

TICIF 4 THEOLOGIES OF ADOPTION

Origin: Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee

1. What is the issue?

We believe God has called The United Church of Canada, in light of its history and in our current context, to think about adoption and some theological trajectories that might inform both present practices and our view of our history with regard to the practice of adoption.

2. Why is this issue important?

This report is the result of a request from the General Council Executive in November 2013 to the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee “to research and devise a position paper regarding adoption and create a United Church of Canada statement on adoption.” The GCE took this action in light of a report it had received from an Adoption Task Group, looking at the pressure some women had experienced in the 1940-1980 period to place their children for adoption.

The United Church of Canada has never before made a statement on adoption, but it does have a historical connection to adoption through maternity homes run by the church.

The United Church also has many informal connections to adoption. Many members of the United Church are adoptees or adoptive parents or have placed children for adoption. The "Sixties Scoop" refers to the removal of Indigenous children from their homes in the period around the 1960s, some of whom were adopted by members of the United Church. Still today many Indigenous children are in state care.

Many members of the United Church today must consider issues of adoption as they make decisions about their families.

The report of the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee tries to address some of the historic realities of adoption in Canada as well as offer some guidance, grounded in our theology, around family and adoption in contemporary Canadian society.

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

The General Council Executive could study the report and discuss the matter.

The General Council Executive could take one or more of the following actions:

- adopt the report and ask the General Secretary to place the report on the United Church's web site;
- commend the report to the Church for study and guidance for making decisions that reflect ethical adoption practices;
- repent for its part during the 1940 – 1980 period in the general societal shaming of women who gave birth to children outside a marriage relationship;

- consider doing further research into the policies and practices of United Church-run maternity homes during the 1940 – 1980 period to determine whether residents were coerced into placing their children for adoption.

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

This proposal is a response to a motion—PMM4—adopted by the General Council Executive at its November, 2013, meeting.

Send questions or comments about this proposal to gce@united-church.ca