

Comprehensive Review Task Group Frequently Asked Questions

Responses to frequently asked questions about the Comprehensive Review.

Q. What has the Comprehensive Review Task Group recommended?

The task group is recommending significant changes that would renew communities of faith, support and nurture new forms of ministry, simplify governance and administration, and enable us to live within our financial and volunteer resources. Read the report and recommendations on www.gc42.ca.

Q. Now that the task group has finished its work, what will happen to the report and recommendations?

The 42nd General Council will consider and make decisions about the report's recommendations and any additional proposals it receives at its August meeting in Corner Brook, Newfoundland.

In the spirit of consultation that has been the foundation of this work, the task group is encouraging all members to read the report and discuss it in their congregations, presbyteries, and Conferences. The United Church of Canada makes its decisions in community and has processes through presbyteries and Conferences for additional proposals to reach the General Council.

Q. What will the General Council do with the proposals?

The General Council has a number of options. It could

- approve the task group's proposals
- approve some and change or reject others
- approve alternate proposals
- choose not to make any changes to the church's structures and processes

Whatever option is chosen, the church still needs to live within its means, reducing spending by \$11 million from 2015 levels.

Q. What will happen after the 42nd General Council?

The next steps after the 42nd General Council will depend on what the Council decides.

If the Council approves changes, it would be up to the Executive and Sub-Executive of the General Council to develop and carry out an implementation plan. Some changes might be implemented right away, while others that affect the structure of the United Church would have to be approved through remits. A remit is a vote by presbyteries or by presbyteries and pastoral charges to change the Basis of Union.

Whatever the Council decides, major cost-reduction initiatives must begin in 2016.

Q. Where can I find out more about the Comprehensive Review Task Group's work that led up to this report?

Discussion papers, reports from the extensive consultations across the church, meeting updates, and other information about the task group's work are available at www.united-church.ca/general-council/gc41/comp-review.

Q. Who are the members of the Comprehensive Review Task Group?

Many faithful and talented people put their names forward to lead this work. From them, the Executive of the General Council appointed seven members to the task group on the recommendations of the General Council Nominations Committee and the Aboriginal Ministries Council. Moderator Gary Paterson worked closely with the task group as a key focus of his ministry as the church's spiritual leader.

Learn more about the members of the task group at www.united-church.ca/general-council/gc41/comp-review/members.

Q. Why does the United Church need to review its vision, structure, and finances?

Although the Christian message is timeless, religious institutions are human creations that need to be renewed from time to time to meet the needs of changing societies.

Like many mainline Protestant denominations in Canada, the United States, and Europe, The United Church of Canada has experienced decades of membership decline as Canadian society has become more diverse and secular. As a result, we no longer have enough volunteers or money to support our current structures. We need to make clear decisions about our priorities for the 21st century and focus our resources on these priorities to address our immediate challenges and equip the church to adapt and respond faithfully in the future to new contexts and opportunities.

Q. What is the Comprehensive Review?

In 2012, the 41st General Council directed that a task group be established "to examine the comprehensive vision and circumstances of The United Church of Canada and develop a report and recommendations for the 42nd General Council 2015 that will best enable the church to live faithfully in God's world at this time in the church's life." The catalyst for the Comprehensive Review was both structural and financial, particularly the need to identify significant cost savings. But the main goal is to enable the church to participate more energetically and faithfully in God's new creation.

After two years of intensive study and consultation, the Comprehensive Review Task Group is recommending major changes to The United Church of Canada that would revitalize and nurture a range of ministries, simplify governance and administration, and enable the church to live within its resources.