

Remits an important part of improving how we do God's work

The next eight months will be a pivotal period in the life of The United Church of Canada. With the deadlines to vote on seven of the eight remits quickly approaching, we have a real opportunity to transform the church so it continues to play an important role in our society.

Considering what is at stake, it is crucial that all pastoral charge boards/councils and presbyteries study the remit proposals and cast a vote. A wealth of background information is available online at GC42.ca/remits, including study guides, informational videos, webinar discussions, and answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs). This is a unique chance to involve members in major denominational decisions that will ultimately be voted on by the pastoral charges boards and councils. If you have questions, e-mail them to remits@united-church.ca and a senior staff member will respond.

The five remits being voted on by both pastoral charge boards/councils and presbyteries are: (1) Three-Council Model, (2) Elimination of Transfer and Settlement, (3) Office of Vocation, (4) Funding a New Model, and (6) One Order of Ministry. The three remits being decided by presbyteries only are: (5) Ministry Partners within Mutual Recognition of Ministry Agreements, (7) Candidacy Pathway, and (8) Towards a New Model of Membership.

While these remits aim to improve how the church operates, the rationale for them really comes down to better serving God. As the Rev. Cathy Hamilton, Chair of the Comprehensive Review Task Group, noted in 2015: "The need for change in how the church is and will be united in God's work is pressing. This is not just about money or about structural change, but about vitality in the church."

If pastoral charge boards/councils and presbyteries fail to cast a vote on any of these remits, that lack of response counts as a no vote. The paper ballots for remits 5, 7, and 8 must be mailed in to the General Council Office by February 17, 2017. Ballots for remits 1, 2, 3, and 4 must be received by June 30, 2017. The deadline for remit 6 ballots is February 28, 2018.

A quick review of how the remits came about. All relate to proposals approved by the 42nd General Council last year. Most of them flow from recommendations made by the Comprehensive Review Task Group, which was directed by the 41st General Council to develop recommendations that would "best enable the church to live faithfully in God's world at this time in the church's life." The following words from the Task Group's report, *United in God's Work*, capture their central message to the church: "We would have to let go of things we have always done and things we cherish. We would have to live within our means and accept that we will be smaller...there is hope of resurrection and new life."

As you consider these remits in all their complexity, please remember that church structures are not what's really important. Our structures and processes are significant only when they support us in living out the teachings of Jesus Christ in our time and place. Church-wide participation in the remit process is vital, and I trust you will make your voice heard and help shape the future of The United Church of Canada.

Yours in Christ,
Nora Sanders
General Secretary, General Council

