

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ON EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND HEALTHY PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS

What is this proposal about?

Based on several months of additional consultation and focus groups with the wider Church, the Permanent Committee on Ministry and Employment Policies and Services has revised the proposal for recommended changes to pastoral relations and oversight and discipline processes.

The purpose of this proposal is to redirect the time, energy and gifts of leaders in both the presbytery and the pastoral charge to focus on nurturing and strengthening the mission life of congregations and other local ministries while also enhancing the support for the effectiveness of ministry personnel and the health of pastoral relationships.

What are the significant changes made to this report?

The feedback and wisdom received from across the country has resulted in several key changes to the report:

- The revised report provides more description of the model while emphasizing flexibility and latitude for Conferences to adapt the model to their specific contexts and circumstances.
- A revised ratio of one Regional Minister to 55 active ministry personnel or equivalent of 30 Regional Ministers
- Revised proposal for funding strategies
- Includes an evidence-based evaluation model for implementation

Why an increase from 14 staff members to 30 Regional Ministers in this proposal?

Through the consultation with ministry personnel and the feedback received from the online survey, there was substantive opinion on the recommendation for new staff members at the court of the Conference. Respondents recognized the value of additional staff to assist with the increasingly complex and onerous requirements of pastoral relations work even though they were conflicted on if and how the church can afford additional staff positions. Despite the funding implications, a common concern was that the ratio of one to seventy-five active ministry personnel was too high. If this model was adopted, it would have to have a smaller ratio of staff to ministry personnel.

This model proposes a staff-based delivery of pastoral relations support located at the Conference. Deployment of this staff to presbyteries or regions would be at the discretion of the Conference. If adopted, it is estimated that a Regional Minister would be required for at least fifty-five active ministry personnel. This is based on the experience of other denominations with staff-based oversight of ministry personnel. This new Regional Minister would report to the Executive Secretary of the Conference and would not retain any decision-making authority on pastoral relations matters.

Why are you being asked to consider this proposal?

In May, 2012, the Executive of the General Council directed that consideration be given to moving some or all of the pastoral relations function to the Conference. Extensive research and

consultation across the church over six years revealed several common concerns about the present model of pastoral relations:

- Volunteer capacity (time and training) in managing employment issues
- Effectiveness of oversight and discipline practices
- Sustainability of the current model given the increasing complexity of legal employment and human rights issues that are challenging for volunteers
- Potential conflict of peers conducting oversight
- Need for more collegiality and support for local and regional mission and ministry

The evidence indicated that volunteer-based support and oversight of pastoral relationships and of ministry personnel through the presbytery or congregation is increasingly often not adequate to meet the standards of due diligence, consistency, justice and accountability that are required. Furthermore, the current model discourages collegiality and drains people of time and resources to devote to relationship building. This proposal seeks to simplify pastoral relations policies, allowing them to respond to the unique geographic, cultural and linguistic characteristics of local ministries.

What are the opportunities and implications of this proposal?

There are opportunities in this proposal for ministry personnel to grow in collegial relationships outside of the direct responsibility of oversight for their peers. Lay members of the United Church would have an opportunity to experience presbytery as a body focussed on mission, rather than the practicality of pastoral relations. While these needs of the church would still exist at the Conference level, the responsibilities could be carried out in a way that contextually suits the Conference and does not require so much volunteer time. This proposal offers a significant amount of flexibility to Conference and presbyteries in choosing how they want to live out God's mission in their context.

With these changes there will be a consistency, quality, and timeliness that will free volunteer hours for focus on the life and mission of the pastoral charge and presbytery. Search and selection processes would proceed more efficiently, and with professional support. Regular assessment and review of ministry personnel by trained staff would better ensure that ministry personnel are supported and are accountable to their calling. Presbyteries would have the opportunity to embrace pastoral care, collegiality and share mission and ministry.

Proposal:

It is proposed that the Executive of the General Council:

1. receive the report
2. recommend to the 41st General Council the adoption of the principles that:
 - a. the pastoral charge and the presbytery be accountable for the discernment and articulation of mission and ministry leadership needs, and the support and nurture of pastoral relationships and ministry personnel;
 - b. the Conference be accountable for the pastoral relations processes related to placement, oversight and discipline;
3. be authorized to establish procedural policies for these principles that:

- i. are flexible (are adaptable according to context)?
 - ii. acknowledge the need for accountable staff
 - iii. are supported by sustainable funding
 - iv. include opportunities for testing portions of implementation
 - v. are authorized within the context of the larger comprehensive review of governance, staff and program structure
4. recommend to the 41st General Council 2012 that category 2 remits be authorized to test the will of the church to move pastoral relations processes related to placement, oversight and discipline to the Conference.