

**Comments on Plan of Action – May 26/27, 2017**

*Note: The asterisk indicates the end of a table group's response. In a few cases, individuals submitted response sheets and signed their names; all names have been removed from this compilation.*

Good plan! How will communities of faith be encouraged? Support? Resources? Were stories that were shared recorded? Could they be made available to congregations?

Annual report: What about race? Skin colour becomes invisible in a bad way? What does that mean for us?

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PTCC grants should not exclude applications for accessibility, i.e. making buildings accessible, and in considering things like sound (and other) for other disabilities.

Some have great anxiety speaking and often the only way to be a voice in the court's meeting is to speak. Many remain silent. Are there other options we can explore?

Students may not feel safe speaking to issues in fear it may cause difficulties/challenges in their process. May be losing some important voices/new voices.

Wish youth could have shared voices in these discussions. Why were we excluded from hearing their experiences and opinions (we have rare interactions and need to benefit from hearing all/learning from all)?

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Great concern with the amount of discernment that has been done in the affirmation process for individuals with disabilities (seen or unseen), as there has been for the LGBTQ. When you ask someone their understanding of affirming church, generally they say LGBTQ, and don't know it also means those with disabilities as well.

The plan of action is not consistent with vision statement in regards to the inclusion of those in the "minority"

To a "Welcoming and celebrating people of any sexual orientation and gender identity" add and all who are marginalized.

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One oft-repeated comment was related to the need for comprehensive education and training so that everyone is aware of problematic language/actions etc.

There needs to be a dedicated task force for action. Someone must be accountable.

Certain people need to stop talking.

Intentional recruiting in a wider community.

Policy, minute keeping and structure keep us from slipping back.

What if for a year no-one said anything without thinking about it?

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With respect to an action plan for “those who are marginalized”, I suggest that the Executive form a small study group to review current thinking and wisdom from our culture re: a variety of “marginalizing factors”. For example, the action plan speaks to “accessibility” in terms that predominated in the late 1970s. The Ontario Human Rights Commission has recently issued quite a comprehensive document on disabilities and inclusivity. This is an area where congregations and other courts are far behind in our society. The same should be done with respect to marginalization on the basis of race, a topic on which many excellent resources are available elsewhere. Please study up to modify the action plan. We won’t get a chance to do this well again. Thanks.

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Toronto Conference requests that covenanting churches affirm that they will not share or allow statements on materials in their church (including in worship) that use language are stances that are hurtful to the LGBT community, including phrases such as “love the sinner, hate the sin”. This is requested with a view to being clear that no hatred or exclusion of any groups be it racial or otherwise, is an accurate reflection of God’s love in the world as we in the UCC understand it.

Institutional wounding of the UCC and not having a plan that is explicit and ignoring the history. We need to hear those stories of exclusion much like we have done with the TRC.

The plan of action lacks the equivalent of a “TRC” process that allows the institution to hear what it has done to the GLBT, family and friends of GLBT, as well as to those of other cultures, languages, theologies, abilities, races, etc.

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1. Support the building accessibility list.
2. Very intentional time for community building and consider staying in those groups.

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As we move forward we should add preferred pronouns on name tags.

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What does it mean to be a community of faith? What don't we talk more about Jesus at the AGM? Be the Gospel.

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1. Will the actions of the “action plan” be the responsibility of the Executive? If so, how? If not, who? Who will put the feet to the action?
2. Inventory of churches and accessibility – physical, hearing and visual.
3. PTCC funding for accessibility projects.
4. New technology for accessibility.
5. Need to have at least one working group to approach other marginalized groups.
6. Set something in place to educate congregations.
7. AGM round tables please! Then we can hear stories, meet more people, learn and grow, meet “the stranger”.
8. Modelling intercultural with AGM leadership.
9. Collate comments such as these and then circulate to the entire group.
10. Have difficult cultural groups share with the AGM “their” music with us, e.g. Korean music, Aboriginal, etc.

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We need to accept people as people first, not as their label first and person second or much later.

To be a welcoming church it starts with the congregations and needs to be totally inclusive as in #1 what is the issue? “inclusive of all”. One more time there needs to be education to the presbytery and to the congregations.

Perhaps the Conference could put full energy on what we have heard from the last panel to save the people who suffer from mental illness. Under plan of action, we could not see all what we heard today are included.

As UCC we've dealt with LGBTQ about 20 years ago. Now it is time to act upon other issues.

The difficulty with some of those who are suffering forms of mental illness hide it well and it makes it a problem for lay and ministerial people to help.

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If Affirm

- Conference – create opportunities for dialogue on pastoral issues
- How do we work ecumenically?

- If in shared space with those who are not affirming, what happens? Can have a safe community if not 24 hours.
- Rental policies, examples to share, e.g. wedding policy

#### Be welcoming

- Make our story known; many people don't know a Christian church is affirming, for example.

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#### Removing barriers

- Add: acknowledge that being affirming is a continuous goal, never fully achieved

#### Being open to the Spirit

- Add: recognize that in a large gathering such as the annual meeting, most people will experience discomfort at some point.

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Do an exercise of (white) privilege so that people will understand what they take for granted that others are struggling with.

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Is it possible to create something similar to one minute for mission which tells stories of inclusion? Or struggles with feeling excluded?

- Gender diversity
- Sexual orientation
- Racism/discrimination
- Mobility
- Mental illness

May be helpful.

Concern for Conference becoming Affirming so we get a majority of the vote at 75%. What plans are there to bring the other 25% of No's along? Need to touch their hearts with love, patience and compassion. How do we encourage this latter group to actively listen to the painful experiences of those who feel excluded and are seeking a spiritual home? Some congregations are going to need more help and resources as they strive to continue their journey toward acceptance.

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Would like to explore scriptures used to oppose inclusion of GLBTQ people; have them explained and responded to from an Affirming perspective.

Improve user-friendliness of TC website. Several at the table expressed challenges finding info on website.

The plan of action needs to be accepted as it is as long as it is understood that this is an ongoing process that needs to be revisited regularly and adjusted as new welcoming strategies are identified.

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