

## **Proposal:**

### **Title:** Gospel

The United Church is a diverse body of faith with many interpretations of where faith takes us, with resulting issues:

- i. an abrogated *{to have parts removed}* gospel when in our interpretations of what the gospel would have us do finds us displacing the biblical gospel behind why we are doing it;
- ii. the social implications of Jesus' teaching are shared but not the saving significance of his person; and
- iii. without a recognizable gospel some within the church either distance themselves from or question whether they still find themselves within this church.

We acknowledge the Bible as the primary document defining our faith.

With the previous General Council's theme, "Who do you say I am?", it was particularly important that we talk about the gospel, what it is, as well as where the gospel takes us ...a conversation which was missing.

By contrast the First Nations peoples practice reciting their history as an integral part of every action.

The church has reached out to the many different voices within itself helping all find a place, though we yet have some distancing themselves within the church not hearing a recognizable gospel in what we are doing. The gospel is an integral part of our history reminding us in the midst of our differences of our shared roots. As a measure of equity it would be important for those who feel distanced to hear periodically a clear understanding of a recognizable biblical gospel, why we do what we do, to find that place.

It is proposed that this General Council request the General Secretary or the General Council Executive to appoint a commission

- to document a biblical understanding of gospel; and
- to report back to the next General Council.

Restated to reflect the **GCE proposal template**:

#### **1. What is the issue?**

Much of our current expression is an interpretation of what we believe the gospel would have us do resulting in

- i. an abrogated *{to have parts removed}* gospel when in our interpretations of what the gospel would have us do finds us displacing the biblical gospel behind why we are doing it;
- ii. the social implications of Jesus' teaching are shared but not the saving significance of his person; and
- iii. without a recognizable gospel some within the church either distance themselves from or question whether they still find themselves within this church.

#### **2. Why is this issue important?**

This issue is both fundamental to our understanding of the bible recognized as the primary document of our faith and an integral part of the faith of many people within our denomination, though without a recognisable biblical understanding of the gospel being repeated leaves question whether it is still part of our faith.

#### **3. How might the General Council Executive respond to the issue?**

It is proposed that the General Secretary or the General Council Executive appoint a commission

- to document a biblical understanding of gospel; and
- to report back to the next General Council

**4. What will be the impact?**

The impact will be that an understanding of gospel has not been displaced, but is still part of this denomination's expression of faith as it pursues several interpretations of where that faith takes us. The primary people impacted will be those for whom a recognizable biblical understanding of gospel has been silent, confirming that they are still part of this church.

Cost and staff time should be moderate depending upon how extensively the commission chooses to document.

The risk otherwise is a growing congregationalism which isolates itself from a shared expression of faith.

**5. How does this proposal help us live into the commitments on equity?**

The church has reached out to the many different voices within itself helping all find a place - this would recognize the distance some feel from our expression, affirm the whole gospel is an integral part of our history reminding us in the midst of our differences of our shared roots, and recognize a primary understanding of our faith.