



The United Church of Canada General Council

GC44 Theology and InterChurch InterFaith (TICIF) Committee Report for October 2023

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Since General Council concluded in August 2022, the Theology and InterChurch InterFaith Committee (TICIF) has met once in person and four times online. The initial in-person meeting was an opportunity to welcome and orient new members to the committee, as approximately half of the committee members' terms from the previous quadrennium had concluded. The committee reviewed that work that was before it, including work continuing from the previous triennium and new work arising from the 44th General Council. Committee members decided to share the work amongst smaller working groups and to focus on three main areas during 2023-2024. These areas are: developing principles to guide our justice work; countering antisemitism; and mission.

Countering Antisemitism Working Group

This group has five members: three from the Anti-Racism Common Table and two from TICIF, with staff support from Adele Halliday and Jennifer Janzen-Ball. This group has been meeting monthly since early February to determine the outline and scope of the work, to gather resources, and to have conversations with various individuals and groups in relation to the work of countering antisemitism.

The Countering Antisemitism Working Group is taking up the work that was begun with the important study, “Bearing Faithful Witness: United Church-Jewish Relations Today,” which was authorized for study in 1997 by the 36th General Council and approved in 2003. The working group will draw heavily on “Bearing Faithful Witness” as it develops education and animation plans to engage the church in consideration of our own scripture, history, theology, and worship, which too often have defined Christianity over and against Judaism. Newer resources will be added, as appropriate. The intent to include education and advocacy in this work: bible study, hymns, liturgies, speaking up against overt and implicit acts of antisemitism in communities.

Some United Church theological schools have accepted the invitation to participate in animating these conversations and learnings. The working group plans to have conversations with other groups and organizations who educate about antisemitism.

The work of countering antisemitism is part of the United Church’s [anti-racism action plan](#). As part of the church’s aspiration to become an anti-racist denomination, we are called to continue to learn about how antisemitism is both implicit and explicit in our Christian faith, how antisemitism is experienced, and to act against antisemitism as part of our commitment to resist all sins of racism in the Canadian context. We focus on this work as Christians so that we can better relate to our Jewish siblings and act in solidarity against antisemitism. We also do this work so that we continue to have informed conversations within the church and in wider society about justice and peace.

As more resources are gathered and events are planned, the information will be posted on the Interfaith Relations webpage.

Mission Working Group

The Mission Working Group is currently working on a proposal that will be brought to the GCE meeting in November 2023. The proposal will include a recommendation about engaging the church in continued learning about the harmful histories and theologies connected to our practices of mission, particularly in the Canadian context. The working group will reflect on what kinds of education and animation might need to be developed in order to engage the church in deepened learning about the impacts of our theologies and practices related to “mission.”

Principles-Based Justice Working Group

The Principles-Based Justice Working Group was comprised of seven members of TICIF and met monthly from October 2022 until early September 2023. During this time, the group reviewed core United Church documents, including *Mending the World*, *Principles of Reconciliation (2003)*, *Towards 2025: A Justice-Seeking Justice-Living Church*, *Principles of Partnership*, *Living Faithfully in the Midst of Empire*, *Intercultural Ministries: Living Into Transformation*, *TRC Calls to Action*, *UCC Response to the TRC Calls to Action*, *A Church with Purpose*, *Caretakers Calls to the Church*, and the *Just Peace Task Group Report*. The group also consulted with members of the Just Peace Task Group, with staff who had experience in using principles to guide justice work, and with staff from Indigenous Ministries and Justice and the Church in Mission units, who have expertise and experience in receiving and responding to requests from members, partners, and civil society groups. Each of these consultations was rich and aided the working group in developing and revising the principles. The group also had fruitful conversations with, and feedback from, the rest of the members of TICIF. Throughout this time, the group has worked diligently to discern and distill the core commitments of the United Church into these principles. TICIF approved the principles in August 2023 and subsequently, a proposal was submitted to the Executive of General Council for its September 2023 meeting.

TICIF Workplan 2023-2024

For the rest of the triennium, TICIF will turn its attention to the study on discipleship that was approved by the 44th General Council in 2022. The work on countering antisemitism will continue. In addition, TICIF will review the “essential agreement” proposals sent to it by GCE. TICIF members will also have input into revising the 2012 Statement on Ministry, as was decided by the 44th General Council in 2022.

And finally, TICIF continues to support ecumenical and interfaith work nationally and globally. TICIF will engage in further conversation about how best to continue to support this work throughout the church.

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