

Proposed Amendments to Constitution and Bylaws: Summary and Background of the Work of the UCCB

UCC Purpose: To Love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and our neighbor as ourselves.

UCC Mission: United in Spirit and inspired by God's grace, we welcome all, love all and seek justice for all.

UCC Vision: United in Christ's love, a just world for all.

Summary

Since General Synod 30 came to a conclusion in July of 2015, the United Church of Christ Board of Directors (UCCB) has engaged in a review of the Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ. This process included in-depth discussions about proposals considered but not adopted at General Synod 30 (GS30), generative discussions by the UCCB, conversations with the Council of Conference Ministers (CCM), collaboration with staff of the United Church of Christ and a survey of the wider church with participation by more than 2,000 individuals.

At the October 2016 meeting of the UCCB and then at the corresponding special meeting in December 2016, the UCCB voted to propose amendments to the UCC Constitution and Bylaws. A detailed explanation of the proposed changes can be referenced in the document "Preparing for General Synod 31: A Guide to Proposed Changes to UCC Constitution and Bylaws," which will be ready for complete distribution by February (insert) 2017. Copies will be posted on the UCC and GS31 website and distributed through UCC's Keeping You Posted.

Central to the conversation about the Constitution and Bylaws was a desire to continue making improvements to these documents to overcome obstacles to effective governance. This is a common and healthy practice of effective governing bodies. As the UCCB was engaged in conversations about the Constitution and Bylaws, the church was also engaged in conversations which would result in the articulation of the purpose, mission and vision for the UCC. Perhaps the Holy Spirit was at work when the UCC Purpose, UCC Mission and UCC Vision (stated above) were adopted by the UCCB the same weekend the UCCB voted to take the steps necessary to prepare the proposed amendments for consideration at GS31. As a discipline, this shows that good governance includes opening ourselves to the movement of the Holy Spirit.

Key Points

The UCC exists in the context of contemporary church and society. This was true when the UCC was formed and it will be true throughout its history. These changes reflect the UCC's best efforts to allow leaders acting on behalf of the National Setting to act nimbly, responsibly and faithfully in the rapidly changing context we face.

The proposed amendments reflect careful deliberation, discernment, negotiation and collaboration by the UCCB. There has been a sincere effort to seek, share, explore and understand different ideas about how to remove barriers to affect governance in our Constitution and Bylaws. The focus in preparing the amendments has been to ensure a process that would be transparent, open and inclusive with ample opportunity for discernment.

The officers of the UCC—the General Minister and President and the (proposed) Associate General Ministers—share tremendous responsibilities as leaders of our beloved Church and as servants of God. The proposed amendments give the UCCB the flexibility to make adjustments that allow the Officers to serve God by serving the Church in a way that aligns with the stated purpose, mission and vision of the UCC. Just as importantly, these amendments would allow the UCCB to work with the Officers to respond to changing internal and external circumstances which warrant change to the responsibilities of the Officers.

The UCCB recognizes that the work of the National Setting of the UCC must be integrated. Whether equipping local congregations to do justice, embodying our commitment to diversity or deploying missionaries across creation, the purpose, mission and vision of the UCC requires complete integration of Justice and Witness Ministries, Local Church Ministries and Wider Church Ministries. All Officers of the UCC bear responsibility and must be empowered by the UCCB to utilize their divinely crafted gifts and talents to serve the Church in fulfilling the mission, vision and purpose of the UCC.

While the current structure has done more to allow for effective articulation of purpose, mission and vision, that structure has evolved from changes made over many years of examination and reexamination of our governing documents. While improvements have been made, obstacles continue to exist. Moreover, some of these obstacles impede the cultivation of strong and meaningful relationships amongst the various settings of the UCC, which is crucial to fulfilment of purpose, mission and vision. The UCCB sincerely hopes these amendments will allow all settings of the Church to preach, teach, listen, learn and stand united in purpose, mission and vision.

The UCCB is working to present the information in many different formats, recognizing the different ways people obtain and process information. Because these are governing documents, there will be precise language with intricate descriptions of processes and procedures. That much is required and unavoidable. What is also required is effective communication so the information is not a mystery.

For individuals or groups interested in comparing the 2015 Constitution and Bylaws Proposed Amendments with the 2017 Constitution and Bylaws Proposed Amendments, the 2015 Proposed Amendments are available online as follows:

- Proposed Amendments to Constitution: [http://uccfiles.com/pdf/Red-Lined-Constitution\(2013-Ed\)_no_GS_changes.pdf](http://uccfiles.com/pdf/Red-Lined-Constitution(2013-Ed)_no_GS_changes.pdf)

- Proposed Amendments to Bylaws: [http://uccfiles.com/pdf/Red-Lined-Bylaws-re-formatted\(2013-Ed\)_no_GS_changes.pdf](http://uccfiles.com/pdf/Red-Lined-Bylaws-re-formatted(2013-Ed)_no_GS_changes.pdf)
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