



Category 2 Remit

Study Guide for Remit 5: Ministry Partners within Mutual Recognition of Ministry Agreements

Approved by the 42nd General Council 2015

Between February 2016 and 17 February 2017, each presbytery will formally be asked in a category 2 remit to approve a new category of “ministry partner.”

This is the question to be voted on:

Does the presbytery agree that

- (a) ministers of denominations within mutual recognition agreements (“ministry partners”), while under appointment or call, are full members of the presbytery, and equivalent to ordered ministers of the United Church in respect to membership and responsibilities in the courts of the church; and that
- (b) the Basis of Union be amended to reflect this policy?

Summary

The 42nd General Council 2015 signed its first-ever mutual recognition of ministry personnel agreements. The implementation of these agreements provides for a new ministry status, “ministry partner,” to identify those ministers serving in The United Church of Canada under these agreements.

The General Council also approved that a “ministry partner,” while under appointment or call, would be a full member of the presbytery and equivalent to an ordered minister of the United Church in terms of membership and responsibilities in all courts of the church. This is the subject of this remit because it requires amending the Basis of Union to allow for full membership.

Background

The 42nd General Council approved mutual recognition of ministry agreements with the United Church of Christ in the Philippines and the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea. It also approved a Full Communion agreement with the United Church of Christ (USA) with the understanding that mutual recognition of ministry will be an integral part of implementing the agreement. The General Council also authorized the Executive of the General Council to enter into further agreements as they are negotiated.

Mutual recognition of ministry, for those denominations with which agreements have been reached, offers a means for the mutual exchange of ministry personnel. These opportunities for exchange can provide for cross-cultural learning, the sharing of gifts and skills, and a deeper awareness of the breadth of God’s church. Mutual recognition of ministry allows ministry personnel of the partner denominations to be eligible to be called or appointed to ministry positions for a period of time as determined by the agreements.

To implement these and future mutual recognition of ministry agreements, a new ministry category has been proposed and is included in the agreements as currently structured. Ministry personnel in a partner denomination interested in serving in The United Church of Canada under a mutual recognition of ministry agreement will apply to become a ministry

partner. This will involve an interview process to explore the minister's understanding of the United Church and their motivation for serving in the church.

Care will be taken, through these processes, to ensure understanding of the distinctive ethos of each denomination, such as the commitment of the United Church to full inclusion of people regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Resources for preparing for the interview are being developed.

Once approved as ministry partners, individuals will be eligible for call or appointment, equivalent to any United Church minister. In other words, the credentials of ministry partners are recognized under the agreement.

Because the agreements are mutual, the same opportunities will exist for United Church of Canada ministers to serve in the partner denominations. Under the terms of the agreements, a similar category and process for "ministry partners" are being structured in partner denominations.

The agreements reflect the particular context of each denomination and are designed to be specific to particular situations and needs. The common thread in all of them will be the category of "ministry partner."

For more detail, please see the [GC42 Workbook](#), REPORTS 41–53 (pages 159–171): www.gc42.ca/workbook.

What is a category 2 remit?

A category 2 remit is needed for changes to the Basis of Union that are significant but not denomination-shaping (*The Manual*, s. F2). A category 2 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 to vote on. If an absolute majority of presbyteries 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 does not vote, that is considered a vote AGAINST the proposal.

Frequently asked questions

Who will be eligible to be ministry partners from The United Church of Canada?

Mutual recognition agreements include both ordained and diaconal ministers of the United Church. Currently, designated lay ministers are not included in these agreements. If the One Order of Ministry proposal is approved, then all ordained United Church ministers will be included in the agreements.

Who approves ministry partners?

Ministry partner status is approved by the receiving denomination. The interview and approval process for ministry partners from other denominations coming to The United Church of Canada will be the responsibility of the General Council unit responsible for oversight of ministry personnel.

What will be included in the process?

Ministry partner applicants will be expected to gain an adequate understanding of the historical and cultural contexts of the United Church through resources and recommended study materials made available for this purpose. These will include Web-based study programs (Sexual Abuse Prevention and Response Policy, Racial Justice Awareness) that all United Church ministers are required to complete. Applicants will complete these courses online before applying for ministry partner status. After their application is received, they will be invited to an online interview whose primary focus is their understanding of the context and ministry of the United Church and their interest in serving in the church.

How will we ensure that ministry partners from other denominations will “fit” the United Church?

Mutual recognition of ministry agreements are established with partner denominations that share a history of relationship and compatibility with the United Church in God’s mission. For example, The United Church of Canada was a founding partner of the Presbyterian Church of Korea and has a long history of overseas personnel with it. As a united and uniting church, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines and The United Church of Canada share common denominational roots and commitments to justice. We also have much to learn from each other. For example, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines and the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea have demonstrated great courage in risking for God’s mission in the face of violence that has not been part of our experience. Mutual recognition agreements do not guarantee a perfect fit, but they acknowledge that we have much to receive and learn from partner denominations in the gifts of ministry and mission.

How will ministry partners be accountable?

While under call or appointment in the United Church, ministry partners will be accountable in the same manner as all United Church ministers. Disciplinary action, if necessary, could extend to removing a person’s ministry partner status and ending their ministry in the United Church. Status as a ministry partner will also depend on an individual being in good standing in their home denomination. If their status as a ministry partner is ended, they will no longer be eligible to serve in the United Church.

Does a mutual recognition of ministry agreement replace the admissions process for ministers from that denomination?

The admissions process continues for any minister who wishes to transfer their ordination to the United Church. Most ministers from denominations covered by a mutual recognition of ministry agreement who wish to seek a call or appointment in the United Church will do so as ministry partners. This enables them to maintain their ordination status in good standing in their home denomination. Those who wish to permanently immigrate to Canada would be able to apply through the admissions process to transfer their ordination status to the United Church.

What happens to pensions while serving as a ministry partner?

Ministry partners serving in The United Church of Canada will be required to join the pension and group insurance plans. The transfer of pension credits when a ministry partner returns to their home denomination will depend on many factors and on the legal and tax requirements of the Canada Revenue Agency and their place of residence.