

Theme: THEOLOGY

GENERAL COMMENTS:

What We Heard:

No groups had general comments on this theme.

MAR 02 – 1925 20 ARTICLES OF FAITH

What We Heard:

- There was either mixed or no support for the proposal.
- Groups expressed the need for General Council to define and engage the church on what is exactly meant by “essential agreement”. It is being used differently in different parts of the country – one group noted the Office of Vocation might help to bring consistency.
- The Articles of Faith were written close to 100 years ago and do not take into consideration modern scholarship, biblical understanding, feminist perspectives, indigenous wisdom, and expressions of our understanding of God.
- The word “essential” was originally adopted at union to accommodate the more inclusive perspectives of the Congregationalist churches.

- There was some discussion about whether and how the Articles of Faith are used at the congregational level.
- The conversation raised the question of how we address different theologies on the spectrum of progressive to conservative.
- There were suggestions that *A Song of Faith* could be the requirement for essential agreement when entering ministry.
- One group wondered about the implications for recognition of ministry from partner denominations.
- Notes indicated that groups discussed whether or not we should delete the 20 Articles of Faith from The Manual, even though MAR 02 actually proposes removing them from the requirements for essential agreement during ordination/admission/recognition of ministry.

- One group noted that this proposal was transmitted with non-concurrence from Maritime Conference.

Suggested Way Forward:

That the 43rd General Council:

1. Direct the Theology, Inter-church, Interfaith Committee to engage in a study of the meaning of “essential agreement”, and
2. Take no further action on proposal MAR 02.

Moved: D. Whiting

Seconded: A. Mock

CARRIED.

SK 2 – CHANGE OF WORDING TO QUESTIONS ASKED OF CANDIDATES FOR MINISTRY

What We Heard:

- There was mixed reaction in groups, but no affirmation for the proposal.
- Groups expressed a desire for the church to have this conversation; groups reported that there is a desire for more inclusive language addressing the male-gendered language in the Trinity.
- There was discussion about the implications of this proposal – which would mean a move from Trinitarian to Unitarian theology – what would that mean for our ecumenical and full-communion partners? Many groups expressed concern about the ecumenical implications.

- One group suggested a study on whether we could modernize the Trinitarian language to be more contemporary for the essential agreement requirements.
- One participant wondered if the question could simply just be “Do you believe in God?”
- One group said that this conversation has been a burden and resulted in broken relationships in other courts of the church.
- There was reluctance to engage in another remit.
- One participant wondered why we were discussing something that they felt was settled at GC42.
- Some groups proposed a study that would be brought back to the 44th General Council.

Suggested Way Forward:

That the 43rd General Council:

1. Direct the Theology, Inter-church, Interfaith Committee to engage in a study on modernizing the theological language we use for agreements required in ordination/commissioning/admission/recognition of ministry and report back to the 44th General Council; and
2. Take no further action on proposal SK 02.

Moved: B. Steadman

Seconded: M. Martin

CARRIED.

TOR 4 – RETHINKING AND UPDATING THE SOCIAL GOSPEL THEOLOGY

What We Heard:

- There were mixed views on this proposal, although there was constructive discussion in the groups, there wasn't consensus to affirm the proposal.
- The tone of the proposal might suggest that the Social Gospel is the intellectual property of the United Church; we need to be careful in our language.
- One group said that 19th Century understandings of right and wrong need to be brought into the modern age; study and conversation are good things.
- Corporate memory of our theological roots in the Social Gospel has been lost; updating theological language addressing the current changes in our society's economic

and social context. There is United Church theological work on this issue that is not assembled in one place.

- There is much good theology happening in our world through other groups and countries; we do not need to take time, energy and money to address this issue.
- Groups were concerned about the additional recommendation by Toronto Conference directing regions to add social justice animators.
- It is important to consistently re-evaluate and update our evolving theology. The conversation/study needs to include scholarly sources from diverse backgrounds and theologies. It was noted all theologians cited in the report were white.
- The Theology, Inter-church, Interfaith Committee has already been given several pieces of work; could this be a conversation that happens elsewhere? Regions? Clusters?

Suggested Way Forward:

The 43rd General Council take no further action on proposal TOR 04.

Moved: S. Dansokho

Seconded: P. Mitchell

CARRIED.