



Category 3 Remit

Study Guide for Remit 3: Office of Vocation

Approved by the 42nd General Council 2015

Between February 2016 and 30 June 2017, each presbytery and pastoral charge governing body will formally be asked in a category 3 remit to approve the creation of a denominational Office of Vocation.

This is the question to be voted on:

Does the presbytery/pastoral charge agree that

- (a) a denominational office of vocation be established in the structure of the United Church, with responsibilities and structure as approved by the 42nd General Council 2015; and that
- (b) the Basis of Union be amended to reflect this change?

Summary

If passed, this remit would create a new permanent Office of Vocation as part of the General Council structure. The Office of Vocation would ensure the United Church continues to be served by trained, skilled, competent, and responsible ministers, with accountability to an elected Board of Vocation.

Background

The 42nd General Council voted to establish a permanent Office of Vocation that would set standards for and accredit candidates for ministry, support ministry personnel, and oversee discipline of ministry personnel.

For more detail, please see

- the Comprehensive Review report [United in God's Work](http://www.gc42.ca/comprehensive-review-report)'s proposal for a College of Ministers (this was changed at GC42 to an Office of Vocation that is lodged within and accountable to the General Council through its elected Board, but some of the background thinking from this report is still relevant): www.gc42.ca/comprehensive-review-report
- the [News](http://www.gc42.ca/news/council-moves-away-college-ministers) section of the 42nd General Council website, www.gc42.ca/news/council-moves-away-college-ministers

Proposed new processes

	Current	Proposed
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each of the four courts (pastoral charge, presbytery, Conference, and General Council) elects people to do education, students, pastoral relations, oversight, and discipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Office of Vocation is part of the General Council. • General Council elects a Board of Vocation consisting of 12–16 ministers and lay people from across the church with a variety of relevant skills.

	work.	
Candidates for ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conferences and presbyteries have Education and Student Committees, and Interview Boards, made up of elected volunteers. • These committees ensure candidates fulfill the requirements for ordination, commissioning, or being designated and are suitable for ministry. • Other volunteers serve on Conference commissions that look into objections received about candidates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board of Vocation establishes standards for education, training, admissions, and accreditation. • Regional assessment boards, made up of volunteers, accompany candidates for ministry. These boards make recommendations to the Board of Vocation about a candidate's fitness and readiness for accreditation. • The Board of Vocation decides whether a candidate will be ordained, commissioned, or recognized.
Support and oversight of candidates and ministry personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and oversight is carried out by volunteer committees at the presbytery, Conference, and General Council levels. • These committees make recommendations and decisions on ordination, commissioning, and admissions of ministers from other denominations. • The committees ensure all candidates have completed the required training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected members at the Conference (or region) accompany and support candidates through their discernment and formation. • Conferences (or regions) continue to have a role in supporting the local pastoral relationship. • General Council staff • maintain a registry of accredited ministry personnel • maintain a list of recognized Interim Ministers and those trained for the Ministry of Supervision • establish and implement standards for admitting ministers from other denominations and readmitting ministers
Discipline of ministry personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers in all four courts respond to disciplinary issues. • Volunteers may have limited experience in conducting investigations, running formal hearings, and hearing appeals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board of Vocation can order reviews of the conduct of ministry personnel, make recommendations, and convene ad hoc formal hearing panels. • General Council staff initiate investigations when concerns or complaints are received about ministry personnel and can recommend reviews to the Board of Vocation. • Investigations are conducted by

		trained investigators.
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Implications of creating an Office of Vocation

A new working unit called the Office of Vocation would be created at the General Council Office. Numerous volunteer committees would cease to exist in all four courts of the church, and staff time at the Conference and presbytery levels would be used more effectively.

The Office of Vocation would consist of paid staff as well as a Board of Vocation with equal numbers of elected ministers and lay people. The staff would deal with procedural and administrative matters. The Board of Vocation would be responsible for making decisions. These changes will ensure greater consistency in practice across the church.

Candidates for the order of ministry would continue to be accompanied and interviewed by volunteers on the regional assessment boards. If Remit No. 1: Three-Court Model passes, creating regional councils, fewer volunteers will be needed at the regional levels.

What is a category 3 remit?

A category 3 remit is required for substantive, denomination-shaping changes to the Basis of Union (*The Manual*, s. F2). A category 3 remit also requires that a study process be available in the church before the remit is released.

The proposed change must be sent to all presbyteries and the governing body of every pastoral charge for a vote. If an absolute majority of the presbyteries and an absolute majority of the pastoral charges vote in favour of the proposed change—not just a majority of those that vote—then the next General Council must also vote in favour of the proposed change for it to take effect.

NB: If a presbytery or pastoral charge does not vote, that is considered a vote AGAINST the proposal.