

## F. INITIATING ACTION AND CHANGE

The courts of the United Church work in relationship with each other in different ways on governance matters. Two of those ways are through

- (a) proposals; and
- (b) remits.

*The four courts of the United Church work in relationship with each other in the spirit of the opening words of A New Creed: “We are not alone.” A pastoral charge governing body works in relationship with the presbytery, the presbytery with the Conference, and the Conference with the General Council. Starting with the General Council, the membership of each court comes from the previous court. All court membership ultimately begins with the pastoral charge, as the members of the pastoral charge governing body are chosen from the pastoral charge.*



### 1. Proposals

#### 1.1 Introduction

A “proposal” is a formal request for a court to take action. It is one way that a United Church member may raise an issue that is important to them and ask for the church to take action on it.

In this section (F.1), the court that is being asked to take action is called the “court of action.”

#### 1.2 Starting a Proposal

##### 1.2.1 Proposals by Members of a Congregation

In general, a proposal may be started by any one member of a congregation.

If the proposal asks for the following kinds of action, it must be started by 10 members of a congregation:

- (a) action concerning the pastoral relationship;
- (b) action by the presbytery to review the pastoral charge; or
- (c) action by the presbytery to review ministry personnel.

##### 1.2.2 Proposals by Others

A proposal may also be started by

- (a) a member of a court;
- (b) a committee or other church body of a court; or
- (c) a court.

### 1.3 Process for a Proposal

The process for dealing with a proposal is set out below.

Members and courts are responsible for completing the parts of the process assigned to them.

#### 1.3.1 Proposal by Member(s) of a Congregation

Member(s) of congregation      The member(s) give the proposal to the governing body of their pastoral charge.



Pastoral charge      →      When the governing body receives the proposal:

*If the governing body is the court of action, it makes a decision on the proposal (see section F.1.4 below).*

If the presbytery is the court of action:

- (a) The governing body decides if it agrees with the proposal.
- (b) *If it agrees*, the governing body must pass the proposal on to the presbytery.
- (c) *If it does not agree*, the governing body decides whether or not to pass the proposal on to the presbytery.

*If the governing body does not agree with a proposal, it normally passes it on to the presbytery only if there is a compelling reason.*



- (d) The governing body may include its own recommendations when passing a proposal on to the presbytery.

If the Conference or General Council is the court of action:

- (a) The governing body passes the proposal on to the presbytery.
- (b) The governing body may include its own recommendations when passing a proposal on to the presbytery.



Presbytery      →      When the presbytery receives the proposal:

*If the presbytery is the court of action, it makes a decision on the proposal.*

If the Conference is the court of action:

- (a) The presbytery decides if it agrees with the proposal.
- (b) *If it agrees*, the presbytery passes the proposal on to the Conference.
- (c) *If it does not agree*, the presbytery decides whether or not to pass the proposal on to the Conference.

*If the presbytery does not agree with a proposal, it normally passes it on to the Conference only if there is a compelling reason.*



- (d) The presbytery may include its own recommendations when passing a proposal on to the Conference.

If the General Council is the court of action:

- (a) The presbytery passes the proposal on to the Conference.
- (b) The presbytery may include its own recommendations when passing a proposal on to the Conference.



Conference → When the Conference receives the proposal:

*If the Conference is the court of action, it makes a decision on the proposal.*

If the General Council is the court of action:

- (a) The Conference decides if it agrees with the proposal.
- (b) *If it agrees*, it passes the proposal on to the General Council.
- (c) *If it does not agree*, it decides whether or not to pass the proposal on to the General Council.



*If the Conference does not agree with a proposal, it normally passes it on to the General Council only if there is a compelling reason.*

- (d) The Conference may include its own recommendations when passing the proposal on to the General Council.



General Council → When the General Council receives the proposal, it makes a decision on it (see section F.1.4 below).

### 1.3.2 Process for a Proposal by a Court

When a court makes a proposal, the first step is for the court to pass the proposal on to the next court.

Then, the same steps as in section F.1.3.1 above are followed, starting with the next court (presbytery, Conference, or General Council).

### 1.3.3 Process for a Proposal by a Member of a Court

When a member of a court makes a proposal, the first step is for the member to pass the proposal on to that court.

Then, the same steps as in section F.1.3.1 above are followed, starting with that court (governing body, presbytery, Conference, or General Council).

### 1.3.4 Process for a Proposal by a Committee of a Court

When a committee of a court makes a proposal, the first step is for the committee to pass the proposal on to that court.

Then, the same steps as in section F.1.3.1 above are followed, starting with that court (governing body, presbytery, Conference, or General Council).

## 1.4 Response by Court of Action

The court of action is responsible for making a decision on the proposal. It has the following options:

- (a) taking the action requested in the proposal;
- (b) taking the action requested in the proposal with some changes;
- (c) taking different action on the same subject matter as the proposal;
- (d) referring the proposal;
- (e) receiving the proposal but taking no further action; or
- (f) taking some other action that the court of action decides is appropriate.

*The chart on the next five pages is a summary of the process for proposals.  
Please refer to section F.1 above for the full requirements.*

