

GS 55 MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF MINISTRIES WITH THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Origin: General Secretary, General Council

The General Secretary proposes that the Executive of the General Council:

***i) approve in principle* the following Memorandum of Understanding between The United Church of Canada and the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea, and**

***ii) direct* the General Secretary to work with the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea to finalize the terms of the Memorandum and develop with the PROK the Implementation Guidelines, and, in whatever ways are appropriate implement the spirit of this agreement at the earliest opportunity; and**

***iii) forward* the Memorandum to the 42nd General Council (2015) for formal approval, signing and celebration.**

Background:

The Executive of General Council in May 2012 authorized the General Secretary to initiate bilateral conversations towards Mutual Recognition of Ministry agreements. They directed that these conversations include if possible a Canadian denomination, one U.S. based denomination, and a number of global or overseas denominations.

In May 2014, the Executive gave approval in principle to a Memorandum of Understanding for the mutual recognition of ministries with the United Church of Christ of the Philippines.

At this meeting, in addition to this proposal for mutual recognition of ministry with the PROK, the Executive will also receive a proposal for a Full Communion agreement with the United Church of Christ (USA). The UCC (USA) Full Communion conversation is more encompassing than Mutual Recognition of Ministry because of the geographical proximity of our churches. There are United Church of Christ congregations in Canada, a number of our Conferences have bilateral relationships with UCC (USA) Conferences and there are significant common areas of mission. Full Communion agreements also incorporate mutual recognition of membership, which again makes sense in churches that are geographically connected. The full communion agreement will also encompass the mutual recognition of ministries, but in the UCC (USA) polity this will require further action by a subsequent General Synod.

In May 2014, the Executive received background material on mutual recognition of ministry.

**Memorandum of Understanding
Mutual Recognition of Ministries
The United Church of Canada and
The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea.**

Through this agreement The United Church of Canada and the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea enter into an ecumenical partnership that:

recognizes the ordained or ordered ministries of both denominations (the ordained and commissioned (diaconal) ministries of the UCC, and the ordained ministry of the PROK); and *establishes* the framework where ordained and commissioned ministers of each denomination can have mutual authorization for exercising all the prerogatives of ministry in each other's congregations.

In so doing the UCC and the PROK affirm each other's ministries as true ministries of the one, holy Church of Jesus Christ, blessed by God and called to provide leadership in the church through word and sacrament, pastoral care and education.

In entering this agreement, the churches affirm their desire to give visible expression to the prayer of Jesus "that they all may be one." (John 17:21) Because of this, we believe that we are "no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him", we believe "the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord." (Ephesians 2:19-21)

Introduction

The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea and The United Church of Canada, from the foundation of the PROK in 1953, and in their respective bodies long before that time, have been partners in mission. The Presbyterian Church in Korea was established in 1907, but the division which created the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) was forced when the majority Presbyterian Church could not accept the more liberal theology being taught by some Korean professors, as well as William Scott of Canada, and espoused by churches whose clergy had studied under them. They were ordered to recant on a charge of heresy, but refused and, leaving, formed the PROK. The United Church was the sole partner denomination choosing to continue to stay in relationship with the PROK in that division. Canadian missionaries shared the grief caused by this separation, reminiscent of the pain in Canadian communities at the Presbyterian conflict over Church Union in 1925. At the same time all endured the great grief of being a mission in exile after the division of the country and the Korean War forced the Canadian mission from its centre in Hamheung in present North Korea to Seoul, along with the loss of so many Christians and friends through the conflict of the Korean War.

United Church overseas personnel and its predecessors since the first days have served the PROK in education, medical, social service, administrative, and other fields. Canadians were a

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significant presence in the liberation struggles of Korea, during the Japanese occupation of 1910-1945, and the dictatorship days of the 1970s and 80s. United Church theological reflections on mission and ecumenism have been greatly enriched by Korea's *minjung* theology. The churches continue to work closely together in justice and peace issues, including most recently shared work on empire and economic justice

The partnership in God's mission of PROK and UCC has emerged from the historic missionary movement to current expressions of the sharing of mission personnel and resources, mutual accountability and common witness. Both denominations are committed to deepening their commitments to new forms and expressions of partnership in the world so that God's people and God's world may be blessed.

Both recognize that the world has changed remarkably in the last two generations. The Korean population in Canada is now the fourth largest in the world outside Korea and continuing to grow significantly. The UCC is deeply concerned about connecting with this growing Korean population so that it might receive their gifts and be transformed into a church that would better serve God's purposes in the new Canadian reality.

The PROK is concerned for its Korean members now resident in Canada and desires to find ways of continuing to support them pastorally. The PROK also recognizes the growing Canadian and English speaking population in Korea and desires that there be opportunities to share in ministry with the United Church of Canada to this community.

The UCC acknowledges the presence of many Korean ministers and congregations already within the ministry of the United Church. A Mutual Recognition Agreement would expand the possibilities for leadership in these and in new congregations as well as the possibilities for United Church ministers to gain valuable experience serving in the PROK for a time.

The PROK acknowledges that this agreement will provide opportunity for some of their ministers to gain experience and skills in leadership in ministry that might otherwise not be available in Korea. Ministers may gain expanded opportunities for congregational leadership and experience of inter-cultural and multi faith communities and families.

Both denominations believe that a mutual recognition of ministries is one step of greater cooperation towards the objective of sharing together in God's mission.

Understandings of Ministry

The UCC and the PROK acknowledge the differences that exist in their understandings and practices of ministry.

The United Church in particular notes its understanding of one order of ministry with two expressions, ordained and diaconal. The United Church believes that there is consistency in understanding and in educational preparation between ordained ministers in both churches. It commends to the PROK the distinctive role of diaconal ministers within the UCC and their historic connection to the world-wide movement of diakonia. It commends the diaconal ministry

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of the United Church to the PROK within this agreement as those ordered within the United Church to distinctive service of education, social justice and pastoral care and invites the PROK to receive their gifts.

Within The United Church of Canada ordered ministers are called to a distinct role of leadership within the church. Their leadership is authorized and exercised through their membership in a presbytery (or district). Through this membership, they are called to exercise governance and leadership, shared with elected leaders, in the ministry of the church. Ordered ministers are office holders within The United Church of Canada. While there may be elements similar to employment, the essential nature of the relationship is a covenant with the presbytery, and the pastoral charge or presbytery recognized ministry, and God.

Ordained and diaconal ministers are ordered by the church and serve the mission and ministry of the United Church as a whole. Preparation for ordered ministry involves university level theological study and an extensive discernment and assessment process. Ordered Ministers maintain the historic connection of the United Church to the church catholic through the faithful witness to the apostolic tradition and the interpretation of a living faith. Ordered ministers carry responsibility as communicators of the tradition enacted in word and sacrament, education and service. They serve as resident theologians, called to bring the church's theological heritage into the context of God's mission in the world.

They are ordained and commissioned to the ministry of The United Church of Canada within the Holy Catholic Church. Consistent with the historic traditions of the church, in the United Church ordination and commissioning take place through the laying on of hands and once enacted, are not re-enacted.

Within the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea ordained ministers are called to serve roles of pastor, teacher, evangelist or other roles according to their own talents and the church's need. There is no difference between a minister and a layperson as a new being in Jesus Christ. However the minister is distinguished from a layperson because of the responsibilities they hold. In a sense of serving the church wholly, the responsibility is a most dignifying, useful, and professional role. Within the PROK ordained ministers are expected to be sincere in faith and be capable of teaching; healthy and committed to the mission of the gospel. They should manage their own families well, and receive respect from others (1 Timothy 3:1-7).

Ministers are called to lead worship authorized by presbytery. They select hymn, psalms, Bible passages for worship and they are responsible for pastoral prayer, sermon, and benediction. They have authority to exercise ritual, that is, baptism and sacrament by the determination of the board meeting (which is composed of the minister and elders) or the permission of presbytery. They have responsibility to lead the baptized to enroll in a church. And when the pastor is asked to administer the sacrament and baptism by another denomination, church, church association, and other special cases, they can exercise or participate as long as it is not against their conscience.

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Ministers are in charge of church administration and discipline for the holiness and peace of the church. Ordained ministry within the PROK is understood to express the commitments of the diakonia in service, education and social justice.

Ministers teach the Bible, doctrines, and church rules to their congregations. They do pastoral visits. They should pray and serve especially for the poor, the ill, the wounded, and the weeping. Ministers can serve educational organizations, administrative institutes, and other mission organizations and they should be devoted to their responsibilities.

Ministry Partner and Eligibility for Call

Mutual Recognition of Ministries means that the ministries of both denominations are considered to be eligible for call, appointment or service within both denominations subject to individual approval as a ministry partner.

Ministers of both denominations must be approved through the respective processes of each denomination to be recorded as a ministry partner. The application of a minister from either denomination is based on a letter of good standing from their respective denominations. The PROK and the UCC commit to ensuring that such letters of good standing ensure that the denomination commends the minister to the other, that their credentials are in order, and that there are no disciplinary actions in process. In addition, letters of reference will be provided indicating that their ministry has demonstrated effective and faithful qualities and character.

Within The United Church of Canada,

An ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea is invited to apply to the national officer of the United Church responsible for oversight of this agreement. The application format (available on-line) includes a personal statement on ministry and the interest in serving within the United Church. An interview will be arranged either in person or electronically, to review the minister's interest and to determine the preparation and suitability for doing so. As part of the process, the PROK minister applying to become a ministry partner is expected to have gained an appropriate understanding and appreciation for the ethos and polity of the United Church. To assist in this preparation, the United Church provides a range of materials available on-line.

Once approved as a ministry partner the PROK minister will have the same standing as all United Church ministers in eligibility for call or appointment to a United Church congregation. This status will enable a PROK minister either from within Canada or from Korea (or elsewhere in the world) to make applications to United Church congregations advertising for a minister and indicate that they are eligible for call or appointment.

It is important to note that this status of eligibility for call does not predetermine or eliminate the further steps that will be required through Immigration Canada (Government of Canada) for a work permit in Canada.

Within the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea,

An ordained or diaconal minister of the United Church of Canada is invited to apply to the national officer of the PROK responsible for oversight of this agreement. The

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application format includes a personal statement on ministry and the interest in serving within the PROK. An interview will be arranged either in person or electronically, to review the minister's interest and to determine the preparation and suitability for doing so. As part of the process, the UCC minister applying to become a ministry partner is expected to have gained an appropriate understanding and appreciation for the ethos and polity of the PROK. To assist in this preparation, the PROK provides a range of materials.

Once approved as a ministry partner the UCC minister will have the same standing as all PROK ministers in eligibility for call or appointment to a PROK congregation. This status will enable a UCC minister either from within Korea (or elsewhere in the world) to make applications to PROK congregations through the usual processes.

It is important to note that this status of eligibility for call does not predetermine or eliminate the further steps that will be required for a work permit in Korea.

Responsibilities

Recognizing the different cultures and practices that define each other's identity and the difficulties that are present in adapting to ministry in an unfamiliar context, the PROK and the UCC commit to ensuring that adequate programs exist within each denomination to support ministry partners. These support programs will include mentoring and accompaniment of ministry partners for the first year or more of their appointment or call.

The PROK and the UCC, through their Presbyteries or other appropriate means, will also undertake a reflection meeting with the ministry partner at the end of their first year of service. The intention of this reflection is to assist the ministry partner in reviewing the first year of ministry in the partner denomination, and determining what additional work or support might be helpful in more effectively functioning in ministry.

Contexts of Ministry

The PROK and the UCC commit to honouring the specific contexts and commitments of each other's ministry. Each denomination will encourage its ministers seeking to become a ministry partner in the other denomination to be sensitive to and to honour these commitments.

Discipline and Accountability

Ministry Partners, who are called or appointed to a ministry in the partner denomination, are seen for the purposes of discipline and accountability, to be equivalent to being admitted to the ministry of the denomination while under appointment or call.

While under appointment or call they are fully accountable to the respective Presbyteries and subject to its discipline. Such oversight and discipline will be consistent with the polity and practices of the denomination they serve. Forms of disciplinary action will vary by context and the practice of denominations, but ultimately can lead to the removal of ministry partner status. In such a case, the relationship of the partner denomination with the ministry partner is severed, the pastoral relationship, call or appointment ends, and discipline and accountability reverts to their

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home denomination. In all processes of discipline of a ministry partner, the partner denomination commits to ensuring that the home denomination is informed of the outcome of such processes. The status of ministry partner is also dependent upon the good standing of the ministry partner with their home denomination. In the event that the letter of good standing is revoked by the home denomination, the status of ministry partner also ends, the relationship of the partner denomination with the ministry partner is severed and the call or appointment is terminated.

Benefits and Compensation

Ministry partners, while under appointment or call in the partner denomination will be compensated by and receive the appropriate benefits within that denomination. The home denomination of the ministry partner will have no responsibility for providing compensation or benefits. The partner denomination will ensure that ministry partners are compensated according to the established policies of the denomination and that adequate benefits are in place for health and insurance coverage and for pension contributions as permitted.

Time Limit of Ministry Partner Status

A ministry partner, following application, interview and acceptance by the partner denomination, will maintain the status of ministry partner for a period of three years or for the duration of a call or appointment.

If the ministry partner is unable to secure a call or appointment within a three year period, ministry partner status must be renewed through a new application process. Each denomination will determine the extent of the re-application process and documentation required.

If the ministry partner has secured an appointment or call, the status continues throughout the call or appointment. At the end of the call or appointment, and at each change of pastoral relationship, a new application must be made for ministry partner status to be renewed. Each denomination will determine the extent of the re-application process and the documentation required.

Internship

Supervised ministry education opportunities for ministry students will be explored. The PROK and the UCC will explore the ways in which such opportunities for cross cultural learning can be offered to candidates for ministry in the partner denomination. The exploration will include recognition of such internships as credit towards fulfillment of ordination requirements in the home denomination.

Implementation Guidelines

Implementing Guidelines will be developed and approved by the respective Executive bodies of the denominations. Such guidelines will be updated periodically and include:

- Compensation, benefits and pension
- Terms of appointments
- Eligibility for consideration for formal admission (in recognition of the reality of migration but with a clear intention that the agreement not be a vehicle for emigration)

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- Options for those pastors who have relocated and desire to be recognized in their new church home
- Oversight and discipline
- Cultural sensitivities
- Denominational identity, ethos, and culture
- Form for tri-lateral covenant between the denominations and the ministry partner
- Other required forms for application
- An ongoing structure to intentionally evaluate and evolve the concept and practice of mutual recognition

Approval of this Agreement

This agreement will be approved by the appropriate governing bodies of each denomination