

United in God's Work

In 2012, the 41st General Council directed a comprehensive review of the vision and circumstances of The United Church of Canada. A task group was created to lead the process, and after two-and-a-half years of consultation, research, and prayer, their recommendations for the 42nd General Council 2015, "**United in God's Work**" (www.gc42.ca/comprehensive-review-report), have been released. We are encouraging all members of the church to read "United in God's Work," watch the short videos, and discuss the recommendations in their churches, presbyteries, and Conferences. It is important that these discussions take place in time to send proposals to General Council in August.

The report proposes that

- the church commit significant resources to supporting new ministries and new forms of ministry by investing 10 percent of annual givings to the Mission and Service Fund in an initiative tentatively called Chasing the Spirit. This recommendation reflects the task group's belief that the purpose of streamlined structures is to allow the church to focus on ministries that support discipleship and evangelism in the emerging culture.
- the church place a high priority on building a relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples based on mutuality, respect, and equity, and that the church continue to live out its apologies to Aboriginal peoples.
- a three-council model of governance be established to replace our current four-court system. The three councils would be communities of faith (congregations and new forms of ministry), regional councils (a middle

court in place of presbyteries and Conferences), and a denominational council (formerly General Council). Local communities would gather in clusters, and strong networks would continue to support our social justice work.

- a College of Ministers be established that would accredit, oversee, and discipline ministers. All paid accountable ministers would be members, and the college would be governed by boards of both lay and ministry members.
- a working group of ministers be struck to study the concept of an Association of Ministers, offer support, and foster collegiality.
- the church spend only what it receives and reduce its spending by at least \$11 million. Communities of faith would pay an annual assessment that would cover governance and support services. All donations to the Mission and Service Fund would fund only ministry and mission activities, such as global mission and outreach ministries.

God is doing a new thing. The need for change in how the church is and will be united in God's work is pressing. This is not just about money or about structural change, but about vitality in the church. You can read the detailed recommendations at www.gc42.ca/comprehensive-review-report. They will be discussed and acted upon in August at the 42nd General Council.

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