

Template: Writing a proposal for the meeting of a Regional Council or for the General Council, The United Church of Canada

Background

What is a proposal? Proposals call on the Regional Council or General Council to make a decision, or set policy, on behalf of the church. Proposals must reflect the responsibilities of the Regional Council or General Council. For example, if you would like the United Church of Canada to address a social justice or policy matter with the federal government, your proposal would be addressed to General Council. If you would like the Regional Council to adopt inclusive language commitments in its services of worship and business, or to address provincial or territorial concerns, the proposal would be addressed to the Regional Council.

Who can make a proposal? Any member of the Regional Council, any Community of Faith or other recognized ministry, or any governance body of the Regional Council. Clusters and Networks may make proposals through a member of the Regional Council.

A member of the Regional Council is: someone who is ministry personnel; an elected lay representative for a Community of Faith; or an individual who has been made a member of the Regional Council by an act of the Executive or the Annual Meeting (for example, a lay member of a Commission).

When can we make proposals?

Generally, proposals are submitted to the annual meeting of the Regional Council, whether it's online or in person. Proposals that need to go to General Council must still be submitted to the Regional Council meeting. It's strongly preferred that proposals be included in the official documents for the Regional Council meeting, so that delegates have time to reflect on it and staff have time to add the Proposal. Please check with your Regional Council office and/ or website for deadlines.

Who decides? The Proposal will be sent to the annual meeting of the Regional Council for discussion, discernment, and voting. The meeting has the right to make amendments to proposals to the Regional Council, and whether or not to submit the proposal to the General Council. In some circumstances, a proposal can be sent to the Regional Council Executive.

More information: The Manual (2021), Section F.1

And now: on to actually writing your proposal

Try to keep it brief, and please explain any acronyms or abbreviations, and any specialized language. Please include the following in your Proposal, using the headings in bold. You can copy and paste these into a new document:

1. What is the issue? Why is it important?

Briefly describe (approximately four sentences) the issue and its significance.

Example: We believe God/Jesus/The Holy Spirit is calling us to:

- do something about... engage the topic of... respond to the challenge of...

2. What is happening now?

Provide a description of the current practice or policy in question, identifying/citing the source of this information.

3. How might the Regional Council or General Council respond to the issue?

Describe how the Regional or General Council might respond to the issue. To avoid being overly prescriptive, please offer multiple options of how the General Council might respond. Commentary may be offered on the possible outcome of adopting each option.

- Study/discussion of an issue
- Adopting clear policy related to an issue or concern
- Action on the issue that could involve the church, others, or both.

4. Background information

Provide details the Regional Council or General Council needs to make an informed decision on the proposal. Eg: What is the history of this issue? What are key underlying theological, ecclesiological, missional, or justice considerations? What are the principles informing this issue?

5. How does this proposal help us to live into our church's commitments on equity?

Describe in broad terms how this proposal engages with the United Church's established principles and positions on equity. These include anti-racism, Indigenous justice, intercultural, disabilities justice, and 2SLGBTQIA+ affirming policies. Who has been consulted in the development of the proposal? Was the proposal developed "with" people, or "on behalf of" people? What might be the impact of this proposal on people and communities? Who is advantaged and who is disadvantaged by this approach?

Final check: Ask someone less familiar with the issue to read this over for you if possible, and identify anything that needs changing or clarifying.

Is the Proposal making a request that is within the power and responsibilities of the Regional Council or General Council?

Is it making a request or asking for a policy that is not already covered in existing policies and practices?

Is the wording as clear as possible? Have acronyms or specialized language been explained?

Does it include accurate information that has been verified by your group?

Can your Proposal meet the necessary deadlines?

Yes to all? Please submit your proposal in Word format to the Regional Council office. (Updated March 2024)