

One Order of Ministry

Response from Diakonia of The United Church of Canada – May 19, 2015

Diakonia of The United Church of Canada (DUCC) is a voluntary independent professional association of Diaconal Ministers and others who see their ministry as diakonia -- a ministry education, service and pastoral care. Our association has a membership of approximately 65 people, most of whom are active Diaconal Ministers, with smaller numbers who are retired and lay people.

The primary purpose of DUCC is to create and maintain community and connection among its members in order to:

- *build up the body of Christ through strengthening diaconal ministries and those in diaconal ministry in the United Church,*
- *share information of interest with members and to others who are interested in diaconal ministry*
- *reflect on issues related to Diaconal Ministry within the United Church,*
- *advocate for Diaconal Ministry in the courts of the United Church, particularly the General Council and its Committees and Task Groups*
- *further theological reflection on diaconal ministry in the context of the changing face of the Christian church in our times*
- *appoint representatives to DIAKONIA World Federation and Diakonia of the Americas and the Caribbean (DOTAC)*
- *promote interest and involvement in international diakonia*

For further information about Diakonia of The United Church of Canada (DUCC) we refer you to our website <http://ducc.ca/>.

Our biannual national gathering of 56 people took place from April 28 to May 1 of this year at Crieff Hills in Ontario to review six reports coming before the 42nd General Council this summer. It is with regard to the One Order of Ministry that we write at this time. We understood from the General Council staff from the Ministry Personnel Policies and Programs unit, who were at our meeting, that there may have been more revisions to the most recent version of the One Order of Ministry and that our input at this time may be helpful. We recently were told that the revisions have been done and were not significant, but we hope our response is helpful.

Our membership is quite familiar with the version of the *One Order of Ministry* that went March General Council Executive and the earlier versions. DUCC has been involved in discussions with the United Church since the 1980's on the idea of there being one order of ministry. In 1982 the 29th General Council formally recognized diaconal ministers as being one expression of the one order of ministry with ordained ministers being the other expression.

Our purpose in reviewing the *One Order of Ministry* report at our meeting was to gather the input from those present and the on-line responses from those unable to be present at the meeting. This report

gathers these responses and reflects the various opinions of our members and is not intended to be a single DUCC response to the *One Order of Ministry* document and its recommendations.

Our membership has a diversity of thoughts and feelings on this topic. However, we do want to share the statements that were made. We did ask for a straw vote on each statement and we had no disagreements on any of our statements below.

We Affirm the Following in the Report:

1. The recognition of the continuation of diakonia within the document and the church
2. The importance of our links with the international Diakonia World Federation and Diakonia of The Americas and Caribbean (DOTAC)
3. The continuing quest for ecumenical relations

Concerns:

1. Use of “choice” language rather than “call” in the document
2. Lack of clarity in the usage of “ordained” as to when it does & does not include Diaconal Ministers
3. Lack of clarity re the “choice” to grandparent into diaconal ministry from Designated Lay Minister (DLM) and Diaconal
 - a. Is this a choice between old and new identity?
 - b. Is this a choice between categories?
 - c. What is the process?
4. The data used to support the assertion that most diaconal ministers are in solo congregational ministries seems faulty. This skews the discussions related to recognized & unrecognized presbytery accountable ministries.

"The Committees have noted that most of the ministry personnel of the church, in spite of the purported differences between the streams, are called or appointed to the same function (i.e. solo pastoral ministry)... (In 2014 there were 1709 Ordained ministers of which 1543 were in pastoral appointments; 141 Diaconal ministers of which 125 were in pastoral appointments; and 143 recognized (and 75 applicants) Designated Lay ministers in pastoral appointments.) "

The implication is that only (141 minus 125)16 diaconal ministers serve in non-pastoral appointments. When the London Conference diaconate met this winter, they identified that while most of them did serve in congregational ministry; about half served in non-congregational ministry (many folks holding two part time jobs, one congregational and one non-congregational). At the DUCC National Gathering 12 of 56 participants identified as working in non-congregational ministry.

Also, pastoral appointments (which could be team ministry) and solo pastoral ministry seem to be conflated.

5. Lack of option for DLMS to become Diaconal Ministers
6. Continued normalization of ordained ministry and “othering” or marginalizing of DLM and diaconate from the norm of ordained ministry
7. “No theological integrity” (p 137). There is no rationale for this statement. What does it mean? Diaconal ministry is rooted in the New Testament and early church. The faithful have many gifts and same spirit. What theological integrity is sought?
8. Use of condemnatory and inflammatory language – “damage” P 137
9. Other policies changes buried in the document, e.g., education requirements
10. The document does not comment on diaconal identity

Question:

1. There were significant changes made in the version of this report that went to the General Council Executive in March 2015 from the earlier version that was circulated to a wider network. The most significant change was to have all ministry personnel being ordained. Has this March 2015 version received a full discussion? If the decisions on the One Order of Ministry report were postponed definitely to the 43rd General Council, what would be the implications for those affected?