



## Category 3 Remit

# Comprehensive Study Guide for Remit 6: One Order of Ministry

### Approved by the 42nd General Council 2015

Between February 2016 and 28 February 2018, each presbytery and pastoral charge governing body will formally be asked in a category 3 remit to approve the creation of one order of ministry.

This is the question to be voted on:

At present there is one order of ministry that is made up of ordained ministers, ordained to word, sacrament and pastoral care, and diaconal ministers, commissioned to education, service and pastoral care. There is also a category of ministry made up of those who are recognized as designated lay ministers following successful completion of a specific program of study.

**Does the presbytery/pastoral charge agree that there should be one new order of ministry encompassing the present categories of recognized designated lay ministers, diaconal ministers, and ordained ministers, with ordination to the ministry of word, sacrament, education, service and pastoral care as the single rite of entry, and with provision for the continued identity of the diakonia within the ordained ministry?**

## Summary

The 42nd General Council 2015 decided, subject to remit, to recognize one order of ministry in the United Church known as the ordained ministry, and

- (i) to provide within the ordained ministry of the church, for those who so choose through an appropriate educational program, ordination to the diakonia;
- (ii) to develop multiple paths of educational formation to the ordained ministry based on an overall equivalency of educational and spiritual formation;
- (iii) to incorporate (grandparent) into the ordained ministry all diaconal ministers; and
- (iv) to direct the General Secretary to establish a process to incorporate into the ordained ministry designated lay ministers currently serving in presbytery-recognized or presbytery-accountable ministries.

This remit does not deal directly with the proposal for grandparenting into the ordained ministry or with establishing the Diploma in Pastoral Theology, discussed below. However, approval of this remit implies that these actions will follow.

The General Council was not unanimous on the proposal for One Order. It was clear, however, that those who approved the proposal did so with the expectation that it would come before the whole church for study and for final decision. This study document is written with this in mind. It seeks to describe the various positions both for and against the proposal. Under the remit process, the proposal itself cannot be changed; the only possible responses are yes or no. It is hoped, however, that this study will assist in making an informed decision, understanding the implications of approving or not approving the remit.

This study draws on materials presented to the General Council in the report of the Joint Ministry Working Group (TICIF 2 A Proposal for One Order of Ministry, [42nd General Council Workbook](#), Plenary 41–50, pages 363–372) and incorporates other content from discussion and debates from General Council and in consultation with an advisory group that represents a diversity of positions on the proposal.

## 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.*

## What the United Church formally says about ministry

### From the Twenty Articles of Faith (1925)

Article XVII. ***Of the Ministry.*** We believe that Jesus Christ, as the Supreme Head of the Church, has appointed therein an ordained ministry of Word, Sacrament, and Pastoral Care and a diaconal ministry of Education, Service, and Pastoral Care, and calls men and women to these ministries; and that the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, recognizes and chooses those whom He calls, and should thereupon duly ordain or commission them to the work of the ministry.

Article XVII. ***Of the Ministry*** has been revised a number of times, but most specifically in 1937 to “calls men and women” and in 1989 to “an ordained ministry of Word, Sacrament and Pastoral Care and a diaconal ministry of Education, Service and Pastoral Care.”

The original text of the 1925 was:

Article XVII. ***Of the Ministry.*** We believe that Jesus Christ, as the Supreme Head of the Church, has appointed therein a ministry of the word and sacraments, and calls men to this ministry; that the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, recognizes and chooses those whom He calls, and should thereupon duly ordain them to the work of ministry.

### From the 1940 Statement of Faith

#### VIII. The Ministry

We believe that God has appointed a Ministry in His Church for the preaching of the Word, the administration of the Sacraments, and the pastoral care of the people.

We believe that the Church has authority to ordain to the Ministry by prayer and the laying on of hands those whom she finds, after due trial, to be called of God thereto.

We believe that, for the due ordering of her life as a society, God has appointed a government in His Church, to be exercised, under Christ the head, by Ministers and representatives of the people.

So we acknowledge the Holy Ministry appointed by God for the spread of the Gospel and the edification of His Church.

### From A Song of Faith (2006)

We are each given particular gifts of the Spirit.  
For the sake of the world,  
    God calls all followers of Jesus to Christian ministry.  
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.  
To embody God's love in the world,  
    the work of the church requires the ministry and discipleship  
    of all believers.

### Statement on Ministry 2012

The Statement on Ministry General Council approved in 2012 (see [gc42.ca/remits](http://gc42.ca/remits), under Resources) offers a succinct explanation of the church's theology of ministry. It is designed to be continually revised, consistent with the church's reformed heritage, as the practice and understanding of ministry changes. If passed, this remit will result in a further revision to the Statement.

### Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (1982)

The Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry document of the World Council of Churches identifies the role of ordained ministry as follows:

In order to fulfil its mission, the Church needs persons who are publicly and continually responsible for pointing to its fundamental dependence on Jesus Christ, and thereby provide, within a multiplicity of gifts, a focus of its unity. The ministry of such persons, who since very early times have been ordained, is constitutive for the life and witness of the Church.

It is especially in the eucharistic celebration that the ordained ministry is the visible focus of the deep and all-embracing communion between Christ and the members of his body. In the celebration of the eucharist, Christ gathers, teaches and nourishes the Church. It is Christ who invites to the meal and who presides at it. In most churches this presidency is signified and represented by an ordained minister.

There is also in the Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry document consideration of the role of deacon. The following section includes a commentary that is relevant to this overall proposal:

*Deacons* represent to the Church its calling as servant in the world. By struggling in Christ's name with the myriad needs of societies and persons, deacons exemplify the interdependence of worship and service in the Church's life. They exercise responsibility in the worship of the congregation: for example by reading the scriptures, preaching and leading the people in prayer. They help in the teaching of the congregation. They exercise a ministry of love within the community. They fulfil certain administrative tasks and may be elected to responsibilities for governance.

#### COMMENTARY

*In many churches there is today considerable uncertainty about the need, the rationale, the status and the functions of deacons. In what sense can the diaconate be considered part of the ordained ministry? What is it that distinguishes it from other ministries in the Church (catechists, musicians, etc.)? Why should deacons be ordained while these other ministries do not receive ordination? If they are ordained, do they receive ordination in the full sense of the word or is their ordination only the first step towards ordination as presbyters? Today, there is a strong tendency in many churches to restore the diaconate as an ordained ministry with its own dignity and meant to be exercised for life. As the churches move closer together there may be united in this office ministries now existing in a variety of forms and under a variety of names. Differences in ordering the diaconal ministry should not be regarded as a hindrance for the mutual recognition of the ordained ministries.*

While the United Church did not formally endorse this document, it has through many years—like most of the global ecumenical community—acknowledged its significance as a critical milestone of ecumenical consensus.

What is your understanding of ministry? What has shaped it?

## The meaning of the One Order proposal

If the remit is approved, there will be one form of ordered ministry in the United Church known as the ordained ministry.

Within this one ministry, provision will be made for the continued identity of the diakonia (see Frequently Asked Questions at the end of this document). The explicit mechanism of diaconal identity will be developed with the Diakonia of the United Church (DUCC) network. Since diaconal identity currently involves a specific program of study (Centre for Christian Studies) and commitment to the values of the global diaconal movement, it is assumed that these two foundations will continue. Ministers who so choose and qualify will, following ordination, be welcomed to the community of the diakonia and may identify themselves as members of the diakonia.

Designated lay ministry (DLM), as it is now known, will end and be incorporated into the ordained ministry of the church. This will involve creating a new diploma study program based on the learning styles of the current designated lay ministry program, and expanded and deepened to achieve a basic equivalency in competencies and preparation for ministry leadership. This new program will be similar to current programs at the Centre for Christian Studies and the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre (training specifically for First Nations ministry). While the M.Div. program in its many forms across the church will remain the primary educational path to ordination, the new Diploma in Pastoral Theology program will provide an additional path.

Congregational designated ministry will continue as the paid accountable expression of lay ministry in the church (see Frequently Asked Questions).

## Why are we considering this change?

While the United Church has been studying the nature of ministry almost continuously throughout its history, the last decade of work has identified significant concerns and challenges to the current practices.

Several task groups have identified the difficulty in distinguishing among the various streams of ministry and in particular in explaining the functional difference between designated lay ministry and ordained ministry. Moreover, various surveys have pointed to congregations not being concerned about the differences between the various streams of ministry, but rather deeply concerned about effective and faithful ministry leadership.

In relation to designated lay ministry, the One Order proposal believes the use of “lay” is inappropriate. Designated lay ministers are accountable to and hold membership in a presbytery (not in a congregation, which is the place of lay accountability), are equally responsible for standards of ministry (for example, boundaries) as are all streams, and generally function in all aspects of ministry leadership, including the sacraments. They are not supervised following recognition, and function in what is increasingly understood as a lifetime call of ministry to the whole church.

It is also clear that many designated lay ministers find the current definition and name to be a significant problem.

While diaconal ministers have developed a clear sense of identity linked to the global movement of the diakonia, in the United Church, the vast majority serve also in solo pastoral ministry. Recent proposals for authorizing diaconal ministers for the sacraments as a rite of commissioning have further minimized distinctions. Most diaconal ministers are already authorized by their Conferences for the sacraments, and task groups have supported sacramental rites for diaconal ministers as a necessary part of their ongoing ministry.

Historically, the ordained ministry has been defined primarily by sacramental authority. Though not alone in this journey, the United Church has moved far beyond restricting sacramental authority solely to the ordained ministry. This has recently included policies that provide for naming Sacrament Elders (following an appropriate course of instruction) in congregations that don't have appointed ministry personnel. If sacramental authority is exercised by all three streams, and indeed beyond, then what are the distinctions among diaconal, ordained, and designated lay ministry?

The one issue that does come to the foreground in these distinctions is the question of education. It is the one factor that has served to differentiate streams of ministry. It is also an area in which there appears to be wide consensus across the church. The United Church has been identified and marked by an educated and informed clergy. The commitment to an educated clergy has provided significant impetus for the proposal for One Order of ministry.

## Current streams and educational paths

The various Master of Divinity (M.Div.) programs, the Centre for Christian Studies program, and the Sandy-Saulteaux program for Aboriginal Ministries have all been accepted as approved studies for admission to the order of ministry.

M.Div. programs are 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 a full-time internship of at least eight months or equivalent (St. Andrew's College has an 18- to 20-month ministry internship). The Atlantic School of Theology offers a five-year distance learning program for those engaged in ongoing ministry. M.Div. programs generally require 30 credits of study (a credit usually involves three hours of class time for the 13 weeks of a term plus significant additional reading and writing time), an internship, and field placements.

The Diploma in Diaconal Ministry (Centre for Christian Studies) is a four- to five-year ministry-based program using an action–reflection model that involves learning circles, academic courses, and field placements. It requires nine learning circles of 8, 12, or 16 days (for a total of 106 days of classroom contact), eight academic courses at the M.Div. level, three eight-month field placements, a Global perspective experience, individual learning plans, and additional written assignments.

The Diploma in Aboriginal Ministry hosted by the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre is a five-year ministry-based program involving learning circles, half-time field placement for the five years of the program, and spiritual formation with a Vision Keeper (supervisor). It serves First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples and also offers diaconal training.

The Centre for Christian Studies and the Sandy-Saulteaux programs are usually undertaken while in part-time employment in a ministry position. 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 Diploma in Designated Lay Ministry is a three-year ministry-based program (requiring at least half-time appointment) consisting of six learning circles of 10 days each, three courses taken at a theological school or other university context, two comprehensive ministry papers, and ongoing ministry supervision throughout the studies.

The church therefore recognizes both degree and diploma paths for ministry formation. Certain degree- or diploma-granting schools carry testamur designation from the church to certify that their graduates are considered academically prepared for ordination or commissioning.

One Order proposes that the Diploma in Designated Lay Ministry be replaced by a Diploma in Pastoral Theology. This new diploma is outlined as a proposal in the One Order report and will require further exploration and development if the remit is approved. It would, however, be based on the current DLM model including the expectation of supervised ministry placement and be similar in time and learning expectations to the Centre for Christian Studies program.

## Pros and cons of One Order

The proposal for One Order of Ministry has resulted in significant debate in the church. This section states as accurately as possible the arguments for and against and explains how the committees involved reached the One Order proposal.

There is already in the United Church an understanding of one order of ministry with two expressions: diaconal and ordained. This has been in place formally since 1989 when the Basis of Union (Article VII) was changed. More recently, designated lay ministry was established by the 37th General Council in 2000. Both diaconal and designated lay



ministries had preceding forms, the diakonia with its ancient expressions and early presence in the United Church through the ministry of deaconesses and United Churchmen, and lay forms of ministry going back in history with strong roots in the three founding churches.

Generally there seems to be little understanding in the church of the differences among the three streams of ministry. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that for most members there is little attention to the differences that might exist, providing the leadership they receive is capable, faithful, and effective. However, as we shall see, issues that do matter emerge. For example, various surveys have shown that an educated clergy is a high priority in the United Church. What form this education takes, however, becomes one of the key issues in the proposal. Two other areas are also explored: issues of identity and equity. Some key questions are offered in the following sections to help focus conversation and decision-making.

## Education

What is the baseline of education that should be required for ministry leadership in the United Church?

The most common degree required for ordination or pastoral leadership in the majority of denominations, Protestant and Catholic, is the Master of Divinity (M.Div.). It replaced, many years ago, the Bachelor of Divinity degree, which still required an undergraduate degree (a first bachelor's degree) as a prerequisite. In other words, for many years ordained ministry leadership across a wide number of denominations has required six to seven years or more of university-level education. Since 1996 the Association of Theological Schools has accredited M.Div. degrees and programs across North America. Using the M.Div. as the baseline of education for ordained ministry has been a significant ecumenical commitment and hard-won achievement. The M.Div. is widely used as well outside North America, allowing for such initiatives as the United Church's recent commitments to mutual recognition of ministry with two global partner churches.

For many years the United Church allowed what was called "the shorter course." This program was based on one year of undergraduate study and three years of traditional Master of Divinity studies, and offered on conclusion a Bachelor of Theology degree. A number of colleges are exploring options to reinstate this program.

In recent years, the Doctor of Ministry degree has become increasingly common as a further professional degree for ministry leadership, requiring an additional three to four years of study. There are also a number of academic degrees beyond the M.Div., such as the Master of Theology (usually requiring two years of additional study) and several academic doctoral degrees (Th.D. and Ph.D.) requiring many more years of study. All of these postgraduate degrees are common today among clergy in many denominations throughout the world.

From this perspective, then, some would argue that depth, rather than function, should be the defining characteristic of ordained ministry; that the need for ministry leadership in today's complex world is for informed theological thinking and reflection.

The M.Div. has been the mechanism of ensuring that ordained ministers are prepared in a broad range of capacities—theology, history, pastoral care, ethics, and so on. Training and skills are important for effective ministry—but education and knowledge are different. Competency for ministry leadership needs to value both training and education, and the M.Div. has ensured that a candidate for ordained ministry possesses both.

A significant challenge to the One Order proposal, therefore, is whether it undermines the M.Div. as the baseline of education for ordained leadership in the church and potentially diminishes the commitment of the church to an educated clergy.

One Order of Ministry proposes multiple educational pathways to preparation for an ordained ministry. Do these approaches ensure that the UCC is able to maintain an educated clergy equipped for ministry in a variety of contexts? The One Order proposal was developed with the idea of maintaining a commitment to an educated clergy as a core identity of the United Church. It affirms, however, that the educational models that maintain this commitment must be varied and diverse.

A major report on Education for Church Leadership (37th General Council 2000), stated: "The United Church has always valued an educated ministry...(however) an educated ministry is not only the product of an education available in post-graduate university programmes." The goal, the report affirmed, is educational excellence while exploring "new ways to recognize, evaluate and measure equivalencies in education derived from experience and formal or informal study."

The One Order proposal recognizes that the diaconal studies program, in emphasizing formation for diaconal leadership, gives priority to a different knowledge and skill base than the Master of Divinity. Its five-year period of formation has generally been accepted as offering the core competencies for ministry leadership. Diaconal ministers now serve in solo ministry leadership across the church and are almost uniformly authorized for sacramental leadership in those ministries. Similarly, the Sandy-Saulteaux program is based on a five-year formation period for ministry leadership in First Nations communities.

The One Order proposal recognizes the importance of the model employed in the designated lay ministry training program. In particular, it notes the emphasis on building on life experience and on different learning styles. The proposal also notes that designated lay ministers now make up about 10 percent of the ministry personnel of the church, and the likelihood that this will increase.

The proposal recognizes that the DLM program itself began with an understanding that designated lay ministry would be time-limited and localized. It noted the following extract from the Ministry 2000 report, which set in place the criteria for designated lay ministry:

The report offers the perspective that the vocation of the Ordained or Diaconal Minister involves lifelong service and accountability to the church. It is ordination or commissioning to the church universal. The vocation of the lay minister, on the other hand, is spontaneous, localized, and temporary in its service and accountability. This report affirms that there is a place for designated lay ministry alongside ordered ministry. Given the demands of ministry today, the church needs to be confident that the spiritual, theological, interpersonal, and educational competencies are the same for comparable ministries. (*Record of Proceedings of the 37th General Council 2000*, p. 614)

Since then, the nature of designated lay ministry has changed. It is no longer seen as time-limited, with most DLMs and the wider church understanding their ministry as a lifelong commitment, and for most purposes no longer localized, with DLMs frequently moving throughout the church.

Because of this shift, the One Order proposal believes that the DLM program should be expanded to a Diploma in Pastoral Theology, similar in time and learning expectations to the



Centre for Christian Studies and Sandy-Saulteaux models. Similar to those models, it is proposed as a five-year period of study and formation. It would incorporate the learning circle model of the existing DLM program and Supervised Ministry Education through a minimum half-time appointment in a pastoral charge. (The full development of a Diploma in Pastoral Theology would only follow if the remit is approved. However, more information about its general proposed design can be found in the One Order proposal.)

Given this, One Order proposes that designated lay ministry end as a separate category of ministry.

The One Order proposal recognizes the challenge the additional educational requirements might present to individuals who find formal academic study difficult. However, effective ministry today requires the capacity for writing and critical thinking that is minimally demonstrated by this level of work.

In addition, the One Order proposal notes that many denominations are beginning to move to competency-based models of education. In the United Church of Christ, our full communion partner in the United States, most candidates for ordination still continue to have an M.Div. However, this degree is no longer a requirement. Instead, candidates are asked to demonstrate that they hold a broad range of competencies that are expected for ordained ministry.

While the CCS and Sandy-Saulteaux programs employ components of a competency model, a wider competency-based educational model for ministry is under consideration in the United Church of Canada (a proposal came before General Council 42 but was sent back for further study). Supporters note that, in such a model, previous learning and life experiences can be taken into account, and candidates are free to choose many alternate paths to fulfilling the required competencies. (Those who question such an approach, however, note that the United Church's theological schools are in a much more precarious situation than US-based schools and could make many of them even more vulnerable.)

The One Order proposal explored the shifts in educational processes underway across North America. It saw the importance of a variety of educational options for ordination based on different learning styles and personal financial capacities and situations. The different paths will clearly not be identical and have different strengths and weaknesses. The M.Div. will continue to offer the greatest depth of education in the theological disciplines and to be a required qualification for many specialized ministries, such as chaplaincies and teaching.

Candidates wishing to pursue further graduate degrees will require the M.Div. as a starting point. However, it is an educational path that is not open to all individuals for a great variety of reasons—individuals who otherwise could and do contribute significantly to the ministry leadership of the church.

The diploma studies for commissioning and ordination offer different approaches that make valued contributions to the variety of gifts in ministry at work throughout the church. So, the One Order proposal believes, will the Diploma in Pastoral Theology.

The proposal for One Order therefore calls for an approach to education and formation for ministry that is flexible, that instills depth as well as practical skills in ministry, and that is transferable with relative ease from one context to another.

Finally, under the current system, discernment committees have acknowledged significant difficulty in working with candidates for ministry in distinguishing among the streams of

ministry. One Order would assist the committees in making clear the real issue to be discerned: which stream of education should the candidate enter and follow?

Does the One Order proposal maintain the commitment of The United Church of Canada to an educated clergy?

## Identity

There have been a number of challenges to the One Order proposal that can be characterized as concern over identity.

For some, the One Order proposal implies a significant loss of identity for ordained ministers. They argue that ordination has assumed a level of education and depth of preparation that does not seem present in the proposal for One Order, resulting in an overall diminishment of both standards and status for ordained ministers.

Another concern relates to the continued identification of diakonia. What is the meaning of One Order if there is still a diakonia? And if diaconal ministers have a distinct identity, what then is the identity of ordained ministers?

There is concern that the diakonia might become invisible in the much larger stream of ordained ministry. At times, diaconal ministers are specifically identified to ensure representation at meetings, in committees, and in programs. Will this visibility potentially disappear with one order of ministry?

For some diaconal ministers and designated lay ministers, the language of ordination is connected to hierarchy, gendered relations, and elite educational expectations, all of which create barriers between the minister and lay people. The language and practice of ordination, then, implies an elitism that some in the designated lay and diaconal streams reject.

Others argue that the differences among the current three streams of ministry are evident and important. They disagree with the position of the One Order proposal that it is not functionally possible to distinguish among them. Ordaining everyone then means the loss of these key differences.

The lack of understanding in the church about the differences among the three current streams of ministry do need to be addressed, still others argue, but through education. Designated lay ministers, in particular, need to understand and accept that designated lay ministry is time-limited and localized.

There is concern over the broadening authorization for sacramental leadership. Some argue that the United Church should return to limiting the sacraments (with some exceptions) to ordained ministers.

Some also believe that the One Order proposal means the end of lay ministry in the church and wonder how the important and historic expressions of lay ministry will continue without some official recognition beyond the local congregation.

What established identities does the One Order proposal challenge? Are these identities central to the church's understanding of ministry? What forms of ministry will best serve the church into the future?

One Order recognizes that if the proposal is accepted there will be some loss of identity for all three streams of ministry. However, it believes that this shift in identity will provide greater consistency and clarity for ministry across the church.

The proposal argues that conferring of sacramental authority should be consistent across a variety of ministry settings. If a minister is an appointed spiritual leader of a faith community, then sacramental life needs to be an integral part of that leadership. But so should the other aspects of ministry (see the Statement on Ministry). The One Order proposal therefore seeks to end the artificial boundaries in the church among word, sacrament, pastoral care, education, and service. The church needs to value and therefore hold accountable its ministry leaders equally for all of these expressions of ministry.

For diaconal ministers, the One Order proposal allows for diaconal identity within the ordained ministry. In doing so it opens up possibilities of deeper understanding of the values and emphasis of diaconal ministry. It can contribute to the end of hierarchical understandings that suggest that diaconal ministers are not “real ministers” and place the emphasis on the particular focus and training of the diakonia and the gifts they bring to ministry.

Another implication is that there will be ecumenical recognition in shared ministries and other ecumenical relationships for diaconal ministers presiding in the sacrament of communion.

It is not yet determined how the continued identity of the diakonia will be expressed within the ordained ministry. The diaconal community in the United Church will be involved in this decision. It is clear, however, that its foundation will continue to be specialized training and identification with the values of and membership in the global diaconal movement.

One Order suggests the possibility of opening in the future other forms of identity and networks. For example, chaplains undertake specialized training and commitment to forms of accountability beyond their ordination vows. So do teachers in various forms of educational ministry or specialists in youth ministry. The One Order proposal then offers the possibility of strengthening these forms of identity.

In this context, it is clear that congregations have many diverse needs. The One Order proposal emphasizes the importance of matching the congregation with the gifts of the minister regardless of the stream of training. All candidates for ministry leadership will be ordained. Therefore it will be increasingly important to match the needs of congregations with the particular gifts of ministry personnel.

For designated lay ministers, life circumstances have often been the critical factor in the stream of ministry they've entered. For many there are real limitations in financial or personal capacities that narrow choices for study. Frequently, designated lay ministers will speak of their particular learning styles making it impossible to consider more academic programs. Many DLMs, however, bring significant life experiences, skills, and alternate paths of education. One Order proposes that education be seen as the sum of life experiences, and that many different skills come together in effective ministry. Knowledge, in other words, can be gained through many different paths—and perhaps most importantly, through a commitment to lifelong learning.

The One Order proposal had earlier explored the possibility of ending the use of the terms “ordained” and “diaconal.” In testing this option, it became clear that abandoning the language of ordination would have significant ecumenical implications. Ordination is the

universally agreed terminology for pastoral and sacramental ministry and represents the widest consensus of understanding in the 350 denominations of the World Council of Churches.

Consultation with partner churches, in particular the Anglican Church of Canada through the Anglican–United Church Dialogue, offered appreciation for the direction represented in the proposal. It is anticipated that the One Order proposal will be accepted ecumenically and will be consistent with processes such as the mutual recognition of ministries agreements with partner churches.

Does the One Order proposal offer a simple, clear, and faithful understanding of ministry?

## Equity

The One Order proposal will address issues of fairness in employment policy for designated lay ministers. Currently, in principle DLMS have status only while under appointment. In practice this is unworkable, raising issues of continued status between appointments, insurance, pension entitlements, and job security. One Order would establish consistency of standards for all ministry personnel.

One Order will also create a uniform minimum pay scale for ministry personnel. For designated lay ministers, the different pay scale, though modest, still raises issues of equal pay for equal work. Ordained and diaconal ministers, however, argue that the increased educational requirements and associated costs should of course result in different salaries. In practice, the difference in (minimum) salaries is almost insignificant, and the difference in costs of education almost impossible to compare given the many options that exist. However, other factors come into play.

In the current financial situation of many churches, the lower salary of DLMS can at times offer an incentive to financially struggling congregations to choose the less-expensive option. One minimum salary scale for all ministers offers greater equity and again encouragement to congregations to look at the gifts of ministry they need, rather than a pay category.

The One Order proposal envisages the ordained ministry encompassing a wide range of expressions and forms of ministry. It requires all ministers in solo leadership of a community of faith to either be ordained or have entered an educational process as a candidate for ordination. Candidates for ordination will be supervised through their educational processes.

Candidates will be expected to complete their programs within an established number of years; however, there will be flexibility in this. For example, someone entering ministry as a later career option might never complete the program; instead it would be a commitment on the individual's part to continue in lifelong learning while in the practice of ministry. It is expected that candidates for ordination will be authorized for sacraments through their respective Conferences.

There will continue to be an expression of paid lay ministry called congregational designated ministry. CDMS will be accountable to their community of faith, which will have full employment responsibility within established guidelines. These will include fair employment standards and minimum salary scales. CDMS will always be expected to work in relation to

an ordained minister (or candidate) and not carry sole responsibility for congregational leadership. Therefore they will not be part of the order of ministry.

There seems to be a predictable pattern in denominations related to lay ministries: new expressions of lay ministry emerge that in time request recognition as accountable ministries, and then seek to be incorporated into the order of ministry. It is possible that such a pattern will be experienced if this One Order proposal is accepted. However, the simplicity of this proposal suggests that it might be sustained for a longer period, at least as long as it will take for new expressions of the church to emerge and future patterns of ministry to be more clearly discerned.

Does the One Order proposal offer greater equity for ministry personnel in the church?

## A proposed study process

The following offers a guide for conversation in a session (or its equivalent) or in a presbytery. (See who may vote in the FAQs.) It is structured as a single meeting of two and a half hours (with a break) and assumes that all participants have read this study document and some have also read the original One Order proposal. It also assumes that everyone in the meeting has access to a copy of this study resource or that sections of it can be projected. It is assumed that the vote on the remit question will be taken at the same meeting following the conversation to ensure that all those who vote have shared in the conversation.

The leader or leaders of this process will likely be different from the formal chair of the voting body (session or its equivalent or presbytery). The chair will introduce the leader(s) and invite them to lead the process.

### Step 1: 5 minutes

### Opening meditation

Have one or a number of people read the following:

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 into 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

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

We are each given particular gifts of the Spirit.  
For the sake of the world,  
God calls all followers of Jesus to Christian ministry.  
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.  
To embody God's love in the world,  
the work of the church requires the ministry and discipleship  
of all believers.  
—A Song of Faith

The leader can offer a simple prayer for God's guidance in the process, and invite the members to reaffirm the values that guide its meetings and decision making.

### **Step 2: 5 minutes**                      **A category 3 remit**

Introduce the remit. Put the text of "What is a category 3 remit?" from page 2 on a flip chart, project it on a screen, or invite people to turn to page 2. Ask, are there any questions about what we are doing in this time? Does everyone understand the process?

(Leaders, please ensure you understand the process and can answer any questions that might emerge. Contact your Conference officers or the General Council Office if you need help in this.)

### **Step 3: 15 minutes**                      **The remit question**

Show everyone the remit question at the top of page 1. People need to be able to see it throughout the session. At various points remind them that this is the only question that will be voted on at the end of the meeting.

Discuss why grandparenting diaconal and designated lay ministers into the ordained ministry is not part of this remit; neither is the content of the proposed Diploma in Pastoral Theology (see Frequently Asked Questions).

Review "The meaning of the One Order proposal" on page 4. Invite people to turn to it in their study resource, or project it.

Does everyone understand what the One Order proposal means? What questions do people have?

(Leaders: If you feel unclear about its meaning, please contact the General Council Office for assistance: [remits@united-church.ca](mailto:remits@united-church.ca).)

### **Step 4: 5 minutes**                      **Key issues for consideration**

Flip chart or project the three key issues identified in this resource: education, identity, and equity. Ask whether there any other issues need to be considered outside of these three. Flip chart these on a page titled "Other Issues," and post them where everyone can see them.

## Step 5: 30 minutes Education

In this time format it is assumed that sufficient background information is presented in the study to explain the differences among the various educational streams. If this is not the case then you will need to allot additional time to helping people understand the differences.

Project or flip chart the question for exploration:

Does the One Order proposal maintain the commitment of The United Church of Canada to an educated clergy?

Invite people to turn to their neighbour to offer a quick initial response to the above question. What is your gut feeling about this question? (Allow two to three minutes for pairs to discuss.) Is it (flip chart):

Yes / No / Uncertain / Different Question

(The intention here is to allow space for those who want to argue for different approaches to the One Order proposal, such as maintaining the status quo.)

Ask people to choose one of these four options as a starting place. (If space allows, ask people to physically move to clusters that represent each of these positions, e.g., the four quadrants of a sanctuary or a room. If choosing this option, write out the four positions on paper and post them in the quadrant.) Invite people by show of hands (or by moving) to show which of the four positions they initially have chosen.

Invite one person from each position to speak briefly about why they have chosen this answer. Continue around the room inviting different positions and voices to be heard in sequence. Invite everyone who wants to speak to do so before anyone speaks twice. Aim for about 30 minutes in total for this exchange of views. The intention is not to seek consensus or agreement but to allow the various positions to be shared.

If under "Different Question" issues are raised that could have been identified in step 4. above, then record them on the "Other Issues" flip chart page.

At the end of this step, have people return to their original seats.

## Step 6: 30 minutes Identity

Project or flip chart the question for exploration:

Does the One Order proposal offer a simple, clear, and faithful understanding of ministry?

Again, ask people to turn to their neighbour to give an initial response to this question. (Discuss in pairs for two to three minutes.) This time, continue conversation in the group as a whole. Invite people to speak to the overall proposal for One Order. Ensure everyone has a chance to speak once before anyone is invited to speak twice.

Again, the intent is not to find consensus or answer this question finally but rather to invite people to explore the issues.



**Break for 20 minutes.**

During the break, take the “Other Issues” flip chart sheet from step 3, above, and move it to the centre. Add to the questions the following:

Does the One Order proposal offer greater equity for ministry personnel in the church?

**Step 7: 30 minutes****Equity and other questions**

Return to the “Other Issues” identified and flip charted in steps 3 and 5. Ask: Given our discussion to this point are there any other questions you wish to add to our list? Add them to the list as they are raised.

Go through the list of questions and issues, inviting those who named each one to say briefly why it is important to them.

Ask: Which of these questions or issues raise difficulties for the One Order proposal? Why? Which of these question or issues support moving forward with the One Order proposal? Why? Which ones are the most important to explore? Highlight these ones.

Invite conversation on the highlighted questions first, and if time allows address the remaining ones. Again, ensure everyone has a chance to speak once before others speak more than once. Again, the intent is not to reach consensus but rather to allow everyone to form their own opinion.

**Step 8: 10 minutes****Voting**

Place before the meeting the remit question (Step 2 above) either flip charted or projected.

At present there is one order of ministry that is made up of ordained ministers, ordained to word, sacrament, and pastoral care, and diaconal ministers, commissioned to education, service, and pastoral care. There is also a category of ministry made up of those who are recognized as designated lay ministers following successful completion of a specific program of study.

Does the presbytery/pastoral charge agree that there should be one new order of ministry encompassing the present categories of recognized designated lay ministers, diaconal ministers, and ordained ministers, with ordination to the ministry of word, sacrament, education, service, and pastoral care as the single rite of entry, and with provision for the continued identity of the diakonia within the ordained ministry?

Remind people that it is not possible to change the question or to answer in any other way than yes or no.

Invite everyone to be quiet and ponder what they have heard. Invite them to keep in mind the following question: What decision will best serve the ministry of Jesus Christ in the future life of the church? Invite them to seek the wisdom of God’s Spirit. Allow for several minutes of silent reflection.

The chair of the meeting (Chair of Session, Official Board, or Presbytery) now resumes leading the meeting. They ask, are you ready now for the question?

Does the presbytery/pastoral charge agree that there should be one new order of ministry encompassing the present categories of recognized designated lay ministers, diaconal ministers, and ordained ministers, with ordination to the ministry of word, sacrament, education, service, and pastoral care as the single rite of entry, and with provision for the continued identity of the diakonia within the ordained ministry?

Now take the vote. The secretary records the majority vote, either yes or no, and files the remit papers with the General Council Office, recording the vote.

## Frequently asked questions

### **What are the three categories of remits?**

When the General Council authorizes a remit, it also determines the category to which the remit will be assigned. There are three categories of remits in the United Church. Category assignment is based on the significance of the proposed change to the denomination. Category 1 remits involve wording or editorial changes. Category 2 remits concern changes that are significant but not denomination-shaping. Category 3 remits may be generally described as making substantive changes that affect who we are as a denomination. Category 3 remits include changes that affect the Articles of Faith, alter significantly the structures of the United Church, redefine our understanding of ministry, or alter our understanding of who is a member of the church. There is a different process to be followed for each category. Category 3 remits require the longest period of study and information-sharing before voting takes place. Only category 3 remits can be sent to pastoral charges in addition to presbyteries. If a category 3 remit passes a majority of presbyteries and pastoral charges, then it must be finally approved (enacted) by the next General Council.

### **Who can vote?**

Category 3 remits are voted on by presbyteries and sessions (or their equivalents). If there is no session in a pastoral charge, then the body that carries the session's responsibility (likely the Church Council) is the body that votes. There is only one vote for a pastoral charge. If there is more than one session, then a joint meeting of all the sessions for the pastoral charge must be held and the vote taken at this joint meeting. To pass, the remit must pass a majority of all presbyteries and sessions/equivalents eligible to vote, and a final vote of the following General Council. A failure to vote, in this process then is effectively a "no" vote.

### **Why do only sessions (or their equivalent) get to vote? Why not the whole congregation?**

The Basis of Union functions as the United Church's constitution. It sets out the rights and responsibilities of the different governing bodies, or "courts," in the church. Under the Basis of Union, the session (or its equivalent) has oversight of the spiritual interests of the pastoral charge. The session votes on remits on behalf of the pastoral charge as part of its oversight of spiritual matters. This responsibility was specifically given to the session (or its equivalent) and may not be delegated to the congregation or any other body. The session (or its equivalent) may wish to consult with the congregation about the remit. It may choose to hold a congregational meeting, and may even ask the congregation to vote so that the session (or its equivalent) learns the views of the congregation. Such a vote would

only be for the information of the session (or its equivalent) because the session (or its equivalent) is not obliged to vote in accordance with the congregation's views. The session (or its equivalent) must still make the actual decision on the remit for the pastoral charge.

### **Why does this remit not include grandparenting?**

The formal question of the One Order remit must be answered first by a majority vote of presbyteries and sessions (or their equivalents). This question belongs to the whole church because it changes the nature and understanding of ministry. The decision about the grandparenting of diaconal and designated lay ministers into the ordained ministry, while an outcome of the decision for One Order, belongs to the General Council and will follow only if the remit passes. If the remit passes, all diaconal ministers will be incorporated into the ordained ministry by virtue of their existing membership in the order of ministry of the church. There will be no "liturgical act of ordination."

Designated lay ministers are not currently part of the order of ministry, so incorporation into the ordained ministry will involve the liturgical action of ordination. The One Order proposal recognizes that there is the need for a process to be developed, and asks the Executive of the General Council to assign this to the General Secretary.

### **What is the diakonia?**

*Diakonia* is a Greek word for "ministry" or "service." *Diakonoi* (deacons and deaconesses) have existed since the early Church, standing alongside episcopal and presbyterial leadership (bishops and elders).

The traditional role of diakonia can be seen today in service (social ministry) in response to needs within and beyond the local community, and in Christian education, welcoming "outsiders" (strangers, seekers, newcomers, candidates for baptism) and bringing them into the faith community.

The essence of *diakonia* has continued throughout history and across denominational lines, even in situations where deacons or diaconal ministers have taken on functions of administration of the sacraments.

### **If the One Order remit passes, will I still be called a diaconal minister?**

Diaconal ministers will formally be ordained ministers of the church. The first action that defines their identity will be the service of ordination. The second action, which is yet to be determined (in consultation with the Diaconal Community of the United Church), will be welcome into the community of the diakonia. This means that the choice will be present, for those who qualify to identify as both an ordained minister and a diaconal minister.

### **Will our ordination under the One Order proposal be recognized by ecumenical partners?**

The overall direction of the One Order proposal is consistent with the ecumenical consensus reached in the Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry document mentioned on page 3.

### **What is congregational designated ministry?**

A congregational designated minister is a baptized layperson employed by a local ministry unit who is accountable to the governing body of the local ministry except in matters of oversight and discipline, where they are accountable to the presbytery. The role of a congregational designated minister is to fulfill a specified ministry position; to work with the ministry personnel who is called or appointed to the pastoral charge, as directed by the governing body; and to comply with the polity of the United Church.

*Appreciation: This resource was developed with the assistance of an advisory panel. Membership on the panel indicates a commitment to assisting the church to make an informed decision on the remit, and does imply support of the proposal itself.*

*Members: Russell Mitchell-Walker; Wendy Kean; Adam Hanley; Arlyce Schiebout; Kate Crawford; Peter Wyatt; Vicki McPhee; Michael Shewburg; Ann Harbridge, Jennifer Janzen-Ball*

*Staff resource: Alan Hall and Bruce Gregersen (writer)*

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