



# The United Church of Canada General Council

## GC44 TICIF02 Principles-Based Justice Work

Document Date  
October 21, 2023

### 1. What is the issue?

The 44th General Council asked that a principle-based approach to its justice work be developed. A set of principles would govern the church's responses to historic, current, and emerging social justice issues and enable timely and contextual responses. The 44th General Council 2022 directed that this work be done by the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee.

### 2. Why is this issue important?

The United Church has used a policy-based approach to its justice and advocacy ministry for decades. For the most part, the policies are reflective of a particular time in history and limited by the current realities of the time. Changes to policies are often slow because of our governance processes. With dynamic and evolving contexts, policy statements made in specific moments in time find us out of sync with the calls of partners and with rapidly changing global realities. Increasingly,

because of changing global and political contexts and requests from partners and civil society organizations, the United Church finds it difficult to be responsive due to the limitations of its policies.

Shifting to a principles-based approach to our justice work will enable the church to respond more quickly to situations of injustice, while at the same time being guided by a consistent framework. The principles give direction and guidance to national staff and national committees in the church's work to seek justice and fullness of life.

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

The Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee recommends that the General Council:

- a. adopt in principle the proposed Principles, with any necessary revisions to be brought to the 45th General Council 2025 for final adoption. Such revisions will be based on the experience and evaluation of using these principles to respond to situations of injustice and to requests from partners, and
- b. encourage further conversation with the Indigenous church about ways to include Indigenous spiritual teachings into the Principles document and to bring suggestions and revisions to the 45th General Council 2025.

### **4. What will be the impact?**

The impact could be that the United Church is able to respond in more timely and contextual ways to situations of injustice arising in Canada and around the world, and further, that we can be more responsive to requests from partners. Shifting to a principles-based approach can be seen as part of the church's ongoing learning and efforts to decolonize its processes, actions, advocacy, and ministries.

The work has been an activity stream within the Justice objective of the Strategic Plan.

There is no financial cost to this proposal. It will involve staff time in terms of staff becoming familiar with the principles and developing processes for applying the

principles in their work.

## **5. How does this proposal help us live into the commitments on equity?**

Adopting a principles-based approach to justice echoes and amplifies the already-existing principles and commitments the church has made on equity.

## **6. For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council Executive:**

The Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee approved the draft principles at its meeting on August 29, 2023 and commended the work of the working group in drafting these principles on a tight timeline. At its September 22-23, 2023 meeting, the General Council Executive approved the recommendation to forward these principles to the October, 2023 annual meeting of GC44 (TICIF 01).

**If this proposal is in response to assigned work - either from General Council or a previous GCE meeting, please list proposal / motion numbers.**

- GCE03 A Principle Based Approach To Justice Work In The United Church Of Canada

Document Type: [Proposal](#)

General Council: [GC44](#)

Originating Body: [Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee](#)