

The Basis of Union

AS PREPARED BY THE JOINT COMMITTEE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA, THE METHODIST CHURCH, AND THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES OF CANADA, AND APPROVED BY THE SUPREME COURTS OF THESE CHURCHES, AS AMENDED BY THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

GENERAL

- 1.1 The name of the Church formed by the union of the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational Churches in Canada shall be "The United Church of Canada."
- 1.2 It shall be the policy of the United Church to foster the spirit of unity in the hope that this sentiment of unity may in due time, so far as Canada is concerned, take shape in a Church which may fittingly be described as national.

DOCTRINE

- 2.1 The United Church recognizes the primacy of scripture.
- 2.2 The United Church recognizes as doctrine the following standards subordinate to scripture:
 - 2.2.1 the 20 articles of doctrine, set out in sections 2.3.0 through 2.3.20;
 - 2.2.2 "A Statement of Faith, 1940," set out in sections 2.4.0 through 2.4.12;
 - 2.2.3 "A New Creed," set out in section 2.5; and
 - 2.2.4 "A Song of Faith," set out in section 2.6.

Twenty Articles of Doctrine

- 2.3.0 We, the representatives of the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational branches of the Church of Christ in Canada, do hereby set forth the substance of the Christian faith, as commonly held among us. In doing so, we build upon the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. We affirm our belief in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the primary source and ultimate standard of Christian faith and life. We acknowledge the teaching of the great creeds of the ancient Church. We further maintain our allegiance to the evangelical doctrines of the Reformation, as set forth in common in the doctrinal standards adopted by The Presbyterian Church in Canada, by The Congregational Union of Ontario and Quebec, and by The Methodist Church. We present the accompanying statement as a brief summary of our common faith and commend it to the studious attention of the members and adherents of the negotiating Churches, as in substance agreeable to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures.
- 2.3.1 **Article I. *Of God.*** We believe in the one only living and true God, a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His being and perfections; the Lord Almighty, who is love, most just in all His ways, most glorious in holiness, unsearchable in wisdom, plenteous in mercy, full of compassion, and abundant in goodness and truth. We worship Him in the unity of the Godhead and the mystery of the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, three persons of the same substance, equal in power and glory.

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- 2.3.2 **Article II. *Of Revelation.*** We believe that God has revealed Himself in nature, in history, and in the heart of man; that He has been graciously pleased to make clearer revelation of Himself to men of God who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit; and that in the fullness of time He has perfectly revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, who is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person. We receive the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, given by inspiration of God, as containing the only infallible rule of faith and life, a faithful record of God's gracious revelations, and as the sure witness of Christ.
- 2.3.3 **Article III. *Of the Divine Purpose.*** We believe that the eternal, wise, holy, and loving purpose of God so embraces all events that, while the freedom of man is not taken away, nor is God the author of sin, yet in His providence He makes all things work together in the fulfilment of His sovereign design and the manifestation of His glory.
- 2.3.4 **Article IV. *Of Creation and Providence.*** We believe that God is the creator, upholder, and governor of all things; that He is above all His works and in them all; and that He made man in His own image, meet for fellowship with Him, free and able to choose between good and evil, and responsible to his Maker and Lord.
- 2.3.5 **Article V. *Of the Sin of Man.*** We believe that our first parents, being tempted, chose evil, and so fell away from God and came under the power of sin, the penalty of which is eternal death; and that, by reason of this disobedience, all men are born with a sinful nature, that we have broken God's law, and that no man can be saved but by His grace.
- 2.3.6 **Article VI. *Of the Grace of God.*** We believe that God, out of His great love for the world, has given His only begotten Son to be the Saviour of sinners, and in the Gospel freely offers His all-sufficient salvation to all men. We believe also that God, in His own good pleasure, gave to his son a people, an innumerable multitude, chosen in Christ unto holiness, service, and salvation.
- 2.3.7 **Article VII. *Of the Lord Jesus Christ.*** We believe in and confess the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and man, who, being the Eternal Son of God, for us men and for our salvation became truly man, being conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, yet without sin. Unto us He has revealed the Father, by His word and Spirit, making known the perfect will of God. For our redemption, He fulfilled all righteousness, offered Himself a perfect sacrifice on the Cross, satisfied Divine justice, and made propitiation for the sins of the whole world. He rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven, where He ever intercedes for us. In the hearts of believers He abides forever as the indwelling Christ; above us and over us all He rules; wherefore, unto Him we render love, obedience, and adoration as our Prophet, Priest, and King.
- 2.3.8 **Article VIII. *Of the Holy Spirit.*** We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who moves upon the hearts of men to restrain them from evil and to incite them unto good, and whom the Father is ever willing to give unto all who ask Him. We believe that He has spoken by holy men of God in making known His truth to men for their salvation; that, through our exalted Saviour, He was sent forth in power to convict the world of sin, to enlighten men's minds in the knowledge of Christ, and to persuade and enable them to obey the call of the Gospel; and that He abides with the Church, dwelling in every believer as the spirit of truth, of power, of holiness, of comfort, and of love.
- 2.3.9 **Article IX. *Of Regeneration.*** We believe in the necessity of regeneration, whereby we are made new creatures in Christ Jesus by the Spirit of God, who imparts spiritual life by the gracious and mysterious operation of His power, using as the ordinary means the truths of His word and the ordinances of divine appointment in ways agreeable to the nature of man.

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- 2.3.10 **Article X. *Of Faith and Repentance.*** We believe that faith in Christ is a saving grace whereby we receive Him, trust in Him, and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered to us in the Gospel, and that this saving faith is always accompanied by repentance, wherein we confess and forsake our sins with full purpose of and endeavour after a new obedience to God.
- 2.3.11 **Article XI. *Of Justification and Sonship.*** We believe that God, on the sole ground of the perfect obedience and sacrifice of Christ, pardons those who by faith receive Him as their Saviour and Lord, accepts them as righteous, and bestows upon them the adoption of sons, with a right to all privileges therein implied, including a conscious assurance of their sonship.
- 2.3.12 **Article XII. *Of Sanctification.*** We believe that those who are regenerated and justified grow in the likeness of Christ through fellowship with Him, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and obedience to the truth; that a holy life is the fruit and evidence of saving faith; and that the believer's hope of continuance in such a life is in the preserving grace of God. And we believe that in this growth in grace Christians may attain that maturity and full assurance of faith whereby the love of God is made perfect in us.
- 2.3.13 **Article XIII. *Of Prayer.*** We believe that we are encouraged to draw near to God, our Heavenly Father, in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and on our own behalf and that of others to pour out our hearts humbly yet freely before Him, as becomes His beloved children, giving Him the honour and praise due His holy name, asking Him to glorify Himself on earth as in Heaven, confessing unto Him our sins, and seeking of Him every gift needful for this life and for our everlasting salvation. We believe also that, inasmuch as all true prayer is prompted by His Spirit, He will in response thereto grant us every blessing according to His unsearchable wisdom and the riches of His grace in Jesus Christ.
- 2.3.14 **Article XIV. *Of the Law of God.*** We believe that the moral law of God, summarized in the Ten Commandments, testified to by the prophets, and unfolded in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, stands for ever in truth and equity, and is not made void by faith, but on the contrary is established thereby. We believe that God requires of every man to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God; and that only through this harmony with the will of God shall be fulfilled that brotherhood of man wherein the Kingdom of God is to be made manifest.
- 2.3.15 **Article XV. *Of the Church.*** We acknowledge one Holy Catholic Church, the innumerable company of saints of every age and nation, who being united by the Holy Spirit to Christ their Head are one body in Him and have communion with their Lord and with one another. Further, we receive it as the will of Christ that His Church on earth should exist as a visible and sacred brotherhood, consisting of those who profess faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to Him, together with their children and other baptized children, and organized for the confession of His name, for the public worship of God, for the administration of the sacraments, for the upbuilding of the saints, and for the universal propagation of the Gospel; and we acknowledge as a part, more or less pure, of this universal brotherhood, every particular church throughout the world which professes this faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to Him as divine Lord and Saviour.
- 2.3.16 **Article XVI. *Of the Sacraments.*** We acknowledge two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which were instituted by Christ, to be of perpetual obligation as signs and seals of the covenant ratified in His precious blood, as a means of grace, by which, working in us, He doth not only quicken but also strengthen and comfort our faith in Him, and as ordinances through the observance of which His Church is to confess her Lord and be visibly distinguished from the rest of the world.
- 2.3.16.1 Baptism with water into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is the sacrament by which are signified and sealed our union to Christ and participation in the blessings of the new covenant. The proper subjects of baptism are believers and infants presented by their

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parents or guardians in the Christian faith. In the latter case the parents or guardians should train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and should expect that their children will, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, receive the benefits which the sacrament is designed and fitted to convey. The Church is under the most solemn obligation to provide for their Christian instruction.

- 2.3.16.2 The Lord's Supper is the sacrament of communion with Christ and with His people, in which bread and wine are given and received in thankful remembrance of Him and His sacrifice on the Cross; and they who in faith receive the same do, after a spiritual manner, partake of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ to their comfort, nourishment, and growth in grace. All may be admitted to the Lord's Supper who make a credible profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus and of obedience to His law.
- 2.3.17 **Article XVII. *Of the Ministry.*** We believe that Jesus Christ, as the Supreme Head of the Church, has appointed therein an ordained ministry of Word, Sacrament, and Pastoral Care and a diaconal ministry of Education, Service, and Pastoral Care, and calls men and women to these ministries; and that the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, recognizes and chooses those whom He calls, and should thereupon duly ordain or commission them to the work of the ministry.
- 2.3.18 **Article XVIII. *Of Church Order and Fellowship.*** We believe that the Supreme and only Head of the Church is the Lord Jesus Christ; that its worship, teaching, discipline, and government should be administered according to His will by persons chosen for their fitness and duly set apart to their office; and that although the visible Church may contain unworthy members and is liable to err, yet believers ought not lightly to separate themselves from its communion, but are to live in fellowship with their brethren, which fellowship is to be extended, as God gives opportunity, to all who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.
- 2.3.19 **Article XIX. *Of the Resurrection, the Last Judgement, and the Future Life.*** We believe that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust, through the power of the Son of God, who shall come to judge the living and the dead; that the finally impenitent shall go away into eternal punishment and the righteous into life eternal.
- 2.3.20 **Article XX. *Of Christian Service and the Final Triumph.*** We believe that it is our duty, as disciples and servants of Christ, to further the extension of His Kingdom, to do good unto all men, to maintain the public and private worship of God, to hallow the Lord's Day, to preserve the inviolability of marriage and the sanctity of the family, to uphold the just authority of the State, and so to live in all honesty, purity, and charity, that our lives shall testify of Christ. We joyfully receive the word of Christ, bidding His people go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, declaring unto them that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and that He will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. We confidently believe that by His power and grace all His enemies shall finally be overcome, and the kingdoms of this world be made the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ.

A Statement of Faith, 1940

2.4.0 Introduction.

No attempt is made to answer all the questions which devout men may reasonably ask in regard to God and man and salvation. But we believe that we have included what is essential to the life of the Church. If our purpose were apologetic we should have to use more of the language of modern science and philosophy. Because our purpose is affirmative we have as far as possible adopted rather the language of Scripture, a language which matches the supreme facts it tells of, God's acts of judgment and of mercy.

The Church's faith is the unchanging Gospel of God's holy, redeeming love revealed in Jesus Christ. It is declared in Scripture; it is witnessed to both in the creeds of the Universal Church and in the Confessions of the Reformed Churches; and it is formulated for a specific purpose in our Basis of Union. But Christians of each new generation are called to state it afresh in terms of the thought of their own age and with the emphasis their age needs. This we have attempted to do for the people of The United Church of Canada—seeking always to be faithful to Scripture and to the testimony of the Universal Church, and always aware that no statement of ours can express the whole truth of God.

2.4.1 I. God

We believe in God, the eternal personal Spirit, Creator and Upholder of all things.

We believe that God, as sovereign Lord exalted above the world, orders and overrules all things in it to the accomplishment of His holy, wise, and good purposes.

We believe that God made man to love and serve Him; that He cares for him as a righteous and compassionate Father; and that nothing can either quench His love or finally defeat His gracious purpose for man.

So we acknowledge God as Creator, Upholder, and Sovereign Lord of all things, and the righteous and loving Father of men.

2.4.2 II. Jesus Christ

We believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, Who, for us men and our salvation became man and dwelt among us.

We believe that He lived a perfect human life, wholly devoted to the will of God and the service of man.

We believe that in Him God comes face to face with men; so that they learn that God loves them, seeks their good, bears their sorrows and their sin, and claims their exclusive faith and perfect obedience.

We believe that in Jesus Christ God acted to save man, taking, at measureless cost, man's sin upon Himself; that the Cross reveals at once God's abhorrence of sin and His saving love in its height and depth and power; and that the Cross is for all time the effectual means of reconciling the world unto God.

We believe that Jesus was raised victorious over death and declared to be the Son of God with power; and that He is alive for evermore, our Savior and our Lord.

So we acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Son of God Incarnate, the Savior of the world.

2.4.3 III. The Holy Spirit

We believe in the Holy Spirit by whom God is ever at work in the minds and hearts of men, inspiring every right desire and every effort after truth and beauty.

We believe that the Spirit of God moves men to acknowledge their sins and accept the divine forgiveness and grace.

We believe that the Spirit was present with power at the beginning of the Church, enabling the disciples to bear witness to what they had seen and heard, filling them with love of the brethren, and hope of the coming Kingdom, and sustaining them in the sense of Christ's continuing presence in their midst.

We believe that by the same Spirit the Church is continually guided and empowered, and her members fortified against temptation, fear and doubt, and built up in faith and holiness unto salvation.

So we acknowledge the Holy Spirit as the Lord and Giver of life, through whom the creative, redeeming love of God is ever at work among men.

2.4.4 IV. The Holy Trinity

Knowing God thus, as Creator and Father, as Redeemer in Christ, and as Holy Spirit working in us, we confess our faith in the Holy Trinity.

So we acknowledge and worship one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

2.4.5 V. Man and Man's Sin

We believe that God gave to man, as He did not to the lower creatures, capacity to share His thought and purpose, and freedom to choose whether he would or would not love and serve Him.

We believe that man has used his freedom of choice for low and selfish ends, thus estranging himself from God and his brother man, and bringing upon himself the judgment and wrath of God, so that he lives in a world of confusion and distress, and is unable of himself to fulfill God's high purpose for him.

So we acknowledge man's sin, God's righteous judgment, and man's helplessness and need.

2.4.6 VI. Redemption

We believe that in the greatness of His love for man God has in Christ opened up a way of deliverance from the guilt and power of sin.

We believe that Christ, by living our life without sin, by dying at the hands of sinful men with faith unshaken and unfaltering love, has done for man what man could not do for himself. On the Cross He bore the burden of sin, and He broke its power; and what He did there moves men to repentance, conveys forgiveness, undoes the estrangement, and binds them to Himself in a new loyalty.

We believe that by His resurrection and exaltation Christ stands victorious over death and all evil, and that He fills those who commit themselves to Him with such grace and strength that in Him they, too, are conquerors. His redemption of man is at once an awful mystery and a glorious fact; it is the Lord's doing and marvelous in our eyes.

So we acknowledge the unmerited love and the mercy of our God in giving His only-begotten Son that we might not perish but have everlasting life.

2.4.7 VII. The Church

We believe that the Church, the society of the redeemed, was brought into existence by God Himself through the work and risen power of Christ, Who in calling men into fellowship with Himself calls them by the same act into fellowship with one another in Him.

We believe that the Church is the organ of Christ's mind and redemptive will, the body of which He is the Head. Under Him the Church is called to the proclamation of the everlasting Gospel with its offer of salvation, to the worship of God, Creator and Redeemer, to the loving service of mankind, and to the care and nurture of the flock.

We believe that all members of the Church are one in Him, and that the life of the Church in every age is continuous with that of the first apostolic company. The groups commonly known as "churches" are called to share in the life of the whole Church, of all ages and of all lands, entering freely into the full heritage of thought, worship, and discipline, and living together in mutual confidence.

We believe that for the fulfillment of her mission in the world God has given to the Church the Ministry, the Scriptures and the Sacraments.

So we acknowledge one holy, catholic, apostolic Church, the Body of Christ, the household and family of God.

2.4.8 VIII. The Ministry

We believe that God has appointed a Ministry in His Church for the preaching of the Word, the administration of the Sacraments, and the pastoral care of the people.

We believe that the Church has authority to ordain to the Ministry by prayer and the laying on of hands those whom she finds, after due trial, to be called of God thereto.

We believe that, for the due ordering of her life as a society, God has appointed a government in His Church, to be exercised, under Christ the head, by Ministers and representatives of the people.

So we acknowledge the Holy Ministry appointed by God for the spread of the Gospel and the edification of His Church.

2.4.9 IX. The Holy Scriptures

We believe that the great moments of God's revelation and communication of Himself to men are recorded and interpreted in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

We believe that, while God uttered His Word to man in many portions progressively, the whole is sufficient to declare His mind and will for our salvation. To Israel He made Himself known as a holy and righteous God and a Savior; the fullness of truth and grace came by Jesus Christ. The writings were collected and preserved by the Church.

We believe that the theme of all Holy Scripture is the redemptive purpose and working of God, and that herein lies its unity.

We believe that in Holy Scripture God claims the complete allegiance of our mind and heart; that the full persuasion of the truth and authority of the Word of God contained in the Scripture is the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts; that, using Holy Scripture, the Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

So we acknowledge in Holy Scripture the true witness to God's Word and the sure guide to Christian faith and conduct.

2.4.10 **X. The Sacraments**

We believe that the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are effectual means through which, by common things and simple acts, the saving love of God is exhibited and communicated to His people, who receive them in faith.

We believe that in Baptism men are made members of the Christian society. Washing with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit signifies God's cleansing from sin and an initial participation in the gifts and graces of the new life. The children of believing parents are baptized and nurtured in the family of God so that they may in due time take upon themselves the yoke of Christ.

We believe that the Lord's Supper perpetuates the fellowship between Christ and His disciples sealed in the upper room, that at His table He is always present, and His people are nourished, confirmed, and renewed. The giving and receiving of bread and wine accompanied by His own words signifies the gracious self-giving of Christ as suffering and living Lord in such wise that His faithful people live in Him and He in them.

So we acknowledge Baptism as God's appointed means of grace at initiation into the Christian fellowship; and the Lord's Supper as His appointed means of maintaining the fellowship in health and strength, and as the act of worship in which the whole soul of man goes out to God and God's grace comes freely to man.

2.4.11 **XI. Christian Life and Duty**

We believe that the Christian life is the life lived in fellowship with Christ and His Church. It begins with repentance and faith. In repentance men turn from sin to serve the holy and forgiving God with new and glad obedience. In faith they entrust themselves to Christ and rest upon Him alone for salvation.

We believe that by the teaching and example of Jesus the Holy Spirit shows men the way and the end of the Christian life, what it means to love God with all the heart and soul and mind and strength, and to love their neighbour as themselves.

We believe that Christian men are called to abide within the fellowship of the Church, to maintain its peace and unity, and to give diligent heed to prayer, to the reading of Scripture, to common worship and the sacraments.

We believe that they are likewise called to live as those who are of the Kingdom of God, and to seek His righteousness both in individual and social life, serving their fellow-men in love for Christ's sake, and striving and waiting in prayer for an ordered common life where the will of God for the well-being and peace of men shall be done over all the earth.

We believe that in denying themselves and in following Christ men are enabled by the Spirit of God more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness; that they are, under the hand of a faithful Father, in labour, love, and duty, in suffering, sorrow and defeat, renewed in the inner man after the image of the crucified and victorious Christ; and that they receive in this life a foretaste of the final redemption, assurance of the divine favour, peace and joy, and the confidence that He is able to keep them to the end.

So we acknowledge the Christian life as the life lived within the family of God, with the graces and privileges, the duties and discipline, through which the Christian man grows up in all things into Christ.

2.4.12 **XII. The Consummation**

We believe that the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, following on His crucifixion, gives assurance that the long struggle between sin and grace will have an end, the Kingdom be revealed in its fullness, and God's eternal purpose accomplished.

We believe that God will judge all men by Jesus Christ, the Son of Man.

We believe that, while salvation is offered to all, God does not take away or override the freedom with which He has endowed men. If they stubbornly refuse His mercy and prefer sinful ways they shut themselves out from the light and joy of salvation and fall under the righteous judgment of God.

We believe that those who accept the offer of salvation and persevere in the Christian way do after death enter into the joy of their Lord, a blessedness beyond our power to conceive. They see God face to face, and in the communion of saints are partakers with the Church on earth of its labours and prayers.

So we acknowledge the righteous and merciful judgment of God and we wait for the coming of the Kingdom which shall have no end.

"We know Whom we have believed, and are persuaded that He is able to keep that which we have committed to Him."

"To the only wise God our Savior be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever."

A New Creed

2.5 We are not alone,
we live in God's world.

We believe in God:
who has created and is creating,
who has come in Jesus,
the Word made flesh,
to reconcile and make new,
who works in us and others
by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:
to celebrate God's presence,
to live with respect in Creation,
to love and serve others,
to seek justice and resist evil,
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,
our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death,
God is with us.

We are not alone.

Thanks be to God.

A Song of Faith

1 2.6 God is Holy Mystery,
2 beyond complete knowledge,
3 above perfect description.
4 Yet,
5 in love,
6 the one eternal God seeks relationship.
7 So God creates the universe
8 and with it the possibility of being and relating.
9 God tends the universe,
10 mending the broken and reconciling the estranged.
11 God enlivens the universe,
12 guiding all things toward harmony with their Source.
13 Grateful for God's loving action,
14 We cannot keep from singing.
15 With the Church through the ages,
16 we speak of God as one and triune:
17 Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
18 We also speak of God as
19 Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer
20 God, Christ, and Spirit
21 Mother, Friend, and Comforter
22 Source of Life, Living Word, and Bond of Love,
23 and in other ways that speak faithfully of
24 the One on whom our hearts rely,
25 the fully shared life at the heart of the universe.
26 We witness to Holy Mystery that is Wholly Love.
27 God is creative and self-giving, generously moving
28 in all the near and distant corners of the universe.
29 Nothing exists that does not find its source in God.
30 Our first response to God's providence is gratitude.
31 We sing thanksgiving.
32 Finding ourselves in a world of beauty and mystery,
33 of living things, diverse and interdependent,
34 of complex patterns of growth and evolution,
35 of subatomic particles and cosmic swirls,
36 we sing of God the Creator,
37 the Maker and Source of all that is.

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38 Each part of creation reveals unique aspects of God the Creator,
39 who is both in creation and beyond it.
40 All parts of creation, animate and inanimate, are related.
41 All creation is good.
42 We sing of the Creator,
43 who made humans to live and move
44 and have their being in God.
45 In and with God,
46 we can direct our lives toward right relationship
47 with each other and with God.
48 We can discover our place as one strand in the web of life.
49 We can grow in wisdom and compassion.
50 We can recognize all people as kin.
51 We can accept our mortality and finitude, not as a curse,
52 but as a challenge to make our lives and choices matter.

53 Made in the image of God,
54 we yearn for the fulfillment that is life in God.
55 Yet we choose to turn away from God.
56 We surrender ourselves to sin,
57 a disposition revealed in selfishness, cowardice, or apathy.
58 Becoming bound and complacent
59 in a web of false desires and wrong choices,
60 we bring harm to ourselves and others.
61 This brokenness in human life and community
62 is an outcome of sin.
63 Sin is not only personal
64 but accumulates
65 to become habitual and systemic forms
66 of injustice, violence, and hatred.

67 We are all touched by this brokenness:
68 the rise of selfish individualism
69 that erodes human solidarity;
70 the concentration of wealth and power
71 without regard for the needs of all;
72 the toxins of religious and ethnic bigotry;
73 the degradation of the blessedness of human bodies
74 and human passions through sexual exploitation;
75 the delusion of unchecked progress and limitless growth
76 that threatens our home, the earth;
77 the covert despair that lulls many into numb complicity
78 with empires and systems of domination.
79 We sing lament and repentance.

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80 Yet evil does not—cannot—
81 undermine or overcome the love of God.
82 God forgives,
83 and calls all of us to confess our fears and failings
84 with honesty and humility.
85 God reconciles,
86 and calls us to repent the part we have played
87 in damaging our world, ourselves, and each other.
88 God transforms,
89 and calls us to protect the vulnerable,
90 to pray for deliverance from evil,
91 to work with God for the healing of the world,
92 that all might have abundant life.
93 We sing of grace.
94 The fullness of life includes
95 moments of unexpected inspiration and courage lived out,
96 experiences of beauty, truth, and goodness,
97 blessings of seeds and harvest,
98 friendship and family, intellect and sexuality,
99 the reconciliation of persons through justice
100 and communities living in righteousness,
101 and the articulation of meaning.
102 And so we sing of God the Spirit,
103 who from the beginning has swept over the face of creation,
104 animating all energy and matter
105 and moving in the human heart.
106 We sing of God the Spirit,
107 faithful and untameable,
108 who is creatively and redemptively active in the world.
109 The Spirit challenges us to celebrate the holy
110 not only in what is familiar,
111 but also in that which seems foreign.
112 We sing of the Spirit,
113 who speaks our prayers of deepest longing
114 and enfolds our concerns and confessions,
115 transforming us and the world.

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116 We offer worship
117 as an outpouring of gratitude and awe
118 and a practice of opening ourselves
119 to God's still, small voice of comfort,
120 to God's rushing whirlwind of challenge.
121 Through word, music, art, and sacrament,
122 in community and in solitude,
123 God changes our lives, our relationships, and our world.
124 We sing with trust.

125 Scripture is our song for the journey, the living word
126 passed on from generation to generation
127 to guide and inspire,
128 that we might wrestle a holy revelation for our time and place
129 from the human experiences
130 and cultural assumptions of another era.
131 God calls us to be doers of the word and not hearers only.

132 The Spirit breathes revelatory power into scripture,
133 bestowing upon it a unique and normative place
134 in the life of the community.
135 The Spirit judges us critically when we abuse scripture
136 by interpreting it narrow-mindedly,
137 using it as a tool of oppression, exclusion, or hatred.

138 The wholeness of scripture testifies
139 to the oneness and faithfulness of God.
140 The multiplicity of scripture testifies to its depth:
141 two testaments, four gospels,
142 contrasting points of view held in tension—
143 all a faithful witness to the One and Triune God,
144 the Holy Mystery that is Wholly Love.

145 We find God made known in Jesus of Nazareth,
146 and so we sing of God the Christ, the Holy One embodied.

147 We sing of Jesus,
148 a Jew,
149 born to a woman in poverty
150 in a time of social upheaval
151 and political oppression.
152 He knew human joy and sorrow.
153 So filled with the Holy Spirit was he
154 that in him people experienced the presence of God among them.
155 We sing praise to God incarnate.

The Basis of Union: Doctrine

156 Jesus announced the coming of God's reign—
157 a commonwealth not of domination
158 but of peace, justice, and reconciliation.
159 He healed the sick and fed the hungry.
160 He forgave sins and freed those held captive
161 by all manner of demonic powers.
162 He crossed barriers of race, class, culture, and gender.
163 He preached and practised unconditional love—
164 love of God, love of neighbour,
165 love of friend, love of enemy—
166 and he commanded his followers to love one another
167 as he had loved them.

168 Because his witness to love was threatening,
169 those exercising power sought to silence Jesus.
170 He suffered abandonment and betrayal,
171 state-sanctioned torture and execution.
172 He was crucified.

173 But death was not the last word.
174 God raised Jesus from death,
175 turning sorrow into joy,
176 despair into hope.
177 We sing of Jesus raised from the dead.
178 We sing hallelujah.

179 By becoming flesh in Jesus,
180 God makes all things new.
181 In Jesus' life, teaching, and self-offering,
182 God empowers us to live in love.
183 In Jesus' crucifixion,
184 God bears the sin, grief, and suffering of the world.
185 In Jesus' resurrection,
186 God overcomes death.
187 Nothing separates us from the love of God.

188 The Risen Christ lives today,
189 present to us and the source of our hope.
190 In response to who Jesus was
191 and to all he did and taught,
192 to his life, death, and resurrection,
193 and to his continuing presence with us through the Spirit,
194 we celebrate him as
195 the Word made flesh,
196 the one in whom God and humanity are perfectly joined,
197 the transformation of our lives,
198 the Christ.

The Basis of Union: Doctrine

199 We sing of a church
200 seeking to continue the story of Jesus
201 by embodying Christ's presence in the world.
202 We are called together by Christ
203 as a community of broken but hopeful believers,
204 loving what he loved,
205 living what he taught,
206 striving to be faithful servants of God
207 in our time and place.
208 Our ancestors in faith
209 bequeath to us experiences of their faithful living;
210 upon their lives our lives are built.
211 Our living of the gospel makes us a part of this communion of saints,
212 experiencing the fulfillment of God's reign
213 even as we actively anticipate a new heaven and a new earth.
214 The church has not always lived up to its vision.
215 It requires the Spirit to reorient it,
216 helping it to live an emerging faith while honouring tradition,
217 challenging it to live by grace rather than entitlement,
218 for we are called to be a blessing to the earth.
219 We sing of God's good news lived out,
220 a church with purpose:
221 faith nurtured and hearts comforted,
222 gifts shared for the good of all,
223 resistance to the forces that exploit and marginalize,
224 fierce love in the face of violence,
225 human dignity defended,
226 members of a community held and inspired by God,
227 corrected and comforted,
228 instrument of the loving Spirit of Christ,
229 creation's mending.
230 We sing of God's mission.
231 We are each given particular gifts of the Spirit.
232 For the sake of the world,
233 God calls all followers of Jesus to Christian ministry.
234 In the church,
235 some are called to specific ministries of leadership,
236 both lay and ordered;
237 some witness to the good news;
238 some uphold the art of worship;
239 some comfort the grieving and guide the wandering;
240 some build up the community of wisdom;
241 some stand with the oppressed and work for justice.
242 To embody God's love in the world,
243 the work of the church requires the ministry and discipleship
244 of all believers.

The Basis of Union: Doctrine

245 In grateful response to God's abundant love,
246 we bear in mind our integral connection
247 to the earth and one another;
248 we participate in God's work of healing and mending creation.
249 To point to the presence of the holy in the world,
250 the church receives, consecrates, and shares
251 visible signs of the grace of God.
252 In company with the churches
253 of the Reformed and Methodist traditions,
254 we celebrate two sacraments as gifts of Christ: baptism and holy communion.
255 In these sacraments the ordinary things of life
256 —water, bread, wine—
257 point beyond themselves to God and God's love,
258 teaching us to be alert
259 to the sacred in the midst of life.

260 Before conscious thought or action on our part,
261 we are born into the brokenness of this world.
262 Before conscious thought or action on our part,
263 we are surrounded by God's redeeming love.
264 Baptism by water in the name of the Holy Trinity
265 is the means by which we are received, at any age,
266 into the covenanted community of the church.
267 It is the ritual that signifies our rebirth in faith
268 and cleansing by the power of God.
269 Baptism signifies the nurturing, sustaining,
270 and transforming power of God's love
271 and our grateful response to that grace.

272 Carrying a vision of creation healed and restored,
273 we welcome all in the name of Christ.
274 Invited to the table where none shall go hungry,
275 we gather as Christ's guests and friends.
276 In holy communion
277 we are commissioned to feed as we have been fed,
278 forgive as we have been forgiven,
279 love as we have been loved.
280 The open table speaks of the shining promise
281 of barriers broken and creation healed.
282 In the communion meal, wine poured out and bread broken,
283 we remember Jesus.
284 We remember not only the promise but also the price that he paid
285 for who he was,
286 for what he did and said,
287 and for the world's brokenness.
288 We taste the mystery of God's great love for us,
289 and are renewed in faith and hope.

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290 We place our hope in God.
291 We sing of a life beyond life
292 and a future good beyond imagining:
293 a new heaven and a new earth,
294 the end of sorrow, pain, and tears,
295 Christ's return and life with God,
296 the making new of all things.
297 We yearn for the coming of that future,
298 even while participating in eternal life now.

299 Divine creation does not cease
300 until all things have found wholeness, union, and integration
301 with the common ground of all being.
302 As children of the Timeless One,
303 our time-bound lives will find completion
304 in the all-embracing Creator.
305 In the meantime, we embrace the present,
306 embodying hope, loving our enemies,
307 caring for the earth,
308 choosing life.

309 Grateful for God's loving action,
310 we cannot keep from singing.
311 Creating and seeking relationship,
312 in awe and trust,
313 we witness to Holy Mystery who is Wholly Love.
314 Amen.

POLITY

I. Background

- 3.0 We believe God is doing a new thing and is calling The United Church of Canada to be part of a new creation.

Following the meeting of the 41st General Council in 2012, the Church engaged in conversations, consultations, research, analysis, and prayer. The 42nd General Council in 2015 responded by approving a new structure to focus our resources on supporting, enlivening, and accompanying Communities of Faith to live out God's call. This structure was approved by the Church through remits which were enacted by the 43rd General Council in 2018.

This flexible and responsive structure enables us to come together to embody the gospel and vision of Jesus Christ in our current context. (2019)

II. The Church

- 4.1 The members of pastoral charges and congregations shall continue to be members of the United Church. (2019)
- 4.2 The United Church of Canada is organized as a three-council structure, consisting of communities of faith, regional councils and a Denominational Council, as follows. (2019)

III. Communities of Faith

- 5.1 Description. A Community of Faith is any community of people within the United Church that: (2019)
- 5.1.1 gathers to explore faith, worship, and serve, including but not limited to pastoral charges, congregations, outreach ministries, chaplaincies, faith-based communal living, house churches, and online communities; and (2019)
- 5.1.2 is recognized as a Community of Faith within the United Church by the Regional Council through a covenantal relationship between the Community of Faith and the Regional Council. (2019)
- 5.2 Membership. The members of the United Church are the members of its Communities of Faith. The members of the Community of Faith are: (2019)
- 5.2.1 people admitted to membership by the Community of Faith, within denominational guidelines; (2019)
- 5.2.2 eligible for election to the Denominational Council and Regional Council; and (2019)
- 5.2.3 entitled to vote on all Community of Faith matters; and entitled to extend the right to vote to adherents on all such matters. (2019)
- 5.3 Authority and responsibility. The Community of Faith has authority and responsibility for: (2019)
- 5.3.1 Mission
- 1) living in covenant with the Regional Council with mutual responsibilities for the life and mission of the Community of Faith, and fulfilling its responsibilities under the covenant;
 - 2) doing regular self-assessments of the ministry of the Community of Faith; and filing the report with the Regional Council;

The Basis of Union: Polity

- 3) joining the hearts, voices, and resources of the community to witness to the gospel and vision of Jesus for a compassionate and just society, both in Canada and around the world;
 - 4) local, regional, national and global initiatives and partnerships (community, ecumenical and interfaith) for ministry, mission and justice work;
 - 5) ministry with children and youth and young adults;
 - 6) honouring and living into intercultural mission and ministry; and
 - 7) living in covenant with Mother Earth and All My Relations in the Earth community; (2019)
- 5.3.2 Governance and administration
- 1) making decisions about the life of the Community of Faith, including worship, care, spiritual practice, and learning; local administration, finances, and governance and local mission, justice, and evangelism;
 - 2) meeting at least annually;
 - 3) complying with denominational and regional policies; and
 - 4) buying, selling, leasing, and renovating Community of Faith property in cooperation with the Regional Council, within denominational guidelines; (2019)
- 5.3.3 Spiritual life
- 1) setting policies for membership, within denominational guidelines and receiving and celebrating new members in the Community of Faith;
 - 2) helping members on their journey as they explore and deepen their faith; and
 - 3) ensuring the proper administration of the sacraments; (2019)
- 5.3.4 Ministry and other leadership
- 1) cooperation with the Regional Council, within denominational guidelines, in recruiting, choosing, calling, appointing, and covenanting with ministry personnel and other staff, and in ending calls, and appointments and covenants with ministry personnel and other staff;
 - 2) encouraging members to consider ministry roles a responsibility shared through the whole Community of Faith; and
 - 3) calling forth individuals for ministry leadership; (2019)
- 5.3.5 Participation in regional and denominational life
- 1) helping to fund the cost of sending members to the meetings of the Regional Council;
 - 2) electing members to serve on Regional Council with shared funding of the cost; and
 - 3) receiving, dealing with, and forwarding proposals from members of the Community of Faith to Regional Councils. (2019)
- 5.4 Limitations. All authority and responsibility of the Community of Faith is subject to: (2019)
- 5.4.1 policies set by the Denominational Council on membership, governance, pastoral relations, property, and any other area within the authority of the Denominational Council; (2019)
- 5.4.2 the covenantal relationship between the Community of Faith and the Regional Council; and (2019)
- 5.4.3 the authority of the Regional Council to assume control of the Community of Faith in extraordinary circumstances where the Community of Faith is unable to or refuses to meet its responsibilities or acts outside of denominational or regional policies. (2019)

The Basis of Union: Polity

5.5 Pastoral Charges Existing Previous to the Union

- 5.5.1 In the management of their local affairs, the various churches, charges, circuits, or congregations of the negotiating Churches shall be entitled to continue the organization and practices (including those practices relating to membership, church ordinances, Sunday schools, and young people's societies) enjoyed by them at the time of the Union, subject in general affairs to the legislation, principles, and discipline of the United Church. Their representatives in the next higher governing body or council shall be chosen as at present.
- 5.5.2 Subject to the provisions of the next succeeding paragraph hereof, all property, real and personal, under the jurisdiction of the Parliament of Canada, held in trust for or to the use of a church, charge, circuit, or congregation of any of the negotiating Churches shall be held by trustees appointed by or on behalf of such church, charge, circuit, or congregation, upon trusts set forth and declared in a Model Trust Deed. This Model Trust Deed should be a schedule to the Act, and should contain, among others, a provision to the following effect: that the property is held for the church, charge, circuit, or congregation as a part of the United Church, and that no property so held shall be sold, exchanged, or in any manner encumbered, unless the Regional Council shall, at the instance of the church, charge, circuit, or congregation, have given its sanction, subject to an appeal, if desired, to the Denominational Council.
- 5.5.3 Any property or funds owned by a church, charge, circuit, or congregation at the time of the Union solely for its own benefit, or vested in trustees for the sole benefit of such church, charge, circuit, or congregation, and not for the denomination of which the said church, charge, circuit, or congregation formed a part, shall not be affected by the legislation giving effect to the Union or by any legislation of the United Church without the consent of the church, charge, circuit, or congregation for which such property is held in trust.
- 5.5.4 Churches, charges, circuits, or congregations received subsequent to the Union, into the United Church, with the approval of Presbyteries or Regional Councils, shall be entitled, if they so desire, to the privileges of sections 5.5.1. and 5.5.3.

5.6 Pastoral Charges to Be Formed Subsequent to the Union

All lands, premises, and property acquired for the use of a local church or a Pastoral Charge of the United Church shall be held, used, and administered under the trusts of the above Model Trust Deed.

5.7 Church Membership

The members of the Church entitled to all church privileges are those who, on a profession of their faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to Him, have been received into full membership. The children of such persons and all baptized children are members of the Church, and it is their duty and privilege, when they reach the age of discretion, to enter into full membership. Admission to full membership and granting of certificates of transfer or removal shall be:

- 1) by the action of the governing body of the Pastoral Charge or by the action of those in full membership when desired by the Pastoral Charge; or
- 2) by a Chaplain in the Canadian Forces, with the approval of, and in association with, two or more members in full communion with the United Church, for persons under that Chaplain's pastoral care.

IV. Regional Councils

- 6.1 Description. A Regional Council is a decision-making body responsible to serve and support Communities of Faith within its bounds and provide necessary oversight. (2019)
- 6.2 Membership. The Regional Council is composed of: (2019)
- 6.2.1 all ministry personnel within the geographic bounds served by the regional council; (2019)
- 6.2.2 ministers of denominations within mutual recognition agreements while under appointment or call; and (2019)
- 6.2.3 lay members elected by the Community of Faith, respecting the balance of lay and ministry personnel where possible. (2019)
- 6.3 Authority and Responsibility. The Regional Council has authority and responsibility for: (2019)
- 6.3.1 Covenanting:
- 1) recognizing a new Community of Faith by entering into a covenantal relationship with it;
 - 2) living in a covenantal relationship with each Community of Faith, with mutual responsibilities for the life and mission of the Community of Faith, and fulfilling its responsibilities under the covenant; and
 - 3) living in a covenantal relationship with ministry personnel; (2019)
- 6.3.2 Services for Communities of Faith:
- 1) providing support, advice, and services to Communities of Faith in human resource matters;
 - 2) providing support, advice, and services to Communities of Faith in dealing with congregational property;
 - 3) managing regional archives;
 - 4) providing on-going leadership training for ministers and lay persons; and
 - 5) providing funding partnerships with United Church educational and leadership training centres and camps as determined regionally; (2019)
- 6.3.3 Serve, support and provide oversight of Communities of Faith:
- 1) reviewing and periodically auditing the self-assessments of Communities of Faith in light of the covenant between the Community of Faith and the Regional Council;
 - 2) supporting emerging new ministries;
 - 3) supporting Communities of Faith in their life and work;
 - 4) serving, supporting and providing oversight when necessary of camps and incorporated ministries in the region;
 - 5) promoting articulation of mission and ministry;
 - 6) ensuring compliance with the policies and polity of the United Church and reviewing any relevant records; and
 - 7) assuming control of a Community of Faith in extraordinary circumstances where the Community of Faith is unable to or refuses to meet its responsibilities or acts outside of denominational policies; (2019)

The Basis of Union: Polity

6.3.4 Mission and ministry. Encouraging and engaging in:

- 1) joining our collective hearts, voices, and resources to witness to the gospel and vision of Jesus for a compassionate and just society, both in Canada and around the world;
- 2) local, regional, national and global initiatives and partnerships (community, ecumenical and interfaith) for ministry, mission and justice work;
- 3) ministry with children, youth and young adults;
- 4) honouring and living into intercultural mission and ministry; and
- 5) living in covenant with Mother Earth and All My Relations in the Earth community; (2019)

6.3.5 Policy and finance:

- 1) administering policy set by the Denominational Council, and setting appropriate regional policy;
- 2) buying, selling, leasing, and renovating Community of Faith property in cooperation with Communities of Faith, and distributing any proceeds within denominational guidelines;
- 3) buying, selling, leasing, and renovating regional property, and distributing any proceeds within denominational guidelines;
- 4) setting and managing its annual budget including revenue from the denominational assessment and setting any additional regional assessment for any additional services the Regional Council wishes to undertake;
- 5) participating in determining priorities for mission and ministry work through Mission and Service; and
- 6) meeting at least annually as the entire Regional Council or through its executive; (2019)

6.3.6 Preparation for Ministry:

- 1) calling forth of persons for ministry;
- 2) accompanying persons in the preparation process;
- 3) ordaining and commissioning of members of the order of ministry;
- 4) recognizing Designated Lay Ministers;
- 5) licensing of Licensed Lay Worship Leaders; and
- 6) celebrating admissions and re-admissions; (2019)

6.3.7 Pastoral Relations: cooperating with Communities of Faith in recruiting, choosing, calling, appointing and covenanting with ministry personnel and Communities of Faith, and in ending calls, appointments AND covenants with ministry personnel and other staff; (2019)

6.3.8 Celebrating retirements; (2019)

6.3.9 Oversight of ministry personnel;

- 1) encouraging and supporting ministry personnel towards health, joy and excellence in ministry practice;
- 2) assisting with informal conflict resolution processes; and
- 3) maintaining the roll of ministry personnel; (2019)

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6.3.10 Participation in denominational life:

- 1) electing members to serve on Denominational Council.
- 2) receiving, dealing with, and forwarding proposals from members of the Community of Faith to the Denominational Council; and
- 3) promoting and fostering direct dialogue between Communities of Faith and the Denominational Council. (2019)

6.4 Limitations

- 1) policies set by the Denominational Council on membership, governance, pastoral relations, candidacy, ministry personnel, property, and any other area within the authority of the Denominational Council; and
- 2) the authority of the Denominational Council to assume control of the Regional Council in extraordinary circumstances where the Regional Council is unable to or refuses to meet its responsibilities or acts outside of denominational or regional policies. (2019)

6.5 Staffing

Each region has staff to assist the Regional Council in meeting its responsibilities:

- 1) staffing numbers are based on assessments, grants from Mission and Service, and any other regional income;
- 2) staffing is based on priorities and needs as determined regionally;
- 3) staff are hired and managed by a regional secretary who reports to the General Secretary of the Denominational Council and relates to the Regional Council executive;
- 4) Regional Councils with more resources are free to retain more staff; and
- 5) sharing of all resources across the Church is encouraged. (2019)

V. Denominational Council

7.1 Description. The Denominational Council is the decision-making body for the United Church as both a denomination and a legal corporation. (2019)

7.2 Membership. The Denominational Council consists of:

- 1) those elected by the Regional Councils according to an agreed-upon formula
- 2) the presiding officer or elder of each Regional Council;
- 3) the Moderator and the immediate Past Moderator;
- 4) the General Secretary of the Denominational Council; and
- 5) other members and guests as determined. (2019)

7.3 Authority and responsibility. The Denominational Council has authority and responsibility for: (2019)

7.3.1 Mission:

- 1) joining our collective hearts, voices, and resources to witness to the gospel and vision of Jesus for a compassionate and just society, both in Canada and around the world;
- 2) engaging denominational-level ministry and mission including resource development and being a resource to Regional Councils and Communities of Faith;
- 3) encouraging local and regional mission and ministry, partnerships, ecumenical and interfaith;
- 4) engaging in national and global partnerships, ecumenical and interfaith relationships;

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- 5) honouring and living into intercultural mission and ministry; and
 - 6) living in covenant with Mother Earth and All My Relations in the Earth community; (2019)
- 7.3.2 Policy:
- 1) setting policies for the denomination on doctrine, worship, membership, governance, pastoral relations, property, and the entrance to paid accountable ministry;
 - 2) making decisions on denomination-shaping issues relating to public witness; and
 - 3) dealing with proposals received from Regional Councils; (2019)
- 7.3.3 Governance:
- 1) electing a Moderator;
 - 2) electing the executive of the Denominational Council;
 - 3) referring all unfinished matters to the executive of the Denominational Council;
 - 4) meeting once every three years in person, with members having the option of full participation through electronic or equivalent means;
 - 5) meeting more frequently as required through electronic or equivalent means; and
 - 6) approving the number and boundaries of Regional Councils, supporting them and promoting parity of service across regions; (2019)
- 7.3.4 Finance and administration:
- 1) setting a three-year budget framework for the Church
 - 2) determining the assessment formula for Communities of Faith and assessing them to meet the requirements of the budget; and
 - 3) maintaining the denominational archives. (2019)
- 7.4 Limitations. The authority and responsibility of the Denominational Council is subject to the following limitations: (2019)
- 7.4.1 changing the Basis of Union—the Basis of Union may only be changed through the remit process, which requires the approval of a majority of the Regional Councils and also, if the Denominational Council considers it advisable because the change is substantive or denomination-shaping, pastoral charges; (2019)
- Substantive or denomination-shaping changes include but are not limited to changes that:
- i. alter the nature of the councils of the Church;
 - ii. significantly change the structures of the Church;
 - iii. redefine the Church's understanding of ministry;
 - iv. affect the articles of faith except for gender language applied to human beings;
 - v. change the baptismal formula or vows made upon ordination or commissioning;
 - vi. move a section from this Basis of Union to the By-Laws; or
 - vii. alter the Church's understanding of membership; (2019)
- 7.4.2 membership requirements—no terms of admission to full membership may be prescribed other than those laid down in the New Testament; (2019)
- 7.4.3 freedom of worship—the freedom of worship enjoyed by churches at the time of union in 1925 may not be interfered with in the United Church; and (2019)

The Basis of Union: Polity

- 7.4.4 property—all policy on congregational property adopted by the Denominational Council must comply with the requirements set in The United Church of Canada Act. (2019)
- 7.5 Executive of the Denominational Council. The executive of the Denominational Council is the decision-making body for the United Church between meetings of the Denominational Council, living into covenantal relationship and mutually accountable with the Denominational Council, Regional Councils, and Communities of Faith, with the following membership, authority and responsibility: (2019)
- 7.5.1 membership: a fixed number between 12 and 18 members, with the exact number set by the Denominational Council; (2019)
- 7.5.2 authority and responsibility:
- 1) dealing with all unfinished matters referred to it by the Denominational Council;
 - 2) dealing with all routine and emergency work of the Denominational Council between meetings of the denominational council;
 - 3) establishing standing and other committees; and
 - 4) exercising additional authority and subject to any limitations as set by the Denominational Council. (2019)
- 7.6 Staffing. The Denominational Council has staff to assist it in meeting its responsibilities through: (2019)
- 7.6.1 staffing based on assessments of Communities of Faith, grants from Mission and Service, and other denominational income; (2019)
- 7.6.2 staffing based on the priorities and needs as determined denominationally; (2019)
- 7.6.3 administering denominational policies; (2019)
- 7.6.4 providing centralized technical services such as information technology, communication, payroll, accounting, human resources, administration, and pension plan; (2019)
- 7.6.5 supporting the Moderator; and (2019)
- 7.6.6 providing leadership in global partnerships and national-level ministry and mission work. (2019)

VI. Denominational Office of Vocation

- 8.0 The denominational Office of Vocation of the United Church is established with the following responsibility and structure: (2019)
- 8.1 Responsibility:
- 8.1.1 establishing standards for training and accreditation of ministry personnel according to denominational policies; (2019)
- 8.1.2 establishing expectations and standards for continuing education, formation, and professional development of ministry personnel according to denominational policies; (2019)
- 8.1.3 determining the person's fitness and readiness for accreditation to ministry; (2019)
- 8.1.4 maintaining registry of accredited ministry personnel; (2019)
- 8.1.5 disciplining of ministry personnel including formal hearings and complaints; (2019)
- 8.1.6 supporting and responding to requests for assistance from Regional Councils; (2019)
- 8.1.7 administering the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary and Voluntary); (2019)

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- 8.1.8 maintaining a list of trained conflict resolution facilitators; (2019)
- 8.1.9 maintaining a list of recognized Interim Ministers, and those trained for the Ministry of Supervision; and (2019)
- 8.1.10 establishing and implementing standards for admitting ministers from other denominations and re-admitting ministers. (2019)
- 8.2 Structure. Oversight of the Office of Vocation is by an elected body that: (2019)
 - 8.2.1 honours and lives into intercultural mission and ministry; and (2019)
 - 8.2.2 consists of a balance of ministers whether ordained, diaconal, or designated lay ministers and lay people, with a variety of active experience. (2019)

VII. Clusters and Networks

- 9. Alongside the three-council structure, there are clusters and networks that, while not formal governance bodies, are central to the living out of the faith of the United Church: (2019)
 - 9.1 clusters: local clusters of Communities of Faith that provide community and support for Communities of Faith and their leaders, and focus on worship, mission, learning, collegiality, and strategic planning; and (2019)
 - 9.2 networks: linking people working on specific issues (supportive housing, intercultural ministry, youth ministry) or for project work (e.g. event planning) that function through the whole Church, depending on the issue. (2019)

MINISTRY PERSONNEL

- 10.0 The Order of Ministry shall be open to persons of all gender identities. (2021)
- 10.1 The pastoral relationship, when initiated by call, shall be without time limit.
- 10.2 The policy of the Church shall be that, as far as reasonably possible, every Pastoral Charge shall have a pastorate without interruption, and that, as far as reasonably possible, every effective member of the Order of Ministry shall have a Pastoral Charge or Community of Faith. (2019)
- 10.3 Every member of the Order of Ministry shall, subject to the rules and regulations of the United Church:
- 1) be a member of the Regional Council; and
 - 2) be subject to the discipline of the Office of Vocation. (2019)
- 10.4 Every member of the Order of Ministry called or appointed to a Pastoral Charge shall, subject to the rules and regulations of the United Church:
- 1) have the right to conduct services in the church, churches, or other places of worship in connection with the Pastoral Charge;
 - 2) have the right of occupancy of the manse in connection with the Pastoral Charge. (2019)
- 10.5 Every member of the order of ministry of a denomination with which the United Church has a mutual recognition agreement shall be eligible for appointment or call in the United Church. While under appointment or call, they are equivalent to members of the Order of Ministry of the United Church in respect to membership and responsibilities in the councils of the church. (2019)

I. Candidacy Pathway

- 11.0 The Office of Vocation and the Church's three councils prepare individuals for ministry through the following phases: (2019)
- 11.1 Calling Forth. The Church engages a creative and invitational approach for calling forth individuals to serve as ministry personnel within our denomination. (2019)
- 11.2 Identify. The Church tests an individual's giftedness for ministry. (2019)
- 11.3 Accompany. The Church accompanies students and candidates by providing support and guidance. (2019)
- 11.4 Equip. Through a variety of learning opportunities, the Church equips individuals and candidates for ministry. (2019)
- 11.5 Assess. The Church assesses the promise, suitability, readiness, and effectiveness of students and candidates for ministry. (2019)
- 11.6. Authorize. The Church authorizes students and candidates as ready for ordination, commissioning or recognition. (2019)
- 11.7 Celebrate:
- 11.7.1 The Church celebrates the conclusion of each student's candidacy pathway. (2019)
 - 11.7.2 The Church celebrates the ordination, commissioning and recognition of all individuals who have accepted a call, appointment, or offer of employment as ministry personnel. (2019)

II. Training for Ministry

- 12.1 The Office of Vocation shall have the duty of inquiry into the personal character, doctrinal beliefs, and general fitness for ministry of a Candidate for the Order of Ministry and Designated Lay Ministry. (2019)
- 12.2 It shall be left to the Denominational Council to determine, from time to time, the course of study leading to ordination, commissioning and recognition. (2019)
- 12.3 Provision shall be made, as far as possible, within the institutions of theological education for instruction in the courses of study in Theology as approved by the Denominational Council.

III. Commissioning, Ordination, Recognition and Admission

- 13.1 The Office of Vocation shall make the final determination of the person's fitness and readiness for accreditation to ministry of Candidates for ordination, commissioning or recognition and of those seeking admission to the Order of Ministry of the United Church. (2019)
- 13.2 The Office of Vocation shall examine each Candidate on the Statement of Doctrine of the United Church and shall, before ordination, commissioning, recognition or admission, be satisfied that such Candidate is in essential agreement therewith, and as ministry personnel of the United Church accepts the statement as being in substance agreeable to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures.
- 13.3 The service to ordain, commission, or receive persons to the Order of Ministry shall be conducted by the Regional Council. Those presenting themselves shall, after hearing the following preamble, answer the questions which follow: (2019)

"Jesus Christ came into the world to be the servant of God and all people. As servant Lord, Jesus calls his Church to a ministry of worship, witness, and reconciliation. In baptism we were received as members of his Church and at confirmation we committed ourselves to its ministry. In order that this ministry of the whole Church may be fulfilled, God has given the ordained ministry of Word, Sacrament, and Pastoral Care, and the diaconal ministry of Education, Service, and Pastoral Care. It is the responsibility of the Church to seek, train, and set apart those whom God calls so to serve.

1. *(to each Candidate)* Do you believe in God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and do you commit yourself anew to God?
2. *(to each Candidate being ordained)* Do you believe that God is calling you to the ordained ministry of Word, Sacrament, and Pastoral Care, and do you accept this call?
(to each Candidate being commissioned) Do you believe that God is calling you to the diaconal ministry of Education, Service, and Pastoral Care, and do you accept this call?
3. *(to each Candidate)* Are you willing to exercise your ministry in accordance with the scriptures, in continuity with the faith of the Church, and subject to the oversight and discipline of The United Church of Canada?"

ADMINISTRATION

14.0 In sections 14.1 to 18.4 inclusive:

“court” means a court of The United Church of Canada or, where the context permits, a council of The United Church of Canada; and

“General Council” means the General Council of The United Church of Canada, or, where the context permits, the Denominational Council of The United Church of Canada. (2019)

I. Missions

14.1 In the administration of the mission work of the United Church there shall be two departments: (a) Home, including all the mission work within the Dominion of Canada, Newfoundland, and the Bermudas; (b) Foreign, including the missions already established or that may be established in other countries.

14.2 For the oversight and administration of these two departments there shall be two Boards, to be known as the Board of Home Missions and the Board of Foreign Missions, to be elected in such a manner and endowed with such powers as the General Council may determine.

14.3 In recognition of the very valuable services rendered by the Women’s Societies, the union, constitution, and lines of work of these societies shall be determined by the joint action of their Boards, subject to the approval of the General Council.

14.4 There shall be placed under the administration of the Home Mission Board of the United Church the monies now administered under the caption of the Sustentation Fund and Church and Parsonage Aid Fund of the Methodist Church; the Home Mission and Augmentation Funds, French Evangelization Fund, and Church and Manse Fund (except that under the Foreign Mission Board) of the Presbyterian Church; the Home Mission Fund of the Congregational Churches; and such portion of the Mission Fund now raised by the Methodist Church and the Foreign Mission Board of the Presbyterian Church, as is now expended in Canada, Newfoundland, and the Bermudas.

14.5 There shall be placed under the administration of the Foreign Mission Board of the United Church the Foreign Mission Fund of the Congregational Churches and that portion of the Mission Fund of the Methodist Church and of the Foreign Mission Fund of the Presbyterian Church now expended in other lands.

14.6 There shall be placed under the administration of the Board of Evangelism and Social Service and the Board of Sunday Schools and Young People’s Societies of the United Church the funds now raised for the work of the Departments of Social Service and Evangelism and the Department of Sunday Schools and Young People’s Societies of the negotiating Churches.

14.7 Inasmuch as certain expenses in connection with the various courts of the Church will have to be met, the ways and means of raising these funds shall be left to the General Council.

II. Publishing Interests

15.0 It shall be left to the General Council of the United Church to determine how far the publications now issued by the negotiating Churches shall be amalgamated.

III. Colleges

- 16.1 All the educational institutions connected with the three negotiating Churches shall, as far as possible, sustain the same relation to the United Church as, under their charter, they sustained to the respective Churches before Union, until the General Council shall determine otherwise and necessary legislation shall give effect to changes made thereby.
- 16.2 The policy of the Church shall be the maintenance of a limited number of thoroughly equipped theological schools, due regard being paid to the needs of different parts of the country. In furtherance of this policy amalgamation shall be effected as soon as possible in localities where two or more theological schools are doing the same type of work.
- 16.3 In addition to the Governing Boards of the several theological institutions, the General Council shall have general oversight of the educational interests of the Church.
- 16.4 The budget of the General Council shall include such funds as are needed to supplement the revenues of the several educational institutions, to assist students in their preparation for the ministry of the church, and for such other purposes and under such regulations as the General Council may from time to time determine.
- 16.5 The several educational institutions shall be encouraged to obtain permanent endowments for their maintenance, may receive contributions for this and other purposes at any time, and, with the consent of the General Council, may proceed to appeal for such funds.

IV. Reorganization

- 17.0 The General Council is empowered to effect from time to time a reorganization of the Boards and Committees of the Church, whether by way of amalgamation, rearrangement, or otherwise howsoever, and to amend the same from time to time; to place under the administration of the Boards, Committees, and Departments established by it the funds appropriate thereto; and to declare that sections 12.1, 12.2, 12.4, 12.5, and 12.6 of the Administration Section of the Basis of Union under the heading Missions and sections 14.3, 14.4, and 14.5 under the heading Colleges be repealed or amended as the case may be to conform with the constitution and powers of the new Boards and Departments so established; and that such repeal or amendment shall come into effect on the dates set by the General Council in such declaration, and thereupon the said paragraphs shall stand repealed or amended as set forth in such declaration.

V. The Pension Fund

- 18.0 Whereas there exist, in some form, in all the negotiating Churches funds to aid aged and retired ministers, and widows and orphans of ministers, provision for similar purposes shall be made in the constitution of the United Church by such amalgamation or modification of existing methods as may be found practicable; and such provision shall embrace the following particulars.
- 18.1 The rights of present and prospective claimants on existing funds in any of the negotiating Churches shall be adequately protected. To this end:
- 18.1.1 the present capital investments of the various benevolent funds of the negotiating Churches, and the income now contributed to those funds by publishing interests shall be combined into a "common trust," if practicable. The rights of present claimants and of prospective claimants (the latter being computed as of the date of the Union) shall be a first charge on the revenue from this trust. If it be found that differences in the constitution and administration of the several funds are such as to necessitate separate trusts, instead of a common trust, this shall not be a bar to the carrying out of the general plan, because in that case their revenues shall be combined.

The Basis of Union: Administration

- 18.1.2 the General Council of the United Church shall provide for:
- 1) the assessing of each Minister who is a member of any of the existing funds at the date of the Union and of all members of the Order of Ministry received into, ordained, or commissioned in the United Church after the Union, on the basis of stipend or age, or both stipend and age, as the General Council may determine; and
 - 2) the collecting of contributions, which shall be obligatory upon all local churches, based upon an equitable allocation or assessment under the rules to be formulated by the General Council, the minimum of such allocation or assessment being the amount which, together with the revenue from said trust or trusts and the foregoing assessment upon members of the Order of Ministry, is requisite to make good the claims of claimants upon the Superannuation Fund to be instituted by the General Council.
- 18.2 Claimants on the proposed Fund shall include the following:
- 18.2.1 all Ministers who, at the time of the Union, are beneficiaries of existing funds;
 - 18.2.2 all Ministers who, at the time of the Union, are regular contributors to existing funds on the scale provided by their respective denominations;
 - 18.2.3 all Ministers' widows and orphans who are now, or may hereafter become, entitled to participate in the proposed Fund;
 - 18.2.4 all Ministers, not members of or contributors to existing funds, who may signify their desire to become members of and contributors to the proposed Fund, on the basis of payments sanctioned by the General Council of the United Church. Provision shall be made whereby Ministers so applying may, by a certain scale of payments, be entitled to have their claim upon the proposed Fund date from the time of their reception into the ministry of any of the negotiating Churches instead of from the date of the Union;
 - 18.2.5 all members of the Order of Ministry received into, ordained, or commissioned in the Church after the Union inasmuch as they shall be required at the time of their reception, ordination, or commissioning to become members of and contributors to the proposed Fund;
 - 18.2.6 lay missionaries appointed by the Board of Overseas Missions and such persons employed by the General Council, the Divisions, or Departments, as the General Council may designate; and
 - 18.2.7 Diaconal Ministers, i.e., those members of the Order of Ministry who have been commissioned or formerly designated or set apart as Deaconesses and Certified Churchmen.
- 18.3 The sources of revenue of the proposed Fund shall be the following:
- 18.3.1 contributions of Ministers who are members of said Fund at its inception, and those who afterward become members, on a scale to be adopted by the General Council of the Church;
 - 18.3.2 offerings in all local churches based upon an equitable allocation to be made by the Board of Management of said Fund, under regulations sanctioned by the General Council;
 - 18.3.3 legacies and donations given for the purpose;
 - 18.3.4 such grants from the profits of the publishing interests of the Church as may from time to time be determined under regulations to be framed by the General Council; and
 - 18.3.5 proceeds of any investments that may be made in the interests of the said Fund.
- 18.4 The General Council shall have power to use such part of the Pension Fund of the United Church as it may deem necessary for the purchase of annuities from the Dominion of Canada for such beneficiaries of the said Fund as the General Council may deem expedient.