatives of the Parties continue to meet to monitor outstanding issues, and to work together on the Calls to Action which pertain to them. The exception is the Corporation of Catholic Entities, which was released from the Agreement in 2015.

1. **Financial Obligations:** The United Church was subject to a two-stage payment structure under IRSSA. The base obligation of \$6,455,020 was met. A second stage payment of \$436,150 would have become due only if fundraising by the Catholic Entities exceeded \$20,000,000. In 2015, it became apparent that the Catholic Entities would not reach that goal, and the United Church's second stage payment obligation was therefore nullified.
2. **Document Obligations:** Under the Agreement, the United Church was committed to provide all relevant documents in its possession to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. These are now in the collection of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) in Winnipeg. Staff at the United Church Archives in Toronto continue to monitor the accession of new materials, including current working documents related to the Settlement Agreement.

The Committee has approved an archival project related to day schools (schools run on reserves where students returned home at night), some of which were operated by the United Church and its antecedents. The project will gather and digitize archival materials related to United Church day schools, and to create narrative histories of these schools.

These materials will be shared with the other Parties to the Settlement Agreement and the NCTR.

3. Independent Assessment Process (IAP): As of April 3, 2018, the IAP Secretariat reports receiving a total of 38,098 claims. Of these, 37,660 have been resolved and 438 are in progress. A total of 26,613 hearings were held and 25 remain to take place. Total awards and negotiated settlements paid is 2,601 billion dollars. Total compensation paid, including legal fees and disbursements, is 3,158 billion dollars. The United Church has received 2,877 abuse claims. This is 7.55% of the total claims the IAP Secretariat received, a percentage somewhat less than the estimated 10-12% of students who attended United Church residential schools of the total residential school student population. United Church representatives have attended 328 hearings. The admission of claims and holding of hearings is virtually complete. The remaining work is largely in sending letters of apology, filing decisions, and closing files.

On April 10, 2017, individuals who had represented the United Church of Canada at IAP hearings, as well as at the precursor Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) hearings, gathered by videoconference to reflect on their experiences. Participants spoke to the deep sense of responsibility and humility evoked by their attendance at the hearings. They spoke about the courage of the residential school survivors and their generosity in responding to the Church representatives' presence and words of apology. They spoke to how the experience had profoundly affected their personal journeys of faith and deepened their ongoing commitment to the work of healing and reconciliation. In early September 2017 the Moderator, who had attended the April gathering, sent a letter of gratitude to the 47 people who had represented the Church in 328 ADR and IAP hearings.

Disposition of IAP records is currently at issue. The October 2017 Supreme Court of Canada *Fontaine* decision upheld that individuals had the right to destroy records related to their claims after a 15-year retention period at the IAP Secretariat. Parties to the Agreement are now seeking direction on what they must do with records in their possession. Direction is also being sought on how to inform survivors of the ruling so that they can decide what they want done with their records.

4. Truth and Reconciliation Commission: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was formally concluded in December 2015 with the release of a Final Report. United Church residential school survivors were a part of those events, along with General Council representatives. See below for the United Church's response to the 94 Calls to Action which were a part of the Final Report.
5. Outstanding Issues: Parties have agreed to work together to resolve legal issues related to but not necessarily covered in the Settlement Agreement. These include claims related to: day schools; day scholars (students who attended a residential school during the day but returned home at night); the administrative split (a structural change to the running of schools and residences in the 1960s); student-on-student abuse; and the Sixties Scoop. The

government is engaged in settlement negotiations in all these areas. No legal ramifications have been identified for the churches, though there could well be documentary implications.

In a related matter, the Parties to the Agreement are collaborating in a “lessons learned” exercise to assess what did and did not work well in the design and implementation of the Agreement. It is hoped that this exercise, which will be survivor-centered and trauma-informed, will provide meaningful input into future settlement agreements and the ongoing work of implementing the TRC Calls to Action.

TRC Calls to Action

The TRC Calls to Action were released in June, 2015, and reiterated at the December 2015 closing of the TRC. The Settlement Agreement Churches endorsed all 94 Calls to Action. The United Church monitors and acts on those in which it is specifically named as a church or a party to the Agreement, as well as those related to issues of Indigenous justice.

1. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Of particular note is call to Action 46, a call to the churches to implement the principles, norms, and standards of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as the framework of reconciliation. In 2015, the Committee requested a task group be created to help guide this work within the non-Indigenous Church.

On March 30, 2016, the United Church participated in the release of an ecumenical statement on the Declaration; Moderator Jordan Cantwell joined with other church leaders and former TRC Commissioner Dr. Marie Wilson on Parliament Hill for the event. One day later, the United Church released its own statement on implementing the Declaration at the launch of the Aboriginal Ministries Consultation.

Education and capacity-building on the Declaration continue as structures shift in response to the remits and the *Calls to the Church* from the Caretakers of Our Indigenous Circle. Implementation of the Declaration by the government (Call to Action 43) has been a significant focus of advocacy in the last triennium. The United Church was a key player in the campaign to pass Bill C-262 (an act to harmonize Canadian law with the Declaration) into law. At the time of writing, that campaign had influenced the government’s decision to support the private members’ bill, which was in committee before returning to the House for third reading.

2. Covenant of Reconciliation: Call to Action 46 concerns the creation, by Parties to the Agreement, of a Covenant of Reconciliation which rejects concepts such as the Doctrine of Discovery in favour of the UN Declaration and treaty/nation-to-nation relationships. This work is at an initial stage.

Indigenous Justice

The United Church has a strong history of advocacy on Indigenous land and treaty rights; water; education; social welfare policy; health care; and missing/murdered Indigenous women and girls. We monitor and take action on those Calls to Action related to these areas. All have been reflected in education and advocacy initiatives in the last triennium.

In addition, we apply the principles of the UN Declaration to justice initiatives undertaken in partnership with the Church in Mission (CIM) unit – for example, climate justice and addressing white privilege. In the fall of 2018 CIM and IJRS will co-host a consultation on the intersection of climate justice and Indigenous rights policy in the United Church.

Working with the Aboriginal Ministries Council, we have identified youth engagement in Indigenous Justice work as a priority, and will be holding a dialogue forum on this in late 2018.

Responding to the Legacy of Church Mission and Ministry in Indigenous Communities

An ecumenical working group has begun meeting to discuss the ongoing colonial legacy of church mission and ministry among Indigenous peoples. The goal is to respond to TRC Call to Action 61 which articulates a vision for regional dialogues on “Indigenous spirituality, self-determination and reconciliation.” While churches have apologized for their role in residential schools and continue to work to address the residential school’s legacy, the legacy of spiritual violence and Christian supremacy in Indigenous communities extends beyond what happened in the schools.

The following churches and organizations are represented on the working group: the Anglican Church of Canada, the Christian Reformed Church of North America, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, KAIROS, Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, Mennonite Church Canada, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Salvation Army, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), and the United Church of Canada. The group understands and is sensitive to the diversity of perspectives on the topic of spirituality among Indigenous nations across the country and the need to move thoughtfully and respectfully. This includes being sensitive to relationships among denominations within Indigenous communities.

Right Relations

1. The Anniversary of the Apologies: The Church’s 1986 Apology to Indigenous Peoples for its role in colonization saw its 30th anniversary in August 2016, while the Apology for residential schools (1998) will see its 20th anniversary in October 2018. These apologies, and the events which lead to them, continue to have a profound impact on our church. The 30th anniversary of the 1986 Apology was marked in Sudbury at the site where the Apology was given. The Committee collaborated with the Aboriginal Ministries Council and Manitou Conference to create a meaningful event with the inclusion of many original participants, including Elder Alberta Billy and the Very Rev. Bob Smith. Planning for the 20th anniversary of the 1998 Apology are underway.

2. **Canada-Australia Dialogue:** Part of being in right relations involves exploring the connections not just as Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada, but also across borders. The Committee and the Aboriginal Ministries Council collaborated with the Moderator's office in a reconciliation dialogue with the Uniting Church in Australia and the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress in 2017-18. An Australian delegation visited British Columbia and Saskatchewan and attended the All Native Circle Conference's Grand Council and the National Aboriginal Spiritual Gathering in Pinawa, Manitoba in July 2017. A return group of Canadians visited Australia in March 2018. They experienced rich cultural diversity, time on the land, and a period of serious contemplation of the intersection of gospel and culture. A strong partnership has been formed between our peoples and our churches, rooted in our similar yet distinct histories of colonization.

3. **Living into Right Relations Network:** Indigenous Justice staff met with key contacts from the Living into Right Relations (LIRR) network to discuss the ongoing work of reconciliation in the context of the changing church. Further to this meeting, the Committee affirmed the following objectives for community engagement going forward:
 - a) Explore, develop, and support just and respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples
 - b) Provide education on the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action and stimulate responses.
 - c) Provide education about Canada's and the church's role in the colonization of Indigenous peoples, the need for apology, the generational impacts of residential schools, systemic racism, culture and spirituality, shared history, and treaties (as per TRC Call to Action #59). This includes providing opportunities to learn together, share truth, and increase cultural competency and safety.
 - d) Be present, show up where Indigenous people are seeking justice, celebrating, remembering, mourning, learning, protesting, rallying, and praying.
 - e) Build capacity, leadership development, empower and equip people for the work.

The Committee also affirmed the importance of the LIRR network in carrying out this work. Since the network's inception in 2008, its members have built knowledge and skills, created resources, and developed local relationships with Indigenous peoples and organizations both inside and outside of the church and ecumenically. The LIRR network will continue to have critically important roles to play in responding to the Calls to the Church, implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the TRC Calls to Action.

4. **Being Good Relations:** The work of reconciliation remains at a critical phase for both the church and the nation. In collaboration with the Task Group on the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Committee has concluded that for the next triennium it will focus on education and animation within the framework of "Being Good Relations". Envisioned being in integral relationship with the Calls to the Church, Being Good Relations will, through prayerful study and action, continue to challenge and help the church embody its commitments to the Apologies, the TRC Calls to Action, and the

UN Declaration. In this way, it responds directly to the challenge contained in Remit 1, “[to live] in covenant with Mother Earth and All My Relations in the Earth Community,” and as such is an essential part of the church’s movement forward into the new structure. This work will be guided by a working group, the form of which is yet to be determined.

Doctrine of Discovery

In August 2015 a gathering was held at the Anishinabe Spiritual Centre in Espanola, Ontario to follow-up to the United Church’s action to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery. The Aboriginal Ministries Circle, Indigenous Justice and Church in Mission staff collaborated to plan and resource this working event. A team of four facilitators led the participants through a process to awaken United Church constituencies on the ongoing colonial legacy that affects the church and all Canadians. The gathering invited strategies to embody the apologies, the repudiation, and the commitment to reconciliation. A [new section of the website](#) was developed to reflect this work and some new resources on the Doctrine of Discovery.

Justice and Reconciliation Fund

Applications to the Justice and Reconciliation Fund have increased to the point that demand now outstrips capacity of the Fund to respond. From January 2016 to April 2018, the Fund has granted almost \$272,000 to 55 projects. The Committee celebrates the increasing interest in and attention to relationship building, educating communities of faith, and living out of the Church’s apologies to Indigenous peoples. The Fund benefitted from a decision taken by Paisley United Church in Paisley, Ontario (Bruce Presbytery of Hamilton Conference), which closed in 2014. The congregation decided to direct a portion of the proceeds of the sale of its building to the ongoing work of building right relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The CIJRS, in turn, affirmed a plan to top up the \$75,000 allocated annually to the Justice and Reconciliation Fund by \$25,000 per year from the Paisley legacy, which is being held by the United Church Foundation.

IMPLEMENTING THE UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AS THE FRAMEWORK FOR RECONCILIATION

Origin: Task Group on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Introduction

The Task Group on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, created by the Executive of General Council in November 2015, responds to the missional call to right relationship and a ministry of reconciliation, and to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, specifically Call to Action 48 which entreats the church to adopt the principles, norms, and standards of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation.

The calls to right relationship and the ministry of reconciliation underlie the United Church's long history of advocacy for Indigenous justice and our commitment to address our own complicity in colonization, residential schools, and the social inequalities that continue to be experienced by Indigenous peoples in Canada today.

The Task Group includes representatives from the Permanent Committees, the Aboriginal Ministries Council, the Committee on Indigenous Justice and Residential Schools, three Conferences, and the Mission and Service Fund. These representatives are:

Ken Albert, Committee on Indigenous Justice and Residential Schools

Russell Daye, Maritime Conference

Greg Glatz, Mission and Service Fund

John Hurst, PC Finance

Bev Kostichuk, PC Governance & Agenda

Will Kunder, Manitou Conference

Jean Macdonald, PC Ministry & Employment

Mark Marshall, London Conference (stepped down, Fall 2017)

Mary Royal-Duczek, PC Programs

Janet Sigurdson, Aboriginal Ministries Council

William Snow, All Native Circle Conference

Brian Thorpe, Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee

Staff Support:

Sara Stratton, Indigenous Justice and Reconciliation Animator

Maggie Dieter, Executive Minister, Aboriginal Ministries and Indigenous Justice

The Task Group was mandated to:

- a) Develop and implement a process to engage the whole church in complying with this Call to Action, providing a mechanism with which to assess compliance; and

- b) Develop, by March 31, 2016, as recommended by the commission, a statement to the Canadian public indicating how the Church is living out this call, and a format for ongoing reporting.

The second part of this mandate has been fulfilled, with a statement issued at the launch of the Aboriginal Ministries Council Consultation on 31 March 2016 and an ongoing summary of the Church's response to the Calls to Action, including those related to the UN Declaration. These are among the resources available on the church's [UN Declaration webpage](#).

The first part of this mandate is significantly underway at various levels of the church.

Educational opportunities on the UN Declaration have been provided to General Council Executive, Permanent Committees, and Staff Leaders. Training has begun for staff. Committees have also been asked to engage in a process of policy review and have been furnished with an assessment tool to help them with this process. Some committees are further along in this process than others. Committees have reported that it is easier to factor the UN Declaration's principles, norms, and standards into emerging policy than it is to revise older policy. The Task Group believes that governance structures still need encouragement in this work, particularly given the impending changes in structure.

Conference engagement has also been undertaken, though given the impending shift to regions, it has taken an education and advocacy framework rather than one oriented to policy and structural review. This included a request for agenda time at the Spring 2017 Conference meetings. A video was prepared linking the principles, norms, and standards of the UN Declaration to the issues facing Indigenous communities today, and a workshop prepared to encourage advocacy with the federal government for implementation of the UN Declaration (Call to Action 43). Varying levels of engagement were reported. This, plus the work emerging from the *Caretakers' Calls to the Church* and the remit implementation team indicate to the Task Group the necessity of continued outreach to the regional councils as they begin to take shape in late 2018 and become the new structure in 2019. Continued outreach to communities of faith is also required. The Task Group (in conjunction with the Committee on Indigenous Justice and Residential Schools) therefore supports an education and advocacy focus on "Being Good Relations" for the whole of the next triennium.

In summation, the Task Group does not foresee the work of policy review and of implementation of the UN Declaration at all levels of the church being completed before the Task Group's mandate ends at General Council 43, and therefore supports the creation of a home or structure in which to house the oversight of this work as the new structure of the church unfolds.

THEOLOGY AND INTER-CHURCH INTER-FAITH COMMITTEE ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

Origin: Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee (Daniel Hayward, Chair)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a committee of the General Council, the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee has been working during this triennium on projects carried over from the previous triennium (Adoption, Hindu-United Church Relations, Land and Covenant, Medical Assistance in Dying, and Membership), new projects (Aboriginal Spiritualities and the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification), dialogues with the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches, and the church's ongoing ecumenical and inter-faith relations. The Committee produced major reports on Theologies of Adoption and Medical Assistance in Dying. This workbook contains two proposals to this 43rd General Council: a report on Membership, and a statement on Hindu-United Church relations.

Introduction

The Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee is a committee of the General Council. We provide regular updates on our work to the Executive of the General Council, and are called to full accountability at the General Councils held every three years under our current organization. This accountability report, therefore, will address matters that have been referred to us by the 42nd General Council, issues that have arisen during this 2015-18 triennium, and also work that has carried over from the previous triennium.

ONGOING WORK

A. Aboriginal Spiritualities

The Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee and its predecessor, the Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee, have helped to facilitate the church's efforts at dialogue and seeking understanding with Jews, Muslims and Hindus through the major study documents *Bearing Faithful Witness, That They May Know Each Other*, and *Honouring the Divine in Each Other*. The Committee's focus on Indigenous issues in the Land and Covenant work has assisted it in recognizing that Aboriginal Spiritualities should be looked at in a concerted way, building on the work done in *The Circle and the Cross* document adopted at the 39th General Council.

Most references to date, including *The Circle and the Cross*, have spoken of "Aboriginal spirituality." During the Committee's meeting in October 2015, it became apparent that there is diversity in the spirituality of Indigenous peoples in Canada that requires the use of the plural "Aboriginal Spiritualities." As well, it is intended that consultation on Aboriginal Spiritualities include dialogue on indigenous spiritualities in the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Latin America and elsewhere. The Committee is also aware that there is great sensitivity in Indigenous communities about spiritualities, with tensions between people who follow traditional teachings and people who practice Christianity.

This is a long-term project, similar to the previous three major inter-faith study documents, and it is not work the Committee can do alone. An approach was made to the Aboriginal Ministries

Council to gauge interest in a collaborative undertaking that will eventually result in a document that will be commended to the church for study. During 2017 it became apparent that there are so many issues now facing Indigenous churches that producing a full report is not possible or needed at this time.

The Committee continues to be willing to take up this project at a time appropriate for the Aboriginal Ministries Council.

B. Adoption

In November 2013 the General Council Executive directed the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee to research and write a position paper regarding adoption and to create a United Church of Canada statement on adoption, giving consideration to other denominational statements on adoption and to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This request by the Executive was the result of a report from the Adoptions Task Group it had established in March 2013, following meetings with individuals and organizations concerned with the experiences of women whose children were placed for adoption from maternity homes operated by the United Church during the period from 1940 to 1980.

This was a major piece of work and a multi-faceted project that continued into this triennium, and included a consultation inviting feedback with stories of adoption. The report on Theologies of Adoption was submitted to the General Council Executive at its March 2018 meeting and adopted by them. The report reflected theologically on scripture connected with adoption, theological motifs raised in the stories submitted as part of the consultation, and issues of family and adoption in Canadian society. Among the topics covered in the report are the role of the United Church in historic maternity facilities, adoption from Aboriginal communities, forced adoption, child welfare, adoption in the LGBTTTQ+ community, and international adoption including interracial and intercultural adoption. In its work, the Committee was struck by the complexity of these issues. For some—whether an adoptee, an adoptive parent, or a parent who placed a child for adoption—the experience has been largely positive. For others, the experience has been negative, and for still others, mixed.

Committee chair Daniel Hayward testified to the Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology in April 2018 as part of that committee's hearings on adoption policy.

C. Anglican-United Church Dialogue

In 2016 the Anglican-United Church dialogue released *Called to Unity in Mission: A Report of the Anglican Church of Canada-United Church of Canada Dialogue, 2012-2016*. The report offered recommendations in relation to co-ordinating mission activities more closely, sharing resources, and ongoing conversation about ministry, including episcopacy. With the acceptance of these recommendations by each denomination, a new phase of the dialogue began in 2017, focussing on pursuing the way forward on mutual recognition of ministry between our two churches, including renewed support for ecumenical shared ministries.

D. Hindu-United Church Relations

Work was begun by the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee following the 40th General Council to study Hindu-United Church relations. This study followed earlier studies of the United Church's relations with Judaism and Islam. It is believed to be the first major examination by a Christian denomination of relations with Hinduism, and is groundbreaking in that sense.

The study resource *Honouring the Divine in Each Other: United Church-Hindu Relations Today* was completed prior to the 42nd General Council and made available online for study and response by communities of faith. The Committee invited comments on a proposed statement on Hindu-United Church relations as the basis for revising the statement to be presented to the 43rd General Council. As stated in the proposal containing the statement (found elsewhere in this workbook), the Committee was disappointed to receive few responses to the study. However, the study period coincided with intense activity in communities of faith voting on remits.

The Committee is going forward with the proposing the statement to this General Council in order to encourage continued dialogue with our Hindu neighbours, and as another step in deepening our relationships with other faith traditions.

E. Inter-Church and Inter-Faith Relations

Committee chair Daniel Hayward was part of The United Church of Canada's delegation visiting China from November 28 to December 8, 2015, at the invitation of the China Christian Council and the National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China. At the same time, Committee member Mathias Ross, along with Executive Minister Michael Blair, represented the United Church at the 9th Consultation of United and Uniting Churches, held in Chennai, India, from November 25 to December 2, 2015, under the auspices of the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order Commission.

Committee member Teresa Burnett-Cole serves on the World Methodist Council, which met in Houston, Texas, as part of the 21st World Methodist Conference from August 30 to September 3, 2016.

Member Grace Eun Kyung Lee represents the Committee on the Migrant Church Working Group, which seeks to expand the United Church's links to communities of faith affiliated with denominations outside Canada.

The World Council of Churches is celebrating its 70th anniversary this year. The celebration began on January 7 with a service at Chongwenmen Church in Beijing – a church visited by the United Church of Canada delegation two years previously. At the World Council of Churches' Central Committee meeting in Trondheim, Norway, in June 2016, the United Church of Canada's representative, Miriam Spies, was elected to the Worship Planning Committee for the World Council's 11th Assembly in 2021. The Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee

lifts up the active engagement of a significant number of United Church of Canada elected members and staff with the World Council of Churches and the Canadian Council of Churches.

This triennium has seen the implementation of the agreements signed at the 42nd General Council on Full Communion with the United Church of Christ and Mutual Recognition of Ministry with the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea and the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. The Committee has sought to live out Full Communion with the United Church of Christ in ways that have included work on a joint response to *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, an ecclesiology document from the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches.

Discussions began in this triennium with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada. Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee chair Daniel Hayward participated in meetings with the Disciples in April and September 2017 on a possible Full Communion agreement. The United Church was invited to name one of two representatives of North American communions who are full voting members of the General Board, the governing body of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada. Committee chair Daniel Hayward was appointed, and attended the General Board meeting held in Newton, Iowa, from April 14 to 17, 2018, where the Board approved a proposal to move towards Full Communion between the two denominations. In this workbook there is a proposal that this 43rd General Council declare and celebrate that a state of Full Communion exists with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

F. Justification

In 2016 the World Communion of Reformed Churches (of which The United Church of Canada is a member) asked member churches for feedback on the Statement of Association with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. Associating with the declaration would place the Reformed churches within a widening ecumenical consensus on a fundamental doctrine, which already includes the Lutheran, Roman Catholic, and Methodist churches, and is affirmed in substance by the Anglican Communion.

The Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee responded to this request in October 2016, stating that The United Church of Canada welcomes and rejoices in such further movement towards Christian unity. The Committee especially welcomed the fact that this further unity is rooted in the doctrine of justification, God's unmerited, unconditional, freedom-giving love for all people and God's creation. The Committee also affirmed and celebrated the Joint Declaration's emphasis on the unity between justification and sanctification, as well as justification and justice.

Based on the responses from member churches, the World Communion of Reformed Churches' Executive Committee decided in December 2016 to hold a ceremony of association with the Joint Declaration during the World Communion's General Council, in Leipzig, Germany, from June 29 to July 7, 2017. The United Church of Canada had a substantial presence at this World

Communion gathering, including elected member delegates, staff, resource people and stewards.

G. Land and Covenant

During the previous triennium the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee began an examination of the issue of land in Israel and Palestine from a covenantal perspective. It was quickly realized that land needed to be understood, not just in the biblical concept of land as it pertains to Israel and Palestine, but also from the perspective of the land within Canada and the relationship of both Indigenous and settler peoples to the land.

The Committee has continued to work throughout this triennium in a study of the theologies of land, rooted in the Canadian context and particularly in Indigenous title and stewardship, but open to local and global issues. In the next triennium, 2018-21, the Committee will be preparing and disseminating a study guide that could include prayers, scripture, questions, and background resources on issues of Theologies of Land, such as conquest, stewardship, care for creation, land and identity, relationality, and Indigenous perspectives on land as foundational.

H. Medical Assistance in Dying

At the request of the General Council Executive in March 2015, the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee has been working to examine the theological implications of Medical Assistance in Dying and to offer guidance to the Executive on the development of a church statement on this issue. This work included a consultation in Toronto in September 2016 with theologians, ethicists, physicians, and people with disabilities and their allies.

A statement composed by the Committee was presented to the Executive at the May 2017 meeting and adopted as an official statement of the church. Briefly, the statement expresses that The United Church in Canada is not opposed in principle to the federal legislation allowing assistance in dying and to such assistance being the informed, free choice of terminally ill patients. There are occasions where unrelenting suffering and what we know about the effect of pain on the human body can make Medical Assistance in Dying a preferable option. However, the church urges a cautious approach by legislators and medical professionals implementing these laws, as well as by individuals, families and communities of faith who are considering making use of this option. We advocate an affirmation of the dignity and intrinsic worth of every life in relation to community, and community-focused and theologically robust discernment on a case-by-case basis that also ensures the protection and care of those potentially made vulnerable (e.g., people with disabilities, the frail elderly, those with mental illnesses, those without personal advocates) by legislation permitting Medical Assistance in Dying. To this end, it is important to engage communities of faith, and the broader community, in conversations about death and dying, and to develop greater capacity to assist members of the church who are facing end of life decisions.

Work is underway to supplement the statement with resources for study, sermon development, worship, personal contemplation, and conversation that assist individuals, families, health care professionals, leaders and communities of faith in dealing with the

challenges presented by end of life decisions from advance care planning to Medical Assistance in Dying.

I. Membership

Membership has been a focus of the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee's work in the last two trienniums. The Committee reported to the 42nd General Council on a new model of membership for the church; General Council then directed the Committee to invite the church into a study of the meaning of membership, including the relationship of baptism and membership, and bring to the 43rd General Council a recommendation of membership for the church.

The Committee produced a study document for circulation throughout the church in the winter of 2017, using two different models—Model One, a slightly amended version of the United Church's current model, and Model Two, a new and different model. It was hoped that the responses received would give an indication of the mind of the church about membership. However, it is clear from the responses to the study document that there is no consensus within the church regarding membership. A summary of the responses received, the two visions of membership, the Committee's current thinking, and recommendations for possible action by this General Council can be found in the proposal on membership elsewhere in this workbook.

J. Roman Catholic-United Church Dialogue

This dialogue has continued discussions on our churches' responses to the ecological crisis. The dialogue has recently released *The Hope within Us: A Report on Climate Change by the Roman Catholic-United Church Dialogue in Canada*. The report reflects on our theology of creation in relation to climate change and calls our people to unite in common witness and action for creation's well-being. The dialogue also prepared an Earth Hour Vigil as a worship resource for ecumenical witness. With the completion of this report, the dialogue is now moving into conversations about ministry, with emphasis on exploring the ministries of all the people of God, in particular how lay people are called into ministry in God's mission.

Summary

The Committee's accountability report to the 42nd General Council concluded that "as can be seen in this report, we have been assigned a vast array of tasks from a variety of concerns within the church." This has continued to be very much the case in this triennium. And it is still the case that tackling such a diverse body of work requires committee members with experience and agility in handling matters of theology and church polity, and a diversity of interests and backgrounds. All of the Committee's members deserve the thanks of the General Council for the time and effort they have devoted to theological questions and the ecumenical and inter-faith relations of The United Church of Canada.

Committee Members this triennium:

Daniel Hayward (chair), Darlene Brewer, Teresa Burnett-Cole, Alison Etter, Jennifer Janzen-Ball, Carmen Lansdowne, Grace Eun Kyung Lee, Martha Martin, Mathias Ross, Earle Sharam, Bill Steadman, Ryan Slifka, Collin Smith, Brian Thorpe

Staff Support:

John Young, Gail Allan

Recommendations:

TICIF 1 Report on Membership

TICIF 2 Proposed Statement: Honouring the Divine in Each Other: United Church-Hindu Relations Today

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND HEALTHY PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS REPORT

Origin: General Secretary, General Council

Background

The work of the Effective Leadership and Healthy Pastoral Relationships (ELHPR) project is the culmination of study and testing of pastoral relations processes and oversight and discipline policies for the past 18 years.¹

The 41st General Council, 2012 authorized the testing of new ways of doing pastoral relations and oversight and discipline under the following principles:

- a) Flexible to contextual and regional differences across the church;
- b) Supported within the overall financial capacity of the church;
- c) Reflective of, but not limited to, a model within which:
 1. The pastoral charge and the presbytery be accountable for the discernment and articulation of mission and ministry leadership needs, and the support and nurture of pastoral relationships and ministry personnel;
 2. The conference be accountable for the pastoral relations processes related to placement, oversight and discipline of ministry personnel; and finally
 3. The courts resource pastoral relations as well as oversight and discipline policies with trained paid accountable staff.

The Effective Leadership and Healthy Pastoral Relationships project was originally designed around ten program goals:

1. improving the “fit” of pastoral relationships as reported by ministers and pastoral charges
2. increasing the number of ministers and pastoral charges who report having a “healthy relationship”
3. increasing the number of ministers who state that they receive the support they need to perform their ministry well
4. decreasing the number of ministry personnel who report that they feel isolated
5. increasing the vitality of pastoral charges and other local ministries
6. proving viability within overall financial capacity
7. decreasing volunteer workload
8. increasing the competency for handling pastoral relations, oversight and discipline
9. increasing the consistency within each Conference in how pastoral relations, oversight and discipline are handled; and
10. increasing the efficiency of pastoral relations, oversight and discipline.

The Conferences participating in the Effective Leadership and Healthy Pastoral Relationships project include: British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario, Manitou, London, Toronto, Bay of Quinte, Montreal and Ottawa, Hamilton, and Maritime. The participating Conferences were given allowance by the Sub-Executive of the General Council

¹ If you would like to know more about the background of the ELHPR project, we offer this presentation for your information: <https://sway.com/nuKMTu8lChknfXs0?ref=Link>

(commons.united-church.ca; search “2013-05-16 GCSE,” p. 75) to operate outside of some of the pastoral relations policies of *The Manual* for the sake and length of their Effective Leadership and Healthy Pastoral Relationships test.

Each of the Conferences designed their own test model, which resulted in four types of tests:

1. movement of all pastoral relations and oversight and discipline policies to Conference, with a focus on collegial support and programming in the presbyteries (British Columbia, London, and Toronto);
2. movement of all pastoral relations and oversight and discipline policies to Conference, with a focus on collegial support and programming in the presbytery, but with the test limited to one presbytery within the Conference (Hamilton and Manitou);
3. test through the Conference, but limited to select policy/procedural policy changes (Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario); and
4. test within two or more presbyteries, and limited to select policy/procedural policy changes (Maritime, Bay of Quinte, and Montreal and Ottawa).

The participation of Saskatchewan Conference was focused on the collection of data regarding the financial and volunteer hours associated with current pastoral relations and oversight and discipline processes. For a number of reasons, including geographical challenges, the data collected did not allow for a comparison with the whole project.

These tests were evaluated during the first and second years and a summary of these evaluations were reported to the 42nd General Council, 2015 (commons.united-church.ca; search “GC42-2015 Record of Proceedings,” p. 657). Also in 2015, the Executive of the General Council approved that the recommendations contained in the report inform the development of new policies consistent with the directions determined by the 42nd General Council, 2015 with respect to church polity and structure. Subsequently, the 42nd General Council, 2015 authorized that the testing continue until such time as new polity and policies are established.

Update during this Triennium

In 2016, the Permanent Committee on Ministry and Employment Policies and Services (PC-MEPS) formed a new Effective Leadership and Healthy Pastoral Relationships working group to monitor the tests and evaluate the principles associated with the model, and develop policy change proposals. The goal of this group was to evaluate and harvest findings from the test projects to inform the remit implementation process related to the Three Council model, the Office of Vocation and the elimination of Transfer and Settlement, which necessitates changes to the pastoral relations processes.

The focus of the working group was:

1. to identify the consistent principles used in this project that the church values enough to carry forward, and what was tried, but can be let go of (divided into policy and best practices);
2. outline what policies would be needed for ELHPR depending on which remits pass;
3. bring non-participating Conferences into the conversation

The working group collected data from nearly every Conference, including Conferences involved in the project tests and those who were not. These data were organized according to current policies, processes, and practices for pastoral relations, vocational support for ministry personnel, oversight and discipline of ministry personnel, the role of Ministry and Personnel committees, and presbytery pastoral oversight. The data provided the working group with an overview of current policies and practices, in these areas, in testing and non-testing Conferences.

After reviewing these data, the working group sought to gather more narrative comments from the testing Conferences, in particular. In March 2017 members of the working group and resource staff hosted Conference-based conversations with Conference staff, Conference and presbytery leaders in the areas of pastoral oversight, oversight and discipline, and the project testing, ministry personnel involved in the search process during the testing, and pastoral charge leaders involved in work of the tests, such as search and interview processes, mission articulation or M&P Committee annual assessments. The objective of these conversations was to harvest narratives, but also to collect effective and non-effective practices from the testing Conferences. The All Native Circle Conference were also included in this piece of consultation to enable the working group to gain an understanding of how this Conference has adapted pastoral relations policies and processes for their contextual realities.

The working group reviewed the results and findings of these conversations. The group also utilized the Conference's own project evaluations, which many of the testing Conferences shared. In all of its harvesting of information, the working group learned how important clear and consistent communication was within the testing Conferences. It was valuable to maximize communication. The group learned how important communication will be in the transition process to new systems and this learning will inform new policy implementation.

Six themes emerged from this final evaluative harvesting of the project:

a) **Ministry profiles: *naming our faith community story***

The group harvested information on both profiles of pastoral charge and of ministry personnel. From the testing, it was apparent that it is helpful for both pastoral charges and ministry personnel to name who they are and what are they called to do. Profiles help to identify the essence of one's ministry and calling. Also, it is helpful for the profiles to be flexible not formulaic, and can draw upon prior work, like a JNAC report. Profiles need to be easily completed by a pastoral charge without a lot of staff support, and not necessarily linked to pastoral charge transition.

b) **Accompaniment/Resourcing**

The current system of two presbytery representatives being heavily involved in every step of the Joint Needs Assessment Committee and Joint Search Committee processes requires far too much volunteer energy and can slow down the process. The testing identified how helpful it was to have a liaison or presbyter offer support from the Conference with a defined number of connections with the search committee without having to be at every

committee gathering or every congregational meeting. The testing showed that this type of accompaniment allowed for a speedier process. The liaison provided oversight to the process on behalf of the denomination and acted as a resource for the search committee in their process. The group also learned that the resourcing and training of interview teams by one staff person can be challenging within current capacity. However, it can be a challenge for dedicated presbytery volunteers to let go of their involvement in the pastoral relations process, in the midst of change.

c) Application process

The working group harvested information on different ways that testing Conferences processed applications by ministry personnel to fill a vacancy. Many testing Conferences had the Conference personnel minister collect applications and check eligibility before forwarding to the interview committee. However, there was an incorrect perception that the personnel minister was not only checking the application for completion and eligibility but doing some vetting to only send the most appropriate applications forward. The working group was worried about one staff person being responsible for this step in the process and what would happen if they were ill or on leave for a period of time. Although, the verification of completeness of an application and the check of the applicant's eligibility before forwarding to the interview team was found to be very helpful and positively received. The working group also harvested the benefits and challenges of the matching tool used in Toronto Conference, which also was a tool to connect pastoral charges with anonymous ministry personnel through their profiles. The tool did not use any algorithms to predict best fit or best match. The working group was attracted by the justice-focus of the matching tool, which sought to address bias and cultural assumptions in matching ministry personnel and pastoral charges for calls and appointments. The working group learned how it had allowed racialized ministry personnel to get an interview when they previously would not have.

d) Care of pastoral charges

The working group learned that simplified processes, like a living ministry profile or an essence statement, could enable the presbytery or Conference to know about the ministry in a pastoral charge and encourage it. Through the creation of these profiles, the presbytery sought to fulfill their pastoral oversight responsibility. With the movement of so much work to the Conference, presbyteries in some testing Conferences were uncertain how to fulfill their pastoral oversight responsibility. While the focus shifted to accompaniment and relationship building, this was challenging for some presbyteries in some testing Conferences.

e) Collegiality

The working group harvested information on building collegiality among communities of faith and among ministry personnel, within the testing Conferences. As part of their goal of building healthy pastoral relationships, some testing Conferences intentionally focused on leadership development of ministry personnel, through the use of retreats and learning circles. The working group heard that this was very beneficial and created energy within the

presbytery. The move of oversight and discipline to Conference in many testing Conferences meant that presbytery could be a place of developing healthy relationships. In some of the testing Conferences, the group learned how important it was to determine how the staff-based support to ministry personnel (via a minister to the ministers) could be done separately from those involved in the pastoral relation or disciplinary processes. There was also a harvesting of learning that collegiality will not appear when other work and responsibilities are taken away, collegiality needs intention to make it happen.

These five themes that came out of the evaluation were used to create the new covenant process.

f) **Oversight and discipline harvesting for the Office of Vocation**

The working group was not only focused on harvesting information related to pastoral relations from the testing Conferences, but also gathered learning related to oversight and discipline. The Office of Vocation will have responsibility for the accreditation, oversight and discipline of ministry personnel, if the remit is enacted and implemented. The working group learned how heavy a toll oversight and discipline can be for presbyteries. It was important to learn that it was beneficial to separate the people (either staff or a small commission) involved in a disciplinary process from the people involved in pastoral relations work and the support of pastoral charges. The testing Conferences relied on staff for support in oversight and disciplinary processes, especially in the informal work before something escalates to a review. The harvesting of the working group confirmed the value of having the court of collegiality separate from the court of oversight of ministry personnel.

The working group, along with the Office of Vocation advisory group (also appointed by PC-MEPS), used the information gathered through the process of harvesting to inform the drafting of policies to guide the new covenant process, new covenant policy, and the Office of Vocation. Through the fall of 2017, the ELHPR working group collaborated with the Office of Vocation advisory group in consulting different stakeholders to gather feedback on these drafts. The details of these consultations are included in the policy proposals.

The working group is grateful for the testing Conferences for their work in the Effective Leadership and Healthy Pastoral Relationships project and their willingness to share their insights, learning, and evaluation with the working group during their mandate this triennium. The working group expresses gratitude to the testing Conferences for their generosity in contributing their resources to the development of new resources to support new policies. The working group is grateful to the many faithful and competent presbytery and Conference volunteers throughout our church who have dedicated many hours to the work of pastoral relations and oversight and discipline.

Recommendations

That the General Council

- Receive this Report for information;

- Thank the Effective Leadership and Healthy Pastoral Relationships Working Group, and the working groups that have come before in the direction of this project; and
- Thank the Conferences for their participation in this project.

If you have questions regarding this report please email them to gc43@united.church.ca.

MANUAL COMMITTEE REPORT

Origin: General Secretary, General Council

The Manual Committee is composed of the following six elected members:

Linda Anderson	Peter Bishop
Alan Boyd	Fred Braman
John Burton (Chair)	Mary-Beth Moriarty

Cynthia Gunn, one of the church's Legal/Judicial Counsel, serves as a corresponding member.

The role of the Manual Committee is to assist the General Secretary, General Council in her responsibility for preparing *The Manual* and conducting remits.

The Committee acts as a resource to the General Secretary in proposing wording for the amendment of existing by-laws or the creation of new ones to reflect policy changes made by the General Council. The Committee's work includes addressing any gaps or inconsistencies in *The Manual*, and recommending improvements to the language and style of *The Manual* generally. The Committee also drafts remits, which are circulated by the General Secretary to presbyteries (and pastoral charges as required) after the form and content of the remits have been approved by the Executive of the General Council.

During the past triennium, Cindy Randall and George Thurlow completed their terms as elected members. The Committee is grateful for their service and welcomed Linda Anderson and Fred Braman to its work.

The 2016 edition of *The Manual* is the first edition to be published following the complete re-writing of the by-laws in the 2013 edition. The Committee had received positive feedback from the wider church on the style and format of the 2013 edition and so followed the same approach for the 2016 edition. It was made available both in hard copy format and as a PDF document on the General Council web site.

The Committee held three in-person meetings during the triennium: in September 2015, May 2017 and September 2017; and one meeting by conference call in October 2015.

At the two meetings in 2015 the Committee's primary agenda was the drafting of changes to *The Manual* to reflect the policy decisions made by the 42nd General Council 2015. The Committee also drafted the remits that had been authorized by the 42nd General Council in 2015. Both tasks are time-sensitive, given the deadlines for publication of *The Manual* and the issuance of remits.

The Committee recognized that if these remits are enacted, the changes to the Basis of Union would be the most substantive ones ever made to the Polity and Order of Ministry sections. In

drafting the remits, the Committee decided to keep to the wording of the actual decisions adopted by the 42nd General Council 2015 rather than preparing specific new wording for the Basis of Union and including it in the remits themselves as in the past. That gave the Committee the benefit of more time after the remits were issued to consider the best approach to revising the Basis of Union and to prepare those revisions in a thoughtful way.

As part of that process, the Committee devoted one of its meetings to reviewing the existing constitutional documents of the United Church and visioning a new approach that might better fit the current church context. The learnings from that conversation have been shared with the General Secretary for future consideration.

There are no proposals from the General Secretary to the 43rd General Council 2018 for specific improvements to the wording of the existing by-laws. While it is customary for the Committee to recommend to the General Secretary that she initiate such proposals, the current remits (if enacted by the 43rd General Council 2018) will require significant re-writing of the by-laws in any case. That task will be the Committee's primary and immediate focus in the next triennium.

John W. Burton
Chairperson

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

Origin: The Nominations Committee, Executive of the General Council

The General Council and its Executive are supported in their mandates, in part, through the work of a number of committees and task groups as well as people serving as representatives of The United Church of Canada with various partner organizations. The Nominations Committee is charged with recommending the members who will serve on these committees and in these roles. Where other courts or groups are authorized to recommend or to appoint members to committees of the General Council, the Nominations Committee compiles these recommendations into a coordinated report.

The majority of the Nominations Committee's work is on behalf of the Executive. This triennium, there are three areas of note where the committee served on behalf of the General Council directly:

- 1) Boundaries Commission – The Nominations Committee was directed by the Executive to bring to the special meeting of the 42nd General Council a recommendation of 7-9 members to serve as the Boundaries Commission. This call for nominations resulted in 50 nominations from across the church. The recommended 9 members were appointed by the 42nd General Council.
- 2) Denominational Council Executive, 2019-2021 – The Nominations Committee was directed by the 42nd General Council, at its meeting in September 2017, to bring to the 43rd General Council a recommendation of 15 members to serve along with the Moderator, the immediate past Moderator and the General Secretary as the Denominational Council Executive. Nominations are being brought forward by the Conferences and the Aboriginal Ministries Council. The Nominations Committee anticipates up to 66 nominations for these 15 positions. The Nominations Committee's recommendation will come forward as proposal *Nominations 1*.
- 3) Committees accountable to the General Council – Each triennium, the Nominations Committee recommends members to serve on those committees directly accountable to the General Council, or coordinates these recommendations on behalf of Conferences. The Nominations Committee's recommendations for these committees will come forward as proposal *Nominations 2*.

In offering its recommendations, the Nominations Committee follows the related guidelines and polices set by the Executive of the General Council, makes use of spiritual discernment practices, and respects the United Church's commitments to diversity, becoming an intercultural church, and embracing the leadership of youth and young adult members.

Appreciation for those who have served

The Nominations Committee notes with appreciation those who served as members of the Executive, General Council committees and the Boundaries Commission of the General Council during this past triennium.

Archives and History Committee – Wayne Harris (chairperson), Julielynn Anderson, Edward Avey, Joan Benoit, Rod Coates, Diana Duncan-Fletcher, Mary Gooley, John Haas, Gerald Hobbs Pamela McLeod, Dawn Monroe, Helen Reed

Audit Committee – Hugh Johnson (chairperson), John Hurst, Lindsay Mohn, Robin Pilkey, Garnet Webster, Leah Weiss

Judicial Committee – Margaret McKechney (Chairperson), Ted Black, John H. Brown, Gail Christy, Rhonda Clarke-Gauthier, Ronald K. Coughlin, Ken Fraser, Bob Gibson, Diana Ginn, Lynda Goy-Flint (Executive), Lorraine Harkness, James H. Hillson (Executive), Fannie Hudson, Marilee Iverson, Jon Jessiman (Executive), Laurie E. Joe, Penny Keel (Executive), Stan Lanyon, Bob Little, Donald Little, Steven Longmoore (Executive), Susan MacAlpine-Gillis, Paul Macklin (Executive), Gary Magarrell, Kathleen McCallum (Executive), Ben McKay, Ellen Mole, Brad Morrison (Executive), Charlene Orr, Cindy Randall, Paul Reed, Barbara Anne Reynolds, Walter Rilkoff, Florence Sanna, Kerri Seward, Joan Silcox-Smith, Betty Lou Skogen, David Smith (Executive), Greg Smith-Young, Lorna Standingready (Executive), Nancy Steeves, Paul Stott, Steve Wilson (Executive), Robert Wright, Ruth Wright

Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee – Daniel Hayward (Chairperson), Darlene Brewer, Teresa Burnett-Cole, Alison Etter, Jennifer Janzen-Ball, Grace Lee, Carmen Lansdowne, Martha Martin, Mathias Ross, Earle Sharam, Ryan Slifka, Collin Smith, Bill Steadman, Brian Thorpe.

Transfer Committee – Philip Newman (Chairperson)

Boundaries Commission – Andrew Richardson (Chairperson), Nicole Beaudry, Mark Laird, Ryan McNally, Marion Parady, Janet L. Sigurdson, Lorraine Stewart, Gordon Waldie, Sarah Jane Wetelainen

The Executive of the 42nd General Council – Jordan Cantwell (Moderator), Gary Paterson (Immediate Past Moderator), John E. Ambrose (corresponding), Cathy Anderson, Janice Asiiimwe, Richard Balson (deceased), Félix Bigirimana, Miriam Bowlby, Susan Brodrick, Jean Brown, Wendy Brown, Janice Brownlee, Graham Brownmiller, Phyllis Buchner (corresponding), Russel Burns, Brenda Curtis, Kenneth DeLisle, Larry Doyle, Judith Evenden, David Fines, Paula Gale, Vilvan Gunasingham, Nelson Hart, Cathy Hamilton, Sean Handcock, Adam Hanley, Andrea Harrison, Dan Hayward, Lauren Hodgson (corresponding), Sungmin Jung, Deb Kigar, Bev Kostichuk, Gabrielle Lamouche, Aidan Legault, Lori Lewis, Marlene Lightning, Jean Macdonald, Jim McKibbin, George Montour,

Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde (corresponding), Caroline Penhale, Tim Reaburn, Noah Richardson, Donna Rumpel, Lawrence Sankey, Phillip Schuyler, Michael Shewburg, Janet Sigurdson, Norm Seli, Miriam Spies, Anna Stewart, Nancy Sutherland (corresponding), Norma Thompson, Erin Todd, Pauline Walker, Vic Wiebe, Donalee Williams, Sybil Wilson, Doug Wright.

Faithfully submitted, by Graham Brownmiller, chairperson, on behalf of the Nominations Committee:

Paula Gale – Newfoundland and Labrador
Sean Handcock – Maritime
Andrea Harrison / Cathy Hamilton – Montreal and Ottawa
Judith Evenden – Bay of Quinte
Jim McKibbin – Toronto
Tim Reaburn – Hamilton
Doug Wright – London
Erin Todd – Manitou
Anna Stewart – Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario
Brenda Curtis – Saskatchewan
Donalee Williams – Alberta and Northwest
Graham Brownmiller – British Columbia
Marlene Lightning – All Native Circle
Diane Bosman & Shirley Welch (staff)

Recommendations

Nominations 1 – Recommendations for Appointment to the Denominational Council Executive

Nominations 2 – Recommendations for Appointment to the Committees of the General Council

JUDICIAL COMMITTEE REPORT

The Judicial Committee (which meets as an Executive of thirteen of the fifty-two members, four named by each Conference) held eight meetings by telephone conference in the period since August 2015. The Executive considered whether or not to hear three appeals and was directed to hold a formal hearing.

The Executive of the Judicial Committee deals primarily with appeals at the General Council level from Decisions of Formal or Appeal Hearing panels, Conferences, the Executive or Sub-Executive of the General Council and from Rulings made by the General Secretary of the General Council.

During this term, Reverend Margaret McKechney chaired the meetings and Nora Sanders acted as secretary. New representatives to the Executive from several Conferences joined the Executive as of August 2015 including Reverend Lynda Goy-Flint for Newfoundland and Labrador, Ms. Laurie Joe for Montreal and Ottawa, Mr. David Smith for Hamilton and Reverend Steve Wilson for the Conference of Manitoba and Western Ontario. Mr. Paul Stott was appointed to the position to represent Toronto Conference in March 2017; Reverend Jim Hillson resigned as the representative on the Executive for Alberta and Northwest Conference in November 2016.

In the term from 2015 to 2018, the following items were dealt with and are reported here:

Item 1

Reverend Gretta Vosper appealed General Secretary Ruling 15-001-R. Nora Sanders did not participate in any of the discussion or decision making concerning whether or not to hear the appeal. At the time this matter was considered Toronto Conference did not have a representative on the Executive. The Executive first considered the preliminary objection that the appellant was not directly affected by the Ruling. The objection was dismissed and the Executive proceeded to consider the submissions by the appellant and the respondent with respect to whether or not the appeal meets the grounds for appeal. The Executive concluded it would not hear the appeal as the grounds for an appeal were not met. Reasons for the decision not to hear the appeal were provided to the appellant, Reverend Vosper.

Item 2

Reverend Karen Rodman appealed a decision of London Conference as a result of a review. Reverend Brad Morrison, member of the Executive from London Conference did not participate in the deliberations with respect to whether or not to hear this appeal. Submissions made by Reverend Rodman and London Conference were considered by the Executive and the decision was made not to hear the appeal as it did not meet the grounds for appeal. Reasons for the decision were provided to the parties.

Item 3

Gibsons United Church appealed the decisions of Vancouver-Burrard Presbytery related to the

sale of their church. Jon Jessiman, representative to the Executive from British Columbia did not participate in the deliberations with respect to this matter. The Executive considered the submissions of the parties and decided not to hear the appeal as it did not meet the grounds for appeal.

Item 4

Toronto Conference requested General Council to hold a formal hearing to consider whether to place Reverend Gretta Vosper's name on the Discontinued List (Disciplinary). The Sub-Executive of General Council directed the Judicial Committee to hold the hearing and report the results to the Executive of General Council. The Judicial Committee Executive appointed Justice Robert Blair, Reverend Roslyn Campbell and Reverend Kate Crawford to hold the hearing.

Members of the Judicial Committee

Reverend Margaret McKechney, Acting Chair, Judicial Committee Executive, Saskatchewan Conference

Lynda Goy-Flint, Newfoundland and Labrador Conference

Jon Jessiman, British Columbia

Laurie Joe, Montreal and Ottawa

Steven Longmoore, Maritime Conference

Paul Macklin, Bay of Quinte Conference

Kathleen McCallum, Manitou Conference

Brad Morrison, London Conference

David Smith, Hamilton Conference

Lorna Standingready, All Native Circle Conference

Paul Stott, Toronto Conference

Steve Wilson, Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario

CONFERENCE RECORDS REVIEW (2012-2015)

Background

The Manual provides:

Oversight of Conferences

E.2.3.1 General

The General Council is responsible for the oversight of the Conferences.

This responsibility includes

(b) reviewing the records of the Conferences.

Past practice has been for the General Council to appoint a committee of Commissioners to review the records of each Conference (including Executive and Sub-Executive) for the previous triennium. The review used to take place over the course of the meeting of the General Council, with the committee reporting its findings by the end of the meeting. For the committee, reviewing these records was a huge time commitment that had the potential to affect their availability to participate fully in the various sessions of the General Council. There is no requirement in *The Manual* that this review take place at the meeting of the General Council.

GC 41 set out a process to be followed which was to appoint a Task Group to review the records with a report to GC 42. Subsequent to GC 42, and in an effort to continue to simplify the processes for review of Conference records, the records were sent to staff in the General Council Office.

Process

In preparation for the review, Conference Records were submitted electronically in advance of 42nd General Council 2015. All Conference records were received, though one was submitted in hard copy only.

The minutes of each Conference were reviewed.

Findings

The minutes of the Conferences for the triennium concluding August 2015 were reviewed by General Council staff. The minutes of the Conferences are in order. The format of the minutes is appropriate and minutes of the Conferences reflect the work that is being done and is within the scope of the authority of the Conferences.

ARCHIVES AND HISTORY COMMITTEE REPORT

Committee Structure and Responsibilities

The Archives and History Committee (AHC) is a mandatory standing committee of General Council, which is, according to *The Manual* (Section E4.8.3a), responsible for coordinating and promoting the archival and historical activity of the United Church.

The AHC consists of: a Chair, appointed by General Council; two representatives from the Academic Community, also appointed by General Council; one representative from each of the 13 Conferences; the General Secretary or designate; and the General Council Archivist as a resource person. The Executive of the AHC includes the Chair, the General Council Archivist, the General Secretary or designate, and two other members selected from the AHC.

For the first two years of the triennium, the AHC met in person once a year for a day and a half to transact its business. During the last part of the triennium, the AHC met a number of times electronically.

Sub-Committees:

There are currently two sub committees reporting to the Archives and History Committee: Historic Sites – Wayne Harris (Chair), Julielynn Anderson (MAR), Nichole Vonk (Staff Resource), Dawn Munroe (MAN), and Gerald Hobbs (BC). This Sub-Committee is responsible for updating the ‘Honouring Our Heritage’ website, located at <http://www.ucheritage.ca>, and vetting submissions. More will be said later.

Artifacts – Julielynn Anderson (MAR), Sarah Wallace (MAR Conf Archives), Nichole Vonk (Staff Resource), Mary Gooley (TOR). The purpose of this Sub-Committee is to investigate how to manage artifacts from various levels of the church.

The United Church Archives Network

The Network consists of the professional archivists of the United Church - the General Council Archivist (Nichole Vonk) and the Conference Archivists. The five Central Conferences (London, Hamilton, Toronto, Bay of Quinte, and Manitou) have one full time archivist (Erin Greeno). The General Council Archives and the Archives of the five Central Conferences operate from the same location: 40 Oak Street, Toronto.

The other Conferences; British Columbia, Alberta & Northwest, Saskatchewan, Manitoba – Northwest Ontario, All Native Circle, Montreal and Ottawa, Maritime, and Newfoundland and Labrador, each have a part time archivist. They are located in a variety of locations: Provincial Archive facilities, Universities, Conference Offices.

Work the Archives and History Committee continued in the 2015-2018 Triennium

Historic Commemorative Programme

The Historic Sites Sub-Committee completed its research into setting up a commemorative

programme for the United Church of Canada. During the past triennium, this Sub-Committee updated and re-launched the website <http://www.ucheritage.ca>. At present, there are nine commemorations listed: Old Hay Bay Church; Formation of the United Church; Stella Burry; Peter Jones; Formation of Truro Presbytery; Trinity United Church, Charlottetown; (Annie) May McLachlan; Rev. Daniel Cock; and Rev. David Smith. Please go to the website for complete information on the nominating process.

Artifacts

The Artifacts Sub-Committee will be an ongoing sub-committee.

As the Sub-Committee proceeded with the work that was set out by the AHC, they circulated a survey to the local churches and found that a large number of people are interested in and need help with recording and preserving their artifacts.

Discussions

During the triennium, the AHC discussed the United Church's policy regarding the copying of / access to the Church Registers, and the possibility of space in the General Council Offices for displaying and preserving artifacts of national significance to the United Church.

We have also started to study the Archival Network Review that was commissioned by the Archival Network Review Advisory Task Group of The United Church of Canada.

Staffing

A Digital Archives Specialist was hired by the General Council Archives in March 2017. The Digital Archives Specialist assists with the Archive's websites and IT systems, as well as making recommendations for long-term digital preservation. The Digital Archives Specialist also provides some assistance to Conference Archivists.

FULL COMMUNION: ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA AND THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2016, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the US and Canada and The United Church of Canada determined that a full communion agreement would provide an opportunity to bear witness to the importance Christian unity in North America, and strengthen the ministry of both of our denominations. This report offers reflections on issues and implications relating to full communion, as background to the proposal that the two denominations undertake a full communion agreement.

The Disciples Canadian Region and the United Church have a long-standing history together. Our relationship spans from local congregational partnerships, to educational and ecumenical endeavours, and includes an unsuccessful union talk that took place between 1969-1985. A lasting product of those conversations are joint United-Disciples congregations in Winnipeg and Calgary. Some Disciples clergy serve in United Church congregations and in general church leadership. Theologically, we both have a passion for justice and mission and hold similar “statements of faith.” There are significant differences in governance and the administration of the sacraments, but the Planning Group has discerned that these are not barriers to a full communion relationship. Both denominations are in full communion with the United Church of Christ in the USA; we share global partners through Global Ministries and Church in Mission. An agreement between The United Church of Canada and the Disciples of Christ would “close the triangle” and mark a new era of ecumenical partnership in North America.

Full communion agreements generally rest on five pillars of acceptance and cooperation: common confession of Christ, mutual recognition of members, common celebration of the Lord’s Supper/Holy Communion, mutual recognition and reconciliation of ordered ministers, and common commitment to mission. The two denominations have understood a full communion as a living and growing relationship. We will learn how to live in this covenantal relationship through rich theological conversations, enhanced witness and mission, and diverse spiritual life and worship.

Congregations can embody full communion through shared worship and mission, congregation or clergy exchanges, or shared networks. National, bi-national, and international possibilities include collaboration in global partnership work, response to the challenges of migration, connecting youth and young adult networks, and joint work in the areas of stewardship, human resources, and communications. Along with mutual recognition of ministries, there may be opportunities for partnership in theological education. Many creative possibilities in our relationship will be discovered as we live into our mission and ministry together.

The planning group recognizes challenges as well as opportunities, including institutional capacity, learning to know each other in our present contexts, restrictions on immigration, and the challenges both denominations meet in becoming intercultural, justice-seeking churches.

The gospel of Jesus Christ calls on the followers of Christ to live life in unity for the sake of the world, so “that the world may believe....” (John 17:21) May this journey of full communion be truly transformative and may God lead this journey with divine wisdom and in grace.

INTRODUCTION

In 2016, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada and The United Church of Canada identified an interest in exploring greater fellowship and potentially a closer relationship between our two denominational bodies. Preliminary conversations suggested there were distinct benefits in greater partnership, not only on the Canadian side of the border, but in our two nations.

In December 2016, a formal meeting of leaders in both denominations took place in Toronto, Canada. Over the course of two days, both sides decided that working towards a full communion relationship is desired. There are, of course, many local, regional, and international implications of such an arrangement, but the leaders determined that this provided an ideal opportunity to bear witness to the importance and power of Christian unity in North America and to strengthen the ministry of both of our denominations. Each denomination named six representatives to explore further the issues involved and prepare a proposal for a full communion agreement. The group met twice in person and in video conferences. This report offers their reflections on issues and implications relating to full communion, as background to the proposal that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, and The United Church of Canada undertake a full communion agreement.

Although many Disciples in the United States may not know The United Church of Canada well, the Canadian Region and the United Church have a long-standing history together. Our relationship spans from local congregational partnerships where United and Disciples have presence together in various towns and cities, to educational (a cooperative agreement with Emmanuel College in Toronto from 1930s-60s), to ecumenical (both founding members of the Canadian Council of Churches), to an unsuccessful union talk which took place between 1969-1985. A lasting and blessed product of those conversations and cooperation are two joint United-Disciples congregations—one in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and one in Calgary, Alberta. In addition, many Canadian Disciples clergy are still educated at United Church seminaries, and some Disciples clergy now serve in United Church congregations and in general church leadership. Theologically, we both have a passion for justice and mission and hold similar “statements of faith.” There are significant differences in governance and the administration of the sacraments, but the Planning Group has discerned that these are not barriers to a full communion relationship.

The United Church of Canada reached a full communion agreement with the United Church of Christ (USA) in October 2015. The relationship between these churches is encouraging a closer relationship between Global Ministries, including the Division of Overseas Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada and the Church in Mission unit of The United Church of Canada. An agreement between the United Church and the

Disciples of Christ would “close the triangle” and mark a new era of ecumenical partnership in North America.

The two denominations have understood a full communion partnership as a living and growing relationship. This partnership doesn't simply mean that we accept one another. Rather, we embrace each other fully in the witness of Christians, the ministries of the Church, and the mission of God. In this covenantal relationship, we commit to being one Church, not in merger but in God's gift of unity, that serves the world that God so loves. The two churches will learn how to live in this covenantal relationship through rich theological conversations, enhanced witness and mission, and diverse spiritual life and worship.

The gospel of Jesus Christ calls on the followers of Christ to live life in unity for the sake of the world, so “that the world may believe...” (John 17:21) The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada and The United Church of Canada have been committed to the visible unity of the church and one ecumenical movement for decades. As the two denominations enter this closer relationship to participate fully in God's mission for this world, may God lead this journey with divine wisdom and in grace.

Brief History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada traces its beginnings to the early national period in the United States of America. Disciples point to the work of four founders to describe their origins. All four men had ties to the Presbyterian Church. Barton Stone (1772-1844), the only one born in America, served as the sponsoring pastor for the Cane Ridge revival, drawing 10-30,000 attendees during the Second Great Awakening. The camp meeting revivals brought controversy. Stone withdrew from Presbyterianism and, with others, formed a loose association of congregations resolving “to sink into union with the body of Christ at large.” These congregations took the name *Christian* and gained strength in North Carolina, Southern Virginia, Kentucky, and Ohio.

Thomas Campbell (1763-1854) and his son, Alexander (1788-1866), were Scotch-Irish Presbyterians who arrived in the United States in 1807 and 1809 respectively. In 1808, Thomas withdrew from the Presbyterian Church in Pennsylvania when he was rebuked for serving the Lord's Supper to Christians not associated with his brand of Presbyterianism. A year later, he formed the Christian Association of Washington, Pennsylvania. Shortly after this event, his family arrived. Alexander, 21 years old, quickly became a leading figure. Members of the Christian Association adopted the name *Disciples*. By 1830, with the help of evangelist Walter Scott (1796-1861), who had arrived from Scotland in 1818, the movement grew rapidly and formed congregations in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia.

The earliest Disciples congregations included African Americans as members, though Disciples also included members who participated in the enslavement of others. Disciples were able to hold the church together during the Civil War. Yet, when the Churches of Christ (Non-Instrumental) separated from Disciples in 1906 by arguing that Disciples had become a denomination through the creation of national missionary organizations, the majority of those

associated with the schism were located in the South. Black Disciples formed a separate, but cooperating, organizational life in 1917 known as the National Christian Missionary Convention. During 1969, as part of the formal restructuring of the Disciples life, a merger was enacted that brought the National Christian Missionary Convention into the newly established Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The resulting National Convocation continues to meet to discuss special concerns affecting African-American Disciples.

In 1812, Alexander Campbell affirmed believers' baptism by immersion as the proper Christian baptism. This led to a brief (1815-1830) affiliation with Baptists. Disciples disrupted Baptist life by seeking reform and urged Baptists to eschew denominational names in order to unite around the simplicity of the apostolic faith, illustrated by the Disciples commitment to 'no creed but Christ.'

The first signs of these Disciples-like commitments in Canada appeared in the Maritime Provinces (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island) by 1810 in the form of mostly Scotch Baptist connections. Most of these early leaders (John R. Stewart, Alexander Crawford, James Murray, and John Stevenson) had some connection to Scotland. By the 1820s, an American, William W. Ashley, married a Canadian and carried Alexander Campbell's writings to Halifax. During the 1830s, a number of the Scotch Baptist congregations established connections to the Disciples congregation in Halifax. By the 1850s, a more formal association of Disciples congregations emerged in the Maritimes. The first Disciples congregation in Ontario appeared at Cobourg in 1836. By 1943, some twenty-four congregations in Ontario were associated with Disciples. It took a number of decades before Disciples life appeared further west in Canada, in the area of the Prairies.

During the 1820s, Campbell's Disciples and Stone's Christians discovered one another. By 1832, they had worked out a formal union that combined about 22,000 members. This union left a legacy of two names. Present-day congregations are known as 'Christian' churches, while their members are called 'Disciples.' In 1968, the denomination adopted its current name, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

In the United States and Canada, Disciples membership stands at around 455,000 (around 274,000 participating members) divided into some 3300 congregations. Around 10% of Disciples members are African-Americans, with much smaller percentages of Hispanics and various Pacific Asian Disciples. The states of Texas, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, and Ohio contain about one-third of all North American Disciples. In addition, the church's Common Global Ministries Board (with the United Church of Christ) oversees work among some 2.7 million indigenous Christians across the world who call themselves Disciples.

Early Disciples hoped to unify the church by restoring the faith and practices of the earliest congregations described in the Bible. For this reason, their worship included the weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper, open to all who professed Christ. Contemporary Disciples continue this practice. Their early commitment to believers' baptism also continues, though contemporary congregations welcome infant-baptized persons into church membership

without rebaptism. Essentially, early Disciples members expressed their commitment to four principles:

- (1) the *Interpretation Principle* represented their commitment to the Bible, primarily for its testimony about Christ, who, as revelation of God, has always represented the ultimate authority for Christian life. Disciples affirmed the role of interpretation in reading the Bible, as public process, informed by the ideas and understanding of the whole of Christianity;
- (2) the *Restoration Principle* emphasized the purity and simplicity of earliest Christianity as guide. Today, Disciples recognize apostolic Christianity possessed far more diversity than earlier Disciples understood, and this principle currently underlines the task of the ecumenical church to understand together the voice of God in the midst of the human voices that surround them;
- (3) the *Ecumenical Principle* stressed their longstanding commitment to church unity; and
- (4) the *Eschatological Principle* pointed to their confidence that God is at work in human history and their belief the church appropriately responds by working toward the realization of the kind of justice that is promised when the reign of God is realized.

Disciples ordained women to ministry as early as the late 1880s. During the late 19th century, leaders among Disciples embraced the scientific spirit that swept American Protestantism after 1870. They fashioned a critical approach to the Bible open to the newest developments in scientific understanding and human knowledge. As Disciples shared this budding “liberal” vision, they began to doubt that any group of Christians, even the ancient Christians, could truly capture the divine message in its entirety. This realization strengthened their historic commitment to ecumenism.

Disciples are perhaps best known for their deep yearning for Christian unity. Disciples often quoted John 17:21, “that they may all be one . . . so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” Both the United States and Canadian Churches are founding members of the World Council of Churches (1948). Canadians were founding members in the Canadian Council of Churches (1944), and the Disciples in the United States were founding members of both the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ (1910) and the National Council of Churches (1950). Disciples have served key leadership roles in all these organizations. In the late 1980s, Disciples and the United Church of Christ formed an ecumenical partnership. Together, they have helped to shape Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC), the partnership of nine denominations that grew out of the Consultation of Church Union (COCU).

Today, Disciples sponsor seventeen colleges and universities and four theological seminaries. Each of these schools is diverse, with the vast numbers of students coming from religious affiliations other than Disciples. They also maintain support for three ‘foundation’ houses located at the University of Chicago, Vanderbilt University, and in Claremont, California. These houses support Disciples masters and doctoral students in non-Disciples institutions.

Brief History of The United Church of Canada

The United Church of Canada came into existence as a denomination in 1925, through a union of the Methodist Church, Canada, the Congregationalist Churches, and about two-thirds of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. These three denominations were joined by a number of local union churches or congregations that had formed, particularly in Saskatchewan, in expectation of such a union.

The driving forces for church union were largely practical, not theological. Chief among them was the challenge of finding the resources, both of finances and personnel, to serve a Canadian population growing rapidly in the early twentieth century, especially on the Prairies, as a result of heavy immigration.

Another key motivation was the conviction that a united Christian Church could help produce a “Christian Canada.” The primary supporters of church union in all three denominations would have described themselves as liberal evangelicals; they held a strong attachment to both evangelism and social service. It is not accidental that these three denominations were key players in the Moral and Social Reform Council, founded in 1908, and its successor body, the Social Service Council of Canada (1912). Advocates of church union saw a “united church” as a stronger force to tackle social ills in early twentieth century Canada. These advocates were heavily represented among moderate Social Gospellers, but church union had significant support in both the radical and the conservative wings of that movement.

Practical motivations notwithstanding, these uniting denominations also shared a conviction that the lack of unity in Christianity was a scandal needing to be overcome. They saw church union as a step in that direction. John 17:21, “that they may all be one,” served as a guiding scriptural text and underlying theological rationale for this enterprise.

While most Methodists and Congregationalists entered the new United Church, church union proved sharply divisive among Canada’s Presbyterians. Noticeable opposition in the Presbyterian Church was present from shortly after church union talks began in 1904. It grew in strength and intensity after the completion of a draft Basis of Union in 1908. In 1925 about two-thirds of the Presbyterian membership and about seventy percent of its clergy came into the United Church, those not entering remaining as a continuing Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Two things marked the period from 1925 to 1939. The initial years saw a consolidation of the church union process as the denomination put together new pastoral charges, worked out governance details, and produced both a hymnal and a service book. The Great Depression also dominated these years. The United Church had many congregations in the southern Prairies, an area buffeted doubly by low commodity prices and severe drought.

The two decades after World War II saw immense growth for the United Church by almost every statistical measurement, e.g., candidates for ministry, the formation of new congregations, church membership, Sunday School enrolment. The mid-1960s to the present has seen a gradual but steady moving away from participation in organized religion in Canada;

indeed, Canada could now be rightly described as an increasingly secularized society. The United Church has, along with many other mainline denominations, seen a steady decline since the late 1960s in all those statistical measuring points where it had seen growth in the immediate post-World War II era.

The 1970s saw the first wave of what would be a dramatic increase in the number of women being ordained. While the United Church approved the ordination of women in 1936, relatively few women were ordained prior to the early 1970s. In 1988, the United Church declared, after bitter debate across the denomination, that no impediment existed to the ordination or commissioning of self-declared gays and lesbians.

Similar to other Canadian denominations that operated residential schools for Canada's Indigenous population, the United Church has apologized to that Indigenous population for its role in the residential schools and also for its participation in efforts to destroy Indigenous cultures, a goal of both the missionary efforts among Canada's Indigenous population and the residential schools. As part of its commitment to reconciliation, including with its own Indigenous membership, in 2012 the United Church added the words "All My Relations" (in Mohawk) to the United Church crest. This action, and the apologies by the United Church, stand within a broader effort by Canadian governments and Canadian society to engage in a reconciliation process with Canada's Indigenous peoples.

From its beginning, the United Church has committed itself to ecumenism, declaring in the 1930s that it saw itself as a united and a uniting church. The 1960s probably represent the high point of the United Church's lived commitment to ecumenism. In 1968, a significant portion of the Evangelical United Brethren denomination in Canada joined with the United Church at the same time as its American counterpart joined the Methodist Church in the United States. Discussions toward church union with the Anglican Church of Canada began in 1943. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) joined those talks in 1969. The Anglicans withdrew from the conversation in 1975. Conversations between the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada and The United Church of Canada continued until 1985 but ended without reaching the hoped-for goal. In recent years the United Church entered into a full communion agreement with the United Church of Christ and mutual recognition of ministry agreements with several other denominations.

The report of a "Commission on World Mission" to the twenty second General Council (1966) signaled a significant re-thinking of the United Church's approach to world mission and to its understanding of Christianity's relationship to other world religions. Among other things, the Commission recommended that "[t]he church should recognize that God is creatively and redemptively at work in the religious life of all [hu]mankind." That re-thinking led to a new emphasis on interfaith relations and subsequent reports, beginning in 1997, on United Church relationships with Judaism, Islam, Indigenous Spiritualities, and Hinduism.

Context: Why Now?

The context to which we bring this conversation of full communion is one of an increasingly diverse society, rural depopulation, expanding secularism, and in the case of The United Church of Canada, an incredible amount of denominational change. As with a full communion agreement, this is not a backdoor to the union; it is an attempt to find common ground in which to plant seeds for God's mission and ministry.

Because the Disciples of Christ has an existing presence in Canada, it is important that both denominations are clear that this is a partnership not an amalgamation. We must show that together we are stronger and able to continue the work of Christ's church in our varied communities while maintaining our own unique identities.

Specifically, in the Canadian context, our two denominations share a common land and social context. We may even think that we are the only progressive voice in our communities. A full communion agreement can benefit both denominations in supporting one another, possibly sharing resources at all levels of the church, giving congregations permission to reach out to one another on common issues or projects when in the past our differences might have kept us apart.

Although both denominations are distinct entities within the one body of Christ, we recognize a number of commonalities that encourage us to pursue greater collaboration and partnership:

- Our ministries are rooted in the gospel imperative to work for justice, personally but more importantly systemically;
- Mission is at the heart of who we are as Christ's church. We are aware of the centrality of mission to our identity both globally and locally. We are likewise critically cognizant of the damaging impact of colonialism on our shared involvement in the world, and therefore a renewed emphasis and intentionality to live and interact differently with our global partners. We also repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery;
- We are both engaging diverse heritages and changing overall contexts and are challenged by the question "how do we speak and move with integrity in this new landscape?";
- Mission and partnership are part of the important, reconciling interfaith work in which we are both actively engaged. We recognize that we live within a landscape of religious pluralism and that as Christians, we are not the center of the universe. We share a common cause in the desire to live into the equity of all faiths and find ways to partner across the spectrum for the greater good;
- God is working in ways that have humbled both denominations and have called us to seek greater collaboration across the body of Christ, living into the call to be one body, and to seek unity not uniformity;
- In the local context we are already working together: we share two joint United Church-Disciples of Christ pastorates (Campbell-Stone United, Calgary, and Broadway Disciples United, Winnipeg); in many rural and urban settings where the Disciples of Christ and the United Church exist within close proximity our congregations have been working together in public witness and service for decades;

- We face similar challenges and strategies which include but are not limited to: the challenge of generational splits; the challenge/opportunity of new technology and communication patterns; the opportunity of engaging immigrant and marginalized communities, recognizing the diversity of the gifts they bring into the body of Christ;
- We are both in full communion relationships with the United Church of Christ in the USA;
- We share global partners through Global Ministries and Church in Mission;
- We have gifts to share with respect to the justice work we have done independently of one another: the Disciples of Christ with respect to anti-racism/pro-reconciliation in the life of the church, and the United Church with respect to full inclusion and celebration of LGBTQ+ in the life of the church; and
- We recognize that being Christian today is counter-cultural, and that there are abundant blessings and challenges as we engage the rich diversity of belief, worship, theology, and Christology exhibited in different generations and cultures. We are committed to being open to the movement of the Spirit as we work to greater inclusivity, acceptance, and collaboration.

Many of our congregations are in a rural context where they are the only Protestant denomination in the community. Those of other denominations may or may not feel welcome or comfortable. The more we can identify our commonalities, the greater the chance that those who feel isolated in their faith may cross the threshold and find a supportive Disciples or United Church community.

The Bigger Picture: Why “Now” is Exactly the Right Time for These Talks

The immediate context out of which we have emerged, namely, the “modern” period, worked under a different set of principles and realities than those we are embedded in today. A time of building and reinforcing institutions and ideologies within a technological framework vastly different from today, the recent past celebrated the triumphalism of Christianity in identity silos which provided little opportunity to truly engage in the partnership models we explore today. We mistakenly believed that we were all successful doing our own things in our own denominations and whatever unions we dreamt of and pursued were perceived to be about compromise and competition rather than collaboration, assimilation rather than mutuality and celebration of difference. We, perhaps, were unable to conceive of this kind of partnership in our recent past.

The future for the church in North America is uncertain at best and bleak at worst, as our nations appear to continue on the journey of public secularization. At its bleakest, many denominations will merge with great compromise, hurt, loss, and some measure of humiliation until there are only a handful with the resources to continue to function. At its best, the continued persistence of denominations is called into question as more and more post-modern thinking Christians question their validity in light of the call to Christian unity. The continued erosion of denominations leads to a weakened universal church in North America with few able to muster the energy and resources to effect significant transformation in the public sphere,

focusing instead, on survival or at least how to have dignity in death. To wait until some undecided point in the future to have these courageous conversations, may indeed, be too late.

The context we must embrace at this point in our shared life together is that the church is not ours but belongs to the Divine who uses as much of it as has heart and openness to be so used. As such, we are stewards of the resources—human, infrastructure, wealth, creativity, compassion—that have been entrusted to our care. In this age of lightning-fast technological change, communications that we could not have dreamed of 20 years ago, and seemingly limitless information at our fingertips 24/7, we have an unprecedented opportunity to be leaders in the restoration of Christian unity to the heart of the church and in the minds and hearts of the children of God under our care. We do so not for our own survival, but so that the gospel of Jesus Christ might be lived out anew, impacting and transforming communities and lives in ways we could not have accomplished in the past. We have always been called to be one body; now is the time to believe it and live it.

To answer the question, “why now?” we ask, “if not now, when?” Our young adults and mature adults are already exploring options to be church differently in this post-modern age. Many of the systems that served us well in the past are in the process of becoming obsolete and something new must take their place. The demands of ministry and mission in the world are infinitely more complex while financial and other resources are reduced. Why would we wait any longer to embrace the call to be partners, joined together more intentionally to accomplish the task of being the hands and feet of Jesus in the world?

Full Communion

What does an ecumenical partnership or “full communion” mean? These terms do not define a merger between different denominations. An ecumenical partnership emphasizes more a style of pragmatic unity in terms of witness, service, fellowship, worship, and the proclamation of a common faith. Both the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the UNITED STATES and Canada and The United Church of Canada each currently have a full communion agreement with the United Church of Christ. These ecumenical partnerships or “full communion agreements” generally rest on five pillars of acceptance and cooperation. Each of these pillars is rooted in scripture and based upon theological understandings reached and explored by both *COCU Consensus: In Quest of a Church of Christ Uniting* (1984) and the *Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry* document (1982).

The Five Pillars of Full Communion

- (1) “Common Confession of Christ.” This pillar is built upon the common faith shared by both churches, that God is in Christ, reconciling the world to God’s self, and is the One in whom “we live and move and have our being.” (2 Cor. 5:19; Acts 17:28) In an ecumenical partnership, both churches covenant to be mutually accountable in their witness to Christ in the world today.
- (2) “Mutual Recognition of Members.” Both churches believe that we have much to learn from the expressions of faith found in other Christian communities. In this second affirmation of full communion, both the United Church and the Disciples of Christ

recognize and affirm one another's baptisms, and also affirm the members of one another's churches. In full communion, both churches would agree to the "transfer of membership" between their local congregations "by letter." Neither church would give up its own approaches to the practice of baptism or church membership. Instead, their commitment to one another represents a desire to express their commitment to the fact that any differences in practices in this area should not divide them as churches.

- (3) "Common Celebration of the Lord's Supper/Holy Communion." Since these churches confess Christ in common, and since they recognize one another's baptism and accept one another's members in each other's congregations, it naturally follows that they should encourage congregations to cross borders where they might be geographically close to one another and to share worship and communion together. Both churches celebrate an open table, open to all who are connected to Christ, and both recognize the table calls us into community and toward a commitment to justice for all God's children.
- (4) "Mutual Recognition and Reconciliation of Ordered Ministers." In full communion, the two churches would affirm one another's ordered ministries as belonging to the one ministry of Jesus Christ. Such ministers in one church will be recognized as ministers in the other church. Each may serve, when invited, as minister to the other. Though ministerial credentials are immediately recognized, each minister will need to go through the standard processes established by each denomination to gain official "standing" within the denomination.
- (5) "Common Commitment to Mission." This fifth pillar of full communion between our two churches recognizes that mission is not an option for the church; rather it, like unity, is part of its very essence. When churches are not engaged in mission, they cease to exist as a church. As our two denominations enter into full communion, we will explore ways of supporting each other in God's mission in our own countries and around the world.

The Local Congregation as the Incarnation of Full Communion

One of the great gifts of the Christian faith is the knowledge that God became one of us. The incarnation is a demonstration that God cares for us enough to be one of us. Another insight given to the Christian faith is that the church is the Body of Christ, and as such is another manifestation of the incarnation.

Within The United Church of Canada and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, full communion is an important aspect of our witness to the world about God's desire for us to "be one, so that the world might believe." (John 17) However, there is a tendency within the ethos of the church to think of full communion as something "out there" or "up there," rather than being an action with local currency. In other words, one might say that full communion needs an incarnation of sorts to bring what might seem to be an ethereal concept into a living, breathing reality.

This concept will become real when congregations actually embody full communion. Both communions have within their local worship a faith-filled recitation of the elements of their faith in the proclamation of shared truth. *A New Creed* of The United Church of Canada begins

with the words “We are not alone, we live in God’s world.” These words tend to bring the transcendent quality of God’s existence into the physical everyday world in which our people live. However, these same words might also have a reference to our sisters and brothers the planet over, and a particular reference to those denominations with whom we share a close walk of faith through ecumenical bonds. As the Preamble to the Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) puts it “we enter into newness of life and are made one with the whole people of God.”

In order to help incarnate the oneness of the church, we recommend that congregations be invited to consider the practice of reciting the statement of faith from their own denomination alongside the statement of faith of those other communions with whom they share a formal ecumenical relationship. The worshipping life of Broadway Disciples United Church (a shared ministry in Winnipeg) was enriched by rotating our statements of faith along with the historic Nicene-Chalcedonian Creed and the Apostles’ Creed. This would not be limited to The United Church of Canada and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, but would include statements of faith from other communions with whom they share this ministry, such as the United Church of Christ (USA), the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, and the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea. It might also be possible to develop membership/confirmation materials based upon these shared affirmations of faith to learn more about what we share and to value how God has made us unique. Neighbouring congregations could develop studies for Lent or Advent exploring our respective and historic creeds. This would be a major and noticeable move within the life of local congregations to show that something new is happening within the life of the church. As Isaiah 43:19 reports God’s intention, “I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”

It is important to note that both the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada and The United Church of Canada extend an open invitation to the Lord’s Supper. “All are welcome” is a common ground in which the Disciples of Christ and the United Church endeavor to mirror God’s invitation to a ministry of healing and wholeness to the world. Both denominations affirm an open table where we come together in unity with our Christian brothers and sisters to remember Jesus’ life, death and resurrection and that he will come again. For Disciples, a weekly tradition of sharing the Table is part of their Christian nurture, and it might be commended to sisters and brothers within the United Church. United Church congregations are invited to remember the affirmation made by The United Church of Canada following the adoption of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Faith and Order Paper no. 111, World Council of Churches, 1982) in the wider church, in which the United Church urged an exploration of the move towards a weekly celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Whether a weekly part of Christian nurture or “[a] taste [of the] mystery of God’s great love for us” to be enjoyed on special occasions, in the words of *A Song of Faith*, “the open table speaks of the shining promise of barriers broken and creation healed.”

Our two denominations also differ in their usual practice of baptism. To bring these varying perspectives within the life of the local congregations, one might teach the gifts of “infant”

baptism and “believer’s” baptism again, as part of membership/confirmation classes—to place these perspectives within the setting of the ecumenical Church and help us come to a deeper understanding of God’s grace and love.

While we share much in common, our differences can offer one another new perspectives. One of the gifts of The United Church of Canada has been its placement within one country with a localized and incarnational sense of mission and ministry. One of the gifts of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada is that because it is not rooted in only one country, it has some sense of its allegiance to the whole world.

Our existing shared ministries, Campbell-Stone United Church (Calgary) and Broadway Disciples United Church (Winnipeg), are invited to tell their stories, including the gifts and challenges of worshiping and serving together, to help others imagine ways for our partnership to become a living, breathing reality.

Where congregations of our two denominations are close geographically, we encourage shared worship or pulpit exchanges and shared mission projects such as refugee sponsorship or shared studies. Including one another in correspondence about special events and regular programs and activities will help relationships develop and open possibilities to imagine new ways to be the church together. Where congregations are at a distance geographically or in different countries, a relationship could develop through social media, exchanges between groups from congregations and longer exchanges between clergy. As the United Church moves to clusters and networks, neighboring Disciples congregations could be invited to be a part of clusters and Disciples and the United Church of Christ (USA) congregations could be included in networks where there are shared passions for mission and ministry.

It is our belief that without some local incarnation of full communion with methods such as those outlined above, and others, as discovered within the life of our shared faith, that our ecumenical partnership will be wanting in the crucial life-lived of our local congregations.

During Vatican II there was the talk of *aggiornamento* – a new, refreshing wind of the spirit blowing through the life of the church. This putting a word to the name for renewal helped the church grasp what was being attempted. Perhaps for The United Church of Canada and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, we might adopt the Western Canadian notion of the Chinook wind as blowing warmth within our lives as people of faith.

National, Bi-national, and International Possibilities for Partnership

Our two churches have long understood engagement in God’s mission in the world to be a primary responsibility of our ministries. In its framework document *Mending the World*, the United Church affirms that “the churches are called to make common cause with individuals and institutions of good will who are committed to compassion, peace, and justice in the world.... God, who loves this world, works for its mending, and calls the church to make this work its first priority.” Thus, the church has committed itself to a vision of ecumenism that is

world-centered, understood as "whole world ecumenism," calling us to work in partnership with all who seek the health and well-being of the whole creation.

Similarly, the Disciples of Christ have stated in *The Church for Disciples of Christ: Seeking to be Truly Church Today* that "[t]he church exists for the sake of praising God and participating in God's mission in and for all the world." The Disciples of Christ also affirm that it is the world that God so loves and in which the church finds its purpose and mission to exist as a faith community. The Disciples clearly understand that God has given unity as God's gift to all followers of Christ, and in unity, Christians must work together to bring just peace to the world.

Both denominations have strong national and international program work and relationships that may be enhanced through full communion. This includes some global partnership work in which both churches are already involved, such as membership in the World Council of Churches (WCC), the World Communion of the Reformed Churches (WCRC), and the Global Christian Forum (GFC), and global partners who relate to both the Global Ministries, which belongs to the Disciples of Christ and the United Church of Christ (USA), and the Church in Mission unit of The United Church of Canada. In this area many possibilities exist for further cooperation, and where some joint work is already underway. Staff members of Global Ministries and Church in Mission have met to share their work and review avenues for increased collaboration. These avenues also include particular global issues where we may support each other in our education and advocacy, such as peace and justice in the Middle East, North and South Korea, and Colombia.

Another area where collaboration with both national and international dimensions may be possible is a response to the challenges of migration, immigration, and refugee issues. The Migrant Church Task Group of the United Church is addressing the ways that migration is re-shaping the church. It is endeavoring to develop structures and processes that will enable the church to be more welcoming and supportive of people migrating to Canada. The Church in Mission unit includes staff working in the area of refugee sponsorship, settlement, and support, as well as advocacy on immigration and refugee issues. The Disciples Refugee and Immigration Ministries (RIM) addresses similar concerns, including the particular challenges of immigration in the present United States context. Refugee and Immigration Ministries equips the church to respond to Jesus' call to welcome the stranger through refugee resettlement, ministering to immigrants and advocacy. RIM provides resources for local congregations, legal consultations, and connections to hands-on mission work. In the rapidly changing political current, this office has promptly responded to certain U.S. policy changes. The Disciples have also provided legal services to the church and community members with Disciples Immigration Legal Counsel, which helps congregations protect their rights, understand their options, and work through the U.S. immigration system.

Significant aspects of refugee and immigration issues in our two countries are impacting each other at this point, and the potential for joint work on this issue is great. In addition to the work that members of both churches in Canada might do in our own context, there may be

opportunities for joint advocacy and action that would include the concerns of both countries, as well as for learning from each other about best practices in our work.

A range of program work offers opportunities for cooperation, for learning from each other, and for action together. The youth and young adult networks and ministries of both churches might meet together or attend each other's regional or national gatherings (e.g., the United Church's Rendezvous event and the joint National Youth Event of the Disciples of Christ and the United Church of Christ). Opportunities for learning and collaboration may arise from meetings or other connections of those working in the areas of stewardship, human resources, and communications. These might include ideas for sharing or joint production of some resources or shared planning of educational events. Collaborations in communication could include partnering on social media, a joint website, or an agreement to include newsfeeds from ecumenical partners on each denomination's website.

Possibilities for resource-sharing may be numerous. Many of the justice issues in which both churches are engaged may involve the development of resources (and in some cases campaigns) that could invite collaboration. As well, those developing liturgy and producing worship resources might work together on some projects or share with each other resources created by members of their particular denomination.

One of the most important (and complex) outcomes of a full communion agreement will be the development of a process for implementing mutual recognition of ministries. This will involve national and regional offices in both denominations, as well as local congregations open to the possibilities of being served by a minister from the partner denomination. The bi-national nature of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada and the already existing flow of people across our borders suggests that as these processes are put into place new and creative opportunities for ministry together may be opened.

As well, ministry personnel may find ways to meet with and learn from each other, such as through joint continuing education events. Theological colleges related to each denomination could also be encouraged to participate in the development of relationships arising from full communion. A meeting of Deans and Principals could identify possibilities for partnership or exchange that would enhance students' education.

As we journey together in the spirit of full communion, other ways of accompanying each other in the challenges and joys we face could be explored. The appointment of representatives to each other's regional or national governing bodies, meetings, assemblies, and other significant gatherings, would recognize that a full communion relationship implies a new dimension of accountability to one another as we make decisions about the life and work of each of our churches. Supporting connections among local faith communities and ministries with similar contexts and commitments (e.g., Indigenous ministries, outreach ministries, migrant or ethnic ministries, African-American and Afro-Canadian communities, etc.) would be one way to bring the resources of partnership and accompaniment to local communities.

One of the marks of full communion is mutual recognition of members. What are the practical implications of this commitment? A national implementation team could consider situations where such recognition would have an impact and processes for giving it meaning. Examples include individuals participating in the other denomination for a period of time, or Disciples members in Canada attending the United Church in a community with no Disciples congregation, or United Church members who live part of the year in the United States and choose to participate actively in a Disciples congregation.

Finally, it will be important to be aware of the implications of our partnership for our involvement in wider ecumenical and interfaith networks. Might we encourage the networks of ecumenical officers in both countries to meet together on occasion? How does our involvement in the ecumenical and interfaith councils of Canada and the United States (as well as globally) inform our relationship, and what do we bring to those bodies as full communion partners? How will we share with each other the gifts, resources, and challenges of our ecumenical and interfaith engagement?

The energizing and creative possibilities in our relationship are many, and others will be discovered only as we live into a deeper understanding and vision of our mission and ministry together.

Challenges to Full Communion

Any Full Communion agreement between denominations presents challenges as well as opportunities. That these challenges are shared by the partner churches indicates that both have much to gain through increased collaboration.

Institutional Capacity

Both denominations face a future of declining resources and a decreased ability to carry out the full range of mission and ministry activities, including ecumenical work. Both denominational offices are likely to become smaller, with fewer staff and less funding. In the United Church much institutional time and energy has been and will be devoted to major changes in the church's governance, structure and funding. This may affect not just commitment to full communion at the national level, but enthusiasm in local communities of faith to work alongside their full communion partners in Canada and across the border.

Knowing Each Other

The Disciples of Christ congregations in the United States may know very little about The United Church of Canada. In Canada, United Church and Disciples communities of faith may know each other if they are in proximity. Otherwise, it is doubtful if the more numerous United Church congregations have much familiarity with the Disciples. As well, some Canadian Disciples may still think of the United Church in terms of the end of talks in the 1980s. An increased knowledge of each denomination's full communion partner, at local and regional as well as national levels, is essential to a rich relationship and affirmation of both churches' ecumenical visions. Presenting the full communion agreement to both partners must include upholding that such an agreement is not a "backdoor" to union. The local contexts of each partner church

are not seen as incidental, but rather as central, to their identities, and each denomination has been called to God's mission and ministry in its own distinct location and context.

Immigration

In recent years Canada has tightened visa requirements for foreign clergy being admitted to Canadian churches. In the United States, restrictions on immigration are increasingly common. A full communion agreement, with its mutual recognition of ministries and embrace of mobility between the two partner denominations, may encounter obstacles to the movement of ministry personnel across borders.

Diversity

Both the United Church and the Disciples of Christ are, as North American denominations, predominantly white in their makeup, although both are committed to an intercultural vision. Yet the worldwide church is shifting its center of gravity to the global South; by 2050 white, non-Hispanic Christians will be only one-fifth to one-sixth of the world's Christian believers, while both the United States and Canada will see increases in the non-white proportion of their populations. Although the dynamics of race, ethnicity, language and culture are different in Canada and the United States, both denominations must grapple with how to move from their current base into becoming more intercultural, during a period that will likely see resistance to these shifts in racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural makeup.

Justice

Justice is an essential part of our respective identities. Both the United Church and the Disciples of Christ are known to have a deep passion for justice. Both churches heed the biblical mandate, "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8) The two denominations may explore means of collaboration and cooperation across borders when called on to denounce injustice and oppression. As both denominations consider justice in society and the world, it is vital not to forget justice in the Church. There are concerns of a "take over" when it comes to numbers, reputation and the size of the respective churches in Canada. It is important to be cognizant of the concern that "mission" has different connotations in both countries, especially for Indigenous persons. The term "mission" for some brings irredeemable memories. Opportunities to make full communion a reality in global missions and ecumenical relations and activities need to be explored.

Conclusion

Movements of faith always involve openness to the Spirit. The Planning Group offers the hope that this full communion agreement might be led by the Spirit. The two denominations should put in place structures to allow the experience of full communion to grow into deeper relationships. This will mean intentional efforts to develop opportunities to learn, to worship and to engage together at denominational, regional, and local levels. While structures seem contrary to the experience of movements, in fact all movements require organizational attention. Most importantly, structures enable this full communion agreement to keep before

the churches the vision of the prayer of Jesus “that all may be one” and through them the world might be blessed.

The Planning Group believes this journey of full communion may be an opening to something truly transformative for us and for others.

Members of the Planning Group

The United Church of Canada

Nora Sanders, General Secretary, General Council

John H. Young, Executive Minister, Theological Leadership

Gail Allan, Coordinator, Ecumenical, Interchurch and Interfaith Relations

Shannon McCarthy, Executive Secretary, Alberta Northwest and Manitoba Northwestern Ontario Conferences

Heather Leffler, Minister

Daniel Hayward, Minister, Chair of Theology and Interchurch Interfaith Committee

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the UNITED STATES and Canada

Teresa “Terri” Hord Owens, General Minister and President

Timothy James, Associate General Minister and Administrative Secretary of the National Convocation

Paul S. Tche, President, Council on Christian Unity

Jennifer Garbin, Regional Minister of Canada

Mark G. Toulouse, Historian and Theologian

Raymond A. Cuthbert, Minister

FAITHFUL DECISION-MAKING ON SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES IN THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

THE ISSUE

General Council 42 ANW3 directed the General Secretary, General Council, to “engage the whole church in a process of consultation, review and discernment about the social justice ministries and public witness of The United Church of Canada,” with a focus on the exploration of such topics as the following:

- How the church most faithfully engages questions of social justice
- The importance of social justice to our faithfulness
- The dangers and possible failures in this ministry
- The criteria, guidelines, and principles that might help guide the church to... most effectively witness to God’s kingdom (kin-dom) and build up the body of Christ

The resolution was based on a hypothesis that while social justice work is “seen as one of the defining characteristics of The United Church of Canada, ... people who fundamentally support the social justice ministry of the Church often have legitimate questions about ... [social justice] decisions, how they are made, what the Church is trying to do when it makes them, and whether there were different approaches that could have resulted in more faithful outcomes.”

The resolution was further based on the assertion that “it is important that social justice work be done with care, and that the principles on which the church engages this work be clear, transparent, widely understood and carefully grounded in our theology and ethics.”

THE PROCESS

The above resolution which originated in Alberta and Northwest (ANW) Conference was referred to the Permanent Committee on Programs for Mission and Ministry (PC-PMM) and the Permanent Committee on Governance and Agenda (PC-G&A). PC-PMM took the lead on responding to ANW3 with representation on its advocacy working group from PC-G&A. The working group undertook these three tasks in fulfilling its mandate: it established the consultation process; it reviewed the findings from the consultation; and finally, it discerned the meaning of the consultation findings and framed recommendations arising out of these findings. This document reflects the working group’s discernment activity; it highlights and reflects upon the consultation findings that the group considers most significant and makes a series of recommendations.

In establishing and managing the first part of the project—the consultation/research phase—the working group members’ primary objective was to ensure the validity and reliability of the research, so that ultimately when they were in the process of discerning the meaning of the research, they could be confident that their discernment was based on scientifically derived evidence, not anecdote.

In seeking to ensure what researchers call “validity” in the results, the working group aimed to ask, in research parlance, the “right” questions of the “right” people. The “right” questions were deemed to be these:

- What is the importance of social justice to our faithfulness?
- What are the characteristics of social justice decision-making in the church?
- Which criteria, guidelines, and principles might help guide the church as it goes about making faithful social justice decisions?

The “right” people were identified as anyone at all who might be considered a United Church of Canada social justice and public witness stakeholder, including the following:

- United Church of Canada-based stakeholders
 - United Church General Council 42 commissioners, including young adult commissioners/observers
 - General Council Executive members
 - People representing United Church financial interests, such as those related to the United Church Foundation and Treasury Funds, and so on
 - United Church social justice/public witness initiators (i.e., people who have put forth social justice/public witness motions at GC 40, 41, 42)
 - Members of United Church advocacy networks, such as the Palestine/Israel network, the Mining Justice network, the Living into Right Relations network
 - Indigenous and migrant church representatives
 - Church people in local congregations
- Non-United Church of Canada-based stakeholders
 - United Church partners—Canadian and global partners
 - United Church of Christ representatives

Further to this, in seeking to ensure what researchers call “reliability” in the results, that is, among other things, accuracy and representativeness, the working group made a number of decisions.

It chose to use an independent, outside research firm (Jane Armstrong Research Associates) to design and implement a methodology for the consultation. For information about Armstrong Research, visit www.armstrongresearch.com.

The group chose to employ both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, an approach that would help to ensure further reliability of the research, since each methodology produces findings that are like checks and balances to the other.

Finally, the group chose sampling methods for recruiting research participants that were designed to produce results that were as representative as possible. And in the end, even

though some Conferences participated more enthusiastically than others in some aspects of the research, the overall response rates were sufficiently high to yield reliable results.

Similarly, although caution must always be exercised when interpreting results based on small sample sizes (such as the sample of 156 noted below), the overall findings taken together produce a meaningful picture from which conclusions may be drawn.

For further information about the consultation design and completion results, as well as comprehensive reports on all of the consultation findings, please see the appendices to this document. To help make sense of the appendices, please take note of the following.

The consultation design called for three phases of research:

- Phase one: qualitative research (telephone interviews) with a small sample of what we have called “Wider Church Participants,” that is, people representing all of the above social justice and public witness stakeholders (except for people in local congregations)
- Phase two: quantitative research (online survey) with a large sample of Wider Church Participants as defined above
- Phase three: quantitative research (hard copy survey) with a large sample of what we have called “People in the Pews,” that is, people from local congregations

This above design resulted in our conducting three separate studies during January through April 2017:

- Two studies—one qualitative (n of 22) and one quantitative (n of 156)—with Wider Church Participants
- One study—quantitative only (n of 532)—with People in the Pews

The appendices contain the results to the three studies in the form of two reports:

- One written report that summarizes the findings of the qualitative research with Wider Church Participants.
- One largely graphic report that combines and compares the results of the quantitative research with both Wider Church Participants and People in the Pews.

SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

What is the importance of social justice to our faithfulness?

Overall, one finding persists throughout the consultation results, including those from both the qualitative and quantitative research: the high level of importance that all stakeholders assign to the church’s social justice and public witness work.

The qualitative research with Wider Church Participants elicited comments such as these:

- Pursuing social justice is an integral part of our faith
- This is completely what we are about
- As a denomination that follows the gospel, social justice is our very essence
- If we are not doing social justice, then what is the point
- A commitment to social justice (putting faith into action and focusing more on what we do than what we believe) is why I am a member of the United Church

The quantitative research with both Wider Church Participants and People in the Pews validated what was expressed in the qualitative research. Respondents in both samples say that the United Church's denominational involvement in social justice is important to their faith and, indeed, that it is important to them to belong to a church that is actively involved in social justice. In the data, we also find a great deal of enthusiasm: respondents are more likely to say that the church's social justice involvement is "very" rather than just "somewhat" important. This is especially true of Wider Church Participants.

The current findings echo observations gathered in 2011 when The United Church of Canada conducted the Identity Survey among national samples of 7,448 people from United Church congregations and 493 United Church youth. At that time, social justice pursuits were considered by both samples to be among the most important things the denomination could be engaging in; and belonging to a congregation that turned faith into action through social justice was one of people's top-rated priorities as well. Further to this, when people in both samples were asked about renewal of the church in the 21st century, the majority chose a social justice path, agreeing with the statement "God has important work for the United Church, and the United Church is uniquely equipped to do it."

What are the characteristics of social justice decision-making in the church?

In looking to answer this question, both the qualitative and quantitative research began with an exploration of people's familiarity and satisfaction with the United Church's social justice processes and activities. In a more direct attempt to answer the question, the quantitative research also asked Wider Church Participants about their perceptions of the *image* of social justice in the church.

On the matter of familiarity, both the qualitative and quantitative research showed that Wider Church Participants are generally familiar with all aspects of social justice in the church—the decision-making process, the decisions made, and the implementation of decisions—although we do note that the quantitative research reveals Wider Church Participants to be more "somewhat" than "very" familiar with all aspects. As for People in the Pews, they are considerably less familiar with all aspects of social justice in the church—the decision-making process, the decisions made, and the implementation of decisions.

On the topic of satisfaction with social justice in the church, the qualitative research with

Wider Church Participants did not yield a strong degree of consensus. However, from the many different perspectives that were expressed vis-à-vis satisfaction, as well as other topics, the qualitative research did provide a flavour for the wide variety of views that are held in the church. And as we expected it would, the quantitative research served to quantify the extent to which these views are held.

The quantitative research, which was designed to produce, as much as possible, an accurate rendering of the views of social justice and public witness stakeholders in general, showed that majorities of people in both samples of Wider Church Participants and People in the Pews are satisfied that the United Church's social justice decision-making process generally results in appropriate decisions and that, to a slightly lesser degree, these decisions are implemented appropriately. However, the quantitative research results show that satisfaction in both groups is more lukewarm than enthusiastic. Also, it is notable that on the specific question of implementation, a significant minority of Wider Church Participants (one-quarter) are not satisfied; and a significant minority of People in the Pews (three in ten) decline to make an assessment (perhaps because of their lack of familiarity, as described above.)

In the results to an "image" question that was asked of just Wider Church Participants, we find that a majority agree that many positive features characterize the decision-making process, for example, that it is alert to emerging issues, fact-based and research-based, among other things. A majority also *disagree* with the *negative* notion that the process is unsuited to the realities of today's church. However, on the other hand, a majority agree that the process is bureaucratic. And people are divided on whether the church's decision-making vests too much power in too few people, oversimplifies complex issues, is radical in its outlook, pays insufficient attention to the opinions of undecided people, and is hard for ordinary people to get their proposals brought forward.

Which criteria, guidelines, and principles might help guide the church as it goes about making faithful social justice decisions?

Although the qualitative research unearthed a number of different perspectives on social justice in the United Church, including the principles on which the church should make decisions, the quantitative research measured the *extent* to which different positions are held, thus suggesting some important trends and themes.

On that note, then, here is what we found in the quantitative research results about people's preferences regarding the criteria, guidelines, and principles that they believe should be "very important" in guiding the church in social justice decision-making.

Most notably, we see that of the 15 principles offered for assessment, the same three principles emerge as priorities for both Wider Church Participants and People in the Pews. Both samples put these three principles, although in different order, at the top of their list:

- A dedication to making social justice decisions that reflect The United Church of

Canada's core convictions to love God and neighbour, and to respond to the call to be participants in the healing of creation

- A dedication to speaking out, when others are mostly silent, on behalf of vulnerable and marginalized people in our society¹
- An openness when making social justice decisions to hear from all the diverse voices that make up our church, including people from different racial, cultural, economic, and age groups, as well as regions, community sizes, and abilities ²

Given the disparity we have seen in the views of Wider Church Participants and People in the Pews on some other topics, it is fascinating—and promising—that on this important question about what should guide the church in its social justice decision-making, both groups share the same perspective on priorities. (It is worth noting, though, that Wider Church Participants' attachment to the top three principles, as well as to the other principles in the list, is considerably greater in intensity than People in the Pews' attachment.) It is also interesting—and moving—that the top-rated principles for both samples are among those explicitly having to do with the concept of a radically inclusive love, particularly for people on the margins, expressed through prophetic witness, a commitment to the social gospel and the healing of creation.

The observation that the concept of a radically inclusive love seems to be winning the day when it comes to the choice of principles for social justice decision-making is further clarified when one looks at the nature of some of the lower-ranked principles and realizes that these have more to do with process and procedures (for example, the principle of making sure that staff have adequate resources to research all angles of an issue before making a decision).

Admittedly, not all of the lower-ranked priorities are of the “nuts and bolts” variety. We note in particular respondents' attitudes toward the principle of being committed to “responding to social justice causes that address calls to action from The United Church of Canada's global partners.” This principle is fundamentally about love of neighbour, and yet both samples rank it as a lower priority. Does this mean that social justice and public witness stakeholders are considerably more interested in the church pursuing domestic causes over global ones? We do not think there is enough data in the current research results to answer this question. But nonetheless, the finding does make us wonder just what people mean by “society” in the second priority principle above. Is the prophetic principle of “speaking out, when others are mostly silent, on behalf of vulnerable and marginalized people in our society” a call to focus on the needs of society within Canada's borders or society writ large on a global stage?

Looking at some other results related to the question about the importance of the 15 different

¹ This wording is changed in the recommendations at the end of this report from the wording the research tested. The research tested the overall principle of “speaking out” using, regrettably, the phrase “on behalf of” instead of “with”. We recognize that speaking “on behalf of” is a more paternalistic and thereby less faithful approach than speaking “with.”

² In asking this question an extensive list of the many diverse voice that make up the church was not included. For example, people of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations were not named explicitly. Diverse gender identities and sexual orientations are included in the corresponding recommendation

principles in guiding social justice decision-making, we find another point worth mentioning here. Although the principle of recognizing that “there can often be many different, but still faithful, perspectives on how to address certain social justice issues, and all of these perspectives need to be considered and debated” is not ranked by respondents as one of the top three priorities, it is nevertheless considered important to a majority of both Wider Church Participants and People in the Pews. This is an interesting finding because it does add nuance to the finding above that the concept of a radically inclusive love should drive social decision-making in the church; undoubtedly not everyone agrees on the best tactics or ways to express love. And of course, this does relate to the reason the current consultation was felt to be necessary in the first place, namely, the concern that “people who fundamentally support the social justice ministry of the Church often have legitimate questions about ... [social justice] decisions, how they are made, what the Church is trying to do when it makes them, and whether there were different approaches that could have resulted in more faithful outcomes.”

The quantitative research delivers some further insights around the top three guiding principles. In addition to asking respondents to rate the importance of 15 guiding principles to them personally, the quantitative research also asked respondents to assess the extent to which, in their opinion, the United Church actually makes decisions based on these principles, in other words, how well the church is performing vis-à-vis these principles.

Overall, we find that People in the Pews give good marks to the performance of the church on the same principles that they think are very important. Among Wider Church Participants, there is similar alignment, with one notable exception.

This exception has to do with one of the three principles ranked as a top priority for guiding the church, that is, the principle about being open, when making social justice decisions, to “hearing from all the diverse voices that make up our church, including people from different racial, cultural, economic and age groups, as well as regions, community sizes and abilities.”

Many Wider Church Participants say this should be a very important guiding principle, but few strongly agree that the church is performing well in this regard.

It is interesting that issues around diversity make up the one priority principle that gets poorer performance marks from Wider Church Participants. Members of this group, incidentally, are themselves far from diverse, in terms of the education dimension of socio-economic status given that a large majority report a level of educational attainment that is much higher than that which the average Canadian has attained.

Wider Church Participants’ assessment of the church’s performance on listening to diverse voices points to work still needed to live out the church’s intercultural commitments made in 2006. It makes us wonder how much things may—or may not—have changed since 2011, when the Identity Survey of United Church people revealed the following: first, that the church membership as a whole is not remotely as diverse as the Canadian population;

second, that the membership displays some exclusionary attitudes toward ministry personnel perceived to be “different”; and third, that marginalized people in the church are neither comfortable nor active in decision-making in the church.

SUMMARY

Overall the people of the United Church, at all levels, attach importance to the church’s involvement in social justice. Social justice is also central to the denomination’s ethos.

Many people in faith communities, however, lack familiarity with the church’s social justice decision-making process, the actual decisions made, and the implementation of decisions. Even people with wider church experience are more “somewhat” than “very” familiar with these things. People in the church could therefore benefit from learning more about the church’s approach to social justice, how high-profile decisions are made, and how they are implemented.

People’s satisfaction with the church’s social justice work (both decisions made and how they are implemented) is more of the lukewarm than enthusiastic variety; further study could be conducted about why this is the case. As noted above, the research shows that some people with wider church experience express concern that the church’s decision-making vests too much power in too few people, oversimplifies complex issues, pays insufficient attention to the opinions of undecided people, and is hard for ordinary people to get their proposals brought forward. Are these perceptions justified and, if so, what can be done to address them? Similarly, given the observation above that people rank the principle of responding to global partners’ needs as a lower priority than many other principles, further research could help to clarify the meaning of this finding and to investigate ways to deal with the matter, should there truly be a gap in current church practice and what the people of the church support.

There is a clear lack of diversity in social justice decision-making, and the church needs to take steps to address this. In order to continue to live into the church’s intercultural commitment, all parts of the church need to be fully engaged in living into ways of being that honour and promote diversity as a priority for the church. Similarly, when the church makes social justice decisions, diverse voices must be part of the decision-making process.

AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT

On behalf of General Council, the Audit Committee carried out its assigned duties in the triennium. The audit committee focuses on:

- the quality of the financial information that is presented in the audited financial statements which are published in the Year Book and on the church website;
- the selection, remuneration, and the preservation of the independence of the auditor who, in the case of The United Church of Canada for this and several previous reporting periods, has been the firm of PricewaterhouseCoopers (“PwC”);
- monitoring any audits of the church conducted by government or third parties.

The committee is chaired by Hugh Johnson C.A., and members include Nora Sanders, the General Secretary of General Council and four others appointed by the 42nd General Council. They are: Robin Pilkey, CPA, CA.; John Hurst; Leah Weiss, CPA, CMA; and Rev. Lindsay Mohn. Pension Board Chair Marcus Robertson, BSc (Hons), MSc, FSA, FCIA; and Pension Board member Dave Gilliland, BMath, FSA, FCIA, CFA, MAAA, CERA also served on this committee. Staff support for the committee has been provided by the General Secretary and Chief Financial Officer, Erik Mathiesen. The committee meets by electronic means and is grateful for the staff support of Mary Worrall in this regard.

Each year, the Audit Committee:

- approved the audit plans and fees proposed by PwC;
- received the audit reports at completion;
- recommended approval of the audited financial statements of the National Accounts of The United Church of Canada by the General Council Executive or Sub-Executive;
- recommended approval of the audited financial report of the Fund of the Pension Plan of The United Church of Canada to the Pension Board;
- Updated workplans and terms of reference documentation as needed.

Over this triennium, a number of changes were implemented to improve disclosure and meet compliance requirements. Most notably, KAIROS operating results are now consolidated in the overall Treasury financial statement and a separate revenue note was developed. For each year, within the context of the auditors’ responsibility, the financial statements received a “clean report.” Each year the committee noted ongoing improvement in internal controls and responding to any suggestions from PwC. The Audit Committee also recommends reappointment of PwC for 2018. The reappointment of auditors must take place annually for a term of only one year.

In recommending reappointment, the committee considered:

- the non profit discount offered from PwC’s regular billing rates;
- the auditors’ understanding of reporting issues affecting the not-for-profit sector;
- the auditors’ knowledge and understanding of the church and its reporting entities;
- the quality, efficiency and economy of the audit plan;

- the auditors' track record in providing the church with continuity of audit staff;
- the auditors' candour and pro-activeness in bringing issues, current events and new ideas to the attention of church staff and the Audit Committee;
- the quality of the auditors' communication and co-operation with church staff;
- the quality of the auditors' communication with the Audit Committee;
- the quality of candour and teamwork among the auditors themselves.

Looking ahead, we anticipate that the existing audit process will need to be refined to reflect changes from remit implementation including the possibility of shared accounting services across courts of the church to achieve economies of scale. There will also be efforts to make church financial information more transparent and accessible.

NATIONAL UNITED CHURCH WOMEN

History - Women have always played an integral role in the life of the church. From as early as the nineteenth century, women worked as teachers, missionaries and nurses, providing care in communities. As time went on, fundraising and social function organizing were added to the women's roles, as well as preaching, administration, and pastoral care as women also moved into ordained and commissioned ministry.

When the United Church officially formed in 1925, the Ladies Aid (LA) (later the Woman's Association (WA) and the Women's Missionary Society (WMS) were doing work at home and abroad. The WA focused on supporting the local church and community, while the WMS was more involved with education and world mission.

In 1953, a committee was established by the General Council of The United Church of Canada to study women's work in the church with the goal of formally recognizing the work and contribution of United Church women. In 1956, the 17th General Council initiated the Commission on the Work of Women in the Church. The findings and recommendations of the commission were released in 1960 with the following goals:

1. To prepare a constitution for a new women's organization in the congregation and at Presbytery, Conference and National levels, the aim of which would be to enlist all the women of the United Church for the total mission of the Church.
2. To study the issues involved and any other matters relation to the formation of such an organization.
3. To make such recommendations to the Eighteen General Council as after consultation with Boards and Committees concerned may be deemed wise (ROP 1960, p.301)

The subsequent Commission on the Work of Women in the Church made fourteen recommendations, including:

Recommendation 3. That subject to the approval of the executive of General Council, the effective date of the functioning of the Board of Women and the coming into operation of the constitution of The United Church Women be January 1, 1962.

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(ROP 1960, p 317)

As a result, General Council took action to ensure that women could share in a much more meaningful way in all the work of the church allowing them to participate on the boards of The United Church at all levels. Approval was given to this organization, United Church Women (UCW), at the General Council meeting held in Edmonton, Alberta, in 1960.

The UCW officially came into being on January 1, 1962. Its Purpose is:

To unite women of the congregation for the total mission of the church and to provide a medium through which we may express our loyalty and devotion to Jesus Christ in Christian witness, study, fellowship and service. (ROP 1960, p 304)

Across the country, 300,000 women joined as Charter Members. The structure of the new organization was the same as that of the national church: Conference, Presbyterial and local units, with UCW representative participating at all levels of United Church structure. Now, in 2018, we have approximately 25,000 active members across Canada.

Since the inauguration of the UCW, many projects have been initiated and completed from worship and Bible study, to sending barrels of clothing overseas, to supporting the Mission & Service of The United Church of Canada with over \$129 million in contributions.

Morogoro Women's Training Centre - A national UCW anniversary celebration occurs every 5 years. In 2012, the UCW celebrated its 50th Anniversary in Ancaster, Ontario with 370 women present. To celebrate the occasion a special project was adopted to support the Morogoro Women's Training Centre in Tanzania. Over \$268,000.00 was raised for this project, the goal of which was to professionalize Traditional Birth Attendants, by training 750 Maternal Health Care workers over three years in ten 11-day Courses per year for 25 women. Enough money was raised to provide Mobile units to visit remote areas. In 2018, more funds were raised to buy special hospital mattresses so women wouldn't have to share a bed.

End Child Poverty Initiative - In September 2013, a five-year Child Well-Being Initiative was begun to end child poverty in Canada. The women began by writing letters to all levels of government urging them to make the eradication of child poverty a greater priority in budget allocations and program emphasis by:

- establishing measurable and attainable goals to reduce child poverty
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An investment in children is a financially, educationally and socially sound investment by society.

The letter writing project was followed up with the presentation of hand made rag dolls to Members of Parliament - 114 dolls at Queen's Park in Toronto and 338 dolls at Parliament Hill in Ottawa. As well, local presentations of dolls were made to speakers at UCW meetings, churches, and other organizations. These dolls speak volumes.

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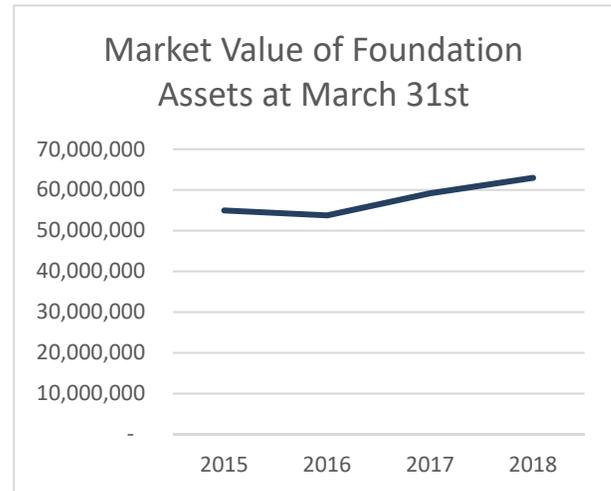
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THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA FOUNDATION REPORT

Growth of Assets under Management:

Since its creation by the Executive of the General Council in 2002 the Foundation began by growing quietly, slowly and steadily. At the beginning of the last triennium momentum increased significantly and we have seen strong growth over the last three years.

In this triennium, the growth has been driven by a combination of strong groundwork, strong investment returns, and increasing donations. We continue to be grateful for the transfer \$29M in assets from the General Council Treasury in 2013. All these things have resulted in nearly \$63M in assets under management, an increase of \$8M since March 2015.

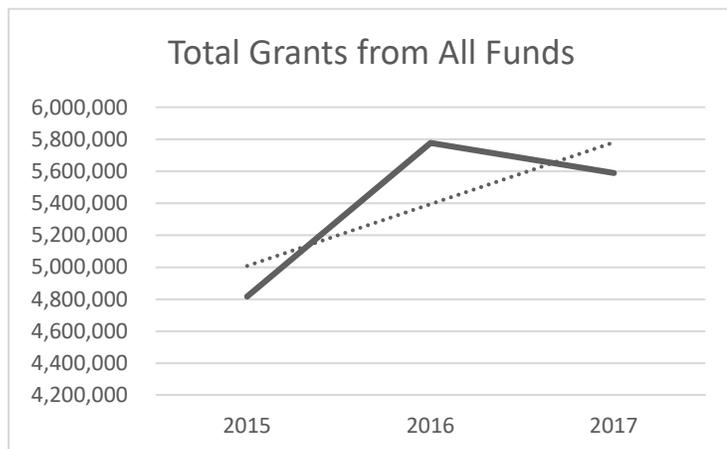


The Foundation’s board of directors is very appreciative of the enormous support and the provision of operating funds by the Church in its initial start-up years. Beginning in January 2015, the Foundation was financially self-sufficient, covering all of its direct and indirect operating costs within the General Council office. The units that support the work of the foundation will now be reimbursed for the services that they provide such as finance and IT. Further, the Foundation established a Mission & Service endowment fund that currently has a balance of \$4M that provide annual grants to the General Council Office.

Growth of Total Grants From all Funds:

The Foundation’s mission is to support the work of the Church. This means supporting the important work of congregations, presbyteries, Conferences, UCC organizations and ecumenical partners through grants and long term fund management. Grants to these diverse areas of work have grown significantly over the triennium.

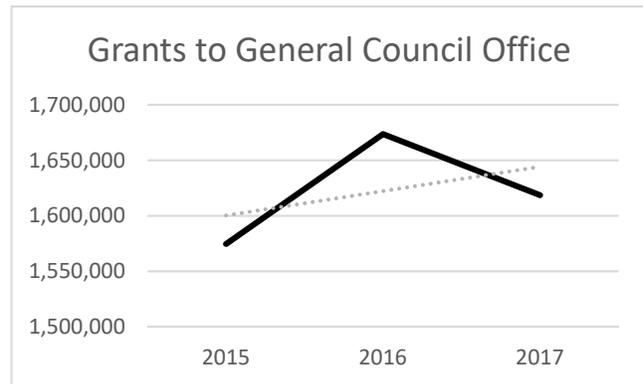
Grants are made through an application process and from short and long term funds where donors designate the beneficiaries.



Growth of Grants to the United Church of Canada:

The Foundation makes grants that support a broad range of the work of the General Council. These grants to the United Church of Canada have also grown significantly. Total grants to the General Council of the church of \$1.6 million in 2017 included:

- \$925,111 for Mission & Service,
- \$641,911 for United Church funds and programs, and
- \$51,532 for projects and overseas projects.



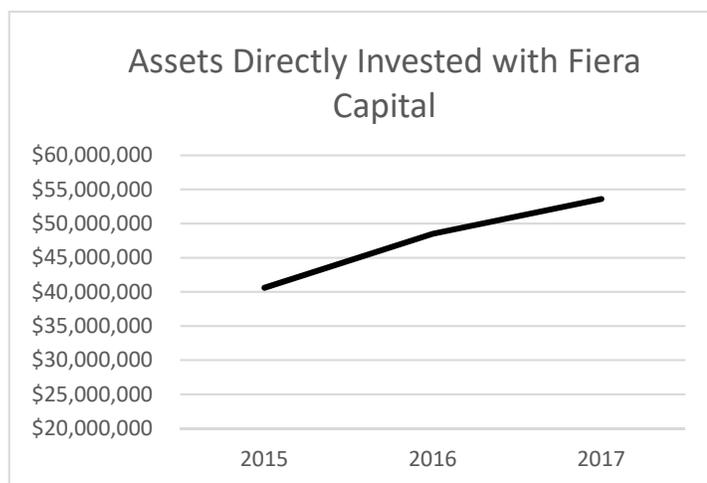
The Direct Investment Affinity Program:

The Foundation also provides access to its fund manager, Fiera Capital Corp. to interested church organizations.

Congregations, presbyteries, Conferences and affiliated organizations now have \$63M invested directly with Fiera in a variety of investment vehicles with accounts ranging from \$10,000 to \$3M.

These organizations get solid customer service and investment management track record as well as fees that are lower than industry standard. The most popular retail fund that UCC organizations are

invested in returned over 8% in 2017 and has an MER (after rebate) of 1.3%.



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NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR CONFERENCE 2018

In The United Church Creed we make our theological Conviction:

We are called to be the Church

We have perhaps struggled with what that means for our United Church of Canada, for the Newfoundland and Labrador Conference just as much in these past few years as the church did in the years leading up to union in 1925.

Since our last General Council, we have learned that all except one remit has passed and we now await the potential enactment by General Council 2018. For the Newfoundland and Labrador Conference this has been a busy time and a discerning time.

The View from Here

This has been a time of looking at the world from the mountain top and seeing the landscape below. It has been a time of standing on the Wharf and looking out over the vastness of the ocean and seeing the sky kiss the sea, yet not knowing what was beyond our eyesight. It has also been a time of being in the mud and wading through the mucky details of how we are to be the church in this changing time. It is the conviction of the Newfoundland and Labrador Conference that our Communities of Faith are vitally important to the life and work of our church. Therefore all initiatives and actions taken with respect to the statement, "We are called to be the Church", have been with two things at the forefront. Our Faith and Trust in God, Creator, Christ and Spirit and our commitment to the well being of our Pastoral Charges. It is the prayer of the leadership that we have been faithful to our call.

Conference Initiatives, Action, and Future Direction

In 2015, the Newfoundland and Labrador Conference moved into a new funding model which based its formula on total raised for all purposes by Congregational giving's (line 32A) less Mission and Service received from the Pastoral Charge , exclusive of UCW (line 36) $32A - 36 \times 5\% =$ Assessment. This new formula has served us well for the past three years and has prepared us for the change that the Remit on Funding will bring. While the General Council Formula is slightly different, we are well prepared for a smooth transition with respect to the funding formula.

In 2016, the Newfoundland and Labrador Conference set up a Task Group to look at making changes to the church structure. The Conference discerned that we needed to make changes whether the Remits passed or not. There needed to be less duplication of processes and committees, and more support to local ministries. In an attempt to do this, the Task Group presented a report at the annual Conference meeting in May 2017 to dissolve East and West Districts and to move the work of the District to Conference. Since 2017 there has been Dissolution of Districts Task Group, working hard to put in place a new Governance model for the Newfoundland and Labrador Conference. Once we realized that the remits had passed, we awaited the results of the Boundaries Commission to ascertain whether we had to stop all activity because we were being placed in a different regional configuration or staying the same.

Once we received the commission report on Boundaries we were able to pick up our work again and move forward. Therefore at the conclusion of the of the 2018 annual Conference meeting in June, we will say goodbye to our Districts and move into a three court model. Members of Conference will have received a new model for governance handbook approved by the Conference Executive as our new governance structure. At the meeting of Conference 2018 we will be nominating people for new positions on Divisions and teams and we will be providing workshops on how this structure will work. We have also had a consultant working on a new way of doing our Pastoral Relations (Joint Needs Assessments) process. We will now be moving into what is called a Mission Articulation Plan (MAP), mapping our faith story and designing our pastoral charges/congregational mission. It is a way for Pastoral Charges to map out who we are, to name who is our neighbour and to decide what our mission is. We will soon be at the stage to have Pastoral Charges try this new tool and provide feedback for making it as user friendly as possible.

I feel with the work that we have done over the past two years, we are ready for the changes that are before us with the passing of the remits. If General Council enacts the remits, all of the changes into Regions Councils will begin in Jan. 1st 2019 and we are more than ready to meet the change. If for some reason General Council 43 does not enact the remits before it, we are more than ready to move forward with a new model of governance, which will help us live within our means into the future.

Staffing Changes

When I took the position of Executive Secretary, I did not dream for a moment that I would be the last Executive Secretary for the Newfoundland and Labrador Conference. And yet here we are also experiencing staffing changes. At the time of writing this report there is still much unknown about staffing here in our Conference and about the retention of our Conference office. While it is our hope that we are able to keep our staff and our office, those details are still unknown. I ask that you keep our staff in your thoughts and prayers in this uncertain time.

Closing

In closing, what is still true is that “we are called to be the church”. What is still true is that we are never alone. Thanks be to God.

MARITIME CONFERENCE REPORT

Origin: Maritime Conference

The View from Here:

Maritime Conference is beautiful and diverse. There is poverty and there is wealth. There are gorgeous pristine areas of natural beauty and there are areas of shocking environmental degradation. There are new immigrants and there are multi-generational European settlers. There are indigenous communities both on and off reserve. We have thriving churches and we have struggling churches. We have corporate developments and we have citizen activists. The effects of climate change progress as coastlines erode, rivers flood and wells run dry.

As church we continue to seek the wisdom of the Spirit as we discern the Call of God and our expression of ministry within the communities we love and serve. Demographic shifts and changes occur sometimes faster than we can accommodate and we suffer loss and grief as cherished expressions of ministry come to the end of their viability. In other areas, these same demographic shifts provide fresh opportunities for new expressions of ministry. Sometimes we are able to respond and sometimes we grieve our inability to move fast enough to be effective in changing times. Even so, growth is occurring along with loss, and we faithfully seek to express God's love through our actions, large and small.

Conference Initiatives and Action

Within Maritime Conference, Pastoral Charges and Presbyteries continue to explore a variety of experiments and initiatives for changes that will ensure viability and expression of ministry into the community. These include part-time ministries, cooperative and shared ministries, amalgamations, ecumenical partnerships and occasionally disbanding and closure. Conference staff are a resource for these conversations and considerations, while the local decision-making body provides formal leadership.

The Maritime Conference Centre, located in the geographic centre of Sackville, NB, is a purpose-built \$3.2 million facility that includes office space, meeting space and state-of-the-art Archival storage space. Fundraising efforts include donations and contributions from the sales of church properties. The result is that the \$1.9 million mortgage is now reduced to just over \$1 million and we are on track to pay off the mortgage well ahead of schedule.

Our four summer residential camps continue to work collaboratively on the shared vision for faith formation ministry with children. "Camp Stuff" is a joint staff training event that occurs each spring.

Youth Forum and Intermediates at Conference programs occur concurrently with the Conference Annual Meeting and routinely bring 300 youth and leaders together with 400 Conference members each spring. Youth Forum now also offers a fall event that shows every sign of continuing to grow.

With the support and blessing of Conference, Janice MacLean has established Prayer Bench as an online ministry for spirituality and faith formation. Conference has also supported Linda Yates in the development of “More Than Friends,” an online resource for marriage preparation.

Maritime Conference justice ministries tend to focus on “the long game” in a number of challenging issues. A few examples of the work that our staff and committees are involved in are:

- **Our relationship with mining and extractive industries in Canada and abroad.** A working group is doing education and advocacy relating to ethical investments, divestment, solidarity with indigenous peoples, and corporate accountability.
- **Living into right relationship with indigenous peoples in our area.** Recently focused on bringing settler and indigenous youth together to explore our responsibilities to care for lands and waters as “Treaty People”. This culminated in a delegation of youth attending the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 2018 with Elders.
- **Growing understanding and action regarding Just Peace for Palestine and Israel** by promoting the “No Way to Treat a Child” campaign, hosting study groups, workshops, and speakers.
- **Ongoing support to refugee sponsors** through networking and communications.
- We have started new initiatives regarding **Mental Health education and advocacy** within the faith community.

We appreciate our ecumenical connections, particularly the Mennonite Central Committee, Anglican Diocese, and recently new connections with Baptist ministries, and also our long term partnerships with Breaking the Silence – Guatemala-Maritimes Solidarity, Kairos, and the Peace and Friendship Project. Many of our ministries have been sparked and nurtured through the work of the Tatamagouche Centre which supports us with deep connections, deep leadership, and deep dialogue for change.

Financial Support Ministries: The financial gifts of people of the United Church of Canada are creatively stretched in order to support two campus ministries, and 12 additional ministry sites and projects through Mission Support Grants. We also encourage growth and development of people and pastoral charges by offering learning funds, youth opportunities funding, and a variety of innovative ministry funds.

The MP&E Unit has placed some focus in the past year in expanding the face to face boundaries training offered throughout the Conference on invitation as both initial and refresher training. We have included discussion on topics of professional ethics and boundaries as well as the abuse prevention policy. An exploration of compassion fatigue as well as some self-discovery regarding triggers that can challenge us when we allow ourselves to become too hungry, angry, lonely or tired combined with some open space case studies has proven to deepen the conversation and learning. Now folk leave the engagement glad they have had opportunity to engage rather than feeling as if it was a mandatory waste of time and energy.

This training must be done face to face to have the any real possibility of consciousness raising on a professional level.

Staffing Changes

Lauren King has joined the Conference Staff in 2017 and 2018 in a half-time contract position in support of youth ministry.

Lorraine Horyl retired from the administrative staff of Maritime Conference at the end of 2017, having served for 27 years.

Conference Archivist Sarah Wallace has just returned to the office after a period of maternity leave, and now combines her part-time position as Archivist with part-time administrative responsibilities.

Future Directions

Conference remains committed to supporting the work of justice and faithfulness with communities of faith around the region and looks forward to the clarification of the organizational means by which these ministries will continue.

Respectfully submitted,

David Hewitt
Executive Secretary
Maritime Conference

SYNODE MONTREAL & OTTAWA CONFERENCE REPORT

Origin: Synode Montreal & Ottawa Conference

The View from Here:

Church closings and amalgamations, with church buildings being re-purposed in the communities or sold to other denominations have been on the increase; however there has also been an increased interest in clustering, building working relationships with neighbouring pastoral charges, particularly in rural areas. This has allowed ministry sites to maintain their small structures and to share leadership, often with one ordered person and a team of Lay workers. Genesis and Rural United Ministry {RUM} in Seaway Valley presbytery were the first, followed by Laurentien Area Ministry north of Montreal Quebec, and Grace United in the west Quebec area of Ottawa Presbytery who are finding creative ways of using both English and French. Each cluster has developed a different model designed to meeting the local needs.

There has also been an increase in the number of congregations using technology during worship for projection of words and images. While this is more frequently found in urban settings, the interest and demand for technology funding has increased in recent years and is appreciated by all generations who gather. Interest has grown as more meetings are being conducted using technology and the Conference Annual General Meeting has for two years been a one-day meeting using technology to connect a number of sites. It has allowed for demonstrations of what is possible in keeping connections going, while respecting shrinking financial resources.

After some discussion based highly on shrinking human resources, the Quebec-Sherbrooke Presbytery and the Montreal Presbytery decided to amalgamate. In a ceremony at the Annual General Meeting of 2016, they were officially joined to become the Consistoire du Quebec Presbytery. Living into the reality has been a challenge as aging populations are not producing new volunteers, and using technology for meetings can be very challenging for those who prefer to gather around a table, sharing not only the business, but also meaningful worship and comfort food. The Consistoire Laurentien has one full time, and a number of part time ministry sites, thus finding appropriate leadership is a challenge but our Spanish congregation continues to inspire us with creative ideas using lay leadership.

Conference Initiatives and Actions:

There have been some learning opportunities because of the needs of others. Aside from the many demands for pastoral support to both ministry personnel and ministry sites, the Conference Personnel Ministers have been working with Pastoral Relations and Pastoral Oversight committees, encouraging use of the Effective Leadership tools. Getting the *Living Ministry Profile* reports filed annually with traditional Annual Reports following congregational meetings has been a greater challenge.

Following a year of discussion within presbyteries, The Conference Licensed Lay Worship Leader Policy and Guidelines took effect in November 2015. Licensed Lay Worship Leaders (LLWL)

continue to be trained, accredited and held accountable each to their own presbytery, however there are times when due to geography or language, it is in the best interest of the ministry site requiring worship to be able to have leadership from a Licensed Lay Worship Leader of another presbytery. The policy allows for such and there is agreement to circulating the names annually of all accredited Licensed Lay Worship Leaders, and of welcoming a Licensed Lay Worship Leader from another presbytery to conduct worship. In 2017, there was a further mutual agreement to share LLWLs with the Bay of Quinte.

With the sale of more church buildings, the Executive, following agreement of the presbyteries approved an Archives Policy that pastoral charges will contribute 2% of the assets from the sale proceeds of closing or amalgamating congregations, to a maximum contribution of \$5000 to assist with the care and maintenance of the archival records of the closing or amalgamating congregation(s) and to assist the Conference Archivists in meeting the demand in processing, arranging and describing the records so that they are accessible for future generations.

Many of us are engaged in keeping connections with the Philippines following the two Beaconsfield initiative proposals opposed to Mining Actions in the Philippines, and my two trips visiting with global partners from which have come many teaching opportunities. The Conference supports United for Mining Justice and will celebrate the Honorary Doctorate being awarded to Padi Rex Reyes, Jr. at the United Theological College, May 2018.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission closure in Ottawa and the 25th anniversary of the Oka Crisis north of Montreal (Kanesatake/Oka) in which many participated were visible reminders that there is a lot of healing that needs to happen for 'right relationships'. Beginning meetings and worship by acknowledging the ancestral lands, and using resources to create learning opportunities are regularly sought out to help with understanding, recognizing accountability and gradually build trust. We are blessed by the teaching Elders from Kanesatake and Kahnawake, Mohawks communities north and south of Montreal, who have been generous with their time.

Staffing Changes:

Personal choices and budget challenges meant that the full-time Youth and Young Adult facilitator Rev. Jean-Daniel Williams resigned to begin working for the Anglican Church of Canada and the Conference reduced the YAYA position to 8 hours per week, engaging Georgia Barrett-Lamey to fill the role, much of which is done using social media to build Conference wide connections. Georgia has also helped provide leadership for presbytery organized events.

Larry Richardson, the Ottawa office administrator reduced his hours to half-time working from home beginning July 1, 2017 and the rental contract for Ottawa space was reduced to one office for the Conference Personnel Minister (West).

Future Directions:

A lot of time and energy was focussed on trying to influence the decisions of the Boundaries Commission with special meetings held both within the Conference and with our neighbours to

the west as regional boundaries were discussed. Now, with the information in hand, establishing Transition Commissions is taking shape. There is satisfaction for some that they are “still together” and also a sense of loss as the Conference will become divided into two regions, and long-standing working relations will be no more. There is concern from ministry sites about how the changes will affect them, particularly the assessments proposed in Remit 4. Where the changes will lead us and whether there will be staff support for those who rely heavily on others to guide the processes, are yet to be seen.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Rosemary Lambie, Executive Secretary

THE BAY OF QUINTE CONFERENCE REPORT

The View From Here

Located in Eastern/Central Ontario and sandwiched between Montreal and Ottawa Conference to the east and Toronto Conference to the west, our eight presbyteries are predominately made up of rural and small town/city congregations. As in many rural communities, some of our churches have witnessed a decline in membership leading to closures, amalgamations and a re-focusing of ministries. We are also witnessing some growth in the west end of our Conference as the GTA (Greater Toronto Area) continues to expand. Much positive energy and excitement has gone into the hosting of GC43 along with our partners at the All Native Circle Conference as we invite you all to Oshawa (Oshawow!!) this July. We are also aware that, with the passing of Remit 1, our Conference will be divided into two regions (11 and 12). While we mourn the loss of cherished friends and colleagues, we await with anticipation to see what God has in store for us in the time ahead.

Conference Initiatives and Action

As one of the first Affirming Conferences, we have continually asked ourselves, *'what does it mean to be an open and welcoming Church?'* This has led to more presbyteries and congregations and even our UCW going through the affirming process. However, we see the welcoming of the LGBTQ2 community as only being one part of an ongoing process. How do we move beyond a welcome sign on the door to welcoming hearts in the pews? We began with an 'Equity Committee' to monitor our own behaviour. Can people see and hear? Are there physical, emotional, spiritual barriers that turn some away? Do scents stop people at the door? What is the difference between equality and equity? We have invested in many congregations through an accessibility fund and have benefited by having equity monitors at all of our meetings to hold the mirror up for us to help us recognise our own bias and exclusions.

We have continued to support ministries in new ventures, such as the *Into the Journey* program with Christine Jarrett, the Transformation Ministry Initiatives and EDGE.

We have been committed to the 'Pathways' program, witnessing many candidates discern their call with the help of a strong Conference Assessment Board and Conference Candidacy Coordinating Committee (4C) and are pleased to see that our hard work has assisted in the formation of national policy.

We have offered many congregation and presbytery training workshops around such topics as Boundaries, the role of the M & P committee, pastoral relations, visioning and co-operative ministries and dealing with conflict.

Our Conference has maintained a close relationship with El Salvador, sending a delegation to a Peace Conference in 2016 and mission awareness trips in 2017 (30 people) and 2018 (37 people).

Staff Changes

We have seen a few staff changes during the past triumium. The Rev. Mary-Jane Hobden, our Conference Personal minister (MEPS) returned to the pastorate. Our Children, Youth and Programs minister, Jacker Harper retired after many faithful years of service to congregational ministry, General Council and Conference, and two of our treasurers, Nicole Lupton and Laura Vink, left the Conference for new employment opportunities.

As a result of these changes, we moved the Rev. David Timpson from CPM Pastoral Care to CPM MEPS and hired the Rev. Carolyn Giesbrecht on a half time contract to do pastoral care and help resource some of our committees. With Jackie's retirement, we hired the Rev. Cathy Russell-Duggan on a part time contract to be our children's and youth minister and shared Jackie's other responsibilities among the staff.

With the resignation of Nichola Lupton as treasurer/IT in December of 2017, we hired Laura Vink as new new treasurer and outsourced our IT needs. Laura resigned in November of 2017 and Linda Wheeler was hired in January of 2018 on a part time contract until the end of December.

This has meant that we have dropped from 6 FTE to 4.5 FTE with all of our part time staff in contracts ending December 31, 2018. While this has stretched existing staff to some degree, it has allowed us to live within our means and be ready for the formation of regions in 2019.

Future Directions

Like the rest of the church, we await GC43 and the adoption of the remits. If remits are passed, six of our presbyteries, along with three congregations from Living Waters will make up region 11 and the remaining two will move into region 12 with the churches in Ottawa and Seaway Presbytery. We are led by the Spirit.

Thanks be to God.

Respectfully Submitted

(Rev Dr.) William Smith
Executive Secretary

TORONTO CONFERENCE REPORT

Origin: Toronto Conference

The View from Here

Toronto Conference is located in central Ontario. It reaches from the shores of Lake Ontario to Georgian Bay and includes Owen Sound near the western boundary and Huntsville and Uxbridge in the east. The Conference provides leadership and support to four presbyteries: Living Waters, Northern Waters, South West and Toronto Southeast. It includes 53,000 church members in 230 pastoral charges. Toronto Conference is characterized by significant diversity ranging from urban to rural, and influenced by multicultural and intercultural realities. There is much opportunity for vital and creative ministry within the Conference.

Conference Initiatives and Action

In this triennium, Toronto Conference has focused on several significant initiatives.

We sent a large delegation to the closing ceremonies of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission at the end of May 2015, and have spent the past three years learning what it means to live into the Calls to Action. We have hosted a number of educational events and sponsored many more in local communities of faith. Our Living Into Right Relations Circle meets regularly and we seek to walk a path of reconciliation and justice in the Conference, the Province of Ontario and our nation.

In 2017, Toronto Conference celebrated become an Affirming Ministry. As part of our Action Plan we committed to act as a resource for communities of faith within the Conference and assist them to engage in conversations about being safe spaces for people of any sexual orientation and gender identity within the church and community. We also acknowledge that there are other areas of marginalization that need the same care and attention that is placed on the Affirming process. The Executive of Toronto Conference begins and ends each meeting by reflecting on what voices have been heard and what voices have not been heard. Our commitment to diversity and inclusion is a key value we name going forward.

Toronto Conference participated in a continuation of the partnership of The United Church of Canada and The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK), by visiting Seoul Presbytery with 16 members of our Conference, and planning for a return visit of a similar PROK group to our community. The Executive of Toronto Conference, in consultation with Seoul Presbytery, approved a Memorandum of Agreement for an ongoing relationship and we name this as a priority in the years ahead. We will continue to work together in the areas of Mutual Recognition of Internship, Exchange Programs for Youth, a Sabbatical Program and Exchanges of Ministry Personnel.

Toronto Conference is home to a significant number of Ethnic Ministries, Emerging Ministries, Community Ministries and Missions. We strive to support these communities and to ensure that their voices are heard in all aspects of our communal life. As we seek to create structures

that may better serve the church, we lift up the unique needs of these communities and their leaders.

Staff Changes

A significant staff change happened in Toronto Conference when Remits 1 – 4 passed at the end of June 2017. David Allen left his long-time position as Executive Secretary to become the Remit Implementation Project Leader for the United Church. This is a well-deserved honour for David. His experience and knowledge from his many years as Executive Secretary, and in particular his leadership when the Conference restructured in 2009, have been a real asset to the wider church in this process.

Norm Greene, who has been serving in South West Presbytery as the Minister for Mission, retired at the end of June, and we give thanks for his ministry and in particular for his passion and support for Ethnic and Emerging Ministries. Karen Hilfman Millson was hired in the summer of 2017 to fill the vacancy as Minister for Vision and Mission in Living Waters Presbytery on contract until the end of 2018. Two presbyteries have hired additional contract staff to support programs and communities of faith as they transition into the new regional structure.

Future Directions

If the remits are enacted by the 43rd General Council and a three council model is adopted, approximately 50 communities of faith from Toronto Conference will join Region 8, a few will be with Regions 9 and 11, and the remainder will be in Region 10. We are excited by the possibility of these new relationships and also by partnering with our neighbours. We see great potential for developing new regional relationships along with strengthening local bonds through clusters and networks.

The theme of our Annual Meeting this year was “Great is Thy Faithfulness” with the tag line “Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow”. With a mix of joy and sadness we celebrate the life of Toronto Conference. We express appreciation for the many faithful folks whose vision and commitment has been part of our story for 94 years, including dedicated staff and passionate volunteers. We go with bright hope into the future, thanking God for the many blessings we have shared.

Respectfully submitted,

Jody Maltby (Rev.)
Executive Secretary
Toronto Conference

HAMILTON CONFERENCE REPORT

Origin: Hamilton Conference

The View from Here:

For the communities within Hamilton Conference the past triennium continues as a time of change. At this stage in our Conference history we potentially will be embarking on the biggest change since Union in 1925. For the most part, our Conference is excited about the possibilities.

Within the context of Hamilton Conference, communities such as St. Catharine's, Hamilton, and Welland, continue to experience higher than average rates of unemployment and the social challenges which often accompany such high rates. However, these communities are witnessing positive improvements. Hamilton in particular has significant growth in its downtown core.

Waterloo, Halton, Milton, and Mississauga, which rely more on "high tech" and service industries, continue to experience high levels of growth.

Our rural communities face constant transition. Changes in farming and the agriculture business have also impacted local congregations. Many rural local communities have seen a decrease in population, while communities along the water are experiencing significant growth. This residential development includes both an increasing population of retirees and "bedroom communities" for those working in urban centres.

Conference Initiatives and Actions:

We have continued to work with Congregations and Presbyteries to support them as they seek new incarnations of church. Following is an outline of some of the initiatives undertaken in the past triennium.

- Resource development and workshop facilitation in the areas of accessibility and workplace safety.
- Organized, in partnership with General Council staff, a workshop on Intercultural and Diverse Communities.
- Effective Leadership and Healthy Pastoral Relationships Test Conference Complete: providing Bruce Presbytery with support around searches, collegial support, congregational essence statements and pastoral oversight
- Pastoral Care and Mental Health Workshop.
- Racial Justice Training
- Conducted a workshop on Advocacy for Social Justice.
- Ministry and Personnel workshops for Presbyteries and Congregations.
- Hosted Cross Conference Interim Ministry Retreats.
- Presbytery Learning Events.
- Congregational Visioning workshops.
- Focus on relationship building and partnerships.
- Action to work toward becoming an Affirming Conference in May 2018.

- Right Relations Engagement, TRC engagement and support of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- Partnered financially with Halton Presbytery to hold annual Ministry in Motion conference
- Started Fresh Expressions training the trainers and working with Presbyteries

Staffing Changes:

- Staff Equivalent at the Conference Office changed from 7.75 full-time staff to 5.6 full-time staff.
- Part-time Administrative position created.
- Full-time Administrative Position with an emphasis on Human Resources created.
- Minister for Congregational Support moved from a two year contract to full-time.
- Full-time Minister for Faithful Public Witness position was eliminated.
- Part-time Minister for Social Justice and Youth Created.
- Summer student position was created.

Future Directions:

Looking forward Hamilton Conference will continue to provide support to UCC clergy, staff, Presbyteries, and Congregations including partnerships related to Effective Leadership and Healthy Pastoral Relationships. We will support and promote Fresh Expressions in our Conference. The Conference will partner with General Council around any changes related to the Comprehensive Review, and the proposed movement to Regions. In 2015, our Conference office became fully accessible!

Closing: We look forward to the proposed transition and a new chapter in our Church and continued Ministry we are reminded "We are not alone, we live in God's world"

Respectfully submitted,



Peter Hartmans
Executive Secretary
Hamilton Conference

LONDON CONFERENCE REPORT

Origin: London Conference

The View from Here:

London Conference includes southwestern Ontario and the District of Algoma. Although there are urban centres in each of its eight Presbyteries, the Conference is primarily rural/small town in nature. These eight Presbyteries have a long history. The only major change in their boundaries happened over fifty years ago. That stability, coupled with the context of the Conference, has created a sense of community within the Presbyteries.

Each of the Presbyteries provides generous support to its local camp with nine in operation across the Conference. Two of these facilities have year-round capability and several of the others have an extended season. This commitment to youth and young adults is also evident through one Presbytery's support of a chaplain at the local college and another's employment of a half-time youth minister. Three of the Presbyteries have a Resource Centre. One Resource Centre is a storefront, another is in a church on a main thoroughfare and the third runs out of the Director's home. Half of the Presbyteries provide support for ministers, a role that varies from a chaplain who receives an honorarium to a half-time ministry position. Additionally, some Presbyteries are engaged with local initiatives. In this past triennium, several of the Presbyteries have coordinated refugee sponsorship.

London Conference has been testing Effective Leadership and Healthy Pastoral Relations, a process that moved the work of Pastoral Relations to the Conference. That change has helped prepare Presbyteries for the move to regions and has been well received. Mostly, the Presbyteries do not miss the heavy load of pastoral relations work. However, they remain concerned about the ministries they support and worry for the congregations in their bounds. What will the changes proposed by the remits mean for the support these receive?

Conference Initiatives and Action

The work of London Conference could be divided into two key areas: its ongoing responsibilities and its commitment to equipping the Conference for change.

In terms of the former, the Conference evaluated its four-year experiment with the Effective Leadership and Healthy Pastoral Relations (ELHPR) project in the spring of 2017. The Pastoral Relations networks of Presbyteries, the Settlement Committee of Conference and the Conference Executive participated in this process. The goals the process set out for pastoral relations were deemed largely to have been fulfilled: clarity and consistency, reduced reliance on a large pool of volunteers, growing expertise. But the hope that the removal of pastoral relations work from the Presbytery would free the Presbytery to focus on ministry and mission were mostly unrealized. Without resources to nurture this shift in focus for Presbytery, it did not develop.

Ministry in the local context is the theme of Conference President, Joyce Payne, who is encouraging Presbyteries and the Conference to “bloom where they are planted.”

In 2017, Conference President, Kenji Marui, engaged the Conference with the theme “To Reconcile and Make New”. This coincided with the release of the video “We Are Still Here.” The production, sponsored by the Right Relations Committee of London Conference, recounts the experience of three residential school survivors for whom southwestern Ontario is home. In 2018, a sequel to that production called “AfterShock” capturing the experience of the children of these survivors was created. The combination of the Conference theme and the availability of these resources has helped broaden the engagement in seeking reconciliation.

The Conference continues to see the preservation of the history of the pre-1812 community of Fairfield as part of its commitment to reconciliation. Fairfield was the site of a remarkable village of Delaware people along with Moravian missionaries. Although the historical account reflects the language of its time, the life of the community was one of mutuality and respect. That is the spirit in which the Conference hopes to forge a partnership with the Delaware Nation at Moraviantown to preserve this history. Is there a way that the past can lead us to a new future together?

In 2016, President Cathy Larmond invited London Conference to turn to the future with the theme “Travelling Along with You.” She set the tone for encouraging the Conference to engage with, respond to and consider the implications of the remits. London Conference had just shy of 100% participation in Remits 1-4 thanks to the commitment of the Presbyteries in ensuring pastoral charges voted.

One of the highlights of the triennium was an event London hosted in partnership with Manitou Conference in Sudbury. The eight Conferences with congregations in Ontario were invited to participate to discuss potential boundaries. Although the results of the Boundaries Commission are quite different from the discussion at this event, the experience of being together and dreaming together fostered new relationships and a spirit of cooperation that will serve London well as it moves into regions 6, 7 and 8.

Throughout the past three years, London Conference has been moving through the Affirming process. This has been a powerful experience at both the Annual Meetings of Conference and in gatherings of the Executive. The leadership of the Affirm Task Group, who have challenged the Conference to engage this work with integrity and honesty, is deeply appreciated.

London Conference Executive has also been pleased to authorize draws on its New Ministry Fund in The United Church of Canada Foundation over the past two years. The fund receives 10% of the net proceeds from the sale of the real property of a disbanding congregation. A further 10% is directed to the Mission and Service Fund and 2% is maintained for the Archive Capital Fund. This is another way that the Conference is looking to the future with hope.

Staffing Changes

In 2016, the Conference reluctantly received the resignation of Pastoral Support Minister, Elaine Graham due to an upcoming move to British Columbia. It was with delight that the Conference welcomed a Past-President and life-long student of spirituality, Anne Beattie-Stokes, to this role. Anne has been focusing on gathering ministry personnel together to encourage the building of collegial networks in light of anticipated changes.

The Conference was also dismayed to receive the resignation of Personnel Minister, Michelle Owens, in the spring of 2017. Michelle accepted the position of Principal at the Centre for Christian Studies. She played a key role in the development and implementation of the ELHPR test. In light of the fact that it was waiting for the outcome of the remits, the Executive of London Conference made short-term plans to cover the different elements of the personnel portfolio pending the announcement of the results. These short-term arrangements have now been extended until December 31, 2018. Tanya Cameron, previously .5 Minister, Vocations and Training, moved into the role of Acting Personnel Minister. The administration portion of Tanya's role was covered with an increase in the hours of Financial Administrator, Krista Ford, from .4 to .6. The work of training and vocations is being resourced through a ministry sharing agreement with Manitou Conference that provides .25 of their Personnel Minister, Lillian Roberts' time. Lillian's experience with Candidacy Pathways in Manitou is proving very helpful in preparing London's Education and Students network for the changes proposed by that remit.

Betsy Exley continues to provide leadership as Faith Formation, Youth and Young Adults Minister. In 2016, she enjoyed a sabbatical focused on evangelism with young adults. Pretima Kukadia-Kinting, the longest serving member of London's staff, covers communications. During the past triennium, she developed a newsletter for the Conference entitled "Latest from LoCo". In an engaging format, she headlines important news, providing links for further detail. Executive Secretary, Cheryl-Ann Stadelbauer-Sampa, welcomed an extended study time earlier this year to focus on recent writings in the area of congregational vitality and mission.

Future Directions

London Conference becomes part of regions 6, 7 and 8 and looks forward to the new partners with whom it will be seeking reconciliation, being inclusive, promoting ministry with children and youth, supporting congregations and caring for ministry personnel.

CONFERENCE OF MANITOBA AND NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO REPORT

The View from Here:

The Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario is large in size geographically and has many communities and congregations that are small and isolated. The Reality for us is that we often cannot find ministers willing to live in our more remote communities or those communities cannot afford full time ministry. These congregations rely heavily on lay leadership through Licensed Lay Worship Leaders, Sacraments Elders, and local Marriage Commissioners. As of writing this report we have twenty-eight perpetually vacant congregations, which are served through lay leadership and local volunteers. We as a Conference are very grateful for the many lay leaders who offer their gifts to the church in this way.

Conference Initiatives and Actions:

Over the last triennium we studied, prayed, and reflected on the Remits coming out of the Comprehensive Review process. We have known for some time due to the above noted situations that change needed to happen for our rural and isolated ministries in order for mission and ministry to thrive in those congregations. We had a high level of engagement and dialogue on the remit topics and had a good response to voting.

There was also a strong response in our congregations in sponsoring and supporting Syrian refugees as well as those seeking sanctuary. Many of our congregations worked with the wider community to help facilitate sponsoring, especially in some rural communities.

We had three presbyteries engaging in the Affirming process. We now are an Affirming Conference with five of our six presbyteries also being Affirming.

Youth ministry is a strong and important part of the ministry of this conference we hold three events annually, two retreats and Youth at Conference. We also worked with Aboriginal Ministries Council to host two Neechi Camps for Youth at Sandy Saulteaux Spiritual Centre to help foster right relations between indigenous and non-indigenous youth.

Working towards Right Relations has also been a focus through the work of our Presbyteries: Assiniboine Presbytery has created a Brandon Indian Residential School Mobile Learning Centre to help foster dialogue, understanding about the issues of Residential Schools and to work towards truth and reconciliation; Winnipeg Presbytery has signed onto the Winnipeg Mayor's Indigenous accord working towards right relations. As part of this work they have hosted a Kairos Blanket Exercise, several speakers, and other educational events. The Conference has worked with Indigenous partners and the Sandy Saulteaux Spiritual Centre in hosting several Feast for Friends, a right relations event.

Staff Changes:

Since 2015 our staff team has remained fairly stable. We have added Maggie Zoske as a part

time Administrative Assistant, she also works for Winnipeg Presbytery. Debbie Coss, Youth and Young Adults and Communications left our staff in 2016 due to budget cuts and we added Twila McNair in 2017 to work part time with our Young Adult and Youth Committee. This July will see the departure of Richard Manley-Tannis as he begins his new position as Principal of St. Andrew's College.

Our Conference also saw a 1/3 reduction in time of our Executive Secretary as we became part of the sharing arrangement with Alberta and Northwest Conference. This arrangement helped to keep our Conference from posting budget deficits and helped us as we look to transitioning to the new staffing model.

Future Directions:

As we prepare to be divided into two regions and say goodbye to one another, as the Eastern portion of Cambrian Presbytery moves into Region 6 and the Manitoba and Central Time zone portion of Ontario moves into Region 5, we are reminded that building relationships with diversity and difference are when we are at our best as church. We have learned many things from Cambrian Presbytery throughout the years. They were part of Manitoba Conference since its inception but that portion of the conference was only formally added to our name in 1981; however, their influence around social justice, becoming the first Affirming Presbytery, and their passion for youth ministry cannot be understated.

We move forward into our future as Region 5 and part of Region 6 with hope and optimism knowing it will take hard work to maintain the connection that our Presbyteries brought us.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon McCarthy,
Executive Secretary.

SASKATCHEWAN CONFERENCE REPORT

Origin: Saskatchewan Conference

The View From Here:

Saskatchewan is a place of beauty. Its beauty is too often overlooked on a drive across its wide expanse or in the weather reports of January and February. The United Church in Saskatchewan is a beautiful place in many ways as well. It is also a place which has had to respond to adversity in the form of rural depopulation, declining membership, reduced finances, fewer volunteers, and a reduction in energy levels. Vacancies are increasing. Ministries are more often less than fulltime. The number of ministry personnel continues to decline which has been exacerbated by the end of the transfer and settlement process and the recent restrictions on the appointment of retired ministry personnel. However, we continue to be blessed by the many diaconal ministers and designated lay ministers who have chosen to call Saskatchewan Conference home and by the ever increasing number of people who taking the training to become licensed lay worship leaders and sacraments elders.

Conference Initiatives and Action:

There are also many exciting new initiatives happening in the United Church in Saskatchewan Conference. A new Conference structure came into effect with the rise of our 2012 annual meeting. One of the results is that the Conference Executive has become smaller. The norm for decision making is by consensus. It is a place of collegiality and a place where everyone around the table has a voice. It is also a fertile place where exciting ideas come from all of the members around the table.

In particular it should be noted:

- In May of 2014, the decision was made to call upon the Government of Saskatchewan to enter into discussions on resource revenue sharing with First Nations. In the fall of 2014, the Conference Executive decided to challenge ourselves in the same way and so a proposal was passed that ½ of the Moats Land Fund (which is revenue from oil producing property) and ½ of the net income which accrues to the Fund be shared with the All Native Circle Conference, or its successor. As a result, to the end of 2017, \$202,415 has been given to the All Native Circle Conference.
- We have been intentional in building upon the relationship with the All Native Circle Conference and Plains Presbytery in other ways. Progress has been slow but it appears as if we may bear the fruit of that relationship as we enter in conversations about how the ministries in Saskatchewan Conference can work with the indigenous ministries within the Province.
- We continue to meet more and more by electronic means and have endorsed the principle proposed by the General Council Executive that face to face meetings should be minimized by including meetings by electronic formats to reduce the resulting carbon footprint. That is never easy. Glitches happen all the time. But it has been a great way to practice patience.

- Youth ministry through our Youth and Young Adult Community (YAYAC) Network and our Youth and Young Adult Ministry staff person is flourishing. This will be the third summer when we have operated our Vacation Bible School caravan which travels for 8 weeks each summer throughout the province offering VBS to communities. It is staffed entirely by university and high school students and in addition to the services that it offers, it seems to be successful at building character and relationships.
- As a response to the decision at the General Council in Cornerbrook to restrict ownership in oil producing properties, the Conference has decided to use some of its assets to purchase shares in a solar power co-op. This is in addition to the grants that it also gives out to ministries within the Conference who perform renovations which are part of a green project of the ministry to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce energy use, reduce water use, reduce sewage or storm-water, reduce pollutants, improve operations, educate occupants or install renewable energy.
- Following the closure of Calling Lakes Centre, Saskatchewan Conference has supported a training program for Licensed Lay Worship Leaders and the result has been a wealth of new people offering themselves for training.
- While it feels like there has been a leveling in energy for mission work, much positive continues to be happening within Saskatchewan Conference with educational events, social justice ministry, outreach, chaplaincy in its various forms, intercultural ministry, and reconciliation and relationship building between first nations peoples and settled peoples.

Of course, there is a sense of determination that these initiatives continue within the new structure. At the same time, but with the reduction in finances there is much fear that they will not.

Staffing Changes:

Since 2009, the staffing of Saskatchewan Conference has reduced from 8.3 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff people to 4.3 FTE staff people plus a contract program staff person for youth and young adult ministry.

In other areas of the United Church staff reductions have been more newsworthy because they have happened in stages. The reduction in Saskatchewan Conference and, I am sure, in many of the other Conferences has been gradual but comparable. This has generally paralleled the gradual reduction in the Grant from the General Council to the Conferences.

Since GC42 in the summer of 2015, there have a few changes in the staffing of Saskatchewan Conference as follows:

- Pam Thomas who started as the Conference Personnel Minister in 2001 retired effective September 30th, 2015. Liz Mackenzie assumed the position effective September 1st.

- Hazel Arbon, who started in the employment of Saskatchewan Conference in 2007, retired effective December 31st, 2015. She was replaced by Julie Graham who has assumed the position of Program Staff for Mission and Education on a ½ time basis.
- Rose Seifert who worked as an administrative staff person since December, 2009, left for greener pastures in August of 2016. She was not replaced and her responsibilities were divided between the remaining 2 administrative staff.
- Katie Curtis who worked as contract program staff person for youth and young adult ministry since the fall of 2012, resigned in January of 2017. Amar Koshy was hired to assume the position later that spring.

Future Directions:

Life on the prairies is changing. Life in ministry as Saskatchewan Conference and as Region 4 is changing as well. Congregations are closing. Churches without ministry personnel are on the rise. Many can only afford only part time ministry personnel and that has contributed to the number of vacancies. Many communities include shared ministry with other denominations. Lay ministry is increasing as is how much it is being valued. There are approximately 30 sacraments elders in place at any one time.

The United Church in Saskatchewan Conference is prepared to embrace the change which is imminent. However, as we do so it will be important to those who are the United Church in Saskatchewan to do what we can to ensure that what makes the Conference distinctive lives on in the new structure and staffing models.

Respectfully submitted,
Bill Doyle
Executive Secretary
Saskatchewan Conference

ALBERTA AND NORTHWEST CONFERENCE REPORT

Origin: Alberta and Northwest Conference

The View from Here:

Alberta and Northwest Conference encompasses a large geography and four provincial / territorial jurisdictions: Alberta, northeastern British Columbia, the Yukon, and the Northwest Territories. We also have three interprovincial Pastoral Charges with points in Saskatchewan. This increased by one at the end of 2017 with the welcome addition of the United Church congregation in Alsask, Saskatchewan, to the Pioneer Pastoral Charge of Coronation Presbytery. To get an idea of the size of the Conference think about the fact that the distance between Edmonton in Alberta and Northwest Conference and Thunder Bay in the Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario is shorter than the distance between Edmonton and Whitehorse, both of which are part of Alberta and Northwest Conference.

Over 400,000 people in the population of Alberta and Northwest Conference identify as United Church. The values of those within the United Church in Alberta and Northwest Conference reflect those of the general population. The average household income of people within the region is higher than the Canadian average. According to Environics, social values within the region and within the Conference are very similar.

However, there are differences in demographics between the United Church in Alberta and Northwest Conference and the general population. The profile of the general population is that of a younger, mobile, employed, affluent population, which tends to be married with families. There are also usually young children in the home.

On the other hand, as we know the profile of the United Church population is that of a more mature demographic even though the median age in Alberta and Northwest Conference is younger than the median age in the United Church as a whole. There is a high concentration of retired people. The United Church population is concentrated in urban and suburban areas and small towns. Those people who are connected with the United Church tend to be folk who were born in Canada; even higher than the national average.

Conference Initiatives and Action

In 2012, the Conference adopted a “Mission in Transition” model for its operations. This model allowed an opportunity to discern the United Church mission and vision in the Conference while remaining flexible in responding to changing levels of funding and places Alberta and Northwest Conference in a positive position to transition into the future structure of the United Church. We have also developed a stewardship program which remains flexible in changing times and allowed us to develop more cost-effective ways to support the mission of the church both in terms of dollars and human resources.

This model reduced the Conference staff to a core staff of Executive Secretary, Personnel Minister, Office Co-ordinator, Administrative Assistant Personnel, Accountant (0.6 FTE) and

Archivist (0.6 FTE). In September, 2016, Alberta and Northwest Conference started the sharing of Executive Secretaries, Shannon McCarthy and Bill Doyle, with Saskatchewan Conference and the Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario. As such the position of Executive Secretary was reduced at that time to .66 FTE.

The Conference meets at a General Meeting every three years with a major gathering of the Conference to take place mid-triennium for the purposes of education and inspiration. In 2017, the Mid-Triennium Event was held in Olds, Alberta, and in 2018, the General Meeting is being held in Sherwood Park.

The people of Alberta and Northwest Conference are ready for change. Should Remit 1 be enacted by General Council, the report of the Boundaries Commission will divide the Conference into two Regional Councils being numbers 2 and 3 with some individual Pastoral Charges joining Region 1 which is in the former British Columbia Conference. We have engaged with this change enthusiastically but with caution that what is uniquely part of Alberta and Northwest Conference will not be lost and that the important work that is being done in a number of areas will continue as part of the new Regional Councils.

Respectfully submitted,
Bill Doyle
Shannon McCarthy
Executive Secretaries
Alberta and Northwest Conference

BC CONFERENCE REPORT

Like the other Conferences and presbyteries throughout the church, BC Conference has been caught up in the whirlwind of change that has resulted from the acceptance of the remits authorized by General Council 42. Change, though, is nothing new to BC Conference and in many areas of our life we were already prepared spiritually and organizationally for even more. Change, when at its most effective, serves the purpose of deepening identity, and that is the approach we have tried to take in BC through the past two decades.

In 2000 BC Conference adopted a more effective governance model than it had previously, allowing it to move more quickly, flexibly and innovatively in all areas of its life. In 2007 the Conference took on responsibility for having a quality, sustainable camping ministry so invested over \$11 million in capital improvements at two camps, as well as setting up a fund for long-term financial support. BC was one of the trial Conferences for the full Effective Leadership initiative and so has already adopted the structures and practices needed for the new pastoral relations work of the future Regions. Significant property work has also been undertaken by the Conference, including the development of a growing affordable housing ministry which will (as presently constituted) build, own and operate over 400 new rental units. This \$140 million project is in partnership with BC Housing. Joint agreements between presbyteries, congregations and the Conference have resulted in the establishment of ProVision Funds which presently distribute approximately \$640,000 annually to congregations and others in the church for new, imaginative, mission-oriented work.

The core work of the Conference is supported by significant bequest and investment income. Presently this income, along with Presbytery allocations, supports 20 staff people, as well as several contractors. New funding has recently allowed the establishment of a program which can provide significant funding, guidance and other support to new communities of faith, particularly ones committed to alternative ways of organizing and gathering as the church.

BC Conference is well-positioned to transition to become a new Region. Conversations with the presbyteries have been taking place over the past three years about transitioning some present presbytery responsibilities to the Conference. They also worked to define the purpose for local Clusters and started planning for how they might function. With the coming loss of presbyteries (and allocations from congregations) we are currently trying to determine how important local work might continue to be governed, funded and managed. We welcome the addition of Whitehorse United and Rundle United congregations into our midst and look forward to discovering how these new relationships might enhance our life together.

Like the rest of the church, there is a wide variety in the vitality and sustainability of the congregations in the Conference. It has become clear that the brief post-war period of the 1950s was an anomaly in the life of the church in North America, where membership expectations were high, building programs extensive, and labour and property relatively cheap. The changed reality of the late 20th and early 21st century has meant that this model of the

church is no longer sustainable. Our urban areas have dwindling and aging membership with too many congregations and buildings; our rural areas do not have the financial resources to support properties and fully employed leadership. While many congregations in both urban and rural areas are able to overcome these trends, we continue to see the closure of congregations.

Closure, however, also brings the possibility of the redistribution of assets, both human and financial. By not having to focus all energy on “keeping the doors open”, many individuals can focus on more direct mission and ministry. By selling some properties, money is freed up to fund new initiatives and financially ground ones that need sustainable funding. By redeveloping and maintaining ownership of major properties, the church can leave a significant asset legacy for the generations yet to come.

The secularity of the west coast has been, and continues to be, a challenge to the church in BC Conference. But it has also meant that the Conference, and the congregations within it, have had to adapt and be more responsive to the world in which we find ourselves. The call of God to “be in the world but not of the world” continues... and if called, then we have nothing to fear, and everything in which to hope.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Cari Copeman-Haynes
President, BC Conference

MANITOU CONFERENCE ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

Origin: Manitou Conference

The View from Here

Everything that we would report at this time is offered through a lens of deep gratitude. Manitou has been the recipient of remarkable generosity which ensured our financial viability until such time as all conferences undergo likely restructuring changes. Many neighbouring conferences declined or reduced their General Council operating grants in order to provide us with the funds necessary to maintain an office and staff complement in this time of transition. Thank you!

Conference Initiatives and Actions

Manitou voted to be recognized as an Affirming Conference at our 2017 General Meeting. We celebrated with representatives from Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble at a special service on November 5, 2017.

Participation in the Candidacy Pathways and Effective Leadership and Healthy Pastoral Relations pilot projects position us well for the changes that will come with the anticipated Office of Vocations.

We were proud to partner with Huntington University in producing *Truly and Humbly: Memories of the First Apology*. The documentary, by film-maker Hoi Cheu, traces the memories of Canada's first Apology to Indigenous peoples by the UCC made in 1986 in Sudbury at the 31st General Council. This was twenty-two years ahead of the Canadian government's Apology to former students of the Indian Residential Schools. The film can be found on our website.

Staffing Changes

Our small staff team is unchanged since we reported to the last General Council. Of note, however, is that during this past triennium staff have had opportunity to share their skills and services in new constituencies. Conference Minister for Mission & Stewardship Animation, Melody Duncanson Hales began to resource the work of the Philanthropy Unit in Algoma Presbytery of London Conference. Conference Personnel Minister, Lillian Roberts, began serving London Conference ¼ time, in support of their candidacy processes. Our Office Coordinator, Sue Whitehead, provides videoconferencing facilitation in other Conferences and to several General Council and Central Conference committees and offers admin support to the General Council Executive and this 43rd General Council.

Future Directions

In the early 1970s, folks in northern Ontario dreamed of having a Conference, governed by and in support of northern congregations. Conference offices and staff seemed a long way away, in southern Ontario. In 1975, Manitou Conference was born. Excitement was tempered by disappointment that neighbours in Algoma Presbytery opted out of joining. As we prepare to

transition to Region 6 we remember the excitement that came with the creation of a new Conference and anticipate the same as we begin life in Region 6!

Will Kunder
Executive Secretary

ALL NATIVE CIRCLE CONFERENCE REPORT

Origin: All Native Circle Conference

The View from Here:

All Native Circle Conference is 30 years old in 2018 and continues to span five provinces with 40 ministries including 10 remote fly in communities. The four Presbyteries within our bounds continue to support ministry in their geographic areas, while looking ahead to the inevitable new and renewed relationship with neighbouring non-Indigenous communities of faith. As ANC Presbyteries examine their past, they look to their future anticipate both affirmative work and aspire to the challenges with any new relationship. (Keewatin Presbytery's final full meeting: Apasapowin Wekoskowin Looking Back, Moving Forward – was held in February of 2018.)

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People has been adopted by the United Church in this triennium. The Indigenous church has used it as the framework to move forward in our new structures and relationships.

Conference Initiatives and Actions:

In this past triennium we recognized one Designated Lay Minister and accompanied several candidates and students who are still in progress. There are currently 20 aboriginal personnel in paid accountable ministry positions in the conference, which is two less than our last report to GC due to one retirement and one long term illness. Four Sacraments Elders were renewed this past year to continue support in community. There are other ministries in ANCC who are supported by non-Indigenous clergy who have transitioned well into community.

The Council of Sharing helped to transition the work of repair and oversight of nationally owned properties that are used by Aboriginal communities to the Aboriginal Ministries Council in March of 2016. Three Council of Sharing representatives were named to the new Property Committee. The Councils of Sharing and Learning also worked very hard to transition all ministry personnel salaries into the new compensation model. The new cost of living groups raised salaries (in most cases) across the country. We have come to the point where the Mission Support that pays clergy salaries in Indigenous communities of faith can no longer stretch far enough to provide all ministries with a clergy with a living wage. Our model of ministry relies on Indigenous clergy remaining and serving in their home communities, but this is changing. We currently have two graduates and candidates who we were unable to ordain because they did not have congregations to serve. One candidate is providing ministry through one of the social services program in their home community. The Calls to the Church address this kind of issue and may mean recognizing ministry in community-based service organization.

The ANCC supported the work of the Aboriginal Ministries Council as they put Caucus groups into place for our Presbyteries and other Indigenous communities of faith close to us. The caucus groups reviewed the Caretakers' document *Calls to the Church* and gave them opportunity for conversation with the document and with each other. The people asked many questions, many of which stretch our imagination to answer.

We are grateful to Saskatchewan Conference who shared with us a monetary gift and the promise of ongoing annual royalties. This generosity of spirit has lifted many holds on our decisions and programs. The Conference has enjoyed more freedom and ability to say “yes” to initiatives we otherwise would have had to reject or have staff search for other alternatives and to provide support to ministries by undergirding their budgets. We have made it a priority to gather Indigenous youth annually. We seek to build community among our young and the young at heart who accompany them, all the while utilizing Indigenous spiritualities and teachings. It has been amazing to experience what a financial safety net can do for confidence decision makes in planning and budgeting.

Staffing Changes:

ANCC office experienced a few staff transitions in this triennium – a retirement and a long term illness moved us to braiding together a administrative support staff team to oversee the workings during these two transitions. A new term contract was created with the focus of Travel, Communications and Technical Support.

Our CPM team changed with a retirement in 2017 and a personal leave in 2018. As a result, we braided together a new team to carry out the CPM portfolio, which is support to students and ministry personnel, administration, pastoral care to clergy, and pastoral relations. We have several part-time staff to support each of the areas of work. This is an interesting time, as we continue to provide support, and work toward the transition of our work to another model.

Future Directions:

After GC42, ANCC named a transition team from the Executive to the working group that came to be known as the Caretakers of Our Indigenous Circle. ANCC helped the Caretakers develop a strategy that provides a just and equitable relationship with Indigenous peoples for the whole church. We hosted the Caretakers in our conference office over the past two years, thrilled to have the diverse Indigenous leadership from across Canada among us and with us. Most of the Caretaker’s work took place around the large boardroom table that ANCC inherited from the Truth and Reconciliation’s Winnipeg office. We were grateful for the wisdom it inspired in us and for us.

With so many changes in our structure ahead and new relationships to forge, we are stretched to our limits as the entire church groans under the weight of moving from an old way of being into the new and renewed. We put our trust in Spirit to guide, strengthen, and give us all hope. Meegwetch. Thanks be to God.

Respectfully submitted,
Cheryl Jourdain
Speaker
All Native Circle Conference