

Faith Talk - A New Statement of Faith for the United Church

The Challenge

The last NACC newsletter (*News Briefs*, January 2003) advised that the NACC would be asking its member congregations to make sure their voices are heard as the United Church embarks on this (problematic) move to generate a new faith statement for the church. General Council has given oversight of the process to its Theology and Faith Committee.

Despite reassurances in the questionnaire's introductory materials, the NACC is deeply suspicious of this process. It promises to be yet another step away from the firmly orthodox stand the United Church embraced at the time of its founding. Our suspicions rest, for instance, on

- The series of "faith" documents approved by recent General Councils (much of their content heavily influenced by the advice of the T&F Committee),
- The assumptions detectable in the present questionnaire's supplementary materials,
- The unfocused nature of the questionnaire itself, which carefully deflects the focus from the fundamentals of the faith, and
- Comments from committee members, quoted in the February, 2003, *Observer* (see "Finding the Right Words").

The same *Observer* article reports there is a fairly wide interest in the Faith Talk process, and it is important that the case for orthodoxy be made clearly and forcefully by as much of the UCC as possible. Certainly, if those who embrace the sort of faith laid out in the Articles of Faith of the *Basis of Union*, do not take part, they will have little right to complain about whatever the General Council eventually approves, likely in 2006.

The NACC Contribution

In an attempt to be helpful, the NACC Executive has asked a knowledgeable team to draft a set of answers to the questionnaire. We hope people will find these responses helpful as they consider how to help point the UCC back to its orthodox roots.

These answers could be used in a variety of ways. For example:

- Some may choose to ignore them completely and to tackle the questionnaire on Faith Talk's own terms;

- Some may decide to jump into the questionnaire "cold", and then compare their answers with the NACC's, revising as they see the need;
- Some may want to start with the NACC answers, critiquing, discarding, amending as they see fit.

However, it is important that the questionnaire responses offered here not be submitted verbatim by others. They should, as just suggested, be used as a reference, a base for discussion. Even if substantively close to what is below, respondents are urged to phrase their answers in their own words.

What Next?

The "Faith Talk" materials (41 pages, in total) are available online at the United Church's website, <http://uccan.org/home.shtm>. To access them, just enter "Faith Talk" in the site's search box. It is likely the first "hit" on the list will give you all the Faith Talk materials, and you will be able to download them as you wish - i.e. in part or in total. However, doing so requires Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is available online (free) at www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep.html.

Alternatively, the questionnaire and accompanying materials can be ordered from

Melodie Mui, Administrative Assistant
Faith Formation and Education
The United Church of Canada
3250 Bloor St. West, Suite 300
Toronto, ON M8X 2Y4
Phone: (416) 231-7680 ext. 4189

Please note, the response deadline is April 15, 2003.