

Theme: Ministry Personnel

General Comments

What We Heard:

- Groups named some fundamental questions about the current structure of the church:
 - How do we do mission & leadership in our current church culture?
 - How do we value trained ministry?
 - How can the church keep pace with changing contexts like low attendance and property redevelopment?
- We care about relationships and being equitable, while honouring the distinctions of who we are.
- However, current church contexts with low attendance, low availability of ministry personnel, shifting attendance

patterns and relying heavily on part-time and retired ministers can create difficult working conditions and recruitment problems.

- Concern that with the loss of presbyteries, individuals will be responsible for setting up their own support/care systems.

BC 4 – CREATIVE RIGHTS

What We Heard:

- Many groups agreed completely with the proposal and some groups had such broad or unanimous support they did not discuss it.
- Questions that were raised:
 - When should congregations hold the copyright instead of the ministers if we make this change?
 - What about when minister collaborate?
- Several groups suggested the need for a legal review. General Counsel for the United Church informed the facilitation group that it is legally possible for the church to make this change should it be approved by the Court.
- There were some groups who noted they were unaware of this issue before this proposal and still feel unclear on the issue and implications.

- Some groups noted it was a good idea and could be expanded beyond ministry personnel (e.g. music ministers).

Suggested Way Forward:

That the 43rd General Council direct the General Secretary to include a statement assigning copyright to ministry personnel on the call/appointment form, and to create a resource for communities of faith that supports assignment of copyright to other paid staff where applicable.

Mover: B. Mee

Seconder: G. Brownmiller

CARRIED.

M&O 4 – MANDATORY TRAINING FOR ALL UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA MINISTRY PERSONNEL

What We Heard:

In general there was affirmation in most groups, and some had mixed feelings.

- There should be a theological component and could be mandatory for all staff; needs to include training about homophobia & transphobia.
- There can be value in setting standards; we do it for other issues like boundaries and racial justice.
- Mandatory training does not always result in learning and can seem like lip service; it can also create vulnerability for LGBTQ2+ communities in implementation.
- Can create additional burdens on paid accountable ministers; starting to feel mandatory overload.

- There are cost & implementation implications unclear in the proposal.
- There should be French translation with attention to the gendered nature of French.
- The Office of Vocation needs to review all the mandatory training required.

Suggested Way Forward:

That the 43rd General Council affirm proposal M&O 4 – Mandatory Training for All United Church of Canada Ministry Personnel and directs the General Secretary to implement its recommendations.

Mover: H. McClure

Seconder: M. Baldwin

CARRIED.

MNWO 5 – MOVING EXPENSES FOR MINISTRY PERSONNEL

What We Heard:

Most groups supported the proposal.

- The need is clearly recognized.
- There were concerns about where the source of funding would come from.
- Limited resources – should let the Regions determine how to respond rather than direct Regions to implement.
- Support for having funding run through the denominational council so that the national church could respond to different need in different regions; can support broader movement over geographical areas.
- It was suggested we refer the proposal for further study, taking into account the concern over funding and some of the creative solutions noted by the discussion groups.

Suggested Way Forward:

That the 43rd General Council refer MNWO 5 – Moving Expenses for Ministry Personnel to the General Secretary.

Mover: M. Spies

Seconder: B. Paterson

CARRIED.

MNWO 6 – APPOINTMENTS OF CONGREGATIONAL DESIGNATED MINISTERS

What We Heard:

It was clearly articulated that we need a larger discussion regarding choices in keeping vulnerable congregations alive. The proposal highlights there is a pressing need in rural congregations that are not left with any viable leadership options in their communities of faith under our current structure.

Discussion groups expressed a lot of mixed feelings, and it is evident there is a lot that needs clarification. There was no consensus to affirm the proposal, but an affirmation that the problem is a significant challenge.

- There were concerns over availability and consistency of accountability, supervision & discipline.

- There was confusion over the role and accountability of Congregational Designated Ministers as already defined in The Manual.
- Some groups questioned whether other options within our current structure could respond to the problem.

Suggested Way Forward:

That the 43rd General Council refer the first two suggestions in section 3 of proposal MNWO 6 – Appointments of Congregational Designated Ministers to the Executive of the Denominational Council.

Mover: L. Buchanan

Seconder: T. Orlando

CARRIED.

Amendment:

Moved: M. Speer

Seconded: M. Quirk

DEFEATED.

MNWO 7 – EQUAL PAY FOR DESIGNATED LAY MINISTERS

What We Heard:

The groups had mixed response to this proposal.

- There was recognition of the value of the work done by Designated Lay Ministers.
- Some commissioners felt the education required for ordered ministry deserves higher pay; others felt that with similar ministry and job descriptions there should be equal pay for equal work.
- Some groups noted that it is possible to pay both ordered ministers and Designated Lay Ministers more than the minimum; multiple groups noted the difference in current pay minimums is very small.
- One suggested solution was amending the salary schedule to include a matrix that guides communities of faith to consider factors in addition to equal pay for equal work (e.g. education).

- Multiple groups suggested more work is needed on this issue, with some groups expressing concern this was a work around to the failed Remit 6.

Suggested Way Forward:

That the 43rd General Council direct the General Secretary to establish a program to encourage reconciliation of the broken relationships between the different streams of ministry and to take no further action on proposal MNWO 7 – Equal Pay for Designated Lay Ministers.

Mover: B. Sheaves

Seconder: K. Grant

NOT COMPLETED.

SK 1 – SEXUAL MISCONDUCT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE POLICY AND PROCEDURES ACCESSIBILITY

What We Heard:

There was strong affirmation for the proposal.

- A number of groups suggested the church consider additional languages as needed/appropriate; we should be translating when there is need/critical mass.
- One comment flagged the possibility that this proposal could be perceived as racist.
- One group noted a concern about funding the implementation.

Suggested Way Forward:

That the 43rd General Council affirms proposal SK 1 – Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policies and Procedures Accessibility and directs it to the General Secretary, General Council for implementation.

Mover: P. Thomas

Seconder: R. Hayes

CARRIED.

SK 3 – ELIMINATING APPOINTMENTS FOR DESIGNATED LAY MINISTERS

What We Heard:

The groups had mixed responses to this proposal, but the majority were not in favour. We heard the following concerns and questions:

- What is the theology of call vs. appointment?
- Practice and policy are difficult – simplification is needed.
- There could be the possibility for longer term appointments without changing the language of appointment; Recognized Designated Lay Ministers might be eligible for open-ended appointments.
- Concerns about supervision and training.
- Designated Lay Ministers are not accountable to the Office of Vocation; to whom will they be accountable?

- Appointments for Designated Lay Ministers are cumbersome and they cause anxiety; the church needs to address the pain that is there on both sides.
- A few groups suggested more study on this issue.
- There were several groups that raised the concern this proposal is a work around to the failed Remit 6: One Order of Ministry.

Suggested Way Forward:

That the 43rd General Council take no further action on Proposal SK 3 – Eliminating Appointments for Designated Lay Ministers.

Mover:

Seconder: