

General Council Executive

The Executive of the General Council (GCE) acts on behalf of the General Council between General Council meetings, and generally meets twice a year. The Executive is composed of 50 voting members, both lay and ministry personnel, representing all 13 Conferences, francophone, ethnic, and Aboriginal constituencies, and various national committees. The General Council Executive has met three times since the last report submitted to the Maritime Conference, May 7-9, 2011, November 12-14, 2011 and March 24-26, 2012.

As this is the final report for the 2009-2012 triennium, we will summarize the major pieces of work that have been accomplished this year and/or are coming to the General Council in August 2012.

Simplification of Manual and Processes

The work of simplification of *The Manual* and various processes included wide consultation with the church and was guided by four principles: balance regulation with flexibility, reflect the church's mission, be accessible, and provide clarity. This work will be coming to the 41st General Council for approval and the authorization of remits, as necessary.

Building Right Relations with First Nations

A number of initiatives have been undertaken to continue to build Right Relations with First Nations Peoples. The Task Group on the Basis of Union and the UCC crest will be bringing recommendations to the 41st General Council that will include insertions to *The Manual* to explain the historical context at the time of Union and the addition of the four colours of the Indigenous medicine wheel and the phrase "all my relations" to the crest. At the November 2011 GCE meeting, at the request of Justice Murray Sinclair, chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a discussion was held to explore our understanding of the term 'reconciliation'. At the meeting in March 2012, the GCE disowned the Doctrine of Discovery, an historical concept that has been used to rationalize colonization of Indigenous peoples, and is asking for similar action by the 41st General Council.

Becoming an Intercultural Church

As the next step in becoming an Intercultural Church, the GCE is recommending the proposal, 'Vision for Becoming an Intercultural Church', to the General Council for adoption. An intercultural church is described as one that is welcoming, relational, adaptive, justice seeking, intentional and missional.

Effective Leadership and Healthy Pastoral Relations

The report 'Effective Leadership and Healthy Pastoral Relations' proposes a new model for pastoral relations and oversight and discipline that would move responsibility for much of this work from Presbyteries to Conferences. Following consultation with the church in winter 2012, the GCE is recommending that 41st General Council direct the GCE to develop and test the processes as outlined in the report.

Accommodations for General Council Office

After considering invitations from various locations across the country, the GCE discerned that it would be best to maintain the General Council Offices in the Toronto area and authorized further negotiations with two downtown churches. After further work, the decision was made to seek a mutually beneficial relationship within the redevelopment of Bloor Street United Church, Toronto and that this would be the new home for the United Church of Canada. It is anticipated that the move will happen in 2015.

Ministry Personnel

The GCE approved a new compensation model for ministry personnel that will a) provide a comprehensive salary package; b) introduce separate salary scales for those credentialed and those not yet credentialed; and c) provide financial assistance in 'high cost, remote areas' when there are excessive financial costs when responding to medical or family crises. After careful review of the issues related to clergy couples compensation, it was evident that there was no change that would be equitable for all so there will be no change in current policy.

Although the UCC pension has survived the fluctuations in financial markets in recent years quite well, in light of low investment yields and after careful deliberations, the Pension Board made some changes to the Pension Plan to ensure its long term sustainability.

Middle East Policy

The Working Group on Middle East policy has worked diligently this triennium, including a trip to Israel and Palestine in winter 2011. Their final report was not available for the March 2012 meeting of the GCE, but will be available through the UCC website by early May.

Associate Relationship with Migrant Church Communities

From time to time, the UCC receives requests from congregations in Canada that belong to denominations in other nations seeking a relationship with the UCC. Such relationships would enable these congregations to root themselves in the Canadian context by association with the United Church while maintaining close connections with their home denominations. The GCE is recommending that the 41st General Council 2012 endorse these Associate Relationships.

41st General Council – Ottawa

Plans are well underway for the 41st General Council to be held in Ottawa, August 11 – 18. A Proposal Task Group is in place to facilitate the proposal and decision making process. The agenda will be finalized once the number of proposals and the number of candidates for moderator are known. Open Space, similar to that used at the Annual Meeting for Maritime Conference last year, will be used during part of the Council. Youth Forum will be a leadership development program this year which will clearly differentiate it from the role of Youth Commissioners.

Further information is available at <http://gc40.united-church.ca/gce>

Respectfully submitted by

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