

# Thinking about One Order of Ministry

A Concept Paper from the Joint Ministry Working Group

May 2014

The Joint Ministry Working Group invites responses to “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, diaconal ministers, and ordained ministers as all part of one order of ministry while acknowledging several paths of educational preparation.

## Why this proposal?

The Joint Ministry Working Group has been appointed by the Permanent Committee, Ministry and Employment Policies and Services (MEPS) and the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee (TICIF) to explore a number of critical issues related to paid accountable ministry.

At the heart of these issues is the identity and functioning (as expressed in the Statement on Ministry, 2012), of

- designated lay ministers, who “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”;
- diaconal ministers, who “serve in all aspects of ministry and are formally called to education, service, social justice, and pastoral care”;
- ordained ministers, who “serve in all aspects of ministry and are formally called to word, sacrament, and pastoral care”; and
- paid staff in other forms of lay ministry.

Specifically, the central question that this proposal seeks to address is: What forms of ministry will faithfully and effectively serve the life of the church into the future? Related to this are questions of theology: Do our definitions and expressions of ministry have theological integrity? Can we explain them theologically to ourselves and to others? There are questions of practice and polity: Given that most ministry personnel in all of the streams are called or appointed to the same function (i.e., solo pastoral ministry), do members of congregations understand the differences between the various expressions of ministry and find them meaningful? Can candidacy processes adequately differentiate the various streams of ministry? And, finally, a critical issue for the working group: What forms of educational preparation are required for ministry leadership in the church today and into the future?

The Statement on Ministry was developed as a mechanism to focus the church’s thinking and theological articulation of ministry. It was designed to be a work in progress that has already had two versions (2009 and 2012) and will likely be revised again. (It reflects, in other words, a Reformed understanding of theology, continuously evolving and reforming.) The processes that led to the first version of the statement (The Meaning of Ministry Task Group, 2006–2009) clearly revealed the difficulties the church has in differentiating the various expressions of ministry. This task group struggled to give adequate definition to the streams and found particular difficulty in expressing the church’s differentiation between designated lay ministry and ordained ministry. It noted the challenge in defining “lay” in the DLM category and particularly had difficulty with definitions that emphasized a closer relationship to people than those who were commissioned or ordained. Of greater concern is the clear statement of many

designated lay ministers that the current definition does not represent their self-understanding and that many find the name itself unacceptable.

In the current process (2012–2015), the working group also feels challenged to differentiate the three streams of ministry, particularly given the request that diaconal ministers be afforded sacramental authority as a rite of commissioning. While there are possible distinctions in emphasis and in training, and certainly in the intentional identification with the worldwide diakonia movement for diaconal ministers, the working group has difficulty in articulating functional and theological differences between the ordained and diaconal ministries as they live out their ministry in The United Church of Canada today. It particularly had difficulty with anecdotal assumptions both of ordination in comparison to commissioning (ordination focused on power and authority in comparison to diaconal commitments to mutuality and empowerment) and of diaconal ministry (as lacking theological depth or missing the skills for overall congregational leadership).

The working group also noted the importance of considering what forms of educational preparation are required for effective leadership in paid accountable ministry today and for the future. It believes that the inability to effectively differentiate commissioned/ordained and designated lay ministry will ultimately situate the DLM program as the basic level of educational preparation for ministry. While the working group believes that there needs to be a variety of educational paths to ministry leadership, it argues, in the following proposal, that there needs to be a basic equivalency between these levels.

Finally the working group believes that a simpler, more transparent and understandable order of paid accountable ministry will best serve the future of the church.

In response to these issues, the working group offers this proposal for “one order of ministry.” It does so recognizing the difficult implications that it raises, both internally and ecumenically, and the challenge of relinquishing some respected and cherished understandings. Because of this it offered a first round of consultation on the concept paper. Respondents to the initial consultation generated a full of range responses, from “no,” “absolutely not,” to “it is about time,” even an emphatic “yes!” People noted the difficulty of letting go of traditional language around ministry and of losing established ways of expressing one’s self-identity associated with ordination, commissioning to diaconal ministry, and recognition of current designated lay ministers. At the same time, members and ministry personnel across the church repeatedly expressed great dissatisfaction with our present articulations of vocational ministry and the three streams.

The Joint Ministry Working Group now offers this next-version paper for consideration and discussion. The intention is to prepare a report for the 42nd General Council, which, depending on the directions emerging from the Comprehensive Review, may propose action or invite further study.

## One Order of Ministry

*“The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way unto him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love.”* Ephesians 4:11–16 (NRSV)

*“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All of these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.”* 1 Corinthians 12:4–11 (NRSV)

The scripture passages above point to a number of issues concerning the vocation of ministry within The United Church of Canada. The working group believes that the current complexity of the “streams” of paid accountable ministry within the church does not reflect the fundamental unity of all ministry. Our current complexity is not understood within the church itself, nor, the working group believes, will it serve the needs of the church for a new time even if we could agree to language that would fully articulate the current distinctions. The working group also believes that it is critical at this time for the church to maintain an educated paid accountable ministry capable of equipping people to live out their faith in meaningful, loving, and mature ways.

The Statement on Ministry (2012), which continues to be a work in progress, attempts to provide a theological reference point for understanding ministry in The United Church of Canada. It outlines in three sections: the Ministry of All (the ministry of the whole people of God); Ministries of Leadership (those both paid and unpaid, who serve in many aspects of oversight and leadership in the church); and Paid Accountable Ministries of Leadership (those who are called to designated lay, diaconal, or ordained ministries.)

The Joint Ministry Working Group’s focus is on the section related to paid accountable ministry. It was tasked to examine two proposals directed to it by the 41st General Council (2012). The first of these issues 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. The second involves a proposal for the sacramental authorization of diaconal ministers as a rite of commissioning. It determined that a critical underlying issue present in both assignments is the church’s understanding of its current 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 present in designated lay ministers serving in pastoral ministry in ways indistinguishable from ordained ministry. Many DLM

personnel speak of their lifetime 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 the option for lifetime membership in presbytery to those retiring designated lay ministers who request it.

The working group heard and agreed with challenges to the concept of local ordination; particularly that the “local” in local ordination was not clear or enforceable. It also noted concern over the differences in educational preparation for designated lay ministry and ordered ministry. It believes that a basic equivalency in educational preparation should be required for all who serve in direct leadership of congregations and communities of faith.

In choosing not to proceed further with an exploration of local ordination, the working group notes there is a basic consistency between the concept of local ordination and the proposal for “one order” of ministry. In both, designated lay ministers serving in pastoral ministry are entered into the ordered ministry of the church. The current recommendation expands the educational expectations from those implicit in the local ordination proposal.

In responding to the proposal for authorizing diaconal ministers for the sacraments as a rite of their commissioning, the working group noted that a large majority of diaconal ministers are serving in pastoral ministry roles, often as solo paid accountable ministers, in ways that are functionally indistinguishable from ordained ministers. While the training and commitment of diaconal ministers is focused on teaming and mutuality in ministry, their opportunities to serve in team ministry positions within the United Church are limited (and dwindling). Other diaconal ministers serve in community ministries where sacramental actions, such as gathering around the common table in communion, or being able to baptize individuals when serving in a housing or health-care facility as a chaplain or outreach minister, are important options within worship experiences in those settings.

The Joint Ministry Working Group noted that the Statement on Ministry chose not to distinguish between streams of ministry by sacramental authority. It did so because of the long-established patterns in the church of extending authorization for sacramental ministry to those in many forms of pastoral leadership, including, most recently, sacraments elders. While authorization for sacraments for all those who are not in ordained ministry is still required, the practice of almost universal approval in most Conferences, particularly for diaconal and designated lay ministers in solo pastoral ministry, suggests that the church has moved well beyond the more traditional understanding that authority for the sacraments resides solely with the ordained ministry. For this reason, the working group believes that authorization for sacramental ministries should be extended to diaconal ministers as a rite of commissioning. However, such a position raises challenges in distinguishing diaconal and ordained ministry.

The working group acknowledges that diaconal ministry is more than a question of what functions are performed. The Working Group on Diaconal Ministry, which recently reported on [Future Directions for Diaconal Ministries](#) to the Permanent Committee on Ministry and Employment Policies and Services, noted that educational formation for the diakonia emphasizes teaming, mutuality, and non-hierarchical style, with commitment to justice, diversity, and at its heart a rootedness in community and transformation. The report affirmed that “while these characteristics are not exclusive to diaconal ministry, they are characteristics explicitly associated with a diaconal identity and approach to the practice of ministry.”

The long ecumenical history of the diakonia, its foundations in the scriptures and in the early church, and its ongoing support within the United Church suggested to the working group that a diaconal option and emphasis in both study and function should continue in some form.

The work of the Comprehensive Review Task Group nevertheless reinforces the reality that we will be a much different church in the future. We will likely be smaller, possibly more congregational, and will need to be more effective in our use of resources. We must be more open to diversity while greatly simplifying our structures and our polity. This proposal for “one order of ministry” represents the desire of the working group to prepare the ministry of the church for such a future.

The Statement on Ministry, in its closing section, affirms that “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,” it suggests that “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.”

The Joint Ministry Working Group therefore has turned to the consideration of a single order of ministry.

It asks the United Church to consider an understanding of ministry that no longer uses the categories of ordination, commissioning, and recognition. Can the church admit to a single order of ministry those candidates for ministry leadership who have qualified through multiple entry points of equivalent educational preparation? This proposal therefore begins with what the working group believes is the critical issue underlying the varied streams of ministry in the church.

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

An important concern in the exploration of one order of ministry is the question, “What educational requirements are necessary for paid accountable leadership?”

The working group believes that 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 believes that there are options already existing within the church that represent the approximate level of equivalency that is desired. In particular, in the [Comparison of Education Programs for Ministry](#), the committee notes the basic time equivalency between the various Master of Divinity (M.Div.) programs, the Centre for Christian Studies (CCS) program, and the Sandy-Saulteaux models. The CCS and the Sandy-Saulteaux models provide for four- to five-year non-residential programs based on learning circles and both grant a diploma on graduation. M.Div. programs are also available throughout the church in a variety of formats from distance learning programs to the more traditional three-year residential models. Part of the requirement for ordination for M.Div. students includes an

internship of eight months (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 part-time employment. The end result is that these two streams and the M.Div. stream require a similar amount of time in preparation and are approximately equivalent in personal financial cost. The somewhat greater cost of the residential M.Div. program (primarily from forgone earning while in full-time studies) is offset by the gaining of an academic degree and its significance for further studies.

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 it addresses specifically 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 Designated Lay Ministry program currently requires three years of non-residential theological education, in residential learning circles and in supervised ministry education (supervision) while in appointments of at least 50% time. In addition, students are required to take three additional university-level courses.

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 modelling it on the Sandy-Saulteaux or Centre for Christian Studies program, or the lay and summer distance programs of other schools.

The current Designated Lay Ministry program, under this proposal, would therefore need to be renamed, possibly lodged within an existing theological institution, and expanded into a five-year model. The working group wonders about the terminology of a “Diploma in Pastoral Ministry” and for the sake of clarity will use that term in the remainder of this paper.

Consideration of competency-based educational models that are currently underway throughout North America and in the United Church can also provide further opportunities to explore the meaning of equivalency in educational expectations. Competency models are based in fulfilling learning outcomes through assessment of core competencies rather than completion of degree or diploma course work. While most colleges and centres employ learning outcomes in the design of their curricula, there is increased movement in some denominations away from assessing fitness for ministry through completion of a degree or diploma toward denominational assessment of competencies. Several United Church institutions already employ competency-based assessments in parts of their curricula. The Formation for Faithful Ministry Working Group is responsible for the further development of competency-based assessments for ministry leadership in the United Church and is preparing to test such a model.

The implementation of competency-based assessment for authorization for ministry would not necessarily replace the M.Div. degree or the diploma options. Instead, any shift toward a competency-based model would likely be evolutionary, with degree and diploma studies remaining as one path of preparation for

the competency assessment. However it would provide a mechanism for assessing and valuing alternative forms of education and life experience.

The Joint Ministry Working Group acknowledges that the proposal for one order of ministry will likely lead toward a greater convergence of theological schools and training for ministry. While continuing to uphold the M.Div. as the traditional standard for congregational ministry leadership, it is also possible, given the transitions that seem inevitable in the social context, that initiatives such as a Diploma in Pastoral Ministry might, in the future, become the primary entry point for ministry leadership. Therefore, the working group has explored several questions:

First, what should be the prerequisite for entrance into a Diploma in Pastoral Ministry stream? Or, in other words, what will be the minimum prerequisite for beginning studies toward ministry leadership in the United Church?

Currently there are four prerequisite options for entry into the Designated Lay Ministry Program.\* The working group wonders if one year of university studies within an established undergraduate program should also be an expectation for all entering into ministry leadership in the United Church. The working group argues that a commitment to lifelong learning is required for effective ministry. It believes that completion of (at least) a first-year level of university study would be a minimum indication of capacity and discipline necessary for such a commitment. A first-year university program would also provide a basic introduction to humanities as a prerequisite for the Diploma in Pastoral Ministry study. The working group expects that the First Nations community would continue to establish its own prerequisite requirements in order to best suit the needs of First Nations communities.

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, in the diploma program, this should be expanded to eight courses (such as that required by the CCS program) to ensure that there is deeper connection with candidates of all educational streams into the experience of theological studies and its interrelationship with critical thinking around mission and ministry. It also notes that a wide range of courses are now available through online options.

### **Time Limit**

Not all candidates for ministry in the various programs of study complete their courses 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 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.*

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\* One of the following: 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.

## **Societies 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 affirms the continuation of the existing network of diaconal 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 worldwide movement of diakonia. The working group believes that this model might be extended to other expressions of the crafts of ministry such as preaching, chaplaincy, or theology, to name only three others. The intention in all of these societies would be to care for and nurture the best and faithful practices of ministry.

## **Students for the Order of Ministry**

The working group notes that it has become a common practice for many students 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 students/candidates who are appointed into paid accountable leadership that affirms their status and acknowledges their ongoing journey toward ordered ministry. One possibility is to use the simple language of *candidate* or some other term 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 in this way. 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).

## **Staff Associate Positions**

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 has heard and accepted that the grouping of this broad collection of paid accountable positions into one category has not been satisfactory for most of the personnel. It believes that the proposal for one order of ministry addresses the challenges in the situation of designated lay ministers serving in solo pastoral ministry who are responding to a lifelong call to the vocation of ministry that is not limited to a specific place and time. It wonders about a return to a familiar language and practice for those who were formerly called staff associates. The further implication of this proposal would be that “congregational designated ministry” would end and be subsumed into the staff associate category.

The emphasis in this category of ministry would be on “associate.” In other words, those functioning in a staff associate position would always be understood to be functioning in association (or on a team) with an order of ministry (or candidate) person. Staff associates would continue to be lay persons, meaning that their membership would continue to reside in a congregation and the call and definition of their work would be focused and limited to that local ministry.

In the current terminology, these positions would also be congregationally designated positions, or those employed and accountable to the congregation. While these positions will need to meet standards of 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 “staff associate position” and would be the place of discipline if required.

The working group notes that the majority of staff associates will be congregationally 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 “staff associate” 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. For this reason, the working group has chosen not to include such a category.

The working group wonders, therefore, how best to address this concern and whether the category of “staff associate” is adequate to include all the varieties of lay ministries present in the church? Should such specialized ministries and their educational requirements be included in the ordered ministry of the church? The working group is also aware of the limitations of this model in addressing the situation of staff associates functioning in presbytery-accountable and presbytery-recognized ministries.

### **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. Under our current court structure, paid accountable positions would look like this:

<b>Staff Associate</b>	<b>Order of Ministry (Candidate)</b>	<b>Order of Ministry</b>
Congregationally 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 unit with supervision by an ordered minister	Team or solo leadership in congregation or ministry unit

The working group recognizes that lay leaders have served and will continue to serve the 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.

In this model, a lay leader or staff associate who feels called to broader, longer-term ministry leadership to the church would be required to apply to the order of ministry before appointment. 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 solo ministry leadership in a community of faith would be on a journey toward, or have achieved an equivalency in, educational preparation and be committed to formal lifelong learning. 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 lifelong learning and continuing preparation for more effective ministry leadership. For someone in early or mid-life, 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.

If a person has gifts for some aspects of ministry but is not able to or chooses not to enter into one of the educational streams, then the working group would encourage that his or her gifts for ministry be used either in a staff associate role or possibly in a regional team model. This model is outlined separately, and offers an important option for ensuring that the varied gifts of ministry are available and effectively used for the ministry of the church.

The working group has been in conversation with the Comprehensive Review Task Group and recognizes that the current structures of the church might change dramatically in the future. It believes that this proposal can be adapted to whatever structure the church ultimately adopts. What this proposal offers, the working group believes, is theological integrity and simplicity in structure and understanding.

### **Language of Admittance to the Order of Ministry**

The language of admittance to the order of ministry is symbolically important and carries a depth of history and meaning. It is important to remember that “commissioning” has only recently been employed within the United Church. The language of “ordered” and “one order of ministry with two expressions” has also developed coincident with the practice of commissioning.

The working group believes that appropriate language can be developed. For example, a possibility for the formal words of blessing spoken by the president / speaker of Conference during the laying on of hands could be as follows:

*“Bless your servant....and confirm by your Spirit her/his call to the Order of Ministry of The United Church of Canada within the Holy Catholic Church.*

And the words of welcome: *“On behalf of the....Conference I declare that you are admitted to the order of ministry of The United Church of Canada. May God bless you in the ministry of word, sacrament, pastoral care, and education.”*

### **Ecumenical Concerns**

There are many different expressions of ministry across the global Christian community. The language of “ordination” is, however, widely used and accepted throughout the World Council of Churches family. The 1982 Faith and Order document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM) speaks of ordination as the

common terminology for recognition of the priestly ministry of the church. A record or certification of ordination, for example, is also required for appointment to hospital, armed forces, and correction services chaplaincy. In these circumstances, and as the United Church moves into mutual recognition of ministry agreements with other denominations, the church will need to be able to confirm its understanding that the “ordered” ministry of the United Church is equivalent with the ordained ministry as understood ecumenically.

The working group believes that this will be accomplished by an affirmation of the United Church that the ordered ministry of the church is consistent with the ecumenical understanding of ordination, and that ordered ministers are admitted by the laying on of hands, the invocation of the Holy Spirit (*epiklesis*), by sacramental sign and action and acknowledgement of gifts and commitment (as indicated by the BEM document.)

### **Options for Further Consideration**

In this proposal, “diaconal” ministers would continue to identify themselves as members of the diakonia, which they would be by virtue of membership in the diaconal network or society (DUCC or a successor organization). Within this model the DUCC could establish criteria for membership based on educational preparation and values in ministry, and perhaps establish a formal admissions process. In other words, order of ministry personnel who are members of the diakonia would be able to continue to identify themselves as diaconal ministers.

Designated lay ministers would no longer be “lay,” but the working group believes that this change is in fact an accurate description of their ministry status within the church. Their commitment to a more pastorally grounded ministry can be affirmed both in an educational stream (Diploma of Pastoral Ministry) and through a possible network or society of pastoral ministry.

The working group recognizes that another significant challenge in this proposal is ending the use of the terms *ordination* and *ordained*. While the working group believes that it is possible to equate the term *order* with ordination (as it is also with commissioning), the change in language nevertheless represents a profoundly symbolic shift that presents many difficulties. Among the difficulties are that the largest component of ordered ministry are those who are ordained; ordination is the common ecumenical term that affirms a common identity for Christian ministry throughout the world; and equating the two terms undermines an intention of this proposal to not subsume diaconal and designated lay ministry within ordination.

With this, the working group considered the possibility of these options:

#### *Option One:*

The proposal as outlined in this paper: one order of ministry that would identify current designated lay ministers serving in pastoral ministry, diaconal ministers, and ordained ministers as all part of one order of ministry while acknowledging several paths of educational preparation. The church would no longer use the terms *ordination*, *commissioning*, and *recognition*.

#### *Option Two:*

In this option all would be ordered, or welcomed into the order of ministry, and then all would be commissioned into a particular expression of ministry. In this option, the working group proposes that the

commissioning to an expression of ministry take place at each appointment and be representative of the appointment. One expression of ministry would be the ministry of education, service, and pastoral care. Another would be the ministry of word, sacrament, and pastoral care. Since the primary liturgical action is the ordering of ministry, it is conceivable that many expressions of commissioning might develop, for example, to chaplaincy or educational and teaching ministry. In each case the act of commissioning would authorize the individual to identify themselves by the appropriate category (diaconal, ordained, chaplain, professor, etc.).

In all of these cases, the possibility of commissioning could be connected to the particular call to ministry and therefore be consistent with the Reformed understanding that ordering is always joined to call. And it might also be associated to the development of networks or societies, each with a membership focused on continued formation and best practices.

*Option Three:*

In this option all would be ordained, and then those who have followed the appropriate educational path and who chose to do so, would be commissioned to the specialized ministry of the diakonia, the ministry of education, service, and pastoral care.

This option, which is similar to that of the Uniting Church of Australia, would continue the historic use of the term *ordination* and be the most consistent to the global ecumenical consensus on ministry as expressed in the BEM document of the World Council of Churches. It would offer sacramental authority to diaconal ministers as a rite of ordination.

As in Option Two above, it might allow for the development of further “commissioned” ministries with specialized focus and would make it clear that such ministries are part of the ordained ministry of the church.

**The working group wishes to test this model and asks:**

1. Is the working group headed in a helpful direction?
2. Does this model offer clarity about vocational ministry for members of the church?
3. *(To ministry personnel)* Does this model honour your call to ministry?
4. Does the model honour the diversity of ministry leadership present within the church?
5. What is helpful in the model?
6. What is not helpful and needs to be changed?
7. Which option (of the three on pages 11–12) is the most helpful?
8. What other options should the working group consider?

The working group is seeking feedback on its thinking as it prepares to report to the 42nd General Council in August 2015. The working group is open to hearing concerns and critique of the model as it is outlined above.

*Responses to this paper are invited: Please log on to complete a short questionnaire:*

*<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/JSSS7W3>*

*More detailed comments and questions can be addressed to: [theology@united-church.ca](mailto:theology@united-church.ca)*