

**Implementation of the Amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws as Voted by the
Twenty-eighth General Synod of the United Church of Christ
*Unified Governance for the National Setting of the United Church of Christ***

Delegates to the Twenty-seventh General Synod in Grand Rapids, Michigan in 2009 adopted the Resolution *Toward Unified Governance for the National Setting of the United Church of Christ*. This requested the Executive Council and Covenanted Ministry Boards to bring a proposal to the Twenty-eighth General Synod with changes in the Constitution and Bylaws necessary to begin implementation of a Unified Governance Structure.

The Executive Council appointed a Unified Governance Working Group with members from the Covenanted Ministry Boards, the Executive Council, Historically Under-Represented Groups, Seminaries, and other national bodies. The Working Group was charged to create a proposal for unified governance and deliver it to the Executive Council for preparation of implementing Constitution and Bylaw amendments for consideration by Delegates of the Twenty-eighth General Synod in Tampa, Florida.

The Working Group met to fulfill its charge over the 2009-2011 biennium. It continually invited and reflected upon feedback from the various settings of the Church under the direction of its chair, The Rev. Dr. Bernard Wilson, senior pastor at Norfield Congregational UCC in Weston, Connecticut.

The Working Group created *A Proposal for Unified Governance for the National Setting of the United Church of Christ*. The Working Group's process included a website to share working documents transparently as the proposal was finalized. The proposal and working documents remain posted at ucc.org/governance. These reflect the theological reflection and prayerful discernment, ideas, dissents, and epiphanies that were central to the Working Group's two year drafting process, focused on serving the mission of the Church. The resulting proposal faithfully and generatively engaged input from across settings of the Church, including key concepts from the work of the earlier Governance Follow-up Teams (I and II) that had grown out of feedback from the 2000 Restructure Evaluation Oversight Committee of the Executive Council.

Once the proposal was affirmed by the Executive Council and Covenanted Ministry Boards, a sub-committee of the Executive Council met with Church and Covenanted Ministry Board attorneys to prepare constitutional changes.

Delegates to the Twenty-eighth General Synod considered the constitutional changes required to implement the proposal and approved the Unified Governance revisions to the Constitution and Bylaws in July, 2011. The amendments combine the five existing governance boards into a unified governing structure, the 52 member United Church of Christ Board, diverse and skilled in varied ways to serve the life of the entire Church with principles of good governance.

Two-thirds of the Conferences must ratify. The two year ratification period begins in the fall of 2011 as Conferences present constitutional changes to their next Annual Meeting or body so empowered to act. The full Implementation Timeline (through 2013), including next actions of

the Covenanted Ministry Boards, will be developed under the direction of the Executive Council, serving as General Synod ad interim, beginning with its Fall, 2011 meeting.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is unified governance for the national setting?

While there will be 4 separately incorporated entities, the membership of each will be identical; thus *one group of people* will have the common responsibility of fiduciary oversight, fund development, and strategic planning rather than many. The United Church of Christ Board is directly accountable to the General Synod and the whole United Church of Christ. The responsibilities of the UCC Board as well as checks and balances are clearly defined in the proposed Constitution and Bylaws. (We currently have 4 Covenanted Ministry Boards and an Executive Council, five distinct entities guiding the national setting with the General Synod).

How does unified governance support mission?

The mission of the United Church of Christ is discerned and pursued in multiple UCC settings and communities, individuals and churches, including the General Synod. Governance in the national setting enables coordinated planning and implementation to communicate and connect the mission. It also helps to allocate a responsible, faithful development and use of resources in service of God's mission with other settings of the Church. It is expected that a common board will be the most effective form of governance to embrace the challenges and creative opportunities the coming years will present to the United Church of Christ and the broader ecumenical community.

Are historical legacies and mandates safeguarded in the Constitution and Bylaws?

Yes. Use of funds in accordance with donor intent is carefully outlined in the proposed Constitution and Bylaws. The Covenanted Ministries' attorneys have reviewed and collaborated on the proposed language and guidelines regarding historical mandates, investment decisions, and draw rates.

Is unified governance in synch with our polity? Yes! The local church is still the basic unit of the church, the General Synod is still the church gathered! Unified governance has been reviewed and affirmed in 2006, 2008, and 2010 by UCC polity and history consultations. (A Summary follows).

What happens to the corporations of the Covenanted Ministries we have now?

The corporations of Wider Church, Justice and Witness, and Local Church Ministries will continue and each will hold its financial assets and its mandates. Executive Council will be changed to the United Church of Christ Board. The Office of General Ministries will not continue but its functions will belong to the United Church of Christ Board.

What is the Role of the Ministry Teams, are they Boards?

They are advisory working groups making recommendations to the full board as all decision making is a function of the United Church of Christ Board.

Why is good governance and a smaller more diverse board important? A smaller board more effectively performs required functions using principles of good governance. Studies show that the larger the board is, the less effective it is. Principles of good governance include *strategic planning, resource development and stewardship, monitoring, and oversight*. These are vital for us to respond faithfully to God's call to ministry and mission. One common board charged with the overall responsibility for this function will enable the UCC to respond most effectively to that call while being accountable directly to the General Synod and to the whole Church continuously through multiple communication and reporting modes.

Is this bad news for small conferences? A conference minister from each region will serve on the board. There is also a conference-rotation provision for at-large members around how much time can pass without a conference serving. And the full board is called to serve the interests of the whole church, all board members, from rural, suburban, urban, intercultural and multiethnic, and of many

skills, all are charged to serve the whole. We are not looking at tokens or slots, we are looking for diverse gifts and life experiences to serve all our diversity!

What are the diversity requirements of the board?

The United Church of Christ Board shall have 52 members, all of whom are elected by the General Synod. 36 members serve in “at-large” positions, others are ex-officio. All members shall have voice and vote. The United Church of Christ Board will mark a diverse membership in keeping with the vision of the UCC as a multiracial, multicultural church which welcomes all. No less than half of the board must be persons of color, no less than half must be women, and no less than one-fifth must be persons under 30. All members will bring their particular and diverse life experience, expertise, wisdom, points of view, and faith to governing and all will be asked to represent and to serve the whole church with their gifts.

How are Board Members chosen? Explain the Nominating Committee, who is on it, and who may put forward names to be considered?

The General Synod will elect most of the members of the Board, with the exception of a few who will serve by virtue of their particular office in the Church. The General Synod Nominating Committee will offer a slate of nominees for to the Synod, based upon the competencies and skills needed for an effective board, including diverse points of view and life experience from fund development to cultural competencies, and diversity that includes socioeconomic diversity. The Nominating Committee itself will be diverse, including members from conferences, historically underrepresented groups, and the Board itself. Anyone in the UCC may submit names to the Nominating Committee for consideration as potential board members.

UCC History and Polity Consultations on Unified Governance – A Summary

1. Three different consultations (2006, 2008, and 2010) affirmed that the single governance structure does not violate our covenantal polity and may allow us to be more faithful to who we are and the mission we are called to by God.
2. The proposed governance structure reflects a covenantal polity consistent with our principles and practices. Nothing in these principles and practices specify the size or number of entities with which the covenant is to be kept. In our history and that of our predecessor bodies, we have had many different configurations and numbers of decision-making bodies. But, the trajectory of that history is towards fewer and fewer decision-making bodies.
3. The consistent value and practice of the UCC and its predecessor bodies is concern first about the mission of the church in the world and for the sake of the world, not just for the sake of the church, and to an openness to the leading of the Spirit in each time and place. We are called to respond and adapt the church to follow the leading of the Spirit in the mission we are called to and not to maintain ourselves for the sake of keeping with that with which we are most familiar.
4. The role and authority of our leaders must be clearly articulated. Our historic understanding of church calls us to be clear about such matters for the sake of covenant and unity. When the role and authority of our leaders is unclear, it hampers our ability to act in mission to and for the world. We become bogged down on internal matters, less attentive to God’s mission.

5. Unified governance is more faithful to who we are – one church. The legacies we are called to steward belong to the whole church, not to one particular part of the church. While efficiency is important, the most important thing is discernment of the Spirit's call and to have that done with one decision-making body opens the possibility for more effective and faithful discernment.
6. Transparency is a core value and the single governance proposal promotes this value with appropriate lines of responsibility and accountability.
7. Faithfulness to our past and history does not demand that we adhere to a particular structure or form. It demands that we respond in our day and time, faithful to discerning the mission before us. Our world is very different from even the one faced in 2000. We must respond differently to this new world. Our ancestors in faith shaped the structure of the church to meet the mission they understood they were called to and we must do the same. Faithfulness is in following in their footsteps to courageously go forward, making changes in the way we are structured in order to be good stewards and carry out God's mission that we are called to here and now.

The Unified Governance Working Group

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*Replaced Bing Tso, called to serve on the WCM search committee in April, 2010