

# **Unified Governance Working Group**

Documents for Dialogue  
and Discernment

**UNITED CHURCH**  
OF CHRIST



# An Invitation from the Unified Governance Working Group

You are invited to participate in a process of dialogue and discernment regarding Unified Governance for the National Setting of the United Church of Christ.

This invitation emerges from a resolution adopted at General Synod in Summer of 2009. In this resolution, Executive Council was asked to appoint a Working Group that would represent the diversity of the church. In the first of our meetings, we designed a dialogue and discernment process that invites your responses to Unified Governance for the National Setting. Your responses inform broader discernment processes of the Working Group which lead to developing a proposal for implementation of a Unified Governing structure.

## We are asking you to:

- Prepare for your dialogue session by reviewing material that describes the historical context leading to this resolution of General Synod. We offer both summaries and complete documents so that you can decide how much information you want.
- Approach this process prayerfully.
- Participate openly and attentively so that you may speak your perspectives and deeply listen to others' perspectives.

## Our promise to you:

1. We are committed to hearing and supporting dialogue across the church about unified governance.
2. In our discernment process, we promise to review all information documented at your dialogue session.
3. Our process is visible and accessible: we are posting our working group documents on <[www.ucc.org/governance](http://www.ucc.org/governance)>.
4. We share an intention to faithfully complete the work we are chartered to do.

## Contents of this Packet:

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
Letter of Invitation	3
Facilitator Resources and Dialogue Process	4-5
General Synod Resolution	6
Executive Summary/Overview	7
Plan of Action with Milestones	8
Core Concepts of the 2008 Governance Proposal	9-10

February 2, 2010

Dear Conferences, Associations, Local Churches, Groups and Bodies of the United Church of Christ:

The Unified Governance Working Group is requesting that you reserve agenda time at an upcoming meeting or special teleconference in order to meet the timeline for dialogue and discernment about unified governance in the National Setting. Feedback is needed by June 30. Your members may wish to prepare for this meeting by reviewing several documents attached in this packet. These documents are also available on <[www.ucc.org/governance](http://www.ucc.org/governance)>.

Please allocate 1-2 hours for this dialogue.

The quality of these meetings is significantly affected by the facilitation. We offer resources for facilitation in the dialogue packet and commend them to you. We will attempt to point you toward a facilitator if you find you need assistance.

Your group's feedback about unified governance must be documented and returned to us within one week of the meeting, identifying the meeting, date, and participants. We are asking that you send an electronic summary that reflects the full breadth of your discussions. All perspectives are important in this dialogue and discernment. Please return the summary to <[governance@ucc.org](mailto:governance@ucc.org)>.

Blessings,

The Rev. Dr. Bernard Wilson, Chair  
on behalf of the Unified Governance Working Group:

Douglas Andrews  
Jim Antal  
Marti Baumer  
Diane Bennekamper  
Lynda Bigler  
Geoffrey Black  
Anita Bradshaw  
Deborah Blood,  
Elizabeth Clement  
James Darnell  
Mike Downs  
Julia Estrella  
Sylvia Ferrell-Jones  
Yvette Flunder  
Edith Guffey

Juanita Helphrey  
Beau Heyen  
Linda Jaramillo  
Bill Land  
Liz Miller  
Marilyn Pagán-Banks  
Rich Pleva  
Phil Porter  
Inez Reid  
Cally Rogers-Witte  
Steve Sterner  
Tanner  
Jeannie Thompson  
Bing Tso

# Facilitator Resources

## Materials Available to You

Everyone should read:

- 2009 Resolution adopted by General Synod
- Executive Summary
- Plan of Action with Milestones
- Core Principles and Concepts

If you want more information about the previous proposal, read these documents online at <[www.ucc.org/governance](http://www.ucc.org/governance)>:

- UCC Constitution and Bylaws
- September 2008 Proposal
- Brief History and Frequently Asked Questions
- Powerpoint presentation on the previous proposal

## Shaping the Dialogue and Discernment Session

- Use the Dialogue Process handout and a flipchart to track ideas
- Make a space that is comfortable, inclusive and respectful

## Discernment Processes: wisdoms and tips

- Speak for yourself; speak and listen from the heart; be attentive to yourself, others, and the overall process
- Invite brief introductions, make people feel at ease, offer appreciation for the many expressions of God's diversity that bring us together as church to reflect
- When engaging the final dialogue question, encourage participants to share their hopes and dreams for the UCC
- Send any tips that emerge from your sessions that you'd like to share with other facilitators as the process continues to <[governance@ucc.org](mailto:governance@ucc.org)>.

# Dialogue Process

1. **Welcome** to the Dialogue and Discernment Process — Opening prayer/reflection
  
2. **Overview and Introductions**
  - Facilitator role* (guiding, charting comments, summarizing)
  - How/what we will document* (a summary overview of all our responses)
  - Ground rules for dialogue and discernment* (prayerful atmosphere; listening and engaged; sharing from the heart)
  - Discernment* (a time of shared reflection)
  
3. **Quiet Reading** 10 minutes for everyone to review the resolution, executive summary, unified governance plan of action with milestones, and principles and concepts
  
4. **What happens next?**
  - Speak for yourself
  - Speak from the heart
  - Be attentive to yourself, others and the overall process

*Dialogue Questions (these follow study of the materials contained in the packet)*

**a) What do you believe God is calling the UCC to be now & into the future?**

For example, see the two italicized questions below to help you and your group think about God’s call for the UCC’s future. You need not answer each, these are ideas to spark your conversation.

*What creative, new models for ministry and mission do you see emerging in the church today? What new possibilities do you imagine for the church?*

*If you were to imagine a “network of settings” for the UCC, what might those look like? How would they support and interact with each other?*

**b) What is your response for the Unified Governance Working Group?**

**5. Closing with Prayer**

Facilitator summarizes the themes that will be sent to <governance@ucc.org> in the coming week; thanks people for participating; closes the meeting or hands it back to convener

# Toward Unified Governance for the National Setting of the United Church of Christ

## Adopted by General Synod 27

5 **BE IT RESOLVED** that since the dialogue regarding governance has surfaced historical  
6 and present tensions regarding matters of race and ethnicity in our denomination, the  
7 General Synod requests the Executive Council and the Covenanted Ministries Boards to  
8 engage in further sacred conversations on race, especially around what it means to be an  
9 anti-racist, multi-cultural, multi-racial church. This conversation would be separate from,  
10 although possibly concurrent with, the discussion on governance in recognition that we  
11 cannot heal relational issues through governance discussions, but we do need to move  
12 toward reconciliation.

13  
14 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the General Synod requests that the Executive  
15 Council appoint a Working Group with representatives from the Collegium of Officers,  
16 members of the Executive Council, Covenanted Ministry Boards, Affiliated and  
17 Associated Ministry Boards, the Council of Conference Ministers, and the Historically  
18 Underrepresented Groups, to guide work toward Unified Governance in preparation for  
19 action by the Twenty-Eighth General Synod. In consultation with the Chair of the  
20 Executive Council, each of these bodies would identify their representative so that the  
21 diversity of the church would be well represented in the Working Group.

22  
23 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that General Synod requests that local churches,  
24 Associations, Conferences, and Historically Underrepresented Groups engage in dialogue  
25 and discernment regarding Unified Governance for the National Setting and report back  
26 to the Working Group by Fall 2010. The Working Group, in a transparent way, will  
27 document all information received and include it in the discernment process.

28  
29 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Twenty-Seventh General Synod affirms the  
30 principle of a Unified Governing Board as the basic governance structure of the national  
31 setting of the United Church of Christ, based on theological reflection, and practices of  
32 good governance that include strategic planning, resource development, and monitoring  
33 and oversight, incorporating the principles and concepts contained in the Fall 2008  
34 Governance Follow-up Team II proposal, in order to carry out faithfully the mission of  
35 the church.

36  
37 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the General Synod requests that the Executive  
38 Council and the Covenanted Ministry Boards bring to the Twenty-Eighth General Synod  
39 a proposal for a Unified Governing Board with changes in the constitution and By-Laws  
40 necessary to begin implementation of a Unified Governance structure.

# Executive Summary/Overview

## of the work of the Unified Governance Working Group (UGov)

Below is an overview of the concepts and principles which are the basis for the Unified Governance Working Group's project. In order to support the discernment and work ahead, your reflections are invaluable for our process leading to a proposal that we will bring to Executive Council and Covenanted Ministry Boards for the Twenty-Eighth General Synod.

General Synod passed the resolution "Toward Unified Governance for the National Setting of the United Church of Christ" which requests "that local churches, Associations, Conferences, and Historically Underrepresented Groups engage in dialogue and discernment regarding unified Governance for the National Setting and report back to the Working Group by Fall 2010. The Working Group, in a transparent way, will document all information received and include it in the discernment process." [Lines 23-27)

### **Unified Governance: What is being proposed**

Preceding the Unified Governance Working Group, the Governance Follow-Up Teams (GFT I and II) had grown out of feedback from the 2000 Restructure Evaluation Oversight Committee (for the national setting of the UCC) of the Executive Council; and the experience of the Collegium since 2000. The concept of Unified Governance for the national setting would bring together one common board rather than five.

Following study and reflection, proposals on how to do this with diverse representation, protections for historic endowments, and principles of good governance were brought forward by the GFT II to the Covenanted Ministry Boards and Executive Council and were affirmed in the Fall of 2008.

The Twenty Seventh General Synod affirmed the principle of a Unified Governing Board as the basic governance structure of the national setting — incorporating the principles and concepts contained in the Fall 2008 Governance Follow-up Team proposal.

### **Why have Unified Governance?**

Common governance would allow for discernment and strategic decision-making in a single body rather than five distinct boards which is the current reality. Moving from the current, multiple board model to a unified governance model would allow the national setting to be more responsive to local churches and settings of the church in a changing world.

# Unified Governance for the UCC National Setting

## 7/29/09 Plan of action with milestones

(A Working Timeline from the Executive Council Chair, Pierson G Kemp, Jr.)

Significant event	Completion date (est.)
1. Appoint working group with reps from Collegium, Exec. Council, Covenanted Ministry Boards, Affiliated and Associated Ministry Boards, Council of Conference Ministers, and Historically Under-represented Groups (HUGS) to guide work toward Unified Governance.	August 15, 2009
2. Charter (formal) working group at the fall meeting of the E.C. Request that the working group establish a requirement that local churches, Associations, Conferences, and HUGS engage in dialogue and discernment regarding Unified Governance.	October 15-17, 2009
<i>Working Group meets to establish process and materials for church wide review, feedback due July 1]</i>	<i>Dec. 3 6 p.m. - Dec. 5 6 p.m.</i>
3. Provide written “status of activity” to the Exec. Council Chair.	January 15, 2010
4. Provide formal presentation of “Status of Activity” toward governance from the working group & Covenanted Bds.	Spring Mtg. of E.C.
5. Provide quarterly report (written) to the Exec. Council Chair.	July 15, 2010
6. Working Group report to the Exec. Council on the status of activities toward Governance at the National Setting.	Fall mtg. 2010

**Note: Continue with appropriate actions/milestones for the remainder of 2010 and into 2011 culminating in implementing the Unified Governing Board by General Synod Twenty Eight.**

# Core Concepts and Principles: Fall 2008 Proposal on Single Governance

As identified by Unified Governance Working Group, Dec. 3-5, 2009

In response to the General Synod 2009 Resolution:  
Proposal available at <[www.ucc.org/governance](http://www.ucc.org/governance)>

## The Proposal affirms:

- **The UCC is a multi-racial, multi-cultural; united and uniting; just peace; open and affirming; accessible to all; global mission Church.**
- **God's mission is the focus.** The United Church of Christ is a church in God's mission (understood creatively & expansively).
- **The role of a board is governance and vision.**  
Governance structures evolve over time. The history of the UCC and its predecessor bodies shows that all have been expressions of the particular vocation and ethos God called them to embody in various times and contexts. This rich, historical legacy reaches back far beyond the 50 years of the United Church of Christ and has been embodied in varied ways, in structures that have sought to be the faithful stewards of that unfolding and ongoing legacy.
- **Officers and staff are leaders**
  - The Collegium model of leadership continues.
  - The role of the General Minister and President is strengthened and clarified.
- **Good Governance and Generative Governance are a priority** (The work of a board is to understand the questions it ought to be asking and to generate appropriate decisions for the life of the organization)
- **The United Church Board is accountable to Synod. The leadership role of Synod is affirmed.**
- **The proposal moves to Unified Governance:** one board serving 4 corporations (3 existing, Justice and Witness Ministries, Local Church Ministries, Wider Church Ministries, and the new United Church Board)
- **The proposal reflects the UCC's inclusiveness**
  - Majority of the board members elected by General Synod are persons of color and women
  - Diversity that includes but is not limited to the Historically Under-represented Groups (HUGS)
  - 32 additional Synod delegates from Historically Under-represented Groups
  - 30 special delegates, to be selected according to criteria yet to be determined
  - Expanded opportunities for engagement in mission outside of Board service are anticipated.
- **Autonomy and covenant are cherished principles in this proposal for a unified structure**
- **The United Church Board would maintain the historic mandates & commitments of the UCC and its antecedent bodies.**

- **The existing relationship with WCM Global Ministries and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) continues.**
- **The United Church Board would honor and preserve original donor intent for all funds**
  - **Changes on draw rates are limited**
- **Smaller Size Board allows for flexibility and nimbleness (1 board instead of the current 5)**  
The current structure of five separate Boards means that joint action takes a very long time and requires multiple meetings and consultations. The StillSpeaking Campaign took 2 ½ years to implement as a result of this reality.
  - **The Board would have 3 ministry groupings ('ministry teams').**
  - **There is accountability between and among ministry teams (checks and balances section). See [www.ucc.org/governance](http://www.ucc.org/governance) for the complete text of the Fall 2008 proposal.**
  - **Expertise and skill sets are needed for committee work (eg financial committee)**
  - **Executive Committee**
  - **Financial Oversight Committee**

## **Additional Study Materials**

Additional in-depth resource materials are available for download at [\*\*www.ucc.org/governance\*\*](http://www.ucc.org/governance).