

Frequently Asked Questions

Unified Governance Proposal for the National Setting of the United Church of Christ and Related Constitution and Bylaw Changes

*Prepared for the Delegates of the Twenty-Eighth General Synod
in Consultation with the Cabinet of the Council of Conference Ministers
and the Unified Governance Working Group*

Where did the proposal for unified governance come from?

The 27th General Synod requested the Executive Council and Covenanted Ministry Boards to bring a proposal to the 28th General Synod for a Unified Governing Board with changes in the Constitution and Bylaws necessary to begin implementation of a Unified Governance Structure.

The Executive Council appointed a Unified Governance Working Group which included representatives of all the Covenanted Ministry Boards, the Executive Council, and other national bodies to prepare a proposal. The Working Group published all its actions and continually invited input from all settings of the UCC. It engaged in theological reflection and prayerful discernment. The current proposal was built upon work done prior to 2009 which had been affirmed by the 27th GS. The report of the Working Group was adopted by the Executive Council [and affirmed by the Covenanted Ministry Boards] and is the basis for the current proposed Constitution and Bylaw amendments.

What is the background for this and how long has the discussion been underway?

The present governance structure for the national setting of the United Church of Christ was implemented in 2000. Feedback received in 2004 indicated several concerns, including the difficulty of strategic planning among several boards, ambiguity about relationships and accountability among the Executive Council and other ministries, and a need to clarify and strengthen the role of the General Minister and President. Those concerns have continued and intensified.

How does unified governance support mission?

The mission of the United Church of Christ is discerned and pursued in multiple UCC settings and communities of UCC members and churches, including the General Synod. Mission includes justice as well as local and global concerns, often linked together, and often growing out of the spiritual life and worship of the church. Mission changes with the context and the time and the call of God. It is not a static thing, ever.

Governance in the national setting enables coordinated planning and implementation to help communicate and connect the mission. It also helps to care for and allocate a responsible and faithful development and use of resources in service of God's mission by the national setting and with other settings of the Church. It is expected that a common board will be the most effective form of governance to embrace the challenges and creative opportunities the coming years will present to the United Church of Christ and the broader ecumenical community.

Are historical legacies and mandates safeguarded in the Constitution and Bylaws?

Yes. Use of funds in accordance with donor intent is carefully outlined in the proposed Constitution and Bylaws. All the Covenanted Ministries' attorneys have reviewed and collaborated on the proposed language and guidelines regarding historical mandates, investment decisions, and draw rates.

Why is good governance and a smaller more diverse board the foundation of the unified governance proposal?

The General Synod Resolution identified a mandate for unified governance because a smaller board can more effectively perform the functions required of boards using the principles of good governance. Studies show that the larger the board is, the less effective it is.

Principles of good governance include *strategic planning, resource development and stewardship, monitoring, and oversight*. These seem vital for the national setting of the UCC to respond faithfully to God's call to ministry and mission.

One common board charged with the overall responsibility for this function will enable the UCC to respond most effectively to that call while being accountable directly to the General Synod as it gathers biennially and to the whole Church continuously through multiple means of communication and regular reporting.

The proposal calls for a diverse membership in keeping with the vision of the UCC as a multiracial, multicultural church which welcomes all. No less than half of the board must be persons of color, no less than half must be women, and no less than one-fifth must be persons under 30. All members will bring their particular and diverse life experience, expertise, wisdom, points of view, and faith to governing and all will be asked to represent and to serve the whole church with their gifts.

The Unified Governance Working Group values good governance and diversity, a unified board supports both of these values.

How are Board Members chosen? Explain the Nominating Committee, who is on it, and who may put forward names to be considered?

The General Synod will elect most of the members of the Board, with the exception of a few who will serve by virtue of their particular office in the Church. The General Synod Nominating Committee will offer a slate of nominees for to the Synod, based upon the competencies and skills needed for an effective board, including diverse points of view and life experience from fund development to cultural competencies, and diversity that includes socioeconomic diversity. The Nominating Committee itself will be diverse, including members from conferences, historically underrepresented groups, and the Board itself. Anyone in the UCC may submit names to the Nominating Committee for consideration as potential board members.

What is unified/single governance for the national setting?

While there will be 4 separately incorporated entities, the membership of each will be identical; thus *one group of people* will have the common responsibility of fiduciary oversight, fund development, and strategic planning rather than many. The single United Church of Christ Board is directly accountable to the General Synod and the whole United Church of Christ. The responsibilities of the UCC Board as well as checks and balances are clearly defined in the proposed Constitution and Bylaws.

(We currently have 4 Covenanted Ministry Boards and an Executive Council, five distinct entities guiding the national setting with the General Synod).

What happens to the corporations of the Covenanted Ministries we have now?

The corporations of Wider Church Ministries, Justice and Witness Ministries, and Local Church Ministries will continue and each will hold its financial assets and its mandates. The Executive Council will be changed to the United Church of Christ Board. The Office of General Ministries will not continue but its functions will belong to the United Church of Christ Board.