



Monday, April 26, 2021

## Chinook Winds Region - Proposal 2021

**Name of person submitting this proposal**

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**Proposal Name**

Proposal to the 44th General Council: Initiating Dialogue on Church Union

**Source**

Moved by Taylor Croissant (Southminster:Lethbridge) and Samuel Grottenberg (Southwood:Calgary)

**Type of Proposal**

For Decision (I want the council to make a decision or take an action)

**Proposal**

**That the General Council initiate an invitation to a new and separate ecumenical dialogue with The Anglican Church of Canada, The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Canada, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, and any other suitable denominations to discuss and explore, over a period of ten years, the possibility of full organic church union.**

**Background**

"that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me." – John 17:21

We believe the Holy Spirit is inviting us to consider how new expressions of Christian unity might serve the Gospel in the decades ahead. As United Church theologian Don Schweitzer has written: "The Holy Spirit gives Christians the freedom to adapt Jesus' teaching and reformulate the church's understanding as they encounter new situations. Faithfulness to the New Testament witness to this freedom sometimes requires one to move beyond what Christian faith meant then ... this can include the church changing its mind in a radical way, saying yes to something to which it formerly said no."

Though our church has previously pursued a similar course of action in the past, we believe a new generation within our church is being called to pursue full organic church union with other theologically similar denominations. The demographic realities of our declining membership, financial resources, and reduced numbers of clergy would support this pursuit, especially when we consider what these demographic trends will look like in our congregations in another ten years.

However, beyond money and attendance, we should pursue this course of action because greater Christian unity is the desire of Christ. Now, at this point in each of our churches' history within Canada, we can perhaps do more together than we can apart. Issues of theology and Biblical interpretation have created difference between our denominations since the Protestant Reformation, but so has ethnic nationalism. To serve the people of Canada today, we may now need a further united expression of mainline Protestantism for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The preamble to *The Manual* contains an excerpt from the "Declaration of Faith (1935, reaffirmed in 1950), which reads, in part, "In a renewed conviction of the worth of inclusive Christian fellowship, The United Church of Canada enters its second decade, prepared, as the opportunity may offer and as God may direct, to seek with other Christian communions further development of its ideals, whether by increased co-operation, organic union, or otherwise, and so fulfill its purpose of being not merely a united, but a uniting Church." Perhaps the Holy Spirit is prompting us towards just such an opportunity to be uniting, on the eve of our church's second century.

Though issues of human sexuality have been sources of division between us in recent decades, we are now seeing increasing ecumenical agreement between mainline Protestants, and likely will see even more so in a further ten years. We acknowledge, however, the challenge these issues may place on this pursuit.

We should also draw upon the wisdom of our global ecumenical partner denominations such as The United Church of Christ in the Philippines, The Church of South India, The Church of North India, The Church of Pakistan, and The United Church of Christ in Japan, who have existed in church union with Anglicans, Disciples of Christ, Lutherans, and Presbyterians for nearly the same length as our own United Church union.

## **Funding Implications**

Creation of a committee that would meet both electronically and in-person over a ten-year period.

## **Confirmation**

Proposal is complete and I am ready to submit it.