

Remit #3

Office of Vocation





What we currently have



- Education and student committees annually accompany about 240 candidates on their path to ordering or designation.
- In an average year, 36 candidates are ordained, 7 commissioned, and 12 recognized; 8 applicants are admitted from other denominations; and one is readmitted from the Discontinued Service List.



What we currently have



- Support for vocational ministry is offered through all four courts of the church.
- Presbytery recognizes DLMs.
- Presbyteries are responsible for oversight and discipline of ministers and pastoral charges.
- Several Conferences are testing (Effective Leadership) moving oversight and discipline of ministers to the Conference.



What we currently have



- **Conferences interview candidates, commission diaconal ministers, ordain ordained ministers, and celebrate the admission of applicants from other denominations.**
- **Conferences approve call and settlement, place ministers on the Discontinued Service List (DSL) when requested (Voluntary), and hold formal hearings for the DSL (Disciplinary).**



What we currently have



- **Conferences establish commissions to review objections about applicants for admission.**
- **Lists of interim ministers and educational supervisors are maintained inconsistently across the Conferences.**



What we currently have



General Council sets the policies and procedures for:

- education, commissioning, ordination, recognition, admission, and mutual recognition.
- complaint processes such as Dispute Resolution and Sexual Abuse Prevention and Response.



What we currently have



- **The Judicial Committee of the General Council hears appeals of Conference decisions and holds formal hearings at the request of a Conference involved in Effective Leadership, Healthy Pastoral Relations.**



What we currently have



Typically across the church per year there are:

- 10 reviews under *The Manual* J8 and/or J9
- 5 complaints to be investigated under the Sexual Abuse Prevention and Response policy
- 2 formal hearings
- 1 appeal

While less than 1% of our ministry personnel are subjected to formal discipline processes annually, each formal action involves more than 40 people, and many more are impacted.



Origin of remit



42nd General Council 2015

- **Comprehensive Review Task Group recommends a College of Ministers to accredit, oversee, and discipline ministers.**
- **The Task Group noted that the existing system of overseeing and disciplining ministers involves all four courts of the church, takes hours of volunteer time and money, and does not produce transparent or consistent results.**



Origin of remit



- **GC42 commissioners who were appointed to review all of the responses to the Comprehensive Review proposals recommended instead an Office of Vocation.**
- **It is considered that such an office is more in keeping with the conciliar nature of the church with accountability to the church.**



How would this office be structured?



- **The Office of Vocation would be lodged within and accountable to the General Council.**
- **General Council would elect a Board of Vocation, consisting of 12–16 ministers and lay people from across the church with a variety of relevant skills.**
- **The board would establish standards for education, training, admissions, and accreditation.**



Candidates for ministry



- 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



For candidates and ministry personnel

- 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.



Support and oversight



General Council staff is to:

- maintain a registry of accredited ministers
- maintain a list of designated Interim Ministers and those trained and recognized for the Ministry of Supervision
- establish and implement standards for admitting ministers from other denominations and readmitting ministers



Discipline of ministry personnel



- **Staff initiate investigations when concerns or complaints are received about a minister and recommend reviews to the Board of Vocation.**
- **Investigations are conducted by trained investigators**
- **The Board of Vocation orders a review of the conduct of a minister, and convenes formal hearing panels.**



Opportunity



- **An Office of Vocation would eliminate numerous volunteer committees at presbytery and Conference.**
- **Staff time at the Conference and presbytery would focus on support and early intervention.**
- **One central body making decisions on discipline will ensure greater consistency in practice and timeliness in decision-making.**

Do pastoral charges/ presbyteries 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?

What has been said . . .



Table Group discussion



What did you hear as being gained (a positive)?

What did you hear as being lost (a negative)?

What would you lift up as your hope or concern?

Plenary discussion

