

# The United Church of Canada: Guiding Principles, Practices, and Processes for Members of Committees and Task Groups

## Theological Foundation

*For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophesy in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the compassionate, in cheerfulness. (Romans 12:4-8)*

In the spirit of Paul's words to the Romans, the members of The United Church of Canada are one body in Christ. Our gifts differ. All are needed for the building up of the body. The following principles, practices and processes have been created to guide us in offering our gifts and inviting each other into membership.

## Principles

We seek a comprehensive approach to recruiting, selecting, supporting, and recognizing those who are elected or appointed to serve as members of *all councils, committees, or groups of the General Council*; one that is:

### **Informed by the Spirit**

Draws on practices of Christian spiritual formation; facilitates individual and group discernment

### **Accountable to the General Council**

Accepts the responsibility to carry out the nominations process for the General Council according to the mandate and established principles

### **Shares Leadership**

Co-facilitated by committee chairs and designated staff in the General Council Office and Conferences



**Elected member** – Those who are elected by the courts of the church, and drawn from its diversity, to serve on the General Council and its Executive; includes Commissioners and Conference representatives on the Executive of the General Council. Alternates are named by the court to which the elected member is accountable.

**Appointed member** – Those who are appointed by the General Council or its Executive; they reflect the diversity of the church and are recruited for particular expertise to serve on Permanent and Standing Committees; program, advisory, and compliance committees; and task groups. Alternates are proposed by the GCE Nominations Committee and appointed by the GCE or its designate.

### **Open and Transparent**

Clear, detailed, and timely information on opportunities, selection criteria and process, and appointments; documented and disseminated through multiple communication channels

### **Inclusive**

Aspires to balance voices, perspectives, and interests while proactively seeking to address inequities; demonstrates an intentional struggle with historic patterns of exclusion

### **Flexible**

Able to accommodate the variety of work, diversity of interests, and routine to unique circumstances

### **Continuously Improving**

Through regular feedback and evaluation is able to make changes and adjustments to practices and processes based on key findings

## **Practices and Processes**

### **Recruitment**

**Eligibility:** Members and adherents of The United Church of Canada are eligible to serve on its general councils, committees, and groups. Membership is a requirement to serve as a committee chair. Staff members of the General Council Office and Conferences are not eligible for governance-level appointments in a voting capacity.

**Documentation:** Written terms of reference for each committee or group are created by the mandating body and documented in their record of proceedings or minutes. Each body also provides written direction on the preferred composition for each committee or group. The competencies (skills, knowledge, attitudes, and experience) required by the chair and by members are clearly delineated and translated into selection criteria. An estimate of the time budgeted for the committee's work is also provided. A committee profile is created for dissemination through the nominations network. The profile describes the

- current situation – *Why is this committee being formed? What is the context for its work?*
- mandate – *What is the committee being asked to do by the mandating body? To whom is it accountable? What is the expected time commitment?*
- composition – *What skills, knowledge, and experience are needed around the table?*
- appointment process – *Who will review nominations, make recommendations, and select the committee's chair and members? What are the selection criteria? What is the timeframe for each step of the process?*

**Corresponding member** – Those who have “voice but no vote” on councils, committees, and groups and who serve by virtue of their position. (The Manual 2004, p. 39) This status is non-transferable. Corresponding members may be appointed by a committee for the duration of a meeting. Staff members may also be assigned this status on a committee by the General Secretary for the duration of a triennium. Their participation on the committee is managed by their supervisor.

**Staff member** – Those who are employees of the General Council of The United Church of Canada and provide support and counsel to committee members. They do not have voting status on committees.

**Chairperson** – The elected or appointed member who works in partnership with the staff resource person to facilitate the life and work of the committee or group to achieve its mandate. Appointed by the GCE or its designate. Alternates are proposed by the GCE Nominations Committee and appointed by the GCE or its designate.

**Staff resource person** – The staff member who works in partnership with the chair to facilitate the life and work of the committee or group and to achieve its mandate. They are selected and appointed by the General Secretary.

A directory of committees and members is continuously updated and maintained. As required, common templates and tools are developed to ensure a uniform “look, feel, and quality” to the information coming from the GCO about committees and groups, and to facilitate record keeping.

**Terms:** The GCE Nominations Committee sets the length of the terms in consultation with the committee chair and staff resource persons. Appointments are renewable once at the invitation of the GCE Nominations Committee.

**Composition:** Diversity and inclusion, geographic and demographic balance, among other criteria are given critical and careful consideration when the mandating body is considering the committee’s composition. Special emphasis is placed on including those who have been historically excluded from positions of influence and authority.

**Member Qualifications:** Active participant in a local pastoral charge or ministry, familiar with the polity of The United Church of Canada, predisposed to collaboration and teamwork, sensitive to diversity issues, leaders in a court of the church, passionately committed to the mission of The United Church of Canada, willingness to discern God’s yearnings for this work

**Information Dissemination:** Conferences are alerted about new opportunities first. Opportunities are posted on The United Church of Canada website and are also distributed by mail, e-mail, or fax as appropriate.

**Search:** The scope of the search is determined by the length of time available with the understanding that Conferences generally require a *minimum* of a month’s notice to make a meaningful contribution to the search. In urgent or fast-breaking situations, the mandating body sets the parameters for the scope of the search.

**Nominations:** The nominations network is broad and includes everyone who is affiliated with The United Church of Canada. Nominations are invited from individuals, pastoral charges, presbyteries, Conferences, theological schools and educational centres, and special ministries. Individuals are also welcome to self-nominate. A mandating body may indicate that it would like formal representation from each of the 13 Conferences. In these situations, each Conference makes the selection of their representative according to their own nominations and appointment processes.

**Expressions of Interest:** Prospective members are asked to send a letter to the chair of the GCE Nominations Committee expressing their interest in a particular opportunity. They are advised to include

**Permanent Committee** – One of four committees mandated by the Executive of the General Council to support its work in the areas of program, governance, planning, and financial and human resources.

**Standing Committee** – An ongoing committee mandated by the General Council to address specific issues or to oversee a particular area of its work.

**Accountability** – The requirement to explain and accept responsibility for carrying out an assigned mandate given agreed upon expectations.

**National nominations network** – Individuals, groups, and institutions affiliated with The United Church of Canada and its courts.

**Mandating body** – The court or committee responsible for mandating other committees or groups and to whom they are accountable.

**Time budget** – An estimated allocation of time to the work of a particular committee or group; includes meeting days/hours, travel days/hours, preparation and follow-up days/hours.

- a little about themselves and their involvement in the United Church
- why it interests them, why they feel called to this work
- what spiritual gifts they would bring, what they hope to learn
- the names of three references

**Screening:** Additional information on those nominees who meet the selection criteria is gathered and reviewed. To provide linkage with Conferences, consultation occurs. Routine screening procedures are applicable if committee members will come into contact with at risk or vulnerable groups through their committee work.

**Privacy:** The United Church of Canada is committed to protecting the privacy of personal information. Personal information is collected, used, maintained, and disclosed in compliance with The United Church of Canada Privacy Policy and applicable federal and provincial privacy legislation including, but not limited to, The Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (2000, c.5). We use your personal information for internal purposes only and will not sell, lease, or disclose this information to any third party.

### **Selection**

**Selection Criteria and Processes:** While the criteria and process are tailored to the mandate of each committee, the practice of group discernment is common to all. Staff members may identify prospective members, carry out research or screening procedures, and assist the Committee Members Services Office in applying the criteria for selection in a transparent way.

**Review and Recommendation:** The Nominations Committees uses practices of spiritual discernment and reviews the membership requests and people who have expressed interest. This committee recommends appointments to the court or committee to whom they are accountable.

**Service to Members:** Expressions of interest are acknowledged and nominators and nominees are thanked in a timely fashion. Members receive an appointment letter to confirm the length of their term and related information about the committee. These letters are copied to the Conferences.

**Communication:** Appointments are posted on The United Church of Canada's website after permission is given by each new member. Their pastoral charge, presbytery, and Conference are notified.

**National leadership group** – The sum of committee members who serve at the governance-level nationally.

**Basic adult education principles** – Learners' experiences and knowledge are recognized as a rich resource. The information provided is related to his/her context and immediate needs. Learning style differences are taken into account. Educational programs are conducted in a safe and comfortable environment, offer facilitation rather than lecture, and promote understanding and retention. Learners' current level of understanding is assessed in advance. Feedback is solicited continuously. Goals and expectations are clarified up front.

**Diversity:** The GCE Nominations Committee declares its diversity goals or aspirations for the leadership group as a whole. Similarly, it describes its aspirations for each committee with input from the mandating body. It reports to the GCE annually on its progress toward achieving its aspirations and any insights acquired along the way.

**Cascading Appointments:** Every effort is made to limit the number of additional appointments that flow from a single appointment. Mandating bodies present rationales for any appointment that has one or more additional committee assignments attached to it.

### **Support**

**Preparation:** Members receive an orientation tailored to their assignment and in keeping with basic adult education principles.

**Leader Formation:** Members are encouraged to receive and provide continuous feedback on their participation. Formal assessments of self, committee, and work progress are completed annually. Ongoing attention is paid to the formation of leaders such as creating resources and educational opportunities.

**Partnerships:** Suitable mentors are available to assist chairs and members as required. Staff resource persons or designates provide support to committee members in carrying out their responsibilities.

### **Recognition**

**Knowledge Exchange:** Each committee or group devises a way to relay information to new members. Members who have completed their terms are interviewed and invited to reflect on their experience and sense of call to serve the church in other ways.

**Celebration and Thanksgiving:** The contributions of committee members are celebrated annually in a variety of ways – reported annually to the Executive of the General Council, to Conferences and presbyteries, and to the pastoral charge. Outgoing members receive a formal letter of thanks and/or an expression of gratitude from the Moderator and General Secretary.