



GCE45 GOV02 Governance Handbook for February 2026

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1. What is the issue?

The Governance Handbook provides guidance for the General Council, its Committees, its Executive, the Committees of the Executive, and the Sub-Executive. It provides a helpful reference document that outlines the expectations and duties of elected leaders along with the mandate of different groups. The current version (last completely reviewed in January 2020) needs updating.

2. Why is the issue important?

The clearer the Executive can be about the expectations of elected leaders along with a statement of the responsibilities of different groups, the better these leaders will be equipped to fulfill their duties.

Updates

The February 2026 version of the Governance Handbook:

1. Takes steps to ensure general governance policies remaining evergreen by:
 - a. Linking to the current version on the web; and
 - b. Removing the reference to the year of The Manual and listing only the section;
2. Aligns and renames the Committees of the General Council with their presentation in The Manual;
3. Retains the numbering of the Committees of the Executive to allow for retired policies;

4. Replaces former committee mandates with new ones that the GCE has adopted since the last edition;
5. Replaces the wording "conference call" by "electronic means in real time".
6. Removes references to cascading appointments to committees no longer in existence.
7. Updates committee meetings to reflect the current policy of one in-person per triennium.
8. Reflects changes committees have adopted in fulfilling their mandate but does not alter their mandate.

New and not just updated

Two changes have been made to reflect decisions at GC 45. The Public Statements section was rewritten to reflect the intentions of the recommendation in the Report on the Office of the Moderator and General Secretary. The Moderator's Advisory Committee and the General Secretary's Supervision Committee have been retired and replaced with a draft Terms of Reference for the Moderator and General Secretary Accountability Committee. These Terms of Reference draw on the material from the report presented to General Council and the Terms from the previous committees to ensure there were no gaps.

At the request of the Benefits Committee, a point has been added to their Terms of Reference that mirrors what the Executive adopted for the Pension Board which would enable the committee to be chaired by someone who is not a member of the United Church, but who is on the committee by virtue of their subject expertise.

Two areas that are not clear and their connection to the Governance Handbook will need further reflection:

1. Indigenous Church

As the Indigenous Church lives into the remit towards becoming fully autonomous, its intentions re the General Governance section and its structure as currently included from previous text may change and would not be matters for the GCE to decide.

2. Board of Vocation

The Board of Vocation practices accountability to the GCE but this is not clearly set out in The Manual (a matter being flagged by the Structural Change Evaluation Steering Group). The Board of Vocation sets its own policies and is currently updating these. The connection between these and the Governance Handbook will need to be determined.

3. How might the Executive of the General Council respond to this issue?

The Governance Committee recommends that:

The Executive of General Council:

1. **adopt the Governance Handbook, February 2026**
2. **direct that the updated version be added to committee sites in SharePoint.**

4. What will be the impact?

Clarity on governance both helps prevent role and authority confusion for elected leaders and contributes to creating an atmosphere of wise decision-making.

5. How does this help us live into the commitment on Equity?

The goal of good governance is to create a climate in which wisdom can be shared, all voices heard, and the faithful decisions discerned. This resource can assist with that.

6. For the body transmitting the proposal:

N/A.

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