

Review of New Structure

Origin:

1. What is the issue?

As a church, we seek always to be faithful to God as revealed in Jesus Christ and guided by the Spirit. In 2018 we were obliged to streamline our structure to respond to a profound change from the context of 1925 or even that of a generation ago. In the new structure we sought to honour the intentions of those who had gone before while designing systems and processes that would enable us to support one another and give leadership in our and subsequent generations. It is common for organizations such as ours to institute a review after a major redesign.

How did we do? Is the new structure working as intended? Have the past five years revealed any gaps or weaknesses?

2. Why is this issue important?

In order to answer those questions and discover whether or not there are any improvements to be made or deficits to correct, we need to study the new structure and ask one another if and how it supporting ministry: local, regional and national. We acknowledge the forward-looking work done to create new systems. Now that we can look back at five years of experience with it we owe it to ourselves and those who come after to examine the new structure with a view to its faithfulness and efficacy. If we can see ways to modify our structures in light of any patterns of effectiveness or ineffectiveness, it is our responsibility to do so.

As Christians and communities of faith we are always reviewing the gap between our stated and operative theologies and spiritual principles with a view to having them more closely align. A review of our new structure would allow us to do the same for the United Church as a whole.

3. How does this proposal help us to live into our church's commitments on equity?

A review will reveal ways we have been more or less faithful to our many commitments to equity, so this proposal concerns all these principles:

- adopting [the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) as the framework for reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples;
- adopting the [Calls to the Church](#) from the Caretakers of our Indigenous Circle as the basis for a new relationship;
- welcoming [people of all sexual orientations and gender identities](#) into full membership and ministry in the church;

- committing to becoming [an intercultural church](#);
- committing to becoming an open, accessible, and barrier-free church, where there is [full participation of people with disabilities](#);
- working towards functional bilingualism and ensuring that Francophone ministries are an integral part of the church's identity, mission, and vision;
- [opposing discrimination](#) of any kind on the basis of identity; and
- developing an anti-racism policy and committing to becoming an [anti-racist denomination](#).

This proposal comes originally from Unifaith Unifor Community Chapter, an association of active and retired ministry personnel and family members from across the whole country with a broad experience of the life of the church and deep commitment to its prophetic presence in the nation and the world. It was developed both “with” people and “on behalf of” people.

The impact of this proposal will be to uphold the people and communities of faith of the United Church as they are consulted on their lived reality in the new structure. It seems to those who drafted it that it would advantage all of us and disadvantage no one.

4. How might the General Council respond to the issue?

The mover proposes that the General Council could:

Conduct a review/study/discussion of the issue

A review would likely include various kinds of information gathering such as questionnaires, polls, focus groups and perhaps some longer interviews. This would begin by testing parameters for the review itself, such as testing the new structure in light of the equity lens listed above, and also the experience of those involved in the church's human resources systems and processes.

Information gathered and synthesized would be shared with the whole church to test accuracy and adequacy of the draft results. Review design would follow a participatory research model, in other words.

The review would involve consultation with those close to the design process of the new structure and access to relevant working papers from that process so that the stated intent of the current structure could be compared to its actual operation. Discussion at all levels of the church (community of faith, region, GC commissioners & staff) surrounding the review and study will broaden awareness of our overall mission, and how our structure is intended to facilitate it. This will generate a greater sense of ownership among all members and adherents.