

Frequently Asked Questions about the Unified Governance Proposal

Is the proposal complete?

Not yet, although the UGov committee feels that the major pieces that required consensus within the group have been resolved or are close to resolution. A finished plan will be presented to Executive Council in October.

How are the historically underrepresented groups (HUGS) represented on the new board?

One of the elements of the UGov proposal carried over from previous plans is that 50% of the members will be people of color and 50% will be women. Each HUG will be able to provide names to the Nominating Committee, and there will be some HUGS members serving on the Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee will also have a set of guidelines around diversity and expertise to fulfill in their selections.

The first class of board members will include members of the former Boards, Executive Council and HUGS.

Have current proposals for changing board structure been evaluated by lawyers to make sure they will pass legal muster?

The proposals from GFT 1 and 2 were fully evaluated by legal counsel; both were for a unified board. Attorneys from all the covenanted ministry boards fully reviewed and vetted these proposals that inform the current work underway. When a new proposal is complete it will be reviewed again by counsel.

Will historical mandates be honored?

There are several historical endowments that undergird part of the activity of the United Church of Christ. The original intent of those endowments will continue to be honored in this new structure.

Is this proposal mission-focused?

To have a unified board will make mission planning and coordination at the national level easier. The current structure requires that initiatives move through a number of different boards in order to be implemented. The new structure will also shift the way that the Collegium works, since the members of that group will be reporting to the same board of directors.

This change in structure will also make it easier for the national church to respond to the initiatives and needs of the local church more effectively. Mission is carried out in all settings of the church, locally, by association and conferences and in the national setting. Carrying out the mission of the church will benefit from increased coordination at all levels and having a simpler structure in the national setting.

Will the Collegium change?

The UGov plan retains a previous recommendation that the Associate General Minister be appointed by the General Minister and President and not be part of the Collegium.

Therefore, the Collegium will consist of four rather than five members.

Is this move to restructure being done for financial reasons?

The new board structure will be less expensive to maintain, so there will be cost savings, but the primary motivation for restructuring is to increase the effectiveness of the national setting, especially in regard to supporting mission. A 2005 evaluation of the restructuring that took place in 2000 indicated that having multiple boards was hampering coordinated mission-planning.

The new structure should also make the national structure able to respond more nimbly to new realities, including financial ones. Resources of all types—time, energy and money—saved by the new plan can then be used to create other ways to gather church members to plan, dream and respond.

Is this a restructuring from the top down or the bottom up?

The best answer to that question is “yes.” It is the result of a long series of conversations that have happened at all settings of the church and proposals have been shared widely. Virtually everyone in this conversation is a local church member and the needs of the local church are forefront in the minds of those involved. And the restructuring is also a result of evaluations of the structure that was created in 2000, with much input from national staff, current national boards and conference ministers.

The organizational issues facing the national setting of the church are similar to those of the local church. Many of the people involved in the work of restructuring are bringing to bear their experience with local church organization.

How are conferences represented?

Although there will not be a specific representative for every conference, the Nominating Committee will be charged with making sure that there is wide representation. Also, six conference ministers will serve on the board, one to be chosen from each of the six regions of the denomination.

It is also assumed in this plan that all members of the board, as members of local churches in the UCC, will bring to bear the interests and concerns of their conferences, associations and congregations.

What are some of the areas of expertise that UGov has identified as being important to the functioning of the board?

UGov is developing a list of those areas that will be included in their proposal.

Serving on one of the five boards has been a way of getting local church people involved in the national setting. Won't the new plan limit that involvement?

It is the belief of members of UGov (and one advanced by previous restructuring groups) that we need to find more flexible and creative ways to involve local church members in conversations and dreaming about mission. The new structure will free up resources for new ways of gathering to have those conversations.

Hasn't this restructuring conversation already occurred?

Two previous committees have worked on restructuring issues and presented proposals

over the past four years. For various reasons, it has been necessary to revisit the restructuring plan. The UGov Committee is in a different position than previous committees because the last General Synod voted to specifically request that a proposal for unified governance be brought to the next General Synod in 2011.