



**The United Church
of Canada
General Council**

GC45 YCOM01 National Youth Council (NYC) for Summer 2025

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1. What is the issue? Why is it important?

We believe God/Jesus/The Holy Spirit is calling us to respond to the challenge of youth underrepresentation in our church. We see the desire for youth inclusion and seek to offer a proposal that will provide an avenue for youth influence at both regional and national levels. The aim of this proposal is not to prove that young people are important leaders in the church, it is to provide a new avenue for their leadership to be empowered within the governance of our denomination.

Youth are an important part of the church now, and will continue to be in the future, therefore the church should invest in them financially and empower their leadership. Youth should be involved in decision making as part of the church's commitment towards diversity and equity. We offer a proposal that will provide an avenue for youth influence at both regional and national levels.

Nothing about us without us.

2. What is happening now?

**From the Nominations Committee's Accountability report to the General Council -
Emerging Trends:**

Youth and Young Adult Participation – The Nominations Committee's Accountability report to this Council observes that "The United Church has expressed a commitment to the full participation of youth and young adults at all levels of the church." and yet "The number of people aged 30 and under serving on national committees is comparatively low." The Committee invites the church to "imagine additional ways to bring the gifts and leadership of young adults into the governance of the church".

Youth are not adequately represented on a regional or national level:

- There is only one person under the age of 25 on the General Council Executive.
- There is an inequity in staffing for first third ministries between the regions; for example, the Chinook Winds Regional Council has a full time staff person, while the Northern Spirit Regional Council does not have one. Most regions do not have a full time staff person in this portfolio.
- Some regions have existing youth councils, but the majority do not.
- Currently there is no staff person at the GCO that is dedicated full-time to First Third or youth ministries.

Youth are already leaders in our church, the youth involved in these programs and other areas of our church are equipped to be involved in the national decision making body of our church, and we believe their involvement is necessary. As The United Church of Canada plans for the next 10 years and as we dream of the church of the next 100 years, we have named Growth, Justice, and Leadership as three of six key priorities. We cannot engage in this work without including and prioritizing the input and experience of the diverse young people who will inherit the church for the next 100 years. Our church must not engage in the work of growth for the sake of growth but as a tool to embody a just, resilient, innovative, and intergenerational church that is led by deep spirituality, daring justice, and bold discipleship.

3. What is the recommendation?

That the General Council direct the establishment of a National Youth Council (NYC) to ensure youth voices have an impact on denominational decision making. The National Youth Council would fit within our existing governance structure as a committee to the GCE, empowered to make decisions regarding youth, lead engagement with youth across regions, and report to the GCE on tasks assigned to it relating to youth concerns.

That the General Council direct the General Secretary to ensure a full time staff person at the General Council Office dedicated to First Third and Youth Ministries. This staff would resource the NYC, create leadership development opportunities for the council, ensure mentorship opportunities between youth on the council. As well as coordinate collaborative youth ministries across the regions, including but not limited to national youth event planning, facilitating cross regional youth ministries and supporting the NYC in bringing their leadership to their regions.

That fulsome terms of reference for this committee be developed in consultation with the youth proposal drafters. That terms of reference be approved at the October 2025 GCE meeting to ensure youth selection can begin promptly as regional AGMs begin.

Membership

Designate a chair, who is a member of the GCE and under 30 at the point of designation.

Designate a secondary GCE member, if possible under 30 who will act in the chair role when the chair is unavailable for any reason.

Up to 18 corresponding members between the ages of 15-25 at the time of election, for 2 year long appointments with a term limit of 2 terms and a rotating appointment schedule between regions to ensure that only half of the council is new per year. The youth council would be made up of one (1) representative from each Regional Council. Additionally two (2) representatives from the National Indigenous Church, to be selected through whichever method each body deems appropriate.

The national staff that resources this council would collaborate with regions to create a process to ensure a minimum of 50 percent of the 16 regionally selected members to be Indigenous or Racialized. Additionally, the national staff will work in collaboration with regions to ensure that all equity deserving communities (2S and LGBTQIA+, ability, and urban/rural, etc) are represented on the NYC.

Responsibility/Authority

The NYC would be involved in or tasked with any matter that the General Council Executive considers having significant implications for the First Third and youth community within our church.

The NYC would be consulted and offer recommendations on youth related proposals to the appropriate bodies.

Involvement in the committee would also facilitate opportunities for youth involvement in the visioning, planning, production, and distribution of youth related projects and ministry materials and the promotion of youth-specific events.

As young people, many who do not have fulltime jobs, and are balancing school or other commitments, an honourarium based on the quantity of meetings they attend should be included for this work.

Meetings

This Committee will meet at least annually, usually online. Additional meetings will be scheduled as necessary.

This committee shall have one in person meeting at minimum once every two years, this meeting may be organized around existing meetings or events like GCE in person meetings or existing youth events for example Audacious Hope or Youth Forum for General Council. A quorum shall be more than half of the appointed members.

Reporting

This committee will report annually or as required to the Executive of the General Council.

Members of the committee will report periodically, as deemed necessary, to their regional councils and regional executives to share the work they are doing as leaders in the church.

4. Background information:

Matthew 19:14 says "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

The United Church has a long history of robust Sunday School programming and youth involvement. We're grateful for that legacy. We feel the changing times require a change in approach for the strength of our youth communities. Having a centralized council where youth can voice their needs, concerns, ideas, and responses to the efforts of the broader church will help facilitate the production of new pathways into involvement, connection, and growth. Inviting youth to participate in decision making processes will inevitably bring new

visions to the table, visions that are crucially needed at this time in the church's story. Matthew 19:14 says that the Kin(g)dom of heaven belongs to children - and if that's true we should be part of building it! We are not a dying church, we are a church learning to live in a new way. Youth have energy, ideas, and hopes to offer - we want and need more avenues and opportunities to give from those resources. Our experiences as young leaders in the church facilitated by the Climate Motivator and Youth Leadership Animator programs have been invaluable for our faith, connection to the Church, and skill development. We want to see more opportunities for leadership development in addition to these programs.

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

“We, as young Christians, ... strive for sustainable and active involvement of young adults in all levels of the WCC by developing leadership skills and advocating for broader participation of youth in the ecumenical movement.... We are called to strengthen the fellowship, build new relations among WCC member churches, continue the dialogue and share with our partner ecumenical organizations.” ECHOS Commission report, May 2015.

As a member church of the World Council of Churches, the United Church of Canada has made a commitment towards the inclusion of youth and their leadership development. The addition of a youth council would reflect that commitment.

This proposal was developed by a forum of youth (Youth Forum Leadership Animators and Climate Motivators) that included youth from across Canada (Prairie to Pine, Canadian Shield, Western Ontario Waterways, Chinook Winds, Pacific Mountains, Living Skies, First Dawn Eastern Edge, Horseshoe Falls, Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters, Shining Waters, Nakonhaka, and Eastern Ontario Outaouais). This proposal directly reflects the experiences of current youth in the church.

The fulfillment of this proposal will require additional administrative labour for the United Church of Canada - labour we feel is worthwhile.

The logistics of council meetings will mean that youth with free time and access to a reliable internet connection will be advantaged. Youth who may work to help support family, or who do not have access to reliable internet may find it more challenging to participate.

Additionally, it may be more difficult for francophone youth to participate if all others are English speakers - intentional inclusion of French resources would be necessary. These limitations should be kept in mind as youth are invited to participate.

1 Timothy 4:12

Young people are the present and future of the church, they are great advocates for Christian unity, and they are the strong prophetic voice of today.

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

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

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