



**The United Church
of Canada
General Council**

GC45 TICIF02 Revised Principles for Justice Work for Summer 2025

True Document Date: August 8, 2025

Origin: Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee

1. What is the issue?

The 44th General Council asked that a principles-based approach to the United Church's 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. In October 2023, General Council adopted the principles in principle and directed the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee to prepare "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."

2. Why is it 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.

Members of the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee met with General Council Office staff who have been applying the principles to various situations of injustice and to calls from partners. Staff provided feedback on the wording and application of the principles. While determining a method for applying the principles, and tracking the use of the principles, is beyond the scope of what TICIF has been asked to do, the committee strongly encourages the development of a method of applying the principles **as a whole** and the development of a tracking mechanism in order to record how and in what situations the principles have been applied.

3. What is the recommendation?

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

- a. that the General Council approve the revised principles, including [the preamble](#); and
- b. that the General Council encourage further conversation with the Indigenous church about ways to include Indigenous spiritual teachings into the principles for justice and to bring suggestions and revisions to a subsequent General Council.

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 principles move us away from a time-bound, policy-based approach to our justice work that cannot respond adequately to rapidly changing contexts. The principles enable the church to be faithful, contextual, and responsive to partner calls as situations evolve. The

challenge going forward will be to help the church understand the implication of this shift and to discern proposals that might shift the church back to a rigid policy framework.

There is no financial cost to this proposal. It will involve staff time in terms of staff developing and refining processes for applying and tracking the principles in their work.

5. How does this proposal help us to live into our church's commitments on equity?

Adopting a principles-based approach to justice echoes and amplifies the 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 revised principles at its meeting on February 7, 2025.

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 (2022)
- TICIF02 Principles-Based Justice Work (October 2023)

For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council:

Please select the appropriate option and provide the key discussion points for items being forwarded to the General Council:

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree without forwarding to the General Council
- ☐ Disagree and forwarding to the General Council
- ☐ Take no action at this time

If you have questions regarding this proposal, please send them to: GCinfo@united-church.ca

Document Type: [Proposal](#)

General Council: [GC45](#)

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