

Appendix: **Interim Covenant between the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church and The United Church of Canada**

Introduction

History

The United Church of Canada and The United Methodist Church and their predecessor denominations have had interaction, cooperation, and relationships that go back to the earliest establishment of a Methodist witness in North America. Predecessors of both denominations participated in the first Ecumenical Methodist Conference in London in 1881. Both churches are members of the World Methodist Council. When The United Methodist Church was founded in 1968 the annual conferences of the Evangelical United Brethren in Canada joined the United Church of Canada. Despite this history of cooperation and practical recognition the two churches have not entered into a formal relationship with each other. We are convinced that the time has come to now enter into such a formal agreement.

UMC

The Constitution of The United Methodist Church affirms that: “The United Methodist Church believes that the Lord of the church is calling Christians everywhere to strive toward unity; and therefore it will pray, seek, and work for unity at all levels of church life: ... through plans of union and covenantal relationships with churches of Methodist or other denominational traditions.”(BOD § 7) In particular the Book of Discipline gives Bishops the role providing “leadership toward the goal of understanding, reconciliation, and unity within the Church ... universal.” (BOD § 403.1 e) The Council of Bishops is given the “the authority to enter into ecumenical agreements with other Christian bodies.” (BOD § 431.1 a)

The establishment of formal “full communion” and “Covenanting Church” relationships with other churches requires the agreement of General Conference. However, throughout the Book of Discipline the ordained ministry and the sacraments of other Christian Churches are recognized as valid by the United Methodist Church regardless of whether or not these churches have a formal relationship with The UMC. This is particularly the case with regard to churches who are part of the Methodist family. The United Methodist Church practices open communion and invites members of other churches to partake in the communion. In the light of this and the historic relationships between the United Methodist Church and The United Church of Canada, the Council of Bishops of the United Methodist Church affirms the relationship and the intentions set out below.

UCCanada

The crest of the United Church of Canada includes the words “Ut Omnes Unum Sint” (“That All May Be One” in Latin), the name of the church in French, “L’Église Unie du Canada” and the Mohawk words, “Akwe Nia’Tetewà:neren”, meaning “All My Relations.” This reflects the United Church’s desire to continue to live into Jesus’ prayer in John 17:20-21, “I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, 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.”

In 1935, 10 years after the formation of The United Church of Canada, the General Council approved this statement, which is still true today: “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.” This statement is still true today and is reflected in the United Church of Canada’s full communion agreement with two other denominations, with its mutual recognition of ministry agreements with four other denominations, and in its ongoing local, national and international ecumenical partnerships and commitments.

The General Council of the United Church of Canada has responsibility for “engaging in national and global partnerships, ecumenical and interfaith relationships”; the General Council or its Executive is responsible for approving mutual recognition of ministry agreements and full communion agreements.

As with the United Methodist Church, the United Church of Canada practices open communion and invites members of other churches to partake in the communion. In the light of this and the historic relationships between the United Methodist Church and The United Church of Canada, the Executive of the General Council affirms the relationship and the intentions set out below.

Interim Covenant Affirmations

The United Methodist Church and The United Church of Canada:

1. Recognize each other as members of the universal church of Christ.
2. Affirm each other’s ordination as “elder” and “deacon” (UMC) and ordination and commissioning as “ordered minister” (UCC) and their administration of sacraments.
3. Affirm each other’s ministry.

Statement of Intent

The United Methodist Church and The United Church of Canada commit themselves to:

1. Working toward the establishment of a formal relationship between the two churches to be approved by the General Conference of the United Methodist Church and the General Council of The United Church of Canada.
2. Working toward the establishment of relationships and clear pathways for cooperation in ministry and mission including:
 - a. Developing and deepening relationships amongst congregations and communities of faith, ministers, lay leaders, and relevant staff of both denominations locally, regionally, and nationally
 - b. Engaging in discussion and consultation with The United Church of Canada (regionally or nationally) prior to establishing any new United Methodist congregations in Canada
 - c. the development of ecumenical shared ministries amongst migrant populations
1. The transfer of ministers will be regulated in accordance with an agreement on the orderly or exchange of ministry in accordance with the provisions of the polity of both churches in

relation to different orders of ministry and their ordination, commissioning, consecrating or licensing.