

Theme: IDENTITY & VISION

GENERAL COMMENTS

What We Heard:

- Important for us to be talking about identity amidst the remit process.
- Need to be able to articulate more than a few public perceptions and/or perspectives.
- Without a vision we are lost.
- We need to stay true to our vision & identity as we move from the old to the new.

BC 3 – LEADING ON PURPOSE

What We Heard:

- There was no consensus on the proposal. Comments included:
 - Who we say we are as a denomination and who we say we are in our congregational living is disconnected. We would want the denomination to clarify its purpose and vision so that our congregations can live into that vision.
 - Efficiency is not a Christian virtue.
 - This feels redundant or too late – even if it reaffirms important parts of moving forward.
 - We should be doing adaptive work instead of structural work (i.e. we need work on strategic leadership instead of functional leadership).

- One group questioned if this proposal was really about funding and setting things up so that funding following priorities.
- There was a question about whether or not this should be the work of the transition teams.
- Who is setting the direction? Top down or bottom up? Concern if we are moving away from grass-roots.
- Some suggested this could be a good idea to ground us with all the changes we are undertaking, especially true since General Council Executive needs priorities to base the budget on; others were concerned this would be imposing something that shouldn't be a priority on to the General Council Executive.

Suggested Way Forward:

That the 43rd General Council forward the notes from the discussion and facilitation group to the new Denominational Executive and take no further action on proposal BC 03.

Moved: M. Baldwin

Seconded: E. Kellogg

CARRIED.

Amendment:

Mover: J. Macdonald

Seconder: J. Evenden

CARRIED.

BC 5 – A VISION TO GROUND US

What We Heard:

There was support for this proposal from most of the groups, accompanied by very robust conversations. Some comments included:

- This work may be a priority but should it be?
- There was debate about the need to do this type of work or is it time to stop talking and get to action.
- Two groups felt it was unnecessary when we have *A New Creed* and *A Song of Faith*.
- There was concern about how much money would be spent to do this work.
- People recalled the Arnprior consultation and the Calls to be the Church in GC39 (which was used to hold ourselves accountable).

- One group commented it's about time. We have been tied up with structure conversations for so long we have not talked about being the church. We need to affirm the importance of working with and through the spirit.
- Congregations already have familiarity with the Joint Needs Assessment process, the General Council should do this type of work too. We should always put mission & purpose first and the bricks and mortar will follow.
- Need to maintain and deepen the relationship the indigenous church in this work as well as equal partners in the sacred circle.
- Some affirmed the need to engage all levels of the church; one group preferred to leave this work to the Moderator and the denominational executive.
- Important in the light of ecumenical partners.

- Perhaps we need a good marketer – we need an effective communication strategy to relate who we are to our congregations and the world.
- There is a wide cross-section of people and ideals; it's an expensive process that cannot be justified.

Suggested Way Forward:

That the 43rd General Council affirm proposal BC 05 and refer it to the General Secretary.

Moved: M. Marshall

Seconded: I. Brown

CARRIED.

TICIF 1 / GCE 17 - REPORT ON MEMBERSHIP

What We Heard:

There was rigorous conversation about this proposal with many perspectives, some of which we have captured below:

- There does need to be change – could we change to something more inclusive?
- Church needs conversation about discipleship; Jesus told us to leave no one behind. We also need clarity on membership so we can determine who has the right to vote at meetings.
- Even with Model 2, we still need to draw a line about how we define commitment.
- Most groups had mixed preferences for Model 1 or 2.
- Concern was expressed about the loss of connection between baptism and membership in Model 2.

- There is a need to acknowledge that there are those who are fully active and committed and those who may be full members but not active.
- Membership is an opportunity to recognize the relationship with the community of faith.
- The language in the current model is dated (i.e. adherents may only vote on “temporal” matters).
- In one group, nineteen favoured model 1, one person liked model 2, and one was ambivalent.
- One group almost unanimously favoured model 2.
- One group felt we should start with Model 2 and incorporate the best of Model 1 into it. Another suggested combining the best of Model 1 and 2 into a Model 3.
- There is a concern about non-active members who return only to influence and cause upset over specific issues.

- Many congregations have not had conversations about membership.
- A few groups suggested that there should be further study.
- There are active congregants who might never become full members under our current model because of cultural ties to another faith tradition (e.g. Roman Catholic) but who add to the life of the church.
- If we are not careful, we could end up with too many categories of membership.
- Some disliked the binary either/or approach of the proposal. Seems administrative rather than spiritual.
- How does this fit with the General Council's other conversations around vision and identity?
- One group commented that we haven't educated our membership well about what membership means (i.e.

adherents, members, full members, transfer of membership). People need to know what it means to be a member of the United Church of Canada.

- What does it mean to belong to the family of God, to the wider Christian family? Baptism is an important part of that belonging to the family.
- One group recommended that Theology, Inter-church, Interfaith Committee do more work on this and solicit more feedback at the local level.

Suggested Way Forward:

That the 43rd General Council:

1. Forward all notes from the Discussion Groups at GC43 to the Theology, Inter-church, Interfaith Committee to

facilitate their further work on the issue of membership.;

~~and~~

~~2. Direct the General Secretary to develop and implement an educational campaign for communities of faith on our current membership model as defined in The Manual.~~

Moved: L. Shepherd

Seconded: M. Lindsay

CARRIED.

Amendment:

Moved: D. Leyton-Brown

Seconded: B. Steadman

CARRIED.

TICIF 2 / GCE 18 - HONOURING THE DIVINE IN EACH OTHER: HINDU-UNITED CHURCH RELATIONS

What We Heard:

- The United Church is really good at creating resources, but needs to encourage people to use them.
- Groups appreciated the consistency with other interfaith partners, and some mentioned previous interfaith statements in particular.
- One group requested to make online access to this statement easier. The Commons website is not user-friendly.
- This statement should be referred to the theological schools for study and use.
- One group raised a justice concern about the caste system.

- Some wished to see the United Church to go further with all interfaith statements.
- There was a concern raised about the wording “God’s liberating presence at work in the Hindu faith” on page 4. It was explained that this is from the 1966 United Church document stating that God is at work in other religions.

Suggested Way Forward:

That the 43rd General Council adopt the statement “Honouring the Divine in Each Other: United Church-Hindu Relations Today” and commend it to communities of faith as encouragement to continue to build interfaith relationships.

Moved: R. Goss

Seconded: J. McKibbin

CARRIED.