



The United Church of Canada General Council

GC44 Theology And Inter-Church Inter-Faith (TICIF) Accountability Report to for October 19, 2024

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Overview

The Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee meets online periodically throughout the year, with smaller working groups meeting more frequently. The committee also met in person in early February 2024 to begin planning for the work assigned by the 44th General Council (2022) around engaging the church in conversation about discipleship.

For the first two years of this triennium (2022-2025), TICIF focused primarily on theological work assigned by General Council. The committee also connects with United Church members who have been named to Canadian and global ecumenical bodies, as well as to Canadian interfaith bodies. The committee continues to wrestle with how best to engage the inter-church and inter-faith work that is part of its mandate, since the elimination of the ecumenical and interfaith program coordinator

position in July 2020. The committee is starting a practice of inviting these representatives to one of the meetings each year so that there is greater understanding of the work that each is involved in.

Currently, the committee has thirteen elected members from coast to coast, representing a diversity of leadership and theological perspectives within the church. The committee has staff support from the Program Assistant, Theology and Ministry Leadership, and the Executive Minister, Theology and Ministry Leadership.

1. Principles for Justice Work

A working group met with General Council Office (GCO) staff in early September to gather feedback about the principles for our justice work. GCO staff have been applying the principles to various justice issues that have been raised within the church and by ecumenical and interfaith partners in Canada and globally. This testing of the principles was approved by General Council in October 2023, with the direction that revisions to the principles be based on learnings from applying the principles. This working group will be working on proposed revisions to the principles to bring to GCE in early 2025; the proposed revisions will then be brought to the 45th General Council in August 2025.

2. Discipleship

The work on engaging the church in discipleship, as mandated by the 44th General Council, is beginning. A small working group from TICIF has been meeting monthly since May 2024; plans are underway to launch a social media campaign in early November. The group is developing discussion questions that can be used in a variety of ways in communities of faith and will have a webpage set up so that we can hear directly from people and communities of faith about how they are living out their discipleship. We anticipate sharing some of these stories and offering reflection questions in some of the Centennial monthly newsletters. TICIF is also delighted to see that engagement in discipleship has taken root in the United Church outside TICIF; notably in “Bold Discipleship” named in the [Call and Vision](#) of the current strategic plan, and in the establishment of the Growth Animators team.

3. Countering Antisemitism

The Countering Antisemitism Working Group was established soon after General Council 44, composed of members from the Anti-Racism Common Table and TICIF. The group created educational resources: a course on ChurchX, Round the Table blogs, a [website presence](#) on www.united-church.ca, and a Good Friday worship service—as ways of living into its mandate of challenging antisemitism in Christian theology and worship. Earlier this year, after those parts of the work were completed, the working group decided to come to an end. The work of countering antisemitism, however, is still very much needed!

The staff assigned to the work (the Executive Minister for Theology and Ministry Leadership and the Anti-Racism and Equity Lead) have developed a further education plan for the rest of 2024 and the first half of 2025. The education plan continues the work of engaging the church in examining the ways that anti-Judaism and antisemitism show up in how we read and interpret scriptures, in our theologies, and in our hymnody. This work is linked to the overall [Anti-Racism Action Plan](#), and one of the live events for the 40 Days of Engagement on Anti-Racism will feature Dr. Amy-Jill Levine, who will explore [The Texts of Advent: Finding Good News and Avoiding Antisemitism](#) on November 19 (with English-French interpretation). The plan for later 2025 and into 2026 is to develop learning opportunities to help the members of the church engage in advocacy to counter antisemitism.

4. Engaging the Church's Histories, Practices, and Theologies of Mission

The Mission Working Group was established in early 2023 and was comprised of members from the Indigenous Church, the Anti-Racism Common Table, and TICIF. The group met throughout 2023 to determine recommendations to bring to General Council Executive, which had assigned the work. GCE passed a proposal in November 2023 which, in part, directed the development of theological, liturgical, and educational resources to engage the church in further learning about our history, theologies, and practices of mission with particular attention to the ways in which these differed with global partners and domestically.

In 2024, a small advisory group, comprised of some of the former members of the Mission Working Group along with some other United Church members with particular knowledge in this area, met with staff to develop an action plan. Resources for bible studies and worship services are being developed with an

anticipated launch in spring 2025. Additional resources and ways to animate the resources will be developed throughout 2025 and into 2026.

5. 2012 Statement on Ministry Revision

Work is progressing on revising the 2012 Statement on Ministry, which is work arising from the “Ministry Leadership to Meet the Needs of the Church in the 2020s” report and proposal. A key aspect of the revision is to strengthen and affirm the importance of the ministry of the whole people of God and to uphold the ministries and discipleship of laity. A small working group comprised of members from TICIF and the Board of Vocation have been meeting regularly since early 2024 to determine scope, review past statements, reports, and proposals on ministry, and to solicit feedback from laity engaged in living out their faith as ministry in paid and volunteer work within and outside the church. A draft statement will be brought to the 45th General Council in 2025.

6. Sad News: TICIF Chair, Rev. Alison Etter, 1982-2024

Rev. Alison Etter, the chair of TICIF from summer 2020-February 2024 and a member of TICIF since 2015, died unexpectedly in February 2024. She is deeply mourned by members of TICIF, her communities of faith, her husband, and her young son. She touched many people with her passion for justice, her deep compassion for all, her wonderful laugh, and her quick and insightful mind. Alison was an excellent chair of TICIF, bringing thoughtful reflection, good processes for ensuring all voices could be heard and could participate fully, and navigated many discussions with wide-ranging perspectives with grace. *Alison, presente!*

TICIF is grateful to members Deborah Elliott and Michelle Owens, who have agreed to co-chair for the remainder of this triennium.

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