

## Thinking about One Order of Ministry

A Concept Paper from the Joint Ministry Working Group  
(May , 2013)

The Working Group invites responses to its early thinking on “One Order of Ministry” for The United Church of Canada. The concept, as outlined in the following paper, would identify Designated Lay Ministers serving in pastoral ministry, ordained, and diaconal ministers as all part of one order of ministry while acknowledging several paths of educational preparation. Distinctions within the order of ministry, such as the Diakonia, could be maintained through a college of ministers or other means of organizational association. Related to the order of ministry and functioning in association with ordered ministers would be lay associates, accountable to congregations, and recognized associates, accountable to Presbyteries.

The Joint Ministry Working Group wishes to test its thinking at a very early stage. It meets again in mid-September and would welcome input by then to the following concept paper.

The Joint Ministry Working Group, of the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee (TICIF) and the Permanent Committee, Ministry and Employment Policies and Services, has been established to respond to two main directions from the 41<sup>st</sup> General Council (2012). The first relates to the proposal for the study of “local ordination” as an alternative to the existing category of designated lay ministers (DLMs) serving in pastoral ministry roles (See Appendix One). The second involves a proposal for the sacramental authorization of diaconal ministers as a rite of commissioning (See Appendix Two).

As it began its work, the Working Group noted the interconnection between the two parts of its assignment and determined that a critical underlying issue present in both assignments is the church’s multiple streams of ministry and the complexity and confusion that they create.

It noted that the proposal for local ordination was an attempt to resolve the difficulty presented in designated lay ministers serving in pastoral ministry in ways indistinguishable from ordained ministry. Many DLM personnel speak of their life-time commitment to ministry within the whole church. Most are authorized for sacraments and, while still requiring yearly appointments, are effectively functioning as if available for call. Recent decisions have also extended life-time membership in Presbytery to those retiring designated lay ministers who request it. The effect of local ordination would have been to move designated lay ministers serving in pastoral ministry into the ordered ministry of the church, albeit with limitations.

The proposal for authorizing diaconal ministers for the sacraments as a rite of their commissioning represents the reality that a large majority of diaconal ministers are serving in pastoral ministry roles, in functional ways they are indistinguishable from ordained ministers in the leadership and nurturing of the Christian community. Diaconal ministers note that their training and commitment is directed towards roles focusing on education, service and pastoral care within the context of team ministries. Instead, many

diaconal ministers serve in solo pastoral ministries. Other diaconal ministers serve in community ministries where sacramental actions, particularly gathering around the common table in communion, or being able to baptize individuals when serving in a housing or health-care facility, are important options within worship experiences in those settings. In this context, it seems unavoidable to extend authorization for sacraments to diaconal ministers. But what then distinguishes diaconal and ordained ministry?

The Joint Ministry Working Group therefore turned to the consideration of the possibility of a single ordered ministry and wonders:

*What would be the implications if the church no longer used the terms ordination, commissioning and recognition, rather instead admitted to a single order of ministry those candidates who have qualified through multiple entry points of equivalent educational preparation?*

The Statement on Ministry (2012) reflected an understanding of two streams of ministry within one order, and a designated lay ministry all of whom functioned “in all aspects of ministry.” (See Appendix Three)

One possible rewriting and condensing of the sections dealing with these three forms of ministry would help to clarify the implications of one order:

Members of the *Order of Ministry* are authorized to serve in all aspects of ministry and are formally called to ministries that include word, sacrament, education, service, social justice and pastoral care.

### **Multiple Streams of Educational Preparation**

An important concern in the exploration of one order of ministry is the question of what educational requirements are necessary for paid accountable leadership.

*The Joint Working Group believes that there should be an equivalent educational expectation for all members of the order of ministry of the United Church of Canada. The Working Group wonders if this belief is shared across the church and what “equivalency” might look like?*

The Working Group also believes that there are options already existing within the church that represent the approximate level of equivalency that is desired. In particular the committee notes the basic time equivalency between the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) programs and the Centre for Christian Studies (CCS) and the Sandy Saulteaux models. (See Appendix Four) The latter models provide for four to five year non-residential programs based on residential learning circles and both grant a diploma on graduation. Traditional M.Div. programs are also available throughout the church in a variety of formats from 2 year (full year intensive) options to the more traditional three year models. Part of the requirement for ordination for M.Div. students includes an internship requirement of eight months though a two year supervised ministry placement is currently being tested as a replacement. Thus M.Div. programs also correspond to a four to five year preparation time. Many M.Div. students also serve in paid part-time ministry appointments during their studies in addition to their paid supervised ministry placement (either the eight month or two year options.)

The Centre for Christian Studies and the Sandy Saulteaux programs are usually undertaken while in less than full-time employment. The end result is that these three models require a similar amount of time in preparation and are approximately equivalent in personal cost. The somewhat greater cost of the residential M.Div. program (primarily from forgone earning from full time studies) is offset by the gaining of an academic degree and its significance for further studies. The Working Group also notes the introduction of a new crediting system for candidates in employment in 2014, which will contribute towards additional equivalency in personal costs.

The Working Group affirms that there is a distinctive reality for First Nations ministry that requires a program specifically addressed to the context of First Nations communities. For this reason it believes that the Sandy Saulteaux program should continue as a program addressed specifically to preparation for the order of ministry for First Nations peoples.

The Working Group also believes that the Centre for Christian Studies program should continue as an educational path specifically focused on those who are committed to the Diakonia.

The Working Group believes that the Designated Lay Ministry Program can fulfill the level of equivalency desired by extending the program to five years and modeling it on the Sandy Saulteaux or CCS program, or the lay certificate and summer distance programs of other schools.

The current Designated Lay Ministry program, under this proposal, would therefore need to be renamed and expanded into a five year model. Several questions will need to be addressed:

First, what will be the prerequisite for entrance into this educational stream? Currently there are four prerequisite options for entry into the Designated Lay Ministry program.<sup>1</sup> *The Working Group wonders if one year of university studies within an established undergraduate program should be an additional expectation?*

Second, the Working Group notes that the current DLM program requires completion of three academic courses offered by other United Church theological institutions. The Working Group wonders if this should be expanded to the eight courses required by the CCS program to ensure that there is deeper connection with candidates of all educational streams into the experience of theological studies. It also notes that a wide range of courses are now available through on-line options. *The Working Group wonders if the expectation of eight academic courses is reasonable?*

### **Time Limit**

Not all candidates for ministry in the various programs of study complete their course within the minimum time frames of the respective programs. This parallels the reality of many undergraduate and certainly graduate degree programs in general university studies. Therefore it is to be expected that candidates for ministry in any of the educational streams will vary in the time taken to complete the

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<sup>1</sup> One of: Successful completion of a Licensed Lay Worship Leader (LLWL) program; Successful completion of the Leadership Development Module at the Centre for Christian Studies; Successful completion of a lay certificate in ministry (at a United Church theological college); Successful completion of a Prior Learning Assessment that demonstrates a basic level of competence in critical theological reflection.

program. However, there is also a benefit to the church and to the individual to set a maximum time for completion of the program. *The Working Group wonders if eight years is a realistic time frame to complete the educational requirements for ordered ministry?*

### **College of Ministers**

Diaconal ministers within the United Church have established a distinctive training program and a connection to the global movement of the diakonia. The Working Group recognizes the value of this historic connection and explored how it might be continued within one order of ministry. It wonders about the concept of a “college” of diakonia, which would be a continuation of the existing association of diakonial ministers within the United Church (DUCC or Diaconal Ministers of The United Church of Canada.) This body could continue to be self-administered, setting in place vision statements, criteria and expectations for those seeking admission and would maintain its historic links to the world-wide movement of diakonia. The Working Group also wonders if the college model might be extended to other expressions of the crafts of ministry such as preaching, chaplaincy or theology. The intention in all of these associations would be to care for and nurture the best and faithful practices of ministry.

### **Candidates for the Order of Ministry**

The Joint Working Group notes that it has become a common practice for many candidates in all streams of ministry to be appointed into ministry positions either as part of their educational or candidature processes or as a means of funding their education. The Working Group therefore proposes that a common terminology be established for all candidates who are appointed into paid accountable leadership that affirms their status and acknowledges their ongoing journey towards ordered ministry. One possibility is to use the simple language of “candidate” accompanying the category of order of ministry. In other words, all individuals in any of the educational streams who have been appointed to a recognized ministry of the church would be able to identify themselves as “Order of Ministry (Cand.)” Order of Ministry Candidates appointed to a recognized ministry would, in this model, have their membership held in a Presbytery (similar to Order of Ministry members).

### **Lay Associate Ministry**

The Working Group notes that Designated Lay Ministry, initiated in 2000, was an attempt to incorporate into one category a broad range of “lay” ministries in the church, among them Lay Pastoral Ministers and Staff Associates. The Working Group acknowledges that this has not worked for DLM’s serving in solo pastoral ministry, nor for many who were former staff associates. The Working Group believes that the proposal for one order of ministry addresses the challenges in the situation of Designated Lay Ministers serving in solo pastoral ministry. *The Working Group wonders about a return to a familiar language and practice for those who were formerly called staff associates?*

Here the emphasis would be on “associate.” In other words, those functioning in a lay associate ministry would always be understood to be functioning in association (or team) with an order of ministry (or candidate) person. While the Working Group wonders if the term “lay” is helpful, the key understanding of “laity” in this terminology would mean that the membership of associate ministers would continue to reside in a congregation. In the current terminology, these positions would also be congregational designated ministry, or those employed and accountable to the congregation. While these positions will

need to follow denominational standards for employment, the congregation will be the sole employer. Presbytery will continue to be involved in the determination that the employment falls within the category of “lay associate ministry.”

The Working Group recognizes that the majority of lay associate ministers will be congregational accountable; among them Christian education workers, pastoral visitors and caregivers, parish nurses, youth workers and music directors. There is, however, an important exception that needs to be considered: those who see themselves functioning as a “lay associate minister” but who have sought out specialized training and preparation for a particular expression of their ministry. Examples of this would be youth workers who have completed specialized programs, or Christian education workers with a Masters of Religious Education. In these circumstances there has been a desire for some process of recognition of the specialized training that they have undertaken.

The Working Group has considered an additional category, based on Presbytery recognition, as a means of affirming such specialized study and vocational call. But it also sees that this might in effect be seen as creating another category of ministry, adding further complications to the church’s expressions of ministry.

*The Working Group wonders therefore how best to address this concern and whether the category of “Lay Associate” is adequate to include all the varieties of lay ministries present in the church.*

### **Spectrum of Ministry**

The model would involve a spectrum of paid accountable ministry within the church, but one the Working Group hopes, would be significantly simplified from what now exists.

<b>Lay Associate Minister</b>	<b>Order of Ministry (Candidate)</b>	<b>Order of Ministry</b>
Congregational Accountable	Presbytery Accountable	Presbytery Accountable
	Conference Recognition	Conference and National Ordering
Congregational membership	Presbytery membership while under appointment	Presbytery membership
	Sacramental authority (assumed need) approved by conference.	Sacramental authority part of order.
Always in team with Order of Ministry Leadership	Team or solo leadership in congregation or ministry	Team or solo leadership in congregation or ministry

The Working Group recognizes that lay ministries have and will continue to emerge within the Christian church. This model seeks to recognize this as a legitimate and ongoing reality of God calling the gifts of leadership forward in God’s people. The challenge has historically been in a movement from lay associate ministry to being called on (precisely because of gifts and talents that have been nurtured and developed in that ministry) to assume roles of leadership in a congregation or ministry. This is particularly keen in some locations in the country where ordered ministers are not available.

In this model, a lay associate minister who feels called to word and sacrament ministry leadership, or is called upon by the church to provide ordered ministry leadership to a congregation, would apply to the Order of Ministry. There would be a discernment, interview and appointment process that would lead to the status of Order of Ministry (Candidate) and a requirement of entering one of the educational streams. The assumption that underlies this approach is that everyone in sole ministry leadership in a community of faith would be on a journey towards, or have achieved, an equivalency in educational preparation. For an individual called later in life to offer a number of years of service in ministry, the educational stream might never be finished, but it would represent a commitment to life-long learning and continuing preparation for more effective ministry leadership. For someone in mid-life or younger, the expectation is that the educational work would be completed within eight years. In both cases the educational work would be undertaken while in either full-time or part-time ministry depending on the learning style and life circumstances of the individual. This is what is currently in place in the existing DLM program.

If a person has gifts for some aspects of ministry but is not able or capable of entering one of the educational streams, then the Working Group would encourage that his or her gifts for ministry be used either in lay associate ministry, or possibly in a regional team model. This model is outlined in Appendix Five and offers an important option for ensuring that the varied gifts of ministry are available and effectively used for the ministry of the church.

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**The Working Group wishes to test this model as it begins its work and asks:**

1. Is the Working Group headed in the right direction?
2. (To Ministry Personnel) Do you, in your expression or stream of ministry, feel included in the model?
3. Does it honour the diversity of ministry leadership present within the church?
4. What is helpful in the model?
5. What is not helpful and needs to be changed?
6. What other options should the Working Group be considering?

The Working Group is seeking feedback on its initial thinking as it prepares to meet again in September 2013. The Group is quite open to hearing concerns and critique of the model as it is outlined above, and will take all comments seriously and into consideration. Another opportunity for consultation and input will occur at a later time.

Please send comments to Sarah Bernath [sbernath@united-church.ca](mailto:sbernath@united-church.ca) with the subject line indicating "One Order of Ministry"

Proposal for the Study of Local Ordination

**The Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee proposes:**

**That the 41<sup>st</sup> General Council direct the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee, in consultation with the Permanent Committee, Ministry and Employment Policy and Services, and other appropriate bodies, to engage the church in a study of the theological and functional implications of “local ordination” for designated lay ministers serving in pastoral ministry roles.**

### **Background**

The proposed Statement on Ministry in The United Church of Canada (2012) maintains the policies and directions concerning Designated Lay Ministry that have been in place in the church following the Ministry Together Report of the 37<sup>th</sup> General Council (2000). The Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee, in undertaking its preparation of the 2012 Statement, has recognized significant ongoing difficulties with the category of Designated Lay Ministry. These concerns have been confirmed and shared by the Permanent Committee, Ministry and Employment Policies and Services.

The Meaning of Ministry Task Group, which proposed the 2009 Statement on Paid Accountable Ministry, struggled to articulate a theological distinction between ordered ministry and designated lay ministry. The Task Group noted in its report that most denominations have some expression of lay pastoral ministry. Most denominations make the distinction between lay and ordered ministries based on sacramental authority. The Task Group believed that the United Church could not make this distinction. With widespread authorization of Designated Lay Ministry for sacramental ministry, and the growing practice of sacrament elders, the United Church has moved far away from a sacramental authority as the defining characteristic of ordered ministry.

The Task Group proposed that the distinguishing characteristic between lay and ordered could be found in the life time accountability and responsibility to Presbytery for the exercise of ministry leadership for ordered ministers, versus the time limited relationship (dependent upon appointment) for lay ministers. The Task Group saw this proposal as consistent with the episcopal role of Presbytery and reflected the relationship of presbyters (in the early church) to the Bishop. The Task Group also proposed that ordered ministry personnel be understood as carrying accountability and responsibility into the whole church, while lay ministry represents primarily localized leadership. The symbolic representation of this was found in the direction that ordination and commission take place at Conference and be a life time ordinance while recognition of designated lay ministry takes place at Presbytery and be repeated for each appointment.

These assumptions have been challenged; by the action of General Council in authorizing Presbyteries to extend life time membership to lay ministers; through responses of many

designated lay ministers who have rejected this understanding; and by some Conferences who have indicated an unwillingness to make distinctions between lay and ordered ministers in their celebration of ministry services.

Consultations with the church in the Statement on Ministry process have lifted up the issue of education for ministry that underlies distinctions between lay and ordained ministries. The course work for designated lay ministry involves three years of supervised training with six, ten day learning circles and three courses of educational instruction. A typical B.Th or M.Div. academic program involves thirty courses (six full time terms of study) and a full time eight month internship program, in addition to the required undergraduate study.

The TICIF Committee has heard clearly from the church the value and importance of academically trained clergy. In a time of increasingly secularization and wide spread lack of theological and biblical knowledge within the church, it is critically important that education for ministry leadership be strong and rigorous.

It also recognizes that patterns of educational preparation need to continue to change, and learning styles and life experience need to be taken into account in determining educational qualifications for ministry.

Designated Lay Ministers involved in pastoral leadership have, as noted above, raised significant concerns about the definitions of the category. Most see themselves in a life time call and commitment to ministry leadership. Many commit themselves to ongoing learning and preparation for ministry. Most bring significant life experience and other forms of education. Most find the term, designated lay ministry, unhelpful, some for its connotations, others because it is too broad.

The TICIF Committee has heard the argument that Designated Lay Ministers function in ways that are closer to the community. This argument implies an understanding of ordination (or commissioning) that assumes a separation or isolation from the people of the church. The “set apart” nature of ordering for ministry, in other words, stands in contrast to the “lay” identities of DLM’s. The TICIF Committee believes this to be a misunderstanding of the nature of life time accountability. The United Church’s *Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice for Ministry Personnel* require anyone serving in paid accountable ministry to recognize appropriate boundaries. If Designated Lay Ministers see themselves in a life time commitment to paid accountable ministry, this implies a “set-apartness” that is indistinguishable from ordered ministry.

In summary the TICIF Committee believes that the church’s understandings and practice of Designated Lay Ministry are unsustainable. It does not have the support of many of those whose ministry it defines. There is no clear theological articulation of its distinctiveness from ordered ministry. There is a confusion of the meaning of “lay” in the title. And the implications of the educational requirements have not been assessed for their effect on a church committed to an educated clergy.



The Committee is also clear however that ending designated lay ministry is not the answer. Many pastoral charges across the country depend on the capable and faithful leadership of designated lay ministers. Parts of the country are significantly dependent upon designated lay ministers for leadership in Presbytery. Experience in other denominations suggests that forms of lay ministry emerge in every setting. While professional academically trained clergy provide the majority of leadership in most Protestant churches, greater flexibility in ministry leadership can make an important and significant contribution to the transformation of the church.

The TICIF Committee does believe that it is vitally important to honour the role and place of designated lay ministry in the life of the church in a way that has theological integrity and is functionally appropriate. At the same time the Committee wishes to lift up the importance of academic preparation and training for all who serve in paid accountable ministry particularly at this time in the history of the church.

### **A Proposal for Local Ordination.**

The Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee proposes that consideration be given to the ministry category of local ordination for those who are called to what has previously been known as “lay pastoral ministry.”

Local Ordination is a term that has meaning in some parts of the ecumenical community. It rests in the authority of a local bishop (or council) to ordain into ministry leadership individuals who are acknowledged within their community to have the appropriate charisms for ministry but who are not able, for any number of reasons, to follow traditional educational paths to ordination. Such individuals, for example in the Anglican Church, are licensed to ministry only within their diocese. Their status, in other words, is localized. But their functioning is equivalent to other ordained clergy

The church’s understanding of ordination and formal leadership in the church emerged in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Centuries. The role of Bishop was to preserve the unity of the Body of Christ by bringing together in a common fellowship Christians within a certain area. *Presbyters* was the earliest term given to those who functioned and shared in leadership under the authority of a Bishop, but both functioned within and subject to a community. In the early church, all forms of ministry belonged to the community and ordination was always based in relationship to the community. In other words, all ordination was localized.

The study proposal would involve an exploration of the following considerations, and likely others as identified during the study process:

- A. Local Ordination as a replacement for Designated Lay Ministry for those serving in pastoral ministry. Individuals in preparation would be identified as candidates for local ordination. Completion of the three year study and preparation process currently in place for DLM, would lead to a service of local ordination, enacted by the Conference within the celebration of ministries service. Those so locally ordained would be afforded the full rights and responsibilities of an ordained minister within the United Church of Canada with the following restrictions.

Ministry personnel with local ordination would be limited to call within a home Conference. A transfer process to another conference would have to be undertaken (including interview board processes) in order to be eligible to accept a call in another Conference. Ministry personnel with local ordination would also not be included in mutual recognition agreements with other denominations.

- B. An individually developed educational plan for all candidates seeking local ordination, and an expectation that the candidate would normally continue in educational processes following ordination. On acceptance into the stream, individuals could be assessed for life experience and educational background. This assessment process would be designed to recognize and affirm life experience, education and preparation from other careers and experiences. The intention would be to develop an individual learning plan, over and above the three year program already in place for DLMs. Candidates for local ordination could continue to engage and work at the individual learning plan in order to qualify for unrestricted ordered status. This might be comparable to what used to be called the short course BD degree or perhaps a diploma in theology. The goal would be that all ministry personnel with local ordination be encouraged to engage in learning and preparation for their ongoing practice of ministry and to qualify for an unrestricted ordination status.
- C. An exploration of appropriate forms of supervision. The TICIF Committee believes that supervision should be an integral expectation for all ministry personnel. In this sense supervision needs to be understood as part of an expected component of professional occupations. It represents a basic commitment to growth and competency in a chosen field of work where there is capacity to do harm. The TICIF Committee believes that supervision is an important means of accountability to the community of faith and to God. The study process would need to explore what forms of supervision would be appropriate for local ordination and whether this would differ for those in unrestricted ordered ministry. An additional area of exploration would be how processes of supervision are related to the educational processes.
- D. Further consideration would be given on whether the term Designated Lay Ministry might continue to be used for those in other forms of ministry, for example ministers of music, youth leaders, parish nurses, and so on, and whether the processes of assessment and study should stay the same as now required for Designated Lay Ministry.

The foregoing provides an introduction to the proposed exploration of local ordination. Much might change or be refined through further study and response from the church. With General Council approval the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee would intend to bring proposals concerning local ordination to the 42<sup>nd</sup> General Council 2015.

The Committee has heard strong affirmation from across the church for the importance of ministry formation and the need for careful development of professional leadership. Healthy, faithful and vibrant congregations require competent leadership well trained for the demands of

our time. This proposal suggests that such leadership can and will emerge in many different ways and be nurtured and formed through a variety of educational processes. The goal remains to provide the best leadership possible to the congregations of The United Church of Canada.

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## **Proposal for Diaconal Ministers Authorization for Sacraments**

### **Title: ANW1 – The Granting of the Right to Administer Sacraments to All Diaconal Ministers at the Time of Their Commissioning**

Originating Body: Oyen Pastoral Charge, Coronation Presbytery with concurrence

Financial Implications if known: None

Staffing Implications if known:

Source of Funding if known: N/A

Alberta & Northwest Conference proposes that:

the 41st General Council 2012:

- 1) direct the Executive of General Council to review the current guidelines for the Commissioning of Diaconal Ministers and add the right to administer the sacraments as part of the responsibilities they undertake at their Commissioning; and
- 2) authorize a Category 3 Remit to be sent to presbyteries and pastoral charges to test the will of the church regarding this change.

Background:

Within Ordered Ministry there are two streams of equal value in our denomination, and many Diaconal Ministers currently serve as the sole minister in Pastoral Charges. Even in shared ministry, much of the work of Diaconal Ministers in their ministry of Education, Service and Pastoral Care leads logically into a sharing of the sacraments of communion and baptism.

As part of their preparation for ministry, Diaconal Ministers study the theology and practise of the administration of the sacraments. The current practice where permission is required in some Presbyteries or Conferences for Diaconal Ministers to administer the sacraments is confusing to congregations who are under the impression that The United Church of Canada believes in and demonstrates equality in ministry; it also results in time consuming work at Congregational, Presbytery and Conference levels. As written in 1 Peter 4:10-12 from The Inclusive Bible: “As generous distributors of God’s manifold grace, put your gifts at the service of one another, each

in the measure you have received. The one who speaks should deliver God's message. The one who serves should do so with the strength provided by God, so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, who has been given all glory and dominion throughout the ages. Amen."

Granting Diaconal Ministers the right to administer the sacraments at the time of their commissioning would eliminate inconsistency and confusion, and also uphold the valuing of all members of the Order of Ministry by The United Church of Canada.

Intermediate Court Action:

Transmitted with concurrence by Coronation Presbytery to Alberta & Northwest Conference.  
Transmitted with concurrence by Alberta and Northwest Conference to the 41st Meeting of the General Council.

From the minutes of the Records of Proceeding of General Council 41:

**ANW1 – The Granting of the Right to Administer Sacraments to All Diaconal Ministers at the Time of their Commissioning**

The co-chair shared some of the comments received from Commissioners not in the Orange Commission.

Motion: Sally Boyle/Edison Bardock GC41 2012 - 071

That the 41st General Council 2012 refer ANW1 "The Granting of the Right to Administer Sacraments to all Diaconal Ministers at the Time of their Commissioning" to the Executive of the General Council.

Carried

## Statement on Ministry in The United Church of Canada (2012)

### *The Ministry of All*

The Church is a community of believers (*ecclesia*) called into existence by the presence of Jesus Christ and the call to continue Jesus' ministry in the world. Through the Spirit, who enlivens and renews the church, all members<sup>2</sup> are empowered to share in Christ's ministry, the work of the church. The church is about God's mission in the world, living out the gospel message through action, that there will be shalom for God's creatures and healing for God's creation. Ministry serves God's mission in the world.

The United Church of Canada since its beginning has upheld a central tenet of the Reformation, that the ministry of the church includes the ministry of all the baptized. (1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:9) At various points in its history the church has affirmed that all its members are called to ministry as parts of Christ's body. The ministry of Jesus begins with a community of people. These diverse communities actively participate in God's mission as disciples of Christ's ongoing ministry which takes many forms. The ministry and discipleship of all is reflected in the conciliar structure of the United Church.

The ministry of all seeks to be:

- representational, reflecting the character of Jesus the Christ, who is among us as one who serves;
- relational, originating in God's covenant and modeling mutual acceptance and respect with all creation;
- collaborative, recognizing that the church's life is based in partnership;
- accountable, being exercised on behalf of and therefore with the authority of the faith community;
- prophetic, enabling communities formed by God's Word and Spirit to be living messengers for the reign of God and to resist the powers of evil;
- charismatic, discerning and faithfully using the gifts and charisms of the Spirit for the building up of the church.

The ministry of all takes place as the Spirit moves in known and unknown ways; bringing into the community of faith and sending into the world, the gifts of its people. "For the sake of the world," says *A Song of Faith*, "God calls all followers of Jesus to Christian ministry. To embody God's love in the world, the work of the church requires the ministry and discipleship of all believers."

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<sup>2</sup> Members in this document is used in its broadest understanding as all who choose to identify and participate in the life of the community of faith.

### ***Ministries of Leadership***

“In the church, some are called to specific ministries of leadership, both lay and ordered; some witness to the good news; some uphold the art of worship; some comfort the grieving and guide the wandering; some build up the community of wisdom; some stand with the oppressed and work for justice.”<sup>3</sup>

While all members share in Christ’s ministry, the church from its earliest days has recognized that God calls some to exercise specific gifts of leadership, both paid and voluntary. These ministries of leadership are based in God’s call and therefore serve to remind the community to whom we belong. The capacity to respond to God’s call is tested by the community and is therefore a reminder that these ministries belong to the body of Christ. All forms of leadership in the church are therefore accountable to the community of faith.

These various forms of leadership in the church can be expressed in the following ancient expressions given current meaning:

- enlivening worship and celebration of the sacraments (*leitourgia*);
- interpreting and passing on Christian tradition (*kerygma*);
- responding to the needs of the community and the world (*diakonia*);
- nurturing faith, making the wisdom of the ages relevant for today (*didache*);
- building up the community of faith as the beloved community of God (*koinonia*).
- embodying the presence of Christ in the world (*marturia*).

Such ministries of leadership are all expressions of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. Through these forms of ministry, leaders empower the community and its members to be representational, relational, collaborative, accountable, prophetic and charismatic in character.

The ministry of leadership, both paid and unpaid, is lived out in diverse ways. Some examples are youth ministry, leadership in worship, pastoral visiting, licensed lay worship leaders, community and outreach ministries and the use of new forms of electronic technology.

It is the responsibility of leaders to seek to be humble and authentic, to act with personal integrity and courage, and be passionate for God’s love for creation. All leadership requires adequate preparation and a discipline of spiritual growth and life-long learning. Education and formation need to contribute to awareness of and sensitivity to the contexts of the ministry and the intercultural commitments of the church.

A particular form of a ministry of leadership in the church is found in the oversight responsibilities and authority given to the courts of the church, the Session, or its equivalent, the Presbytery, the Conference and the General Council. In Reformed and specifically in the United Church tradition, the episcopal role of the bishop is shared between the Presbytery and the Conference.

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<sup>3</sup> A song of Faith; 1 Corinthians 12

The decision making structures of the United Church are conciliar, meaning that each court has particular roles and authority. Because of our theology of the ministry of all, all courts of the church include both lay and ordered leadership.

### ***Paid Accountable Ministries of Leadership***

While all members of the church share in Christ's ministry, the Church has from its earliest days recognized that God calls some from within the community through specific gifts to ordered expressions of ministry. The United Church recognizes one order of ministry in two expressions, ordained and diaconal. The church has also recognized the emergence of lay expressions of paid accountable ministry in local and time limited contexts. These include designated lay ministries recognized and accountable to the Presbytery and congregational designated ministries accountable to congregations.

Ordered and those designated lay ministries recognized by the Presbytery, 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, and designated lay ministers while in paid accountable ministry positions, 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 denomination 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. Ordination and commissioning are liturgically enacted at a Conference level.

*Ordained ministers* serve in all aspects of ministry and are formally called to word, sacrament and pastoral care. This involves presiding in worship and sacrament, nurturing and strengthening the beloved community of God, making the wisdom of the ages relevant for today, and being representatives of Christ in the world in seeking justice and wholeness for all of creation.

*Diaconal ministers* serve in all aspects of ministry and are formally called to education, service, social justice, and pastoral care. "Diaconal ministry, rooted in the tradition and history of diakonia, encourages a growing faith, speaks truth to power, seeks mutual empowerment,



proclaims prophetic hope, nurtures life-giving community, and fosters peaceful, right relationship within the church and the whole of creation.”<sup>4</sup>

By virtue of their training and recognition, ordered ministers are representatives of the whole United Church. Their ministry is presbytery accountable. Because of their distinct role of leadership their membership in the United Church resides in a Presbytery throughout their lives. As they are called to ministry and God’s mission in the world, ordered ministers in Presbytery recognized ministries are maintained on the role of Presbytery or may be retained when engaged in other vocational or personal activities. Ordered ministers are entrusted to initiate new forms of ministry, including the possibility of non-stipendiary ministries authorized and accountable to or recognized by presbytery.

*Designated lay ministers* are members of the church called to exercise gifts for leadership in mission and ministry that respond to a need within a local congregation or community ministry. Their ministries are presbytery accountable and dependent on appointment. Designated lay ministers are required to complete an educational program while under appointment, and completion of the program provides eligibility for subsequent appointments. Designated lay ministers function in various aspects of ministry leadership relating to their appointment and they are also members of Presbytery. At the end of an appointment, the Presbytery and Designated Lay Minister discern together questions of ongoing ministry and presbytery membership. Because designated lay ministry is dependent on appointment, it is celebrated (re-enacted) at each appointment. The appointment is liturgically enacted by the presbytery either in a presbytery meeting or in the local ministry.

### ***The Future of Ministry***

The church is about God’s mission in the world. Therefore the Holy Spirit continually calls the church to renew its understanding of ministry opening itself to new expressions that serve the needs of the present day.

In particular, existing paradigms of congregational identity are changing. People no longer maintain formerly expected patterns of participation. The United Church is challenged to re-image the nature of life in the church. As the church has begun to experiment with new expressions of community it will develop a greater variety of forms and models of ministry that will involve all of the people of the church. As the church carries God’s Word into the world in new ways, ministry will be characterized by more collaboration, networking and transparency as well as a variety of educational approaches.

Ministry will be transformed as the church itself is transformed.

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted from the Statement of Vision of Diakonia of The United Church of Canada

## Appendix Four

(Educational streams comparison chart)

<p><b>M.Div. (3 years)</b> (Sample: Emmanuel College)</p>	<p><b>Diploma in Diaconal Ministry</b> (Centre for Christian Studies)</p>	<p><b>Diploma in Aboriginal Ministry</b> (Sandy-Sauteaux Spiritual Centre)</p>	<p><b>Diploma in Designated Lay Ministry</b> (Calling Lakes DLM Program)</p>
<p>3-4 year "residential" program</p>	<p>4-5 year ministry-based program</p>	<p>5 year ministry-based program</p>	<p>3 year ministry-based program</p>
<p>Prerequisite: B.A. or equivalent 30 credits fulltime or part time</p>	<p>Prerequisite: 2 week Leadership Dev. Module</p>	<p>Prerequisite: recommendation from applicant's community</p>	<p>Prerequisite: Licensed Lay Worship Leaders Certificate or equivalent e.g. LDM ; minimum ½ time appointment</p>
<p>Required semester long courses:</p>	<p>Action-reflection model: learning circles</p>	<p>Action-reflection model</p>	<p>Action-reflection model</p>
<p>O.T. 1 &amp; 2 N.T. 1 &amp; 2 History of Christianity 1&amp;2 Theology 1 &amp; 2 Worship Songs of the Church Leadership in Church &amp; Cong. Homiletics 1 Education &amp; Faith Formation Context &amp; Ministry (field placement)</p>	<p>3 Theme Years:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ pastoral care</li> <li>▪ social ministry</li> <li>▪ educational ministry</li> </ul> </p> <p>Each theme year includes:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 2 two-week learning circles</li> <li>▪ 8 months of field learning or placement</li> <li>▪ written assignments</li> </ul> </p>	<p>8 week-long learning circles; 2 back-to-back, 4 times a year</p> <p>Each learning circle is the equivalent of 30 hours classroom time</p> <p>½ time field placement in each of the 5 years</p> <p>Work with a Vision Keeper ("supervisor")</p>	<p>6 learning circles of 10 days each (2 circles offered each year)</p> <p>3 courses taken at a theological school, university or educational centre</p> <p>2 comprehensive ministry papers</p>
<p>Contextual Education Christian Ethics in Context Ministry Seminar Leadership Seminar</p>	<p>8 academic courses taken at an outside institution e.g. VST, St. Andrew's, University of Winnipeg</p>	<p>Cost: Total annual costs for a full time student: \$9,095 plus travel (this includes \$5,720 in tuition, accommodation, and meals)</p>	<p>Cost: \$4,600 per year plus travel</p>
<p>4 Open Electives &amp; 6 Designated Electives in:</p>	<p>An Integrating Year:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 2 two week learning circles</li> <li>▪ written assignments</li> <li>▪ 8-12 hour individual learning plan</li> </ul> </p>		
<p>Bible History, Theology or Ethics Pastoral Care or Education Worship or Homiletics Spirituality Denominational Elective</p>			
<p>Cost: \$564 per course</p>	<p>Cost: LDM \$1,400 Each theme year \$4,850</p>		

**Proposal  
41<sup>st</sup> General Council (2012).  
Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee**

**The Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee proposes that the 41<sup>st</sup> General Council (2012) direct the Executive of General Council to encourage the emergence of *regional team models* of congregational ministries by:**

- 1. Gathering and sharing the experience of regional team models across the church;**
- 2. Calling on Presbyteries to encourage and facilitate the development of regional team models within their bounds;**
- 3. Identifying and addressing structural issues that would facilitate the emergence of regional team models;**
- 4. Examining the implications of and mitigating the negative effects of the growing number of part time ministries in the church.**

**Background**

It is clear that the church is changing and the challenge is not how to resist the changes, but to be faithful in the midst of them. It is important that the church maintain a strong sense of what its purpose is; to be about God's mission in the world; to nurture and support effective ministry that empowers a willingness to risk for God's mission; to reach out in new forms of ministry; and to be truly incarnational of God's presence in the world. In the midst of these challenges, it is important that models of ministry emphasize the widest use of ministry gifts, and that communities of faith value relationships that strengthen and support each other.

The TICIF Committee believes that no one model of ministry will serve the future of the church. There will continue to be congregations that function with full time ministry personnel. Some congregations, relating to their particular geographic contexts, will likely need to be served by alternative forms of ministry including ecumenical shared ministries. Increasingly, some congregations will need to function without ministry personnel at all, as faith communities making use of lay leaders and sacrament elders. New forms of ministry will also emerge, likely with distinctive forms of leadership.

The Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee believes that regional team models will provide an important option for congregational ministry in the future of The United Church of Canada. They offer the potential to use effectively the varied gifts of ministry personnel; they link congregations together in stronger networks of relationship; they provide a means for

smaller congregations to continue ministry; and they nurture and value lay leadership in the life of the church.

### **The Meaning of Ministry Task Group**

The Meaning of Ministry Task Group (2006-2009) was composed of members of the Permanent Committees, Programs for Mission and Ministry, Ministry Employment Policies and Services, the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee and the Executive of General Council. It proposed the “Statement on Paid Accountable Ministry (2009)” to the 40<sup>th</sup> General Council(2009) and as part of its report, made several recommendations to the Executive of General Council. Among its recommendations to the GCE it offered the following:

As the church explores and prepares itself for the emergence of new expressions of ministry, the Task Group is drawn to the importance of using the gifts of ordered and designated ministries in relation to each other. The Task Group affirms the suggestions received in the discernment responses and elsewhere that lift up the possibility of models of congregational structures that involve one Ordered Ministry personnel, or a team of Ordered Ministry personnel working in partnership with Designated Lay Ministers in serving a cluster of congregations. The Task Group believes that this model effectively brings together the specific and appropriate roles and gifts of ordered and designated ministries. The Task Group also believes that the increasing pattern of congregational use of part-time ordered ministry personnel is the major impediment to the exploration of these models, and a significant injustice to ministry personnel. The accompanying proposal requests that further exploration be undertaken on the model and on the implications of restricting the use of part-time ordered ministers in all but exceptional circumstances (where the ministry personnel themselves seek such a position for personal reasons.)

*The (Meaning of Ministry Task Group) ... proposes that the Executive of General Council request that the Permanent Committee, Ministry and Employment Policies and Services and the Permanent Committee, Programs for Mission and Ministry explore options that limit the number of part-time ordained and commissioned ministries in such a way as to encourage the emergence of new models of congregational clusters, including the option of ordered ministry personnel working collaboratively with designated lay ministers in support of a cluster of congregations.*

This proposal was not acted on.

Following the direction of the 40<sup>th</sup> General Council (2009), The Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee (TICIF) undertook further work on the Statement on Ministry and invited responses from across the church to a revised version of the statement. It also invited participation in a Symposium on The Future of Ministry in The United Church of Canada co-sponsored with the 2011 Annual Theology Conference of Queen’s School of Religion. These consultations confirmed the direction of the Meaning of Ministry Task Group and offered further evidence to the TICIF Committee in support of regional team models.

### **The Valuing of Gifts**

Like the Meaning of Ministry Task Group, the TICIF Committee believes that the ongoing challenges in the church over “streams of ministry” has at its roots, a failure to honor the distinctive gifts of each part of the body.

For example, diaconal ministers are trained to work in teams. Diaconal Ministers indicate from their understanding of history that they were required to serve in solo ministry positions by decisions relating to settlement. This was further accentuated by financial challenges which limited the capacity of congregations to support multiple ministry positions. The end result is that most diaconal ministers serve now in solo pastoral ministry positions. The intention of diaconal ministry however, has always been to function in specialized ministries of education, community ministry and pastoral care, collaboratively with ministers of word and sacrament. While the distinctive training and vision of diaconal ministry is still relevant in solo ministry positions and should not be diminished, the vision of diaconal ministry in collaborative relationship to the ministry of word and sacrament is largely lost.

A similar point could be made about designated lay ministry. There are ongoing challenges to the church’s understanding of designated lay ministry that are more fully explained in an accompanying proposal<sup>5</sup>. One emphasis, however, of lay ministry has been the wider engagement of the varied gifts of people with a depth of life experience and alternative education paths. The TICIF Committee believes that lay ministries within the church are meant to function in relationship to ordered ministries, not in a subordinate way, but in a manner that values different gifts and training.

### **Valuing the Church’s Ministry Leadership and Ecclesiology**

The TICIF Committee believes that the church’s future depends on effective and faithful leadership. Congregations need passionate and committed leadership from trained ministry personnel, capable of helping the church respond faithfully to the current context. While the church has always valued an educated clergy, there is no more important time, the committee believes, to value the importance of theological training for ministry leadership. As the Christian memory of church members disappears, and new members come into the church with a very limited understanding of the core of Christian teaching, the role of “resident theologians” becomes increasingly important. Congregations also need access to many other gifts of leadership, the Committee believes, functioning in relationship and collaboration with each other. The present reality is very different. Instead what is evident in the church is an increasing number of part-time ministries in isolated congregations each seeking to employ or call a solo ministry personnel.

The TICIF Committee believes that the increasing number of part time ministries presents significant challenges to the church. It concurs with the Meaning of Ministry Task Group that part-time ministries present a significant injustice to Ministry Personnel. It is the understanding of the Committee that this is also the assessment of the Permanent Committee, Ministry and

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<sup>5</sup> See the proposal from the Theology and InterChurch InterFaith Committee for a study process on “local ordination.”

Employment Policies and Services Committee. TICIF's area of concern however is primarily with the theological and ecclesiological implications of this trend.

The Committee believes that the trend towards part time ministries is a sign of existing and growing congregational isolation. Individual congregations, as they face financial challenges to maintaining full time ministry, move into part time ministry as the preferred direction. With financial pressures growing across the church it seems likely that an increasing number of ministries will be part time, leaving ministry personnel who require full time employment to bring (cobble) together a variety of positions. The assumption behind this, TICIF believes, is that congregations are independent entities without a commitment to a larger identity in relation to neighbouring United Churches. The Methodist understanding of "connexion" is lost as is the importance of Presbytery. TICIF believes that the United Church's theological understanding has always balanced congregational identity with that of the Presbytery. No congregation exists in isolation.

The assumption that the default option to financial challenges is part-time ministry undermines an understanding of the interrelationship of congregations within the Presbytery, and it also further limits the capacity of Ministry Personnel to fulfill their oversight and mission roles in the larger church. More concrete research would be necessary to confirm what appears true to the Committee, that part time ministries restrict the capacity of ministry personnel to give adequate time to both support the mission and ministry of the larger church and to fulfill the governance roles that ministry personnel are required to fulfill within United Church polity. The Committee believes that this will potentially have serious implications for the ecclesial identity of The United Church of Canada.

### **An Alternative Model of Ministry**

The Committee believes that regional teams need to be facilitated as one model of ministry for the future of the church. This concept, which is also called the larger parish model, is widely in use in the British Methodist Church. Similarly, such models are in use in New Zealand, Australia and elsewhere around the world.

It is also being experimented with in a number of Presbyteries throughout the country. In simplified terms it involves a team of ministry personnel serving a larger number of congregations or faith communities. In this team there would be a variety of skills and gifts. The TICIF Committee believes that an academically trained ordered minister should be in every team. This fulfills an expectation that a "resident theologian" should be present and available to every congregation of the church and reflects the desire that is widely held across the church valuing the role of a theologically educated clergy. It might become the expectation that such teams also include a diaconally trained minister representing again the valuing of different gifts in ministry and the focus on faith development and training of lay leaders. The team might function with lay ministry personnel, youth ministers or parish nurses, each bringing their own particular gifts.

A critical component of this larger parish model is that every congregation would also be served by lay worship leaders (including licensed lay worship leaders) and sacrament elders. The model is therefore focused on the support and nurture of lay leadership rather than based on spreading the work of ministry personnel across increasing numbers of congregations. In this model, ministry personnel would not preach at all the points on a Sunday. Rather the distinctive gifts of the ministry team would enable the work of all leaders in the larger parish, allowing different forms of worship to emerge.

The regional model would also provide possibilities for leadership teams to engage actively in new and different forms of ministry and mission. New initiatives that create faith activities or communities, which are not necessarily structured according to a congregational model, could be pursued by a team. As more creative missional endeavours are sought for the future, this might give the necessary space and flexibility.

The TICIF Committee believes that such a model would provide an alternative to the increasingly common occurrence of congregations choosing to close when they can no longer call a paid accountable minister. The Committee notes examples where some congregations are searching for 6-10 hour per week positions. Instead the encouragement would be for such congregations to maintain a community of faith in their present location through the gifts of lay leadership in worship and ministry and supported through connection to a larger parish.

The Committee believes that for the effective functioning of regional team models, supervision and coordination will play a major role. However, it need not be assumed that a supervising role would automatically be filled by an ordered minister. It might be the case that a Designated Lay Minister in the team would carry a much longer history and proven record of effective supervision of a team. In other words, the role of supervision and coordination would be seen from the perspective of the best use of the gifts of the team.

The Committee notes the importance to the church of retired ministers who continue to offer their gifts in ministry, many in part-time positions. It is vitally important that the gifts of retired ministers be honored and used well by the church. Regional team models provide an opportunity to make exceptional use of such ministries. They can provide an opportunity for retired ministry personnel to be mentors in a team relationship to those just entering ministry. They can provide support to lay ministers who need the additional skills and training that retired ministers can often provide. They can function with much greater flexibility in length and focus of service, knowing that they are part of a larger team that will offer stability and continued presence to the community.

The Committee believes that employing regional team models is vitally necessary for the future of the church. However the most significant block to its emergence is the choice of congregations to seek part time ministry leadership and the willingness of Presbyteries to approve these decisions. The TICIF Committee believes that Presbyteries already have sufficient authority to limit the number of part-time ministries and to encourage the development of larger parish models. The Committee also believes that sharing the learnings of experiments with larger parish models can inform Presbyteries and invite them to better use their authority and responsibility for mission and ministry.



There are a number of structural issues that need to be addressed for regional team models to be more widely of use in the church. Among these is the capacity of Presbyteries to be the employer of regional teams, if this is the model of employment that is chosen.

The TICIF Committee recommends therefore that the Executive of General Council take action to ensure that Presbyteries have the legal capacities required to support the development of regional team models.

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