

PROPOSAL TO GENERAL COUNCIL – NB #1

Title: Seeking Peace in the Middle East with Methods Applied in South Africa

Origin: United Network for Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel, South West Presbytery

Financial Implications: Current budget to support the issue through staff is sufficient

Staffing Implications: Continuing of current staff capacity re: Israel-Palestine

Source of Funding: No new funding needed

Intermediate Court Action: South West Presbytery transferred with non-concurrence

1. What is the issue?

Various legal studies and tribunals have confirmed that the Israeli treatment of Palestinians living under occupation meets the definitions of "apartheid" in the Convention Against Apartheid and "genocide" in the Convention Against the Crime of Genocide, yet Israel has ignored over 35 UN resolutions and has violated numerous international humanitarian law statutes that should be governing its treatment of Palestinians, including the Fourth Geneva Convention and the terms of its membership in the United Nations. Significant but still very limited economic sanctions have not compelled Israel to stop its illegal settlement of Palestinian land, its 11-year blockade of Gaza, its ongoing ethnic cleansing of Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley, its relatively indiscriminate killing and imprisonment of Palestinians, or its theft of Palestinian land, water and gas resources.

Because of the consistently brutal hardships suffered by Palestinians in the occupied territories, over 170 Palestinian political parties, unions and organizations of civil society issued a call in July 2005 for a global campaign of boycott and divestment against Israel similar to that imposed against apartheid in South Africa, and the Christian Palestinian community, through National Coalition of Christian Organizations in Palestine (NCCOP) communications with the World Council of Churches, has repeatedly pleaded for help for its very survival from the international Christian community.

In the apartheid era in South Africa, in response to the stellar moral leadership of Bishop Desmond Tutu and others, The United Church of Canada undertook leadership initiatives that included divestment and the support of boycott and sanctions strategies in its working for justice there, and Bishop Desmond Tutu himself has said many times that the situation of the Palestinians in the occupied territories is even worse than the situation of the blacks under the Afrikaans governments in South Africa.

The government of Canada was slow to undertake economic measures against the South African government then, and despite being under a contractual legal obligation as a signatory of the Fourth Geneva Convention to protect the rights of Palestinian civilians under occupation, continues to provide military, political and economic support for the

Israeli oppression of Palestinians – despite its own stated policy of being against the occupation of the Palestinian territories.

Exemplary and non-violent moral leadership has been consistently lived out by Palestinian Christian leaders, and their pleas for boycott, divestment, and sanctions have been responded to in only a limited and lukewarm way, our United Church Unsettling Goods campaign being an example. Now cannot be said to be the time, for that time is long overdue, for us to take the prophetic moral ground, but we can now take prophetic moral strides and advocate more strongly than ever, through proposed non-violent means, for the ending of the occupation.

2. Why is this issue important?

The prophet Ezekiel said: "Thus says the Lord God: Enough, O princes of Israel: Put away violence and oppression, and ... cease your evictions of my people, says the Lord God." (Ezekiel 45:9) The application of non-violent pressures on Israel to cease the occupation of Palestinian lands is no more an act of hatred against the Jews themselves, an anti-Semitic act, than the application of non-violent pressures on South Africa to cease its systematic oppression of blacks in the apartheid era could be considered an act of hatred against white people in leadership in that country.

The United Church of Canada's Affirmation of Faith calls on us to seek justice and resist evil, and nothing less than our integrity as a church is at stake when we see systematic suffering on the part of one people in one era, and decide to take up their just cause fully, whereas we see systematic suffering on the part of another people in another era, namely our own, and refrain from taking up their just cause just as fully. Palestinian Christians are our primary partners in the land that we call holy, the land in which dwell the roots of our Jewish and Christian history and traditions, the land in which our Lord was born, lived, was crucified, undertook his passion, suffered, died, and rose to live forever at Easter. As our primary partners in this holy land, they have repeatedly told us they are under siege, their capacity to withstand the daily pressures to take up violent responses to their plight diminishing rapidly, and their need of the international Christian community's "costly solidarity" more acute now than ever before.

3. How might the General Council respond to this issue?

We call on The United Church of Canada to take more significant leadership to end the occupation of Palestinian lands by:

- 1) Advocating with the Canadian government and corporations for a just and peaceful resolution of the conflict based on international law, particularly by calling on the government of Canada to:
 - a) End Canadian military, political and economic support for Israel until it honors its agreed upon obligations under international humanitarian law;
 - b) Sanction Israel as it did apartheid South Africa;

- c) Honor Canada's contractual obligations as a signatory to the Fourth Geneva Convention to protect Palestinian human rights; and
 - d) Encourage a policy of boycott and divestment throughout civil society as recommended by the May, 2017 UN report from the Special Rapporteur to the Occupied Territories;
- 2) Calling upon the membership, congregations, and groups affiliated with the United Church to contribute to the realization of a just peace in Palestine and Israel through adopting a campaign of boycott and divestment against all corporations, companies, and institutions which engage in illegal or oppressive activities such as those that:
- a) Provide products, services, or financial support to groups or organizations that engage in violence against defenseless civilians;
 - b) Provide products, services, or technology to any government or organization that refuses to recognize/acknowledge the human and civil rights of all inhabitants of Israel and the occupied territories;
 - c) Provide products, services, or technology that sustain, support, or maintain the occupation;
 - d) Have established facilities or operations on land internationally recognized as occupied;
 - e) Provide products, services, or financial support for the establishment, expansion, and/or maintenance of settlements or settlement-related infrastructure on territory internationally recognized as occupied;
 - f) Provide finances or assist in the construction and/or maintenance of the separation barrier within the occupied Palestinian territories; and
- 3) Supporting the international campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions until Israel meets its obligation to recognize the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination and complies with its obligations under international law, including the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes.

4. For the courts transmitting this proposal to the General Council

Are there comments, affirmations, suggestions you would like to make with respect to this proposal?

This proposal was received by South West Presbytery at its April 24, 2018 meeting and transmitted with non-concurrence.

MOTION by Brian McIntosh/Tina Conlon that South West Presbytery transmits the Proposal: "Seeking Peace in the Middle East with Methods Applied in South Africa" to the Annual Meeting of Toronto Conference with concurrence and agreement. DEFEATED

This proposal will go forward to the Annual Meeting of Toronto Conference with non-concurrence.

PROPOSAL TO GENERAL COUNCIL – NB #2

Title: Responding with Costly Solidarity to Palestinian Partners

Origin: United Network for Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel –
Toronto, South West Presbytery, Toronto Conference

Financial Implications: Current budget to support the issue through staff is sufficient

Staffing Implications: Continuing of current staff capacity re: Israel-Palestine

Source of Funding: No new funding needed

Intermediate Court Action: South West Presbytery transferred with non-concurrence

1. What is the issue?

The National Coalition of Christian Organizations in Palestine (NCCOP) wrote an open letter to the World Council of Churches (WCC), and through the WCC to all its member churches, in June of 2017 which calls for a more “costly solidarity” from the international Christian community with regard to the suffering and hardship placed upon Palestinians who have lived under occupation since 1967. The background of that letter outlines the context of suffering which continues to be experienced by Palestinians in the occupied territories, and the United Church is called by our Christian partners in that region to respond to the urgent call contained in that letter.

2. Why is this issue important?

The United Church has advanced in incremental steps its policies regarding Israel – Palestine over a number of General Councils, and has implemented some advocacy and action campaigns over that same timeframe, yet still the suffering continues in relatively unmitigated and even worse fashion than when we started. The occupation of Palestinian lands/territories continues unabated, and people continue to suffer untold hardships due to their lack of human rights and the international community’s inability to address the source of their hardship, having instead accepted it as a “normalized” situation.

We are called by God to be responsive to our partner’s urgent cries from the land that is the geographical ground and root of our faith. If we fail to do so our integrity as a church in partnership with those who have issued such calls and cries is at risk, not just politically but theologically.

In the postscript to the nine calls to action contained in the NCCOP letter, our partners state the following: “We fully grasp the pressure church leaders are facing here and abroad not to speak the truth, and it is because of this that we are raising this call. Things

are beyond urgent. We are on the verge of a catastrophic collapse. The current status-quo is unsustainable. This could be our last chance to achieve a just peace.”

Now is the time to act with the “costly solidarity” called for by our suffering Palestinian Christian partners.

3. How might the General Council respond to the issue?

We call on the United Church of Canada to respond with education and action on each of the nine calls to action contained in the June 2017 letter from the NCCOP, as follows:

- 1) Call things as they are: recognize Israel as an apartheid state in terms of international law, and therefore call upon Israel to grant equal rights, privileges, protections, and responsibilities to all its citizens;
- 2) Unequivocally condemn the Balfour declaration as unjust;
- 3) Take a clear theological stand against any theology or Christian group that justifies the occupation and privileges one national, ethnic, or religious group over others;
- 4) Take a stand against religious extremism, and against the creation of a religious state in the Middle East;
- 5) Revisit and challenge our religious dialogue partners, and be prepared to withdraw from partnership if the occupation and injustices in Palestine and Israel are not challenged;
- 6) Encourage United Church leaders and members to visit Bethlehem and other Palestinian cities in cooperation with Palestinian tourist and pilgrimage agencies.
- 7) Defend the Palestinian’s right and duty to resist the occupation creatively and non-violently, speaking in support of economic measures such as boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) that pressure Israel to stop the occupation;
- 8) Create and support lobby groups who seek to defend the rights of Palestinian Christians;
- 9) Create a strategic program within our church and/or ecumenically similar to those that intentionally and systematically opposed racism in apartheid South Africa and/or elsewhere.

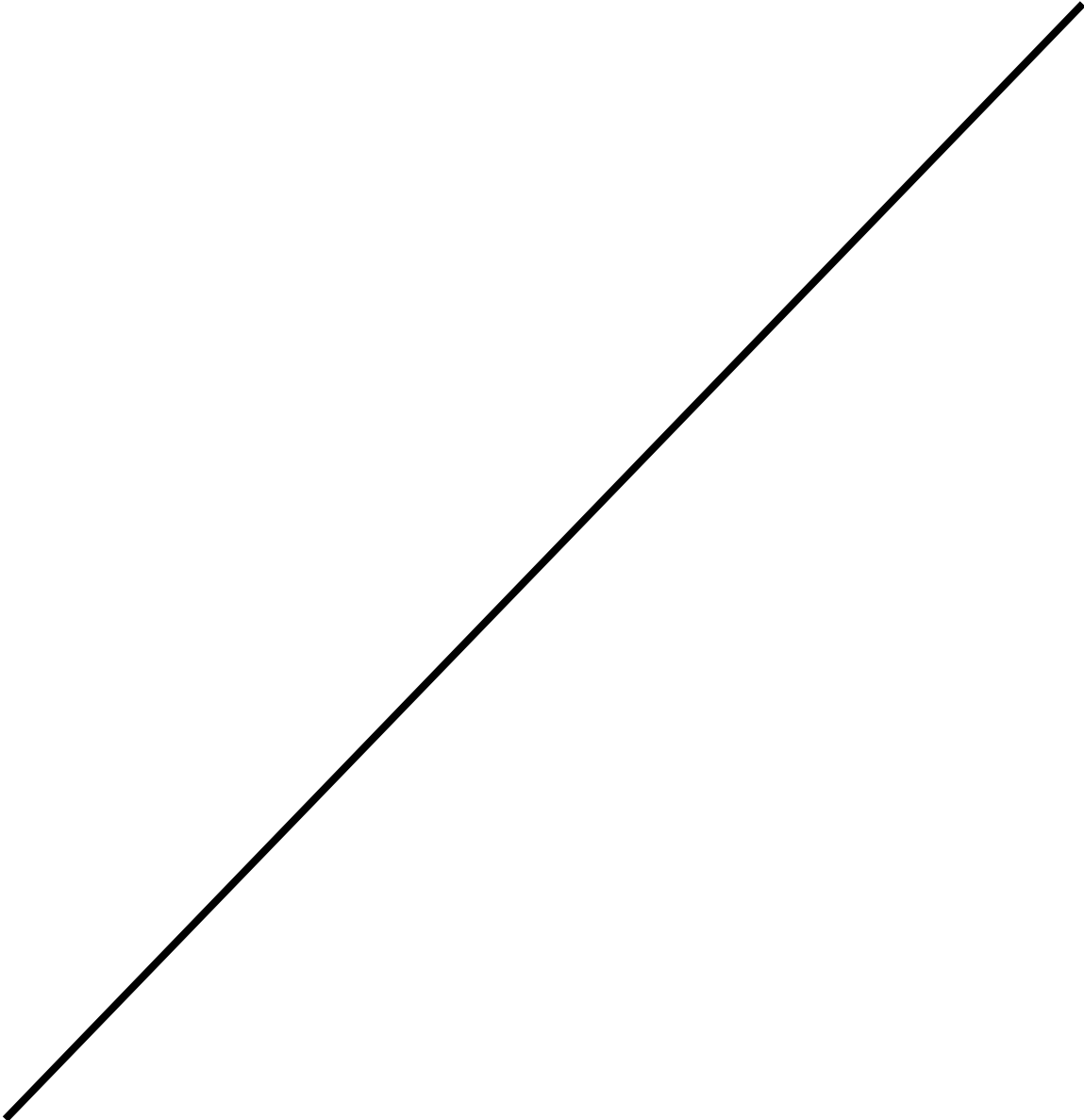
4. For the courts transmitting this proposal to the General Council

Are there comments, affirmations, suggestions you would like to make with respect to this proposal?

This proposal was received by South West Presbytery at its April 24, 2018 meeting and transmitted with non-concurrence.

MOTION by Brian McIntosh/Paul Shepherd that South West Presbytery transmits the Proposal: “Responding with Costly Solidarity to Palestinian Partners” to the Annual Meeting of Toronto Conference with concurrence and agreement. DEFEATED.

David Allen clarified that this proposal will be passed on to the Annual Meeting of Toronto Conference with non-concurrence.



PROPOSAL TO GENERAL COUNCIL – PGC #7

Title: Protecting the Pension Plan with Participant Permission

Origin: Toronto Southeast Presbytery

1. What is the Issue?

The Administrator of the United Church Pension Plan has changed the plan with a potential negative effect for plan members without informing members or seeking their consent.

2. Why is this Issue important?

The United Church maintains a defined benefit retirement plan and requires participation in the pension covenant by ministry personnel/staff and pastoral charges/employing units. Portions of the plan text are offered in italics below. They clearly show that the General Council Executive – the plan's Administrator - changed the pension plan section 14.02 (c) in 2010* (effective 2011), allowing benefits to be reduced, without wide consideration, even if the plan is in good shape:

**the Administrator may in its discretion make amendments to the Plan, which reduce in value or which affect prejudicially any right, option or benefit entitlement accrued under the Plan on and after January 1, 2011. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the Administrator may in its discretion make amendments to the Plan which reduce or affect prejudicially any pension increase, pension update or other benefit improvement made on or after January 1, 2011 in respect of Credited Service before or after January 1, 2011. For greater clarity, the Administrator's power to amend the Plan under this section 14.02(c) may be exercised irrespective of the funded status of the Plan at any time.*

The plan administrator (the General Council Executive) made this change without clearly informing plan members, or seeking their due consideration or consent,

3. How might the General Council respond to the issue?

The 43d General Council should direct that:

1. The plan be revised to remove language permitting reductions to benefits, reverting to the text of 2007**; and
2. Any such changes in the future can be taken only with the due consideration and consent of the beneficiaries (pension plan members) by vote.

***30.05 The Executive of General Council, its Sub-Executive, or the Pension Board with regard to amendments that are within its authority, may amend the provisions of the Pension Plan at any time, provided that no such amendment shall deprive any Member, Spouse of a Member, dependent child or Beneficiary of any vested equitable interest in the Pension Fund, and provided that any change affecting the actuarial solvency of the Pension Fund or the equity of the Members, their Spouses, dependent children and Beneficiaries shall be made only after due consideration (4/26/2004)*

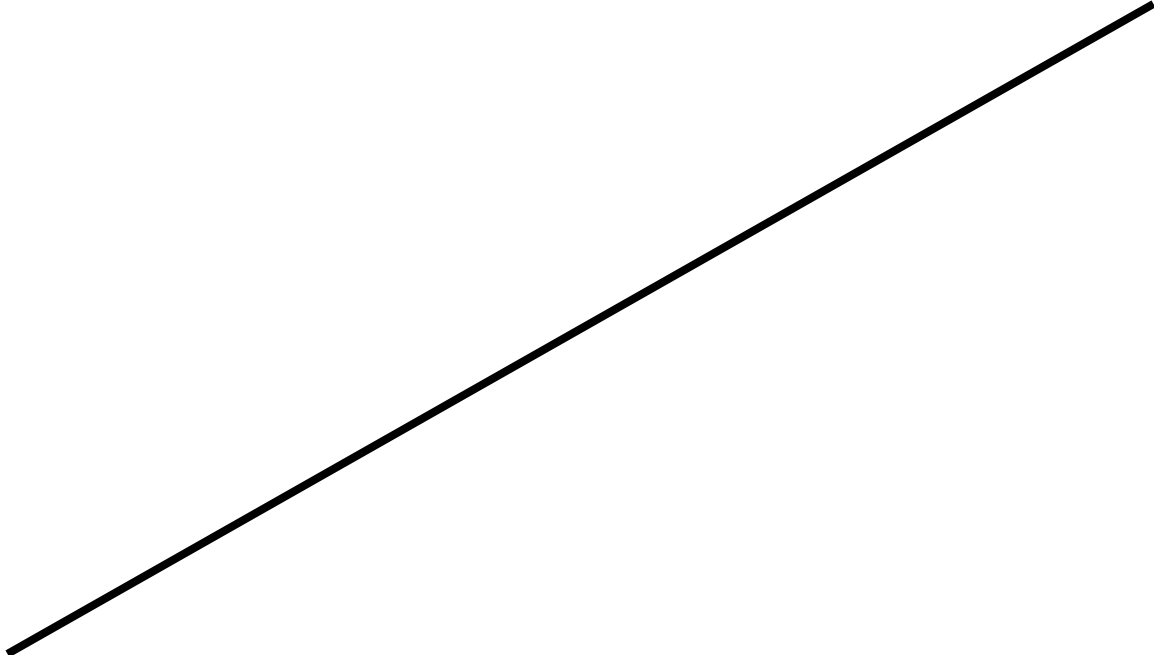
30.06 While The Church has every expectation of maintaining the Pension Plan into the indefinite future, it reserves the right, notwithstanding anything set out in the foregoing to the contrary, to discontinue the Pension Plan by action of the Executive of General Council, and subject to the approval of the Financial Services Commission of Ontario and Canada Revenue Agency, provided that no such discontinuance shall deprive any Member, Spouse of a Member, dependent child or Beneficiary of any vested equitable interest thereunder except by reason of insufficient funds when a reduction in benefits may be authorized by an appropriate Federal or Provincial jurisdiction. (4/26/2004)

4. For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council:

Are there comments, affirmations, suggestions you would like to make with respect to this proposal?

This proposal was received by Toronto Southeast Presbytery at its March 20, 2018 meeting.

MOTION: Robin Wardlaw/Won Hur that Toronto Southeast Presbytery receive the proposal to the General Council titled “Protecting the pension Plan with Participant Permission”, support the proposal and forward to Toronto Conference. CARRIED.



PROPOSAL TO GENERAL COUNCIL – PGC #8

Title: Supplementing Pension Benefits

Origin: Toronto Southeast Presbytery

1. What is the Issue?

We propose that any jurisdiction selling church property hereafter set aside at least 10% of the proceeds from such sales to be accumulated in a restricted use fund of The United Church of Canada. The fund will be used to supplement pension benefits for both current and future members of the plan once it is large enough and a distribution policy has been developed. The fund will remain in place as long as the pension plan exists.

2. Why is this Issue Important?

The United Church maintains a defined benefit retirement plan which requires participation and contributions by clergy and congregations. We are concerned about the well-being in retirement of UCC pension plan members due to the static level of pensions being paid since 2009.

There are a number of factors leading us to this concern:

- Pensioners report that their monthly pension benefit from the UCC pension plan after a thirty-plus year career in the United Church is typically 35% - 40% of their pre-retirement earnings (including housing allowance), making retirement precarious and tense for many Plan members.
- There has not been a pension benefit increase since 2009, and there is no pension increase planned for the near future. Since the last increase in 2009 the Consumer Price Index in Canada has risen by approximately 15%, leaving United Church pensioners with less and less buying power.
- The pension plan is fully funded on a going forward, solvency, and wind-up basis as of the last actuarial valuation. Since the number of pensioners (approximately 4,500) is greater than the number of active members (about 3,500), the plan is largely dependent upon market conditions to improve its funded status. Two decades of low interest rates and uneven markets have revealed the vulnerability of this funding model: the plan has not been able to protect its members from inflation.

3. How might the General Council respond to the issue?

The 43d General Council should direct that:

When church properties are being sold as congregations close, that a portion of this money be used to provide pension upgrades. The proceeds of sales could be held by

each Conference in trust for the United Church, generating considerable revenue across the Church that could then be used for pensions upgrades.

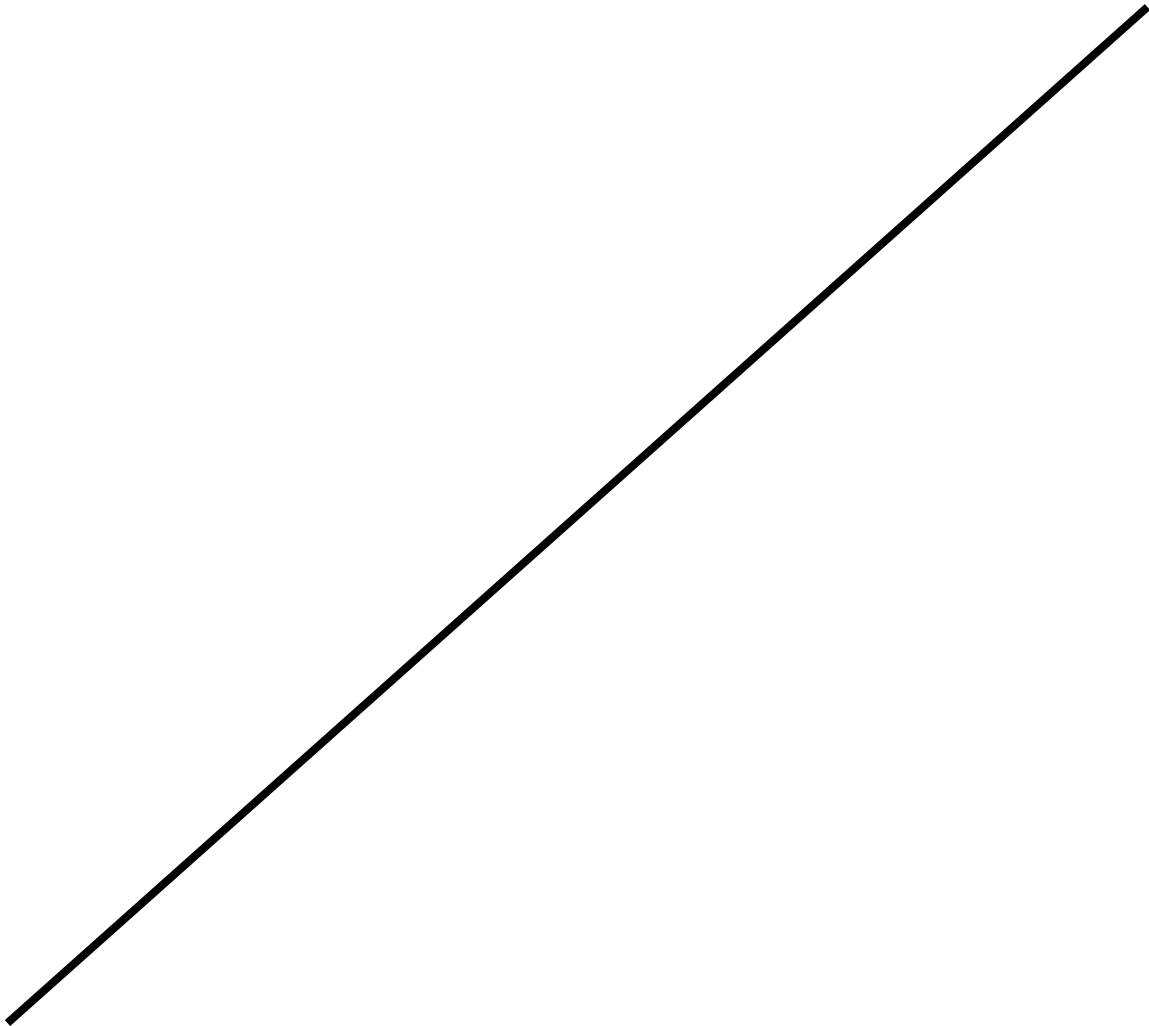
As pension law currently stands, there are restrictions on adding funds to a multi-employer pension plan such as ours. However, with some creativity, other methods of supplementing retirement pensions could be developed. We imagine money accumulating in a restricted use fund until a method of augmenting pensions is developed.

4. For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council:

Are there comments, affirmations, suggestions you would like to make with respect to this proposal?

This proposal was received by Toronto Southeast Presbytery at its March 20, 2018 meeting.

MOTION: Robin Wardlaw/Won Hur that Toronto Southeast Presbytery receive the proposal to the General Council titled "Supplementing Pension Benefits", support the proposal and forward to Toronto Conference. CARRIED.



PROPOSAL TO GENERAL COUNCIL – PGC #9

Title: Inflation Affects Pensioners Too: Adding Cost of Living Allowance to Retirees' Pension as with Active Members' Salary

Origin: Toronto Southeast Presbytery

1. What is the Issue?

We propose that: pension plan members and stakeholders be surveyed on the question of adding a permanent cost of living allowance to the plan, as of a date to be determined, giving retirees the same benefit as that currently in place for active members. If there is substantial agreement to such implementation, the plan administrator will initiate this extended benefit as of the soonest possible date.

2. Why is this issue important?

- The plan text and goal currently states that protection against inflation erosion be made available when the administrator believes it is possible.
- The administrator has not felt it possible to undertake the traditional upgrade to pension benefits since 2009, thus eroding the benefits of retirees from that date, compared to active ministry personnel, by about 15%
- The policy for the minimum remuneration for Ministry Personnel, as active members of the plan, is to keep current with the annual inflation rate.
- There is definitely a cost to employing units as well as plan members if the cost of living allowance was added to the plan.
- This cost, in regards to employing units (pastoral charges), could be offset by grants from church funds, such as one created through the use of a portion of the proceeds of the sale of church property.
- The cost could also be borne by employing units (pastoral charges) as a way of offering justice to their staff and Ministry Personnel, equal to that being granted now, to active Ministry Personnel.
- This cost, in regards to active members of the plan could be defined by the plan's current actuarial advisors, at which point the membership, by survey or vote, could indicate their willingness to be protected against the inflation erosion currently being suffered by retired members for close to ten years.
- The administrator alone should not be asked to bear the brunt of criticism. The choice to fund cost of living allowances should come from those whom it will affect.
- Contributions to the plan since 2013 have already been increased with the effect of lowering the eventual pension benefits without the input of all parties. It is time to see if contributions may again be increased, but this time, with the effect of raising the eventual pension benefits.

3. How might the General Council respond to the issue?

The 43rd General Council should direct that:

1. Just such a survey on the question of adding a permanent cost of living allowance to the plan be conducted for all pension members on a date to be determined, giving retirees the same benefit as that currently in place for active members.
2. And if there is substantial agreement to such implementation, that the plan administrator will initiate this extended benefit as of the soonest possible date

4. For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council:

Are there comments, affirmations, suggestions you would like to make with respect to this proposal?

This proposal was received by Toronto Southeast Presbytery at its March 20, 2018 meeting.

MOTION: Robin Wardlaw/Won Hur that Toronto Southeast Presbytery receive the proposal to the General Council titled "Adding Cost of Living Allowance to Retirees' Pension as with Active Members' Salary", agree with the proposal and forward to Toronto Conference.
CARRIED.

