

## FROM THE FELLOWSHIP OF PROFESSIONAL WOMEN OF THE UNITED CHURCH

to

## THE COMMISSION STUDYING WOMEN'S WORK.

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The Fellowship of Professional Women of the United Church of Canada, under the leadership of their National Executive, have made a continuous and thorough study of an " Order " for all trained women workers of the Church since 1946, when the General Council appointed a commission on " The Ministries of Women." Local units of the Fellowship have shared in this study and it has been a major subject of discussion at the Biennial Conferences.

The first serious study resulted in a brief prepared in 1947 for presentation to the General Council commission on " The Ministries of Women." This brief so commended itself to the commission that their report to the 1948 General Council included the following recommendation:

We recommend that the General Council provide for a commission to consider the advisability of establishing the Diaconate or some similar Order as an Order of the Ministry open to both men and women; that the commission study the conditions of admission to the Order, the relation of its members to the Church Courts and the training appropriate for candidates for the Order. The commission to report to the 14th General Council.

This recommendation was not endorsed by the 13th General Council in 1948 although a considerable proportion of the commissioners voted in favour of it.

The Fellowship, however, continued its study. At the Biennial Conference in 1953 there was a strong feeling in favour of one order which would unite Deaconesses and Missionaries; and, since any woman worker who meets the qualifications may join the Deaconess Order, a number of Missionaries and women in Executive positions who had not previously joined the Deaconess Order have been designated.

Graduates of the United Church Training School entering the service of the Woman's Missionary Society have also been designated to the Deaconess Order at the time of their commissioning as well as those who plan to serve under the auspices of the Committee on the Deaconess Order. This has been a personal expression of the desire for unity among the women workers of the Church rather than an endorsement of the Deaconess Order as an Order providing in its present form a completely, satisfactory status for all women workers.

The action of the General Council in 1954 - first - in continuing the Commission to Study Women's Work in the Church; secondly - in approving a Remit to Presbyteries which if endorsed by the 1956 General Council would make all Deaconesses in the active work ex-officio members of Presbytery, has led to a further study on the part of the Fellowship of Professional Women. In connection with the remit to Presbyteries it was decided that any statement from the Fellowship to the Presbyteries would be inappropriate while the matter is under review. It was, however, decided to share with the Commission to Study Women's Work in the Church the thinking of the Fellowship regarding " One Order " and their recommendations regarding the relationship of women workers to the Church.

It is the conviction of the Fellowship of Professional Women that there should be one order for all qualified women workers of the United Church of Canada, and it is their opinion that the standards of admission should be set by the General Council, and that all designated Deaconesses and commissioned Missionaries be eligible for membership in the new " Order."

They believe that the Order would have a two-fold purpose -

- (a) to create within the United Church of Canada an Order of the nature of the Diaconate which would give official status to women called of God and trained in the ministry of teaching and service
  
- (b) to unite in one body all qualified women entering the full time work of the Church for fellowship, discipline, the renewal and strengthening of the commitment made on entering the Order.

It was generally agreed that the members of the Order in active service should be members of the session of the congregation in which they are at work and of the Presbytery in which their work is located.

It was also their opinion that recognizing the diversity of the ministry rendered by the Women Workers of the Church - the functions of members of the Order would include medical service, social welfare, education, Christian education and evangelism - and that they would be united not in specific function but by a common theological training and a common commitment to full time work in the Church, recognized by a setting apart or ordination by Conference.

The National Executive on behalf of the Fellowship of Professional Women present the following ~~RECOMMENDATIONS~~ re RELATIONSHIP OF WOMEN WORKERS TO THE CHURCH.

Assuming " one Order " for all the qualified women workers of The United Church of Canada, the following suggestions concern procedures that might be followed in selection, training, employment, etc.

In preparing these suggestions the National Executive of Professional Women in the Church has noted that, while candidates for the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments are selected by and under the oversight of Presbytery and are ordained by Conference, General Council Boards or Committees deal with such matters as: standards of preparation, including the course of study in Theological Colleges, broad responsibility for recruiting, transfer from one Conference to another and pensions.

#### 1. RECRUITING AND SELECTION.

That broad responsibility for recruiting and final authority in the selection of women for the work of the Church ( other than the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments ) rest with a General Council Board or Committee.

That, along with other references, a recommendation from the session of the church of which she is a member be required in the case of every young woman making application for Church Work. ( N.B. see below \*)

That, when the General Council Board or Committee has decided that an applicant has met the requirements for Church work, a report on her academic standing, health and personal qualifications (reference papers etc.) be sent to the Presbytery in which she has her Church membership and that the endorsation of her Presbytery be a necessary condition of her final acceptance as a candidate for Church work and a student of the United Church Training School.

That, from the time of her acceptance as a candidate until the time of her appointment, she be under the supervision of Presbytery as are the candidates for the Ministry, and that at the close of her first year at the United Church Training School, the decision of the General Council Board or Committee regarding her continuing the course be based on the advice of both the School and the Presbytery.

That, while the United Church Training School should be free to accept special students who may not at the time of entrance look forward to entering Church Work as a vocation, the general policy be that students entering the Training School be fully-accepted candidates for Church Work - as are the majority of those who enter the Theological Colleges - even though the choice of the particular form of work be not made until later. Nevertheless, every opportunity and encouragement should be given to aid students to make this decision early, certainly not later than the close of the first year at the School.

(Reasons given for the selection of candidates by a General Council Board or Committee rather than by Presbytery were:

The United Church Training School is a national School, whereas there is a Theological College in most conferences.

In many Presbyteries there are no women workers, hence there are many Presbyteries that lack a full knowledge of the functions of a trained woman worker in Canada, and know little of the functions of those serving overseas. It would, therefore, be difficult for an individual Presbytery to make as wise a choice as a General Council Board or Committee with its knowledge of the total work of the Church.)

## 2. SETTING APART.

That all entering the Order be set apart or ordained by Conference on the recommendation of the General Council Board or Committee in consultation with the United Church Training School and the Presbytery concerned.

### 3. EMPLOYMENT.

That it be recognized that women workers will be employed by self-supporting congregations, by Church institutions, by General Council Boards and Committees, by the Woman's Missionary Society, and by cooperating Boards, and that, while ~~so~~ employed, the worker is directly responsible to her employing body which will determine her duties, salary, holidays and other conditions of work.

### 4. GENERAL COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITY.

That, when the responsibilities outlined above are taken by Presbytery and Conference and employing bodies, there remain a number of important functions which should be discharged by General Council through appropriate Boards or Committees. These functions include:

- (1) Standards of Admission to the Order
- (2) Course of Study at the United Church Training School
- (3) Recruiting and selection of candidates
- (4) Recommendation of qualified candidates for setting apart or ordination by Conference.
- (5) Recommendation of candidates for appointment.
- (6) Arranging for transfer of workers from one employing body to another, as required.
- (7) A Pension Plan.

It is assumed that the course of study would be determined by the Board of Colleges and Secondary Schools, and that a Pension Plan would be administered by the Board of Pensions. The remaining functions should be discharged by a special Board or Inter-Board Committee of General Council, including the functions now performed by the Committee on the Deaconess Order and Women Workers of the Church and the Personnel Committee, and adding certain others.

It is recognized that there will continue to be women employed by The United Church of Canada who are not members of the Order - some trained in the United Church Training School, some not so trained. For these such a special Board or Committee of General Council would assume certain responsibilities. There will also be situations arising which will require the study and direction of such a Board or Committee in the general interest of the women workers of The United Church of Canada.

Respectfully submitted,

*Teneo Campion*

for National Fellowship of  
Professional Women.