

GC43 GCE22 Commitment To Becoming An Anti-Racist Denomination

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1. What is the issue?

We believe God is calling The United Church of Canada to deepen its racial justice work by making a clear and unequivocal commitment to becoming an anti-racist denomination.

God's Spirit continues to move in this time, and calls people in the church to respond to ongoing manifestations of racial injustice in church and in society.

2. Why is this issue important?

The current context of anti-Black, anti-Indigenous, and anti-Asian racism that manifests itself against Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour requires the followers of Jesus to make clear commitments to contribute to a just and equitable church and world. [A Song of Faith](#) reminds us that Jesus "crossed barriers of race, class, culture, and gender" and that we are "a church seeking to continue the story of Jesus by embodying Christ's presence in the world."

The United Church of Canada has a long history of condemning racism:

For decades, the United Church has condemned all forms of racism, named racism as sin, and worked to eliminate systemic racial discrimination. People in the United Church have developed [anti-racism](#) policies and education programs, worked towards reconciliation and [Indigenous justice](#), adopted the [Calls to the Church](#), and created [intercultural policies](#) and initiatives. In spite of this steadfast and faithful work by committed people over generations, the reality of racism in the

church is ever-present.

– [Working Towards Becoming an Anti-Racist Denomination](#)

Over these many years of anti-racism work, and in the midst of many other commitments, the United Church has not specifically declared itself as an anti-racist denomination. Words matter! The current context of racism requires this church—for its own integrity and its understanding of participating in the [mission of God in the world](#)—to build communities where all can participate in the fullness of life. The church can work towards this vision by stating clearly its commitment to becoming an anti-racist institution.

The United Church has already made a commitment to [becoming an intercultural church](#). A commitment specifically about becoming an anti-racist denomination would further this commitment and deepen the church's work towards racial justice.

3. How might the General Council respond to the issue?

The 43rd General Council could,

- a. **make a clear statement committing The United Church of Canada to becoming an anti-racist denomination;**
- b. **empower the General Secretary, General Council to implement the necessary frameworks and strategic directions, including processes for involvement of the whole church, to continue to live into this commitment; and**
- c. **request that the General Secretary, General Council offer annual updates on the progress of the church's anti-racism commitments to the recalled General Council, and offer updated proposals as needed.**

4. For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council Executive:

The United Church of Canada has a long history of engagement in anti-racism work, and it has been engaged in racial justice issues since the 1960s. The document "[A Timeline of Racial Justice and Anti-Racism in The United Church of Canada](#)" offers a short overview of some of

the church's historical and contemporary efforts.

More recently, the church has engaged in the following:

- adopted an anti-racism policy, [That All May Be One](#)
- [mandated racial justice training](#) for all United Church ministry personnel
- made a commitment to becoming [an intercultural church](#) and adopted [an intercultural vision](#)
- worked on the calls from the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#)
- adopted the [Calls to the Church](#)
- committed to the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)
- engaged with the [United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent](#)
- created processes on racial harassment

In June 2020, a proposal entitled "[Towards an Anti-Racist Denomination](#)" was written for consideration by the General Council at the height of protests for racial justice around the world. A part of that proposal suggested that the United Church "clearly state a missional goal for the denomination to become an anti-racist church." Earlier that same month, the Executive of General Council issued a strong statement [in support of Black Lives Matter](#).

Currently, the Executive of General Council has an Anti-Racism Working Group. There is also a White Privilege Working Group, as well as an Indigenous Peoples Reference Group and a Racialized Peoples Reference Group. All are engaged in various aspects of anti-racism work.

The document "[The United Church of Canada: Working to Become An Anti-Racist Denomination](#)" offers further background on what it might mean for the church to become an anti-racist one.

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