



connex

IMPORTANT UPDATES FROM PC-MEPS

Please circulate to

- ✓ Treasurer
- ✓ M&P Committee
- ✓ Ministry Personnel
- ✓ Lay Employees
- ✓ Presbytery Personnel/E&S Rep.
- ✓ Pension Convenor
- ✓ Church Board/Office

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Office of Vocation

Letting go is a theme in presbyteries, districts, and Conferences across The United Church of Canada right now as the remits reorganizing the denomination, which got such a resounding “yes” vote across the country, are being implemented. Those good ideas from a couple of years ago are now becoming real, and we are grieving the end of the familiar while preparing the way for the new.

Work That Has Been Done and Is to Come

Smoothing the way for the new Office of Vocation are the presbytery and Conference Education and Students committees, Internship and Educational Supervision committees, and Conference Interview Boards. Three pilot Conferences went ahead on the candidacy pathway ironing out wrinkles, smoothing the way for the transition. Six Candidacy Boards and the Council on Learning serving Indigenous Communities of Faith are appointed and being trained.

They will be resourced by the Office of Vocation ministers. (See the Xtra for everyone’s names.)

Pilot Conferences showed an increase in those thinking about ministry coming to discernment events, and more people becoming candidates for commissioning to the diaconal ministry of education, service, and pastoral care; to ordination; and to designated lay ministry. In gratitude to the whole Education and Students network, we anticipate this letting go will bring, in the spring, many folk listening for the Spirit’s call to ministerial leadership. And there is still space for those passionate about supporting ministry formation—Lay Supervision Teams and Circles of Accompaniment, for example.

Separating Responsibilities

We let go of the things that haven’t worked so well in our current accountability system for ministry personnel. Starting January 1, 2019, the place of membership and collegiality will rest in the regional councils, while the place of

accountability about standing will rest with the Office of Vocation.

- Ordered ministry personnel, once ordained and commissioned, remain on the roll of accredited ministry personnel until we die, request a move to the Discontinued Service List (voluntary), or have our names placed on the Discontinued Service List (disciplinary).
- Designated lay ministers may request to remain on the roll of accredited ministry personnel between appointments or following retirement.

Teams of people are offering skilled, consistent, clear, and relational approaches to the oversight and discipline of ministry personnel. The Response Committee, the Remedial Committee, and the Board of Vocation will ensure fair and supportive resolution and adjudication of concerns, freeing regional councils to support “health, joy and excellence in ministry practice” of their ministry personnel.

continued

Office of / Bureau de la vocation

Credentialing

Consistency of credentialing is another area moving to the Office of Vocation. Thank you to Conference Interim Ministry Committees and presbyteries for laying the foundation for this work by designating Intentional Interim Ministers, Educational Supervisors, and chaplains and bringing ministry personnel off the Discontinued Service List through readmission.

A smaller and more flexible governance system is part of the changes. To support the new system, the Office of Vocation has a Standards for Accreditation Committee, which will take the decisions of General Council around mandatory training, redesigning the admission process and other areas, set standards, and ensure quality resources and implementation. The mandatory training for ministry personnel is to ensure well-equipped leaders who can engage communities of faith and other places of service in mission for the future. The Office of Vocation ministers will walk with ministry personnel as together we meet the standards set for effective leadership.

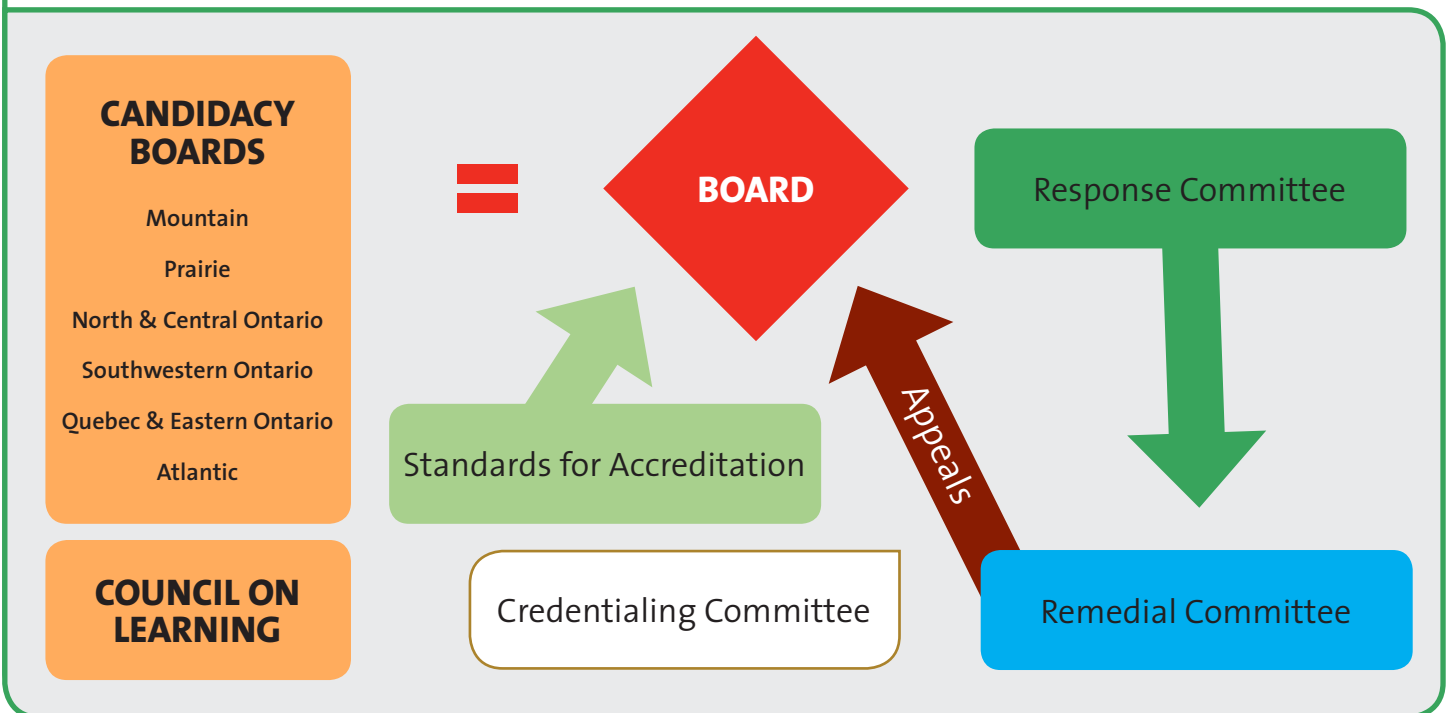
Board of Vocation

The 15-member Board of Vocation elected by the Executive of the General Council and the National Indigenous Council oversees the various aspects of the work assigned to the Office of Vocation. It will approve the standards, hold formal hearings, and be the place to appeal decisions of the Remedial Committee or the Credentialing Committee that are subject to appeal. The Board and appointed members, nominated by Conferences, are living into the intercultural church and braiding with the Indigenous Church as we respond to the Calls to the Church.

Heartfelt Thanks

There is no doubt that letting go of the familiar is painful, especially when we haven't yet caught the vision of the new. More than 80 people are engaged in the work of the Office of Vocation. We give thanks for the pilot Conferences and the work of task groups. We recognize the years of faithful service of many people in the current systems. Thank you for your beauty, for the letting go, for your risking a new way of living out our connection—our love in Christ for one another.

—The Rev. Dr. Jenny Stephens is Team Leader: Policies and Programs for Ministry Personnel at the General Council Office, and the architect and coordinator of the Office of Vocation.



2019 Benefits Premiums: Yes, Some Rates Are Going Up

In an effort to manage payroll costs and to provide the best mix of benefits that are affordable to members and employers, we were able to reduce the assessed rates on a temporary basis in 2015 by drawing on reserves to reduce premiums by 20 percent.

Year	2009-2014	2015-2017	2018	2019
Rate (% of Pensionable Earnings)	5.15% (except EFAP)	4.30% (including 0.19% EFAP)	4.59% (including 0.20% EFAP)	4.98% (including 0.22% EFAP)

Over that period, the reserves were drawn down from \$31 million to \$22 million. With a target reserve of \$10 million, a decision was made to begin moving back to charging rates based on actual plan costs. In 2018, rates increased by 6.5 percent. Based on the current reserve estimates (\$19 million), the rates for 2019 must increase by 8.5 percent.

Benefit Category	Rate for 2018	New Rate for 2019
Restorative Care Plan (employer paid): EN22	0.95%	1.03%
Employer Indemnity (employer paid): EN23	0.10%	0.11%
Pension Contributions (employer paid): EN26	Unchanged 9.0%	Unchanged
BASIC Benefits, incl. health and dental, life insurance (employer paid): EN27	4.59%	4.98%
Pension Contributions (employee paid): DN02	Unchanged 6.0%	Unchanged
Long Term Disability (employee paid): DN19	2.666%	2.893%
Optional Life (employee paid): DN22	Unchanged (As per the Rate Table)	Unchanged
Optional Spousal Life (employee paid): DN23	Unchanged (As per the Rate Table)	Unchanged
Optional AD&D (employee paid): DN24		
Single: for each \$10,000 of volume	\$0.30	Unchanged
Family: for each \$10,000 of volume	\$0.50	Unchanged
Optional Health and Dental (employee paid): DN25	Monthly	Monthly
Single	\$38.36	\$41.62
Family	\$109.26	\$118.55
Pensioner Health and Dental (deducted from pension)	Monthly	Monthly
Single	\$50.84	\$55.16
Family	\$102.55	\$111.27



STRAIGHT TALK about Our Pension Plan



Good news! A valuation of our pension plan's assets and liabilities as of the end of 2017 shows a surplus of 16 percent on a solvency basis! Strong stock market results boosted asset values, while modest increases to interest rates have kept liabilities in check. Investment returns are important to the plan's financial health given that 72 percent of the total \$67 million in pensions paid out in 2017 came from investment returns. One reason for this is that only about 37 percent of plan members are actively contributing (the rest are either retired or have terminated employment).

While the funded position of the plan at the end of last year is good news, the Pension Board is looking at it with caution, particularly given the recent dip in stock markets and some observers' predictions of a continued market downturn.

Following an intensive study of the plan's sustainability, the Pension Board recently received a report that highlighted the concern that when (not if) the next

significant market downturn happens, the plan has few options for covering any deficit that might result. Normally, a plan has two options for recovering from a funding deficit: reduce benefits, or increase contributions. These are likely not options for our plan. Some provinces restrict or prohibit benefit reductions; since we have members all across Canada, we wouldn't be able to reduce benefits equally for all members. As for contributions, we are doubtful that members and employers could absorb substantial contribution increases. For these reasons, our plan has less ability to cover deficits than many other plans.

These circumstances, coupled with increasing numbers of retired members and decreasing numbers of active contributing members and employers, demand caution when viewing the surplus position of the pension plan at the end of last year.

While the Board shares the desire of some members to use surplus to increase benefits, it must also be concerned with protecting existing benefits. These issues require a delicate balance. Further updates will be provided to members as circumstances evolve.



COMPENSATION AND PAYROLL

— Treasurers and Year-End

Information on year-end was e-mailed to all treasurers in November. Everything is now online; search www.united-church.ca for "Pastoral Charge Payroll."

Updated payroll forms are always online and will be the only ones accepted by ADP starting January 2019.

If you would like a hardcopy of year-end information or payroll forms, e-mail payroll@united-church.ca, or call 800-268-3871, ext. 3132 or 2757.

Connex is the newsletter of the Permanent Committee on Ministry and Employment Policies and Services (PC-MEPS), the Ministry and Employment unit at General Council Office, and The Pension Plan of The United Church of Canada.

United Church Benefits Centre: 1-855-647-8222

(update personal information; start pension)

Benefits@united-church.ca

Disability@united-church.ca

Pension@united-church.ca

Green Shield Canada: 1-888-711-1119 greenshield.ca
(questions on coverage for health and dental; online tools; reminders)

Pastoral Charge Payroll Service: 1-800-268-3781,
ext. 3132 or 2757 payroll@united-church.ca

Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP): Confidential, 24/7
1-800-387-4765 (English), 1-800-361-5676 (français) shepell.com

Ministry and Employment unit at GCO: 1-800-268-3781
MinistryandEmployment@united-church.ca



Office of / Bureau de la vocation

Elected and Appointed Members Involved in the Office of Vocation

Board of Vocation

Norm Seli (OM), Pickering, ON (Chair)
Mark Green (DM), Victoria, BC
Andrew Kinoti Lairenge (OM), Vermilion, AB
Darrell Reine (DLM), Regina, SK
Moses Kanhai (Lay), Regina, SK
Mary-Jo Eckert Tracy (OM), Spring Bay, ON
Judy Zarubick (DLM), Kincardine, ON
Sungmin Jung (OM), Barrie, ON
Jean Bethune (Lay), Hamilton, ON
Debra Kigar (DM), Burlington, ON
Hewitt Holmes (OM), Barrie, ON
Darla Sloan (OM), Québec, QC
Natasha Pearen (OM), Amherst, NS
Sandra Brooks (Lay), Duncan, BC
Eileen Antone (Lay), Southwold, ON

Office of Vocation Ministers

Brenda Fawkes (OM)
Karen Medland (OM)
Marlene Britton (DM)
Tanya Cameron (Lay)
Karen Valley (Lay)
Andrew Richardson (OM)
Susan Beaver (OM)
Will Kunder (OM)

Regional Council

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Indigenous Church
Indigenous Church

Mountain
Prairie
North & Central Ontario
Southwestern Ontario
Quebec & Eastern Ontario
Atlantic
Job share supporting Indigenous Church

Standards Committee

T. Murray Speer (OM), Banff, AB
Kathleen James-Cavan (OM), Saskatoon, SK
SunDo Hyun (OM), Radville, SK
Deborah Deavu (DM), Cambridge, ON
Maya Douglas (OM), Toronto, ON
Marie-Beth Wright (Lay), St. John's, NL

Response Committee

Beth Bourke (Lay), Victoria, BC
Anna Constantin (OM), Edmonton, AB
Bryon Delarue (Lay), Calgary, AB
Sheryl McLeod (OM), Almonte, ON
Edward F. Barbezat (OM), Ottawa, ON
Stéphane Godbout (célébrant laïque), Montréal, QC

Remedial Committee

Mollie Williams (OM), White Rock, BC
Jo Ann Silcox (Lay), London, ON
Mary Elizabeth Piercy (DM), Nottawa, ON
Thérèse Samuel (OM), Thornbury, ON
Etienne LeSage (OM), Hamilton, ON

Credentialing Committee

Wanda Burse (OM), Blenheim, ON
Pegi Ridout (OM), Hamilton, ON
Eleanor Scarlett (OM), Brampton, ON
Blair Lewis (OM), Bathurst, NB
Sherpherd Munikwa (OM), Carmenville, NL



Candidacy Boards

Mountain

	Regional Council
Laura J. Turnbull (OM), Penticton, BC	1
Heidi Koschreck (OM), Victoria, BC	1
Murray Groom (OM), Shawnigan Lake, BC	1
Leenane Shiels (OM), Pitt Meadows, BC	1
Vicki McPhee (DM), Calgary, AB	3

Prairie

Adam Hall (OM), Tofield, AB	2
Wayne Youngward (Lay), Edmonton, AB	2
Brian Mee (OM), Lemberg, SK	4
Shirley Goodrich (Lay), Meacham, SK	4
E. Lynn Bayne (Lay), Saskatoon, SK	4
Pamela Thomas (OM), Regina, SK	4
Rob Smith (Lay), Pinawa, MB	5

North & Central Ontario

Eun-Joo Park (OM), Sault Ste. Marie, ON	6
Jane Graham (Lay), Blind River, ON	6
Daniel Benson (OM), Toronto, ON	10
Linda Butler (OM), Richmond Hill, ON	10

Southwestern Ontario

Wendy Noble (OM), London, ON	7
Paul Vollick (DLM), London, ON	7
Emmanuel Kwadwo Ofori (OM), St. Thomas, ON	7
Gerry Hofstetter (OM), Southampton, ON	8
Laurie O'Leary (OM), London, ON	8
Anita Spiller (OM), Vineland Station, ON	9

Quebec & Eastern Ontario

	Regional Council
Michelle Brotherton (OM), Bowmanville, ON	11
Marybeth Wilson (OM), Haliburton, ON	11
Denise Boyd (DLM), Little Britain, ON	11
Blair Paterson (OM), South Mountain, ON	12
Marc Grenon (Lay), Saint-Ignace-de-Stanbridge, QC	13
Lee Ann Hogle (OM), Magog, QC	13
Read Sherman (OM), Montréal, QC	13
Natalie Istead (OM), Wakefield, La Pêche, QC	13
Edwige Affaa (Laique), Gatineau, QC	12

Atlantic

Yvette Swan (OM), Taymouth, NB	14
Jane Johnson (OM), New Maryland, NB	14
Sheila Gallant (Lay), Grand Tracadie, PE	14
Elizabeth Stevenson (OM), Kingston, NB	14
Catherine Stuart (OM), Bedeque, PE	14
Margaret-Ann Plant (DLM), Inverness, NS	15
Kevin Cox (OM), Timberlea, NS	15
Sally Shaw (OM), Bedford, NS	15
Simbarashe Mazhara (OM), Gambo, NL	16
Ettie Gordon-Murray (OM), St. John's, NL	16
Brenda Andrews (Lay), Mount Pearl, NL	16

Council on Learning

Provisional Indigenous Candidacy Board

John Thompson (OM), Oxford House, MB	Indigenous Church
Gloria Cook (Lay), Koostatak, MB	Indigenous Church
Grafton Antone (OM), Southwold, ON	Indigenous Church
Evan Smith (OM), Toronto, ON	Indigenous Church
Dallas Saulteaux (Lay), Regina, SK	Indigenous Church

For more information on the regions, see www.united-church.ca/news/final-report-regional-council-boundaries.