



Young Adult Engagement Research Project

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May 13, 2024

Introduction

For the 2021-24 Triennium, the Governing Board adopted, as one of its first Operating Guidelines, to join and invite young adult engagement in the activities of the Council. As a result, the Young Adult Eco-System was created and implemented. In order to take this initiative further, this research project was undertaken in order to explore previous efforts of the Council to involve young adults in their work and to look for recommendations and areas of improvement that the Council can integrate heading into the next triennium.

This research project delves into the work of previous youth committees of the Council, examines the efforts to engage young adults in the 2021-24 Triennium, and makes recommendations for the Council going forward for the 2024-27 Triennium in order to increase, encourage, and cultivate young adult voices and leadership in the Council's work.

Current and former young adult members of the Council were asked to reflect on the following questions for the purposes of this research project. Their reflections have been recorded throughout this document.

- What has the experience already been so far? What is the contribution that youth and young adults have made to the Council, and what can they contribute going forward to the work of the various bodies of the Council?
- Where is the Holy Spirit moving in the life of the church in Canada today? Where is the energy?
- Our operating guideline says that the Council will join and invite youth and young adults. What would it mean to join young adults in their faith journey?
- How could youth engagement in the Council shift the Council's focus and continue to engage youth and young adults in the work?
- What changes or investments or practices should the Council undertake to grow youth and young adult engagement in the life of the Council?

Description of pre-2021 Experiences of Young Adult Engagement in the Council

In November 2000, the by-laws of the Canadian Council of Churches were adopted with a section that mandates a Youth Committee for the Council as follows:

1. *There shall be a Youth Committee of at least six members to help the Council and its member churches integrate young people into the activities of the Council.*

2. *The Youth Committee shall:*

- a) *Encourage member churches to send youth participants to the Council, including its Governing Board and its Commissions;*
- b) *Monitor youth participation in the various levels of the Council and report its findings and recommendations to the Governing Board;*
- c) *Involve young people in a way that is consistent with forum, in study, action, service, and leadership development;*
- d) *Provide support for young people and youth leaders in responding to the ecumenical calling in Canada.*

3. *The Youth Committee shall be comprised of the following members:*

- a) *Up to three representatives from each member church of the Council. At least half of the committee's members shall be youth representatives from member churches (up to thirty years of age);*
- b) *National youth staff, in those denominations which have them, as consultant members without vote, and*
- c) *Co-opted members (without vote) who possess specific skills and experience, or who belong to organizations which share the concerns of the Youth Committee.*

In reference to the above by-laws, former General Secretary of The Council, Janet Somerville, sent an email in December 2001, regarding a “fully-fledged CCC Youth Committee,” which consisted of “the development of a web site/electronic newsletter that would connect interested young adult Christians in Canada and nurture their ecumenical vision and skills.”

In the months following the acceptance of the by-laws, a small committee began to take shape, initially with three members, and then six when membership was broadened. According to a report written in November 2001, the first project of the Youth Committee was to be a web site and an electronic newsletter for young adult Christians concerned about the unity of Christian vocation.¹ This included an editorial policy, submitted as follows:

To serve as a forum for Canadian youth for the discussion and examination of all aspects of ecumenism. That is, in a manner consistent with ‘forum’ and the purposes and functions of the CCC and the Youth Committee, the publication will seek to stimulate the reflection of youth on their own and each other’s traditions and on the relationships between these traditions.

¹ The Presbyterian Church donated \$5,000 to this Youth Committee, according to the November 2001 report.

Having spoken with the former members of the Youth Committee in 2001, I've compiled their experiences with the committee, their feedback, and their suggestions and recommendations based on their time with the Council for augmenting the contribution, the voice, and the leadership of young adults to the life and work of the Council going forward.

First, the members of the group reflected on the significant benefits of the committee as an extension of initiative by the Governing Board, and the way in which it afforded member churches the opportunity to have youth representatives. As for the young adults themselves, the opportunity served as an important window for them, professionally, as it exposed them both to ecumenism and to proper board operations. As such, it was a critical educational experience. Lastly, one of the most significant benefits was that this committee created a dedicated space in which young adults with similar interests – particularly that of ecumenism – could listen to each other, support each other, and engage one another, thus creating a community through which ideas and contributions to ecumenical life could flow.

On the other hand, there were numerous challenges and setbacks discussed in the conversations I had. The first was the challenge of having a larger critical mass – the Youth Committee was a small group with great ambitions. An important contribution they were able to make was to write articles for the website about topics such as youth and racism, which they felt was a tangible contribution. Nevertheless, the ability to make significant contributions to the Council in other ways was limited. While the committee provided an important space and community, it was separate from the life of the Council, which was often seen as intimidating and unwelcoming to younger people, who felt they didn't have much to contribute. Further, the way in which the Council operated, as a bureaucratic and sometimes political structure, often precluded the voice and presence of young adults, who felt as if they were observers to an older, more experienced group.

Moreover, other challenges to young adult engagement in the life of the Council presented themselves with respect to time and financial resources. As the work of the Youth Committee was done on a volunteer basis, it was difficult to provide the resources to attend events and meetings. The Youth Committee had ambition, excitement, and vision, but its members did not have enough time to accomplish their goals.

The Youth Committee in 2001 began with important goals and priorities, the most important of which was to engage young adults in the life and work of the Council. While they were able to create a vital community in which young adults could listen to and engage one another, and contributed to some areas of ecumenical life, they also ran into significant challenges such as time, long-term commitment, financial resources, and inclusion in the wider life and work of the Council, all of which would lead to the marginalization of young adults in the Council's ecumenical work. Eventually, the Youth Committee dissipated, though their impact is still felt in the Council as we have much to learn from their efforts upon which we can continue to build going forward, and many of them are involved in ecumenical leadership today.

2021-24 Triennium

Looking back on more recent history, current Youth Governing Board members shared their reflections on their experience within the Council as young adults.

While their experiences have been described as a generally positive learning experience, they also address significant challenges and concerns, the first of which stems from the May 2021 Council By-Laws (Section V, B. 1.):

Youth members of the Governing Board shall be a member of one of the member churches or associate member churches of the Council. Through their membership in a member church or associate member church, *each youth member is typically attuned to the sensibilities of different Christian traditions in the family of member churches. Each youth member of the Governing Board serves the Council as a whole and therefore does not represent their member church or tradition.*²

During the 2021-24 triennium, only three members were nominated to the Youth Governing Board. Current Youth Governing Board members expressed concern about the above section of the By-Laws, as they feel it exacts too much pressure on a small group to represent youth on a large scale and to separate their denomination from their role serving the Council as a whole. As a result, young adults in the Council feel they are in a difficult position to contribute to the work of the Council.

Next, young adults at the Council have described feelings of paternalism and pushback in their attempts to vocalize their ideas or become involved in Council work. Ultimately, the young adults I interviewed stated that they do not feel empowered to speak up, get involved, or share their ideas as they feel the Council creates an intimidating space in which their voices are not heard or considered.

In this difficult time in history, the Holy Spirit is guiding the Church through a significant time of change, and young people feel an intense overlap between their faith and the significance of social issues that they are passionate about and eager to address. The Council, then, as it exists, is in an excellent position to hear from young adults and integrate them into its work. Young adults feel as though the Council is too inward-focused, and ought to look to engage young adults beyond a few youth representatives.

In the face of these challenges, the 2021-24 triennium has offered a notable step toward the growth of young adult engagement in the Council, as General Secretary Pastor Peter Noteboom included, in the Operating Guidelines, ([see Appendix A](#)) a section on “Joining and Inviting Young Adult Engagement,” which was described as follows:

² Emphasis added.

In the programs, priorities, and activities of the Council we are joining with young adults and inviting them into planning, discernment, and participation: joining and inviting lay leaders, seminarians, theological students, and graduates in the life of the Council, and consulting ecumenically as member churches about what we are hearing and learning from seekers, sbnrs, nones and dones, and then sharing how we are forming and being formed by the encounter with Christ in one another.

This was intended to be delivered by the means of a Young Adult Eco-System ([see Appendix B](#)) which consisted of several initiatives meant to integrate youth and young adults into the work of the Council. These include: **a) Employment Pathways, b) Learning Pathways, c) Program Pathways, d) Appointment Pathways, e) Governance Pathways, and f) Institutional Pathways.**

The Young Adult-Eco System has successfully integrated young adults into the life and work of the Council with respect to the Employment Pathways, as one candidate was hired in 2022, one in 2023, and the Council has applied for another position for 2024 through Canada Summer Jobs. Additionally, the research and program assistantships has seen significant results, as is detailed in the attached document, and updates include: Special grant applications have gone into several funding sources. One follow-up has yielded a \$30,000 pledge to an endowment fund. In 2022 we received two \$15K grants from the Anglican Foundation and the UCC Foundation for 3 years of support for this program. In 2025 new grant applications can be submitted.

Additional pathways that have begun to make headway are the Program Pathways and the Governance Pathways. Based on my research, it is my recommendation that investment in the Youth Eco-System – and a discussion and exploration of all of its elements – be among the top priorities of the Council for the 2024-27 triennium, in order to cultivate young adult participation, presence, and involvement in the life and work of the Council. The Youth Eco-System, at the fullness of its vision, would include young adults in various ways which would grant them the opportunity to be involved far beyond volunteer work and would remove the barrier of financial burdens for young adults looking to contribute. The details are outlined in the final section of this document.

Looking Ahead – Recommendations for the 2024-27 Triennium

My research and conversations have gleaned several recommendations going into the 2024-27 Triennium to invite young adults into planning, discernment, and participation in the life of the Council:

1. Investing in the Young Adult Eco-System

Investing in the Young Adult ecosystem in order to get as many of its pathways as functional as possible, by fully considering and exploring each element, would establish connections with young adults where they are – whether in churches, schools, or anywhere else – and grant them various opportunities to work, to volunteer, or to get involved at their best level of

capacity. This would create a space for them to be heard, to be empowered, to learn, to have leadership, to be mentored – and would create the critical mass needed for young adults to engage with one another and the rest of the Council, and not to feel isolated, intimidated, or overlooked.

Monitoring this eco-system and driving investments and activities in this eco-system ought to be the responsibility of a strong and dedicated group, such as that of the Youth Involvement Committee, which heads the work and keeps it all a top priority for the Council and the Governing Board. Building this committee up, integrating young adults to monitor and take charge of its work, and expanding its membership is critical to accomplishing these goals. This should be a specialized space which also works with and is involved with the dialogue and decision-making of the Governing Board.

Increasing Council presence on the ground at local parishes. A collaborative effort between The Canadian Council of Churches and its member churches to engage young adults by establishing a connection that would introduce young adults to the Council and its work. This is an element described in the Operating Guidelines as “meet and engage local ecumenical networks.” The Council connecting with its member churches on the ground to create activities and engagement that would increase young adult involvement, which is a challenge for both.

Establishing connections and relationships with theological schools. The Council establishing a presence and relationship with theological schools where young students who are passionate about their faith, about theology, and about ever-prevalent social justice issues can learn about ecumenism and become involved in the Council’s faith and social justice work. To go where they are, to make the Council known, and to invite and integrate them into a space where they can address the tensions in their life and faith with like-minded people of the same age and contribute to the Council’s work. There is need and there is interest on the part of young people who are eager to do this work.

Establishing connections and relationships with campus ministries. Likewise, partnering and working alongside campus chaplaincies and chaplaincy associations (such as at [the University of Toronto](#)), wherein fellowship and ecumenical dialogue among faithful adults is likely taking place, would provide an ideal space in which the Council could make itself known to young adults already actively engaged and interested in this kind of work.

Removing the Financial Burden for young adults interested in the Council’s work. Several of the pathways involve employment opportunities, scholarships, and other grants that would make involvement in the Council’s work more accessible to those who do not have the time or the resources to invest to their full capacity in the life of the Council.

2. North American Ecumenical Theological Institute

The North American Ecumenical Theological Institute, modeled after Global Ecumenical Theological Institute will serve as a way to engage and involve young adults in ecumenical education and work. As an educational space which offers space to address political, economic, ecological, and faith issues, and the way they all overlap, all young adults who are interested – whether in theology, social justice issues, or faith – will be able to learn, engage one another, and hone their ecumenical skills, and will thus be able to contribute even more significantly to the Council’s work. This will also serve to transcend the growing polarization of political opinions, which is a growing problem for faith communities.

3. Giving serious consideration and power to the voices of young adults in Council affairs

Leadership roles and mentorship. In order to avoid feelings of paternalism, intimidation, and disregard for young adults in the life of the Council, there needs to be a significant shift of mindset and reframing of the space in which the Council normally operates. For young adults to feel empowered, they need to feel that they belong in the life of the Council and have an active role in its work, rather than being mere observers to an established system. Young adults are able to bring a perspective, a voice, and an energy to the Council that it otherwise cannot match. They have a desire to engage, and for the Council to continue its good work, it needs to invest in community and relationships, mentor young adults in their work and listen to them. Though there are expected to be difficulties and challenges with such a profound shift, perseverance will glean the best results for young adults at the Council, and in the ecumenical movement more widely.

Suggestions for how to accomplish this include the following:

- A larger, separate young adult body with a critical mass, which is empowered and financed, and which meets on its own. Not only reports to the Governing Board but is actively involved in the dialogue and decision-making process.
- Panels to engage with young adults from the community, as was done at the Governing Board in Quebec City.
- Investing in and expanding the work of the Committee on Youth Involvement to meet regularly and take charge of these efforts and to keep it a top priority for the work of the Governing Board.
- Putting young adults in positions of leadership and mentorship in their Commissions and in the Governing Board to be involved in the dialogue and decision-making process.

4. Reviewing the position description for the Youth Governing Board members, especially the role of the Youth Governing Board representative.

Reviewing the position description for young adult members of the Council would clarify their roles and responsibilities with respect to the operations of the Council in order to remove the pressure to represent or speak for groups which are too large for them or to which they are not attune.

Conclusion

Increasing young adult engagement in the life and the work of the Council will require a profound shift in investment and priorities, and this involves the implementation of all of the above recommendations, as they will operate in a reciprocal relationship. First, the Council needs to go where the young adults are, in churches, schools, or campus ministries to make itself known and to establish relationships with young adults who are passionate but do not know where to go. Next, most challenging and yet vital, is for the Council to address the financial challenges involved in allowing young adults to participate at their full capacity. Often work and initiatives have dissipated due to a lack of time and resources. Further, the Council needs to invest in young adults by mentoring them and then entrusting them with positions of leadership within its work. Young adults are at the center of a rapidly changing and increasingly stressful time, and they recognize challenges and are committed to Christian life and practice and aim to bring those things together. The Council is in an excellent position to integrate them and to learn from them.

Lastly, the Council need only listen. Each denomination, each church, each parish has young people fighting to be heard, to lead, to contribute, and to work. Giving them serious consideration and the space to get involved will make significant changes. By creating a large space where a significant number of young adults can get involved and make a difference, the Council will plant and water the seed required to continue its good work for generations to come.

Appendix A

2021-24 Triennium Plan - DRAFT

**General Secretary Mid-Term Report on the Operating Guidelines, UNDPAD and Anti-Racism Priority, and Cross Canada Conversations
Peter Noteboom – September 28 2022; February 2024**

Introduction

For the 2021-24 Triennium, we committed to consider these operating guidelines in how we do our work. The context for these 2021-24 operating guidelines of The Canadian Council of Churches are the identity words found in our tagline: Christ | Community | Compassion. The tagline is amplified by our mission vision: The Canadian Council of Churches responds to Christ’s call for unity and peace, seeks Christ’s truth with an affection for diversity, and acts in love through prayer, dialogue, and witness to the Gospel.

Operating Guidelines

	Detail	Measurable / Deliverable	Mid-Term Questions	Mid-Term Possible Recommendations	Final Report
Overarching: Christ-Centred	<i>In the programs, priorities and activities of the Council we are explicit in our Christian identity, celebrating the incarnational witness of this body and rooting ourselves in the love of God, the solidarity of Jesus with the poor and all creation, and the hope of the Spirit. We embody the gift and challenge of the gospel to a cynical world.</i>	Digital and print resources are explicit about our Christian identity. Conversations at program tables of the Council are explicit about our Christian identity. Dialogue at all tables of the Council demonstrates this guideline.	Who and how might we assess whether we are following this overarching guideline? Have concerns been raised? Has appreciation or affirmation been expressed?		All the programs, priorities and activities of the Council are explicit in our Christian identity. No concerns have been raised. 2024-27 Recommendation: Maintain as the overarching guideline with no changes.

<p>Joining and Inviting Young Adult Engagement</p>	<p><i>In the programs, priorities, and activities of the Council we are joining with young adults and inviting them into planning, discernment, and participation: joining and inviting lay leaders, seminarians, theological students, and graduates in the life of the Council, and consulting ecumenically as member churches about what we are hearing and learning from seekers, sbnrs, nones and dones, and then sharing how we are forming and being formed by the encounter with Christ in one another.</i></p>	<p>A young adult eco-system is imagined, created, implemented and sustained.</p> <p>Young adults participate in shaping existing programs of the Council, and new programs of the Council are sparked by young adult engagement.</p> <p>The Council shows up at youth and young adult events, conferences and movements.</p>	<p>Are we only making progress on this guideline in ways that involve paid positions?</p> <p>Where will we, should we, show up where we are not now to join youth and young adults in their ministry and action?</p> <p>How will we develop a stronger institutional connection to seminaries, theological schools, and institutions of Christian higher education?</p> <p>How will we establish a strong Youth Committee?</p>	<p>In 2023 budget \$15,000 to \$25,000 for a youth/young adult “program” that includes support for the Standing Committee</p> <p>Identify and secure a multi-year matching grant from a new source to make such a position possible.</p> <p>In 2023, the General Secretary to prioritize reaching out again to Heads of Theological Schools and Christian Higher Education Canada to present the Council and invite a renewed relationship.</p>	<p>See the Young Adult Eco-System February report for details. Nine people have had or are having an employment experience at the Council thanks to this Operating Guideline. \$70K has been raised to support these employment efforts.</p> <p>We have had some governance and appointments success but not enough.</p> <p>Young adults on the team have been GREAT.</p> <p>A research project is underway to identify 2024-27 Eco-System directions.</p> <p>A North America Ecumenical Theology Institute is planned for 2026 that includes participation of ecumenical theology schools.</p> <p>2024-27 Recommendation: Maintain as #1, updated based on the results of the research project.</p>
<p>Practicing Faith Sharing</p>	<p><i>In the programs, priorities and activities</i></p>	<p>Faith sharing methodology is learned</p>	<p>How can we make this guideline more</p>	<p>Request the General Secretary</p>	<p>Faith sharing is a methodology used by the</p>

	<p><i>of the Council we look for ways for member churches to meet each other more intimately through: sharing faith stories as a proven ecumenical and spiritual practice of growing Christian unity, opening space for dialogue on sensitive topics and controversial issues, and challenging each other and being challenged by the interaction to seek Christ's truth with an affection for diversity.</i></p>	<p>and practiced during devotions, Bible studies, prayer services and Week of Prayer for Christian Unity celebrations. Sessions are hosted for dialogue on sensitive topics or issues.</p>	<p>explicit or visible?</p> <p>Would an adapted one-pager version of the Global Christian Forum resource on this be helpful?</p> <p>Does our recent experience of some challenges demonstrate “meeting each other more intimately?”</p>	<p>to develop a one-page or short resource on how to integrate “faith sharing” into ecumenical meetings/gatherings/prayer times and develop a promotional plan for circulating and sharing far and wide throughout Council networks.</p>	<p>Global Christian Forum. Most tables of the Council make time for and practice faith sharing in different ways. This is an organic component of all Council work.</p> <p>A one-pager hasn’t been necessary or requested.</p> <p>2024-27 Recommendation: Discontinue this operating guideline and fold it into our understanding of the overarching guideline, to be explicitly Christ-centred.</p>
<p>Local Ecumenical Networks</p>	<p>Meeting Local Networks <i>In the programs, priorities and activities of the Council we find, support, and build links with local ecumenical expressions and activities across Canada.</i></p>	<p>Local ecumenical, inter-church and ministerial networks across Canada are identified, contacted, and joined in person, by social media, or email. Their members are invited to become Friends of the Council.</p>	<p>How will we generate a list of local ecumenical networks across Canada?</p> <p>Are local ecumenical networks now mainly local interfaith networks?</p> <p>How might we contribute to bridging local differences or</p>	<p>Continue the process of developing a “Friends” category of Council supporters and develop a robust outreach effort to local ecumenical and interfaith networks.</p>	<p>We have a listing of ecumenical and interfaith networks now. Click here.</p> <p>The Governing Board met in Quebec City.</p> <p>Some program priorities are proposing local events and tours across Canada.</p> <p>Virtual meetings make connecting locally across Canada more possible.</p>

			divides between “evangelical” and “ecumenical” ministerials?		2024-27 Recommendation: Maintain this Operating Guideline as #2, integrate it into program priorities whenever possible, and develop an institutional avenue for regularly cultivating local ecumenical networks and relationships.
Striving Toward Just Intercultural Community	<i>In the programs, priorities and activities of the Council we are learning from one another about what a just intercultural community looks like and feels like, naming who is missing or not participating fully in our deliberations, leaning into the Biblical vision of all nations, and striving to become an intercultural community characterized by justice and dignity, a beloved community. Our affection for diversity leads us to become a community that is diverse and includes but is not limited to multiple generations, language,</i>	Just Intercultural Community is described and guides the participation, policies and practices of all bodies of the Council. The Council includes and has relationships and connections in Francophone Canada who participate fully in the life and work of the Council. The Council includes and has relationships and connections in Indigenous Canada who participate fully in the life and work of the Council. The Council reflects on and advances justice, reconciliation and development with	What do we mean by Just Intercultural Community? How will we tie this operating guideline to our anti-racism priority? Would a Just Intercultural Community roadmap be helpful? What concrete actions would help us live into this guideline? What theological work is being done, needs to be done, and who is doing it or will do it?	Develop and implement a bilingualism policy that advances a just intercultural community. Implement a robust youth and young adult ecosystem and program that advances a just intercultural community. Connect and develop relationships with (self-determining) Indigenous churches in Canada.	The 2021-24 triennium has seen activities and progress related to the practice of interculturality and intercultural leadership and learning. French language and Francophone participation in the Council has been strengthened through digital platforms and the Quebec Governing Board meeting, for example. An Indigenous Forum, an Indigenous Christian Ecumenical space has been proposed. The Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning has made innovative progress and is in transition.

	<i>culture, gender, age, and geography.</i>	People of African Descent.	How will we connect and learn from Indigenous (self-determining) churches including Inuit, Metis and First Nations ones in the one ecumenical movement?	Connect and support the ecumenical disabilities community in Canada and model inclusive design in all we do. Tie these separate initiatives together with a Just Intercultural Community Roadmap	Ecumenical is intercultural. Intercultural is ecumenical. 2024-27 Recommendation: Maintain as #3 Operating Guideline and update it to reflect the progress and developments of the past triennium.
Telling Our Stories	<i>In all the programs, priorities and activities of the Council we are learning to tell our stories of meaningful personal connections and valuable community contributions. Communications, communications, communications. We are identifying our intended audiences and results, telling our stories in a compelling way, and investing in the most effective ways of sharing the</i>	The communications of the Council across all platforms tell a consistent, memorable story, lift up the unique contributions of the tables of the Council, and advance the Council's mission/vision to respond to Christ's call for unity and peace, to seek Christ's truth with an affection for diversity, and to act in love through prayer, dialogue and witness to the gospel.	Two parts to this task: 1) digital infrastructure, that is a cohesive family of updated, relevant and easy-to-use websites, social media platforms, electronic newsletters, on-line learning platforms. How are we doing? 2) a highly functioning storyteller, that is Communications	Continue to strengthen the digital infrastructure of the family of Council websites. Develop a feedback loop with the Communications Coordinator and key stakeholders that encourages her and also respects time limitations.	Leaps and bounds progress has been made here in this triennium: the family of websites, a fully functional bilingual main site, a new https://justiceandpeace.ca archives site, integrated social media platforms with clearly delineated responsibilities, experimentation with new platforms like substack, the adoption of a new Contact Relationship Management software platform tailored to the Council, its contacts, newsletters, events, donors, and volunteers.

	<i>ecumenical work of the Council and its members. We are supporting mutual learning and serving as a resource to each other, the Canadian Christian community, and to the wider society.</i>	The story of the Council invites the Council to join other people and movements, and attracts new participants in the programs and services and dialogue of the Council.	Coordinator, who also invites and coordinates others telling the stories of the Council. What digital infrastructure and practices do we need to invite more “starfish” initiatives (non-hierarchical and spontaneous) in addition to the “spider” (hierarchical and controlled) ones?	Experiment with developing an on-line learning presence and program.	And the Council benefits immensely from a world class part-time storyteller as Communications Coordinator who knows how to be a reliable voice for the Canadian expression of ecumenism. 2024-27 Recommendation: Remove this as an Operating Guideline, but link Telling Our Story to all the operations and programs of the Council with its own plan.
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Other 2021-24 Program Priorities Set by Governing Board and Executive Committee

	Detail	Measurable / Deliverable	Questions	Possible Recommendations	Final Report
United Nations Decade for Peoples of African Descent	<i>The Council supports in principle the United Nations Decade for People of African Descent. The Governing Board has mandated the Chairs of the Commissions, Management Committee of Project Ploughshares, Reference Groups, and Working</i>	Recognition, Justice, and Development for and with People of African Descent are present in some way at all the tables of the Council. Anti-Racism and anti-Black racism dialogue and action is being held at multiple tables of the Council.	Some initial progress and activity was carried out by the UNDPAD ecumenical coalition, which seems to have dissipated. How will we support the People of African Descent	That the Council writes the member churches of the UNDPAD ecumenical coalition asking what their intentions are in continuing this focus.	Mixed outcomes. Several important events and outreach activities were held, and an ad hoc coalition of participating churches was supported. However, interest and focus on the UN Decade for People of African Descent as a rallying point has waned.

	<p><i>Groups of the Council to integrate recognition, justice, and development, which are the goals of the UN Decade, and to make anti-racism and anti-Black Racism priorities of the Council.</i></p>		<p>conversation to continue?</p> <p>How can we more intentionally engage the Black Canadian church (Black Baptist in Toronto and Atlantic Canada, British Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal, Diaspora churches)?</p>	<p>That the Executive Committee recommends to the Governing Board that the Council explore what it might mean to set a goal of becoming an anti-racist organization.</p> <p>That the Executive Committee recommends that an equity audit be carried out in 2023, along the lines of the Imagine Canada outline.</p>	<p>The Decade runs from 2015-2024.</p> <p>2024-27 Recommendation: Monitor follow-up activities and opportunities from the Decade, and fold this priority, especially the inclusion and participation of Black Canadian churches in the life of the Council, into the updated operating guideline #3 on interculturality.</p>
<p>Cross Canada Conversations</p>	<p><i>The Council hosts three to four All Council Cross Canada events per year. Cross-Canada Conversations are virtual screen-based all-Council events. They focus on topics in the main mission, mandate and priorities of the Council, integrate prayer and liturgy, invite participation from</i></p>	<p>3 to 4 Cross Canada Conversations are held annually.</p> <p>Several have been held in the past two years, for example, Hong Kong Prayer event, Week of Prayer for Christian Unity event, UN Decade for Peoples of African Descent event, and others.</p>	<p>Currently we rely on bodies of the Council to take the initiative in scheduling CCC's. Should the Executive Committee/General Secretary undertake the organization of (an annual) Cross Canada</p>	<p>See upcoming Cross Canada Conversation on Interculturality.</p>	<p>This was mainly a pandemic era way of organizing, yet holds promise for the future as well.</p> <p>2024-27 Recommendation: Remove as a priority, but look for opportunities to practice the ideal of Cross Canada Conversations in the programs and tables of the Council.</p>

	<i>across Canada in French and English, and model the best possible virtual learning and dialogue methodologies.</i>		conversation along the lines of the 2019 event “What is the place of Christianity in Canada today?” https://www.councilofchurches.ca/news/highlights-from-the-cross-canada-conversation/		
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Appendix B

February 2024 Report

**2021-24 Young Adult Eco-System for The Canadian Council of Churches
Committee on Youth Involvement Standing Committee of the Governing Board
Prepared by P. Noteboom – May 2022; Updated Nov 2022; Feb 2024**

Note: Text in Green Reflects Changes from May 2022

Note: Text in Gold Reflects Changes from Feb 2024

Introduction

The Governing Board adopted as its first Operating Guideline for the 2021-24 Triennium to join and invite young adult engagement. This means that in the programs, priorities, and activities of the Council we are joining with young adults and inviting them into planning, discernment, and participation. There are two aspects of this operating guideline. The first aspect is to join and invite lay leaders, seminarians, theological students, and graduates in the life of the Council. The second aspect is to consult ecumenically as member churches about what we are hearing and learning from seekers, sbnrs, nones and dones, and then sharing how we are forming and being formed by the encounter with Christ in one another.

No single initiative or appeal generates the response or change the Governing Board seeks. Instead it could be that a full eco-system of complementing and different initiatives could shift the culture of the Council. What follows are updates on various elements of the eco-system.

A. Employment Pathways (4-7 opportunities) (General Secretary)

1. Canada Summer Student Jobs (2-3 positions per year)

The Council prioritizes an application process for two to three Canada Summer student grants early in the year and complements the grant to ensure that the experience is sufficiently funded and it is a positive experience for all involved. Minimal financial outlay, some forethought in preparing the grant request, and an important commitment to accompanying the Summer students with a meaningful and relevant project.

- a. Communications Summer Student (1)
- b. Program Summer Student (1)

Update: The Application was successful for the first time in 2022. We will be hiring two Canada Summer Student positions beginning in June 2022 (8 weeks, 35 hours a week).

We hired one Summer Student for July-August, Emma Ceruti. The second position did not bring forward a suitable candidate. Hopefully next year will be more successful!

We hired Marina Fanous in 2023 and did not hire for a second position even though it was approved.

In 2024 we have applied for one position.

2. *Research and Program Assistantships (2-4 positions per year)*

10 to 12-month assistantships (otherwise known as internships) of 1-2 days per week for graduate students. These assistantships are funded by internally restricted fund balances with some matching grant funds.

- a. Pablo Kim Sun completed Research, Teaching and Program Assistant with FILL that was funded by the Catherine Donnelly Fund and partially by the Intercultural Leadership and Learning Fund.
- b. Amelia Pahl is completing two years as the Christian Unity Research and Program Assistant funded by a grant from the Order of St. Lazarus that is matched by the Theological Education Fund.
- c. David Montealegre and Nadia VanderKuip are serving as research, teaching and program assistants for the Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning funded by the Intercultural Leadership and Learning Fund.
- d. Roshney Kurian is completing a one-year (now three-year) Research and Program Assistantship with the Commission on Justice and Peace funded by the theological education fund and the Shearer endowment fund.
- e. Paul Kye was the O’Gara Research and Program Assistant with the Commission on Faith and Witness funded by the O’Gara Fund and the theological education fund.
- f. Emma Ceruti was a short-term Program Administrator with the Commission on Faith and Witness.
- g. Setri Dzivenu is now the O’Gara Research and Program Assistant with the Commission on Faith and Witness funded by the O’Gara Fund and the theological education fund.
- h. Marina Fanous is now the Christian Unity Program Coordinator funded by a grant from the Order of St. Lazarus that is matched by the Theological Education Fund. Marina has picked up additional time serving as an assistant to Communications and carrying out a young adult research project.

Update: Emma Ceruti has accepted our offer to her for the Christian Unity Research and Program Assistant to continue Amelia’s good work. She has now completed her time with the Council.

Action Items: Continue to identify funding sources and matching funds to support these engagements, possibly the Anglican Foundation, the United Church Foundation, and other church-based foundations who invest in youth, young adult, faith formation, and leadership. Special grant applications have gone into several funding sources. One follow-up has yielded a \$30,000 pledge to an endowment fund.

In 2022 we received two \$15K grants from the Anglican Foundation and the UCC Foundation for 3 years of support for this program.

In 2025 new grant applications can be submitted.

3. *Vacancies for program staff*

Michael Buttrey has come on staff as the Secretary, Faith and Life Sciences, stepping into the robust role that Rebecca Ivanoff had filled for nearly 10 years.

Update: No current program vacancies.

B. Learning Pathways (General Secretary and Youth Committee)

1. *Field Education Placements (1-2 per year?)*

This involves placing theological students or religious studies students in programs of the Council for a semester or a year for a specific project. TST, NAIITS, Tyndale, the U of T Religious Studies, and the U of T Multifaith Centre would be important partners in this work. Other theological schools across Canada could also partner in this way.

Update: Still no action here, aside from relationship building conversations. This needs concentrated effort.

There hasn't been time to put concentrated effort into this pathway, though several conversations have been had with VST, TST, and MST, and large Lilly grant has been awarded to support field education placements.

2. *Ecumenical Internships*

Some member churches have historically supported international ecumenical internships (the United Church, for example). Could the Committee on Youth Involvement facilitate those connections, pursue joint funding, and promote those internship opportunities?

Update: There are several youth and young adults attending the World Council of Churches Assembly, including four stewards.

Action Item: Invite youth and young adult participants in the World Council of Churches Assembly to connect with The Canadian Council of Churches and the Committee on Youth Involvement.

No update on this action item, except that some follow-ups have occurred.

3. *Scholarships*

- a. Elijah Harper Bursary Fund, NAIITS: Annual contributions of \$5,000 have been made in 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 with a commitment to continue. The contributions come from the Theological Education fund. **No contributions have been made in 2023 or 2024 so far.**
- b. Our Whole Society scholarships: Biennial scholarships for participation in Our Whole Society conferences of the Canadian Interfaith Partnership. The contributions come from the Theological Education fund. **Current Online, no scholarships needed.**
- c. Bursary funds for attendance in FILL programs earmarked for youth and young adults. The contributions come from the FILL Bursary fund. **STILL AVAILABLE, Consider Specifically Designating and Promoting Them with Youth and Young Adults.**

This still a viable pathway that could use more attention. How will we build it into FILL planning?

- 4. *Special accredited or non-accredited learning and participation programs*
 - a. Non-accredited accompaniment programs of young adults experiencing events and processes of the Council such as was proposed for Quebec City. Organized by the Committee on Youth Involvement, with support again from Mike Wagenman?
 - b. Accredited course in ecumenism through the Toronto School of Theology that involves a semester-long or year-long participation in the life of the Council, such as was proposed by TST Director Pamela Couture.
 - c. Non-accredited or accredited course in ecumenism that the Commission on Faith and Witness has been exploring and proposing.

Update: Dr. Mary Marrocco has drafted a proposal for an Ecumenical Institute, and we are reflecting about how best to move forward. Is an online learning platform the next best step? How will we build an appropriate academic partnership? What role might we like the Youth Involvement Committee to have? Other bodies of the Council?

Action Item: Determine how will we invite youth and young adults into the journey to Quebec City, and how will we join youth and young adults in Quebec City?

Good young adult panel in Quebec City. Will this become a tradition at Governing Board meetings? Still possibilities to explore around accredited or non-accredited learning and participation programs, but depend on strong volunteer leadership.

C. Program Pathways (Youth Committee and other tables of the Council)

1. *Ecumenical Essay Contest*

The Commission on Faith and Witness has taken the initiative to develop this proposal. The launch of the Ecumenical Essay Contest will be this coming Fall. All bodies of the Council will be invited to assist in promoting participation in the contest.

Update: The Unity and Peace ecumenical essay contest is underway! Delayed after all. May take place in 2024.

2. *Member church programming for youth and young adult*

Joining young adult programming of member churches: showing up. What would this look like?

Update: No action here yet, except showing up for Student Christian Movement (SCM) events such as the Cahoots Festival.

Action Item: Request invitations from member churches to attend youth and young adult events? What more could be done here?

~~3. *All Council Cross Canada events (3-4 per year)*~~

~~Inviting young adults to lead and participate in All Council Cross Canada events and campaigns of the Council? It will take time to build up this capacity and expertise.~~

4. *Consultation, learning and sharing*

Convening the youth and young adult program leaders to consult ecumenically as member churches about what we are hearing and learning from seekers, sbnrs, nones and dones, and then sharing how we are forming and being formed by the encounter with Christ in one another. Is this an initiative that the Youth Standing Committee could lead? Possibly on specific theological topics or other topics related to youth and young adult communities: volunteer engagement, "voluntourism", short-term mission programming discussion.

Update: None at this time.

5. *Committee on Youth Involvement "programming"*

What initiatives, leadership, and accountability processes could best be led by the Standing Committee? What financial resources will be required? People? Should we engage a specialized staff person or a part of a staff person's time?

Inviting submission of essays (done by CFW) or opinion pieces, homilies or sermons (maybe a justice and peace initiative)?

Organizing one All Council Cross Canada young adult-inspired event per year or planning

a Young Adult Forum?

Promoting Council-wide participation in existing young adult programming by member churches.

Update: All good questions.

Action Item: We need robust membership in the Committee on Youth Involvement.

Update: We have not been able to kick into gear a Youth Involvement Committee. Who/how can that come to life? Should it come to life?

D. Appointment Pathways (Nominations Committee and Member Churches)

Appointment by member churches to the program bodies of the Council such as the Commission on Faith and Witness, the Commission on Justice and Peace, the FILL Reference Group, Christian Interfaith Reference Group, Faith and Life Sciences Reference Group, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Writing and Animation Team, the Working Group on Sexual Exploitation in Canada, and the Canadian Ecumenical Anti-Racism Network.

These appointments occur primarily through the triennial nominations and appointment process overseen by the Nominations Committee. How can we best encourage such appointments?

Update: At least two young adult appointments have been made to the Governing Board and Commissions. More churches could be intentional about this strategy. Special request made through the nominations and appointment process for the 2024-27 triennium.

E. Governance Pathways (Nominations Committee and Member Churches)

1. Youth Members of the Governing Board

Three youth members of the Governing Board were appointed in May 2021: Jessica Stevenson, Erin Jamieson, and Maria Roman. Hurray!

Update: Maria Roman has had to step down; Erin Jamieson has also had to step down.

Action Item: Invite member churches to appoint two other Youth Governing Board members.

Update: Boston Laferté has been appointed, along with Sara Solomon. Sara Solomon has not been able to participate so far.

2. Youth Members of the Youth Standing Committee of the Governing Board

What will be the ideal composition of the Youth Standing Committee? How will we

achieve that composition? Is the purpose of the Youth Standing Committee sufficiently clear and compelling? What partnerships do we need/want to be evident on this committee?

Update: None.

Action Item: Reflect on the composition and appointment process for the Committee.

Proposal: bring all interested parties to the table (youth GB members, appointees, staff, and see what happens!

~~3. Young Adult Vice-President~~

~~Propose a new Vice-President position that is defined as a young adult. Or better yet, a regular Vice-President who is a young adult. Or both. This may require some intentional mentoring and accompaniment.~~

~~**Update:** None. Maybe next triennium.~~

F. Institutional Pathways (Youth Committee and Constitution Committee)

1. Affiliates

What non-member youth and young adult organizations should we encourage to consider joining or inviting as affiliates so that they can be included and accompany the decision-making and programs of the Council?

Christian Student Movement? InterVarsity Christian Fellowship? Power to Change? The Navigators of Canada? Catholic Christian Outreach?

Action Item: Develop relationships with member church youth organizations, ecumenical ones, and para-church ministries. **Meetings scheduled with IVCF and CSM/WSCF.**

Standing Committee on Youth Involvement of the Governing Board

The tasks of this committee are to:

- a. facilitate members inviting young adults into planning, discernment, and participation at every level of the Council;
- b. encourage member churches to identify, mentor and send young adults to participate in the Council, including its Governing Board, Commissions, Project Ploughshares, Reference Groups, and Working Groups;
- c. listen and learn from youth participation in the various levels of the Council, report on findings and make recommendations at least annually to the Governing Board;
- d. facilitate the involvement of young adults in all the activities of the Council in a meaningful way that is consistent with forum in study, action, service, and leadership development; and

e. participate in the renewal of the ecumenical movement in Canada.

The Role of the Committee on Youth Involvement in helping to implement this eco-system

Advice and guidance and support from the Committee on Youth Involvement Standing Committee for the General Secretary and CCC staff leadership for implementing such a series of young adult eco-system pathways would be very helpful.

Accountability for the creation and implementation of such an eco-system would be critical.

In addition to overall guidance and accountability for implementing both the Operating Guideline and such an eco-system, the Committee on Youth Involvement could take specific responsibility for a few specific initiatives, in particular under the Learning Pathways (B) and the Program Pathways (C).

Next Steps for the Committee Once the Committee Finds Its Place

- Reflect on committee membership and begin a membership recruitment process.
- How can we change or strengthen the eco-system pathways to be more about “joining” rather than primarily about “inviting”?
- What single project or initiative from the list above would we like to pick up and begin working on that shows the most promise in the new year, 2022?