

## **Remit 1 – Three Council Model**

### **Background:**

The 42<sup>nd</sup> General Council 2015 approved, subject to remit, a new three-council model for the United Church as set out in the attached Schedule “A.”

The 42<sup>nd</sup> General Council 2015 authorized this Category 3 remit to presbyteries and pastoral charges to test the will of the church with respect to the new model.

### **The Question:**

Does the presbytery/pastoral charge agree that:

- (a) the United Church be re-organized into the three-council model approved by the 42<sup>nd</sup> General Council 2015; and that
- (b) the Basis of Union be amended to reflect this change?

## Appendix “A” to Remit 1 – Three Council Model

The United Church of Canada, organized as a three-council structure, would consist of communities of faith, regional councils, and a denominational council as follows:

### 1. COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

#### A. *Description:*

A community of faith is any community of people within the United Church that:

- gathers to explore faith, worship, and serve, including but not limited to pastoral charges, congregations, outreach ministries, chaplaincies, faith-based communal living, house churches, and online communities; and
- is recognized as a community of faith within the United Church by the regional council through a covenantal relationship between the community of faith and the regional council.

#### B. *Membership*

The members of the community of faith are:

- people admitted to membership by the community of faith, within denominational guidelines;
- eligible for election to denominational council and regional council; and
- entitled to vote on all community of faith matters; and entitled to extend the right to vote on financial and administrative matters to adherents.

#### C. *Authority and responsibility*

The community of faith has authority and responsibility for:

##### *Mission*

- living in covenant with the regional council with mutual responsibilities for the life and mission of the community of faith, and fulfilling its responsibilities under the covenant;
- doing regular self-assessments of the ministry of the community of faith; and filing the report with the regional council;
- joining the hearts, voices, and resources of the community to witness to the gospel and vision of Jesus for a compassionate and just society, both in Canada and around the world;
- local, regional, national and global initiatives and partnerships (community, ecumenical and interfaith) for ministry, mission and justice work;
- ministry with children and youth and young adults;
- honouring and living into intercultural mission and ministry;

##### *Becoming an Intercultural Church;*

- living in covenant with Mother Earth and All My Relations in the Earth community;

#### *Governance and administration*

- making decisions about the life of the community of faith, including worship, care, spiritual practice, and learning; local administration, finances, and governance, and local mission, justice, and evangelism;
- meeting at least annually;
- complying with denominational and regional policies;
- buying, selling, leasing, and renovating community of faith property in cooperation with the regional council, within denominational guidelines;

#### *Spiritual life*

- setting policies for membership, within denominational guidelines and receiving and celebrating new members in the community of faith;
- helping members deepen their faith while exploring their faith journey;
- ensuring the proper administration of the sacraments;

#### *Ministry and other leadership*

- cooperation with the regional council, within denominational guidelines, in recruiting, choosing, calling, appointing, and covenanting with ministry personnel and other staff, and in ending calls and appointments/covenants with ministry personnel and other staff;
- encouraging members to consider ministry roles a responsibility shared through the whole community of faith;
- recommending to the appropriate body suitable lay members as inquirers, candidates, and licensed lay worship leaders, as and if required under denominational policy;

#### *Participation in regional and denominational life*

- helping to fund the cost of sending members to the meetings of the regional council;
- electing members to serve on regional council with shared funding of the cost; and
- receiving, dealing with, and forwarding on proposals from members of the community of faith to regional councils.

#### *D. Limitations*

All authority and responsibility of the community of faith is subject to:

- policies set by the denominational council on membership, governance, pastoral relations, property, and any other area within the authority of the denominational council;
- the covenantal relationship between the community of faith and the regional council; and
- the authority of the regional council to assume control of the community of faith in extraordinary circumstances where the community of faith is unable to or refuses to meet its responsibilities or acts outside of denominational or regional policies.

## 2. REGIONAL COUNCILS

### A. *Description*

A regional council is a decision-making body responsible to serve and support communities of faith within its bounds and provide necessary oversight.

### B. *Membership*

The regional council is composed of:

- all ministry personnel within the geographic bounds served by the regional council; and
- lay members elected by the community of faith, respecting the balance of lay and ministry personnel where possible.

### C. *Authority and Responsibility*

The regional council has authority and responsibility for:

#### *Covenanting:*

- recognizing a new community of faith by entering into a covenantal relationship with it;
- living in a covenantal relationship with each community of faith, with mutual responsibilities for the life and mission of the community of faith, and fulfilling its responsibilities under the covenant;
- living in a covenantal relationship with ministry personnel;

#### *Services for communities of faith:*

- providing support, advice, and services to communities of faith in human resource matters;
- providing support, advice, and services to communities of faith in dealing with congregational property;
- managing regional archives;
- providing on-going leadership training for ministers and lay persons;
- providing funding partnerships with United Church educational and leadership training centres and camps as determined regionally;

#### *Serve, support and provide oversight of communities of faith:*

- reviewing and periodically auditing the self-assessments of communities of faith in light of the covenant between the community of faith and the regional council;
- supporting emerging new ministries;
- supporting communities of faith in their life and work;
- serving, supporting and providing oversight when necessary of camps and incorporated ministries in the region;
- promoting articulation of mission and ministry;
- ensuring compliance with the policies and polity of The United Church of Canada and reviewing any relevant records;

- assuming control of a community of faith in extraordinary circumstances where the community of faith is unable to or refuses to meet its responsibilities or acts outside of denominational policies;

*Mission and ministry:*

encourage and engage in:

- joining our collective hearts, voices, and resources to witness to the gospel and vision of Jesus for a compassionate and just society, both in Canada and around the world;
- local regional national and global initiatives and partnerships (community, ecumenical and interfaith) for ministry, mission and justice work;
- ministry with children, youth and young adults;
- honouring and living into intercultural ministry and mission; and
- living in covenant with Mother Earth and All My Relations in the Earth community;

*Policy and finance:*

- administering policy set by the denominational council, and setting appropriate regional policy;
- buying, selling, leasing, and renovating community of faith property in cooperation with communities of faith, and distributing any proceeds within denominational guidelines;
- buying, selling, leasing, and renovating regional property, and distributing any proceeds within denominational guidelines;
- receiving, dealing with, and forwarding on proposals from communities of faith to the denominational council based on denominational policy;
- setting and managing its annual budget including revenue from the denominational assessment and setting any additional regional assessment for any additional services the regional council wishes to undertake;
- participating in determining priorities for mission and ministry work through Mission and Service;
- meeting at least annually as the entire regional council or through its executive;

*Preparation for Ministry:*

- recruitment and discernment of persons for ministry;
- accompaniment and supervision of persons in the preparation process;
- ordination and commissioning of members of the order of ministry;
- recognition of Designated Lay Ministers;
- licensing of Licensed Lay Worship Leaders;
- celebrations of admissions and re-admissions;

*Pastoral Relations;*

- cooperating with communities of faith in recruiting, choosing, calling, appointing and covenanting with ministry personnel and communities of faith, and in ending calls and appointments/covenants with ministry personnel and other staff;

celebrating retirements;

*Oversight of ministry personnel;*

- encouraging and supporting ministry personnel towards health, joy and excellence in ministry practice;
- assisting with informal conflict resolution processes;
- maintaining the roll of ministry personnel and informing the office of vocation of those ministry personnel in good standing;

*Participation in denominational life:*

- electing members to serve on denominational council.
- receiving, dealing with, and forwarding on proposals from members of the community of faith to the denominational council; and
- promoting and fostering direct dialogue between communities of faith and the denominational council.

*D. Limitations*

- policies set by the denominational council on membership, governance, pastoral relations, candidacy, ministry personnel, property, and any other area within the authority of the denominational council; and
- the authority of the denominational council to assume control of the regional council in extraordinary circumstances where the regional council is unable to or refuses to meet its responsibilities or acts outside of denominational or regional policies.

*E. Staffing*

Each region has staff to assist the regional council in meeting its responsibilities:

- staffing numbers are based on assessments, grants from Mission and Service, and any other regional income;
- staffing is based on priorities and needs as determined regionally;
- staff are hired and managed by a regional secretary who reports to the General Secretary of the denominational council and relates to the regional council executive; and
- regional councils with more resources are free to retain more staff, and sharing of all resources across the church is encouraged.

### 3. DENOMINATIONAL COUNCIL

*A. Description:*

The denominational council is the decision-making body for the United Church as both a denomination and a legal corporation.

*B. Membership*

The denominational council consists of:

- those elected by the regional councils according to an agreed-upon formula
- the presiding officer or elder of each regional council;
- the Moderator and the immediate Past Moderator;
- the General Secretary of the denominational council; and
- other members and guests as determined.

### C. *Authority and responsibility*

The denominational council has authority and responsibility for:

#### *Mission:*

- joining our collective hearts, voices, and resources to witness to the gospel and vision of Jesus for a compassionate and just society, both in Canada and around the world;
- engaging denominational-level ministry and mission including resource development and being a resource to regional councils and communities of faith;
- encouraging local and regional mission and ministry, partnerships, ecumenical and interfaith;
- engaging in national and global partnerships, ecumenical and interfaith relationships;
- honouring and living into intercultural mission and ministry;
- living in covenant with Mother Earth and All My Relations in the Earth community;

#### *Policy:*

- setting policies for the denomination on doctrine, worship, membership, governance, pastoral relations, property, and the entrance to paid accountable ministry;
- making decisions on denomination-shaping issues relating to public witness;
- dealing with proposals received from regional councils;

#### *Governance:*

- electing a Moderator;
- electing the executive of the denominational council;
- referring all unfinished matters to the executive of the denominational council;
- meeting once every three years in person, with members having the option of full participation through electronic or equivalent means;
- meeting more frequently as required through electronic or equivalent means;
- approving the number and boundaries of regional councils, supporting them and promoting parity of service across regions;

#### *Finance and administration:*

- setting a three-year budget framework for the church
- determining the assessment formula for communities of faith and assessing them to meet the requirements of the budget; and
- maintaining the denominational archives.

#### *D. Limitations*

The authority and responsibility of the denominational council is subject to the following limitations:

- *remit*: the Basis of Union may only be changed through the remit process, which requires the approval of a majority of the presbyteries and also, if the General Council considers it advisable because the change is substantive or denomination-shaping, pastoral charges;
- *membership requirements*: no terms of admission to full membership may be prescribed other than those laid down in the New Testament;
- *freedom of worship*: the freedom of worship enjoyed by churches at the time of union in 1925 may not be interfered with in the United Church; and
- *property*: all policy on congregational property adopted by the denominational council must comply with the requirements set in The United Church of Canada Act, 1925.

#### *E. Executive of the denominational council*

The executive of the denominational council is the decision-making body for the United Church between meetings of the denominational council, living into covenantal relationship and mutually accountable with the denominational council, regional councils, and communities of faith, with the following membership, authority and responsibility:

##### *membership:*

a fixed number between 12 and 18 members, with the exact number set by the denominational council;

##### *authority and responsibility:*

- dealing with all unfinished matters referred to it by the denominational council;
- dealing with all routine and emergency work of the denominational council between meetings of the denominational council;
- establishing standing and other committees; and
- exercising additional authority and subject to any limitations as set by the denominational council.

#### *F. Staffing*

The denominational council has staff to assist it in meeting its responsibilities through:

- staffing based on assessments of communities of faith, grants from Mission and Service, and other denominational income;
- staffing based on the priorities and needs as determined denominationally;
- administering denominational policies;
- providing centralized technical services such as information technology, communication, payroll, accounting, human resources, administration, and pension plan;
- supporting the Moderator; and
- providing leadership in global partnerships and national-level ministry and mission work.



#### 4. CLUSTERS AND NETWORKS

Alongside the three-council structure, there are clusters and networks that, while not formal governance bodies, are central to the living out of the faith of the United Church:

- *clusters*: local clusters of communities of faith that provide community and support for communities of faith and their leaders, and focus on worship, mission, learning, collegiality, and strategic planning; and
- *networks*: linking people working on specific issues (e.g. supportive housing, intercultural ministry, youth ministry) or for project work (e.g. event planning) that function through the whole church, depending on the issue.