

Frequently asked questions about the eight remits now before the church

The June 30, 2017, deadline for four remits that could fundamentally reshape The United Church of Canada is fast approaching.

To help pastoral charge boards/councils and presbyteries make informed decisions on these proposals (Remit 1: Three Council Model; Remit 2: Elimination of Transfer and Settlement; Remit 3: Office of Vocation; and Remit 4: Funding a New Model), we've updated this Frequently Asked Questions document. **For ease of reference, the questions are now grouped by remit number, with the newest questions at the start of each one.**

The deadline for Remit 6: One Order of Ministry is February 28, 2018. The deadline for three other remits has already passed.

Remit 1 (Three Council Model) questions

Why does remit 1 propose that the name of General Council be changed to Denominational Council?

The task group that worked on this remit felt that it might be helpful to have new nomenclature for each council of the church, as each would have different powers and responsibilities than what came before.

What are some specific examples of authorities that could be exercised by communities of faith?

In 2015, the 42nd General Council envisioned that communities of faith would have authority for “buying, selling, leasing, and renovating community of faith property in cooperation with the regional council, within denominational guidelines.” They would also assist in “recruiting, choosing, calling, appointing, and covenanting with ministry personnel and other staff, and in ending calls and appointments/covenants with ministry personnel and other staff.” However, the 42nd General Council made multiple references to communities of faith acting “in cooperation with” with regional councils. This would likely mean that on matters of substantial consequence—terminating a pastoral relationship with a minister, selling a valuable property, incurring significant debt—that there would need to be mutual agreement by both the local ministries and the regional council.

Would non-traditional communities of faith be subject to the same governance requirements as more traditional ones?

A one-size governance model would not fit a multiplicity of local ministry types. The regional council would need to ensure that appropriate governance is in place to ensure transparent, fair, and responsible decision-making. For a small house church in a remote community with a

migrant population, governance would look different from that of a traditional congregation with several hundred members, a large budget, and extensive property and trust funds.

Could a person be a member of more than one community of faith? If that is allowed, would they then have multiple votes?

Lay membership is a responsibility of the local ministry. Anyone can be a member of a congregation where they live. If they also wanted to join a congregation near the cottage, for example, they could join as an adherent. They would not be allowed to be a representative for both at the regional level, but could vote on all local issues in their congregation of membership. With the permission of the other congregation, they could also vote on local administrative issues as an adherent.

How are clusters, or supportive groups, formed and maintained? What role does the regional council have in these?

These have not been defined in either the report or the remit. The original idea was that clusters would arise spontaneously in response to local needs and interests. However, in experience, they have required an individual to take responsibility for initiating and supporting, or have required a presbytery or Conference resource to do so. If this remit passes, more work would have to be done in this area.

Would this remit affect the role, responsibilities, and accountability of Ministry and Personnel Committees at the congregational level?

Regional councils would have responsibility for supporting the pastoral relationship between the local ministry and the minister. There would still be a role for Ministry and Personnel Committees locally to support the relationship and ensure that due diligence is done.

(Older questions below)

How many regional councils will be established in each province?

Pastoral charges and presbyteries have until June 30, 2017, to vote on this remit. If both groups approve it by an absolute majority, the Executive of the General Council has agreed that a special meeting of 42nd General Council commissioners will be held electronically in September 2017. Its sole purpose will be to establish a commission to set the number and boundaries of the regional councils. The number of regional councils is expected to be in the range of 12–15.

Will regional councils have elected officials from each community of faith?

Remit 1 provides that regional councils will include “lay members elected by the community of faith, respecting the balance of lay and ministry personnel where possible.” The details of how

many representatives would be elected from communities of faith will be determined if remit 1 passes.

In the study guide for remit 1, it is suggested regions would have the authority to set “any additional regional assessment for any additional services the regional council wishes to undertake.” Can you give us an example?

One of the reasons for this remit is to reduce costs, particularly costs related to governance. This conditional language was inserted to allow regions to have some flexibility. For example, if the regional council wanted to meet more often in person than the financial modelling provides for, it could presumably make the case for additional assessment. Or perhaps it could offer additional support services to small pastoral charges, such as filing T3010 annual charitable returns or managing payroll.

The study guide for remit 1 states that regional councils will be involved with “receiving, dealing with, and forwarding on proposals.” Is the intention that proposals come from individual members or from a larger body?

It has been our “conciliar” church’s polity that courts talk to one another and initiate actions. It is not anticipated that this will change if we move to a three-council model. The General Council motion states that communities of faith will participate in “regional and denominational life: receiving, dealing with and forwarding on proposals from members of the community of faith to regional councils.” So the intention is that proposals come from the governance body of the community of faith, not directly from individual members.

Would the executive of regional councils have more power? If regional councils meet just once a year, how will matters that come up through the year be addressed?

Conference and presbytery executives already play a role like this. In the regional model there would continue to be an executive. If the remit is passed, the General/Denominational Council will then consider proposals on the terms of reference and scope of decision-making that executives would hold.

Remit 1 talks about “communities of faith.” How are they different from congregations?

The term “community of faith” is broader than “congregation.” It would include any community of people in the United Church that gathers for faith, worship, and service, and is recognized by the regional council through a covenantal relationship between the community of faith and the regional council. It could include congregations as we currently understand them, community-

based and justice ministries, faith-based communal living, house churches, shared ministries with other denominations, online communities, and others.

Could an online community of faith just meet in a chatroom via the Internet?

There will likely be a need for some flexibility on meeting requirements for online communities, but nothing specific will be determined unless remit 1 passes. That remit addresses structural change only.

Who defines membership for the community of faith? Could I become a member of an online community and then transfer my membership to a congregation?

Remit 1 only addresses structural change and does not deal with membership requirements. It would not change the current membership requirements: full membership requires a [form of profession of faith](#) within denominational guidelines. As a separate initiative, the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee has released a [study into the meaning of membership](#), including the relationship of baptism and membership, and will be making recommendations to the 43rd General Council.

If communities of faith cannot afford to send a representative to regional council, will there be funds they can access? Can they send one rep between them? How can we make the regional council gatherings affordable for small communities of faith?

This would be determined by the regional council as it establishes priorities for the resources it will manage—those already attached to the region/Conference and those they may generate by assessment.

Remit 1 calls for the formation of “clusters and networks.” What are they?

Clusters are voluntary gatherings of several communities of faith that would provide community and support for communities of faith and their leaders, and focus on worship, mission, learning, collegiality, and strategic planning. Networks link individuals working on specific issues (e.g., supportive housing, intercultural ministry, youth ministry) or for project work (e.g., event planning) that function through the whole church, depending on the issue.

If the church moves to a three-council structure, what will happen to agencies that are currently being funded by presbyteries, such as chaplaincies?

One of the most fundamental design principles in all of the restructuring work is to allocate more resources and potentially be able to better protect existing “mission spending.” At the

proposed Denominational Council level, the financial model contemplates maintaining funding at current levels for mission support, global support, and theological school grants. There will be an increase in funding for Embracing the Spirit, plus more than \$2 million will be freed up for regional mission priorities. At the proposed regional council level, the model contemplates less resources for governance meetings, but it is hoped that “purer” mission work like chaplaincy will continue to be funded. The source of funds would likely not be assessment but rather the larger Mission & Service pot. There are lots of variables, but the overall idea is to provide more sustainable funding to things like chaplaincy and to reduce administration/governance.

The appendix to remit 1 makes reference to “living in covenant with Mother Earth and All My Relations in the Earth community.” What does this mean?

These terms have come into our discourse as a result of the [church’s relationship with Indigenous peoples](#) and continuing engagement with Indigenous theologies. “Mother Earth” refers to the Earth, our home; “All My Relations” is a phrase that speaks to the connectedness of all living things in the created order. (It is rendered in Mohawk on the [United Church crest](#).) Taken together, they refer to our relationship with Creation, a relationship that is named in different ways in [A New Creed](#) and [A Song of Faith](#).

Who is looking after the human resources aspect of pastoral relations? What are the ideas about managing what looks like an immense workload going to the proposed regional councils, if remit 1 passes?

It is recognized that part of our organizational legal and moral responsibilities for due diligence is to maintain standards of accountability around human relations and pastoral relations, no matter what our structure. In the motion passed by the General Council (see the appendix to remit 1), regional councils will “co-operate” with communities of faith in recruiting, choosing, calling, appointing, and covenanting with ministry personnel as well as encouraging and supporting ministry personnel, assisting with informal conflict resolution, maintaining the roll (membership) of ministry personnel. Staffing for most of this HR-type function will be paid for from assessments (providing remit 4 passes). Remit 3 proposes a national Office of Vocation, which would be responsible for determining the fitness and readiness of candidates for accreditation and admission, formal disciplinary processes, and supporting the regional councils. Determining fitness and disciplinary processes have evolved largely to the Conferences already and will evolve further, if the office is approved, to the denominational office. These functions would not be done, however, in isolation from the regional councils’ support of ministry personnel and pastoral relationships, but does separate the formal responsibilities for support and for oversight.

If remit 1 passes, what will happen to funds that are controlled by Conferences and have been available for congregations?

A fundamental design principle is that any local funds with local purpose would remain local. Depending on number of regions and availability of volunteers, this would get sorted out at implementation.

Does this mean more autonomy and less support? Whom will we call when we have questions about local governance and pastoral relations?

We want to streamline our governance processes for a modern era so there are more human and financial resources to directly support ministry. Regional council offices would be the first point of contact of support and service, as they would be primarily focused on support and service to area ministries. One Conference is already considering a proposal to move all processes and services requiring professional skill or expertise (human resources, public relations, property, discipline, etc.) to the Conference office, freeing presbyteries to focus on collegiality and support of ministries.

Remit 1 envisions regional councils replacing presbyteries and Conferences. How many presbyteries and Conferences do we now have?

We currently have 85 presbyteries and 13 Conferences across Canada.

Pastoral charges and presbyteries now have the responsibility to vote on remits. If Remit 1 passes and presbyteries are no more, will the obligation to vote on category 2 and 3 remits be housed in the regional councils?

If remit 1 is approved, General Council will need to make decisions to fully flesh out the new governance model, including deciding whether the church will continue to use a remit process for making fundamental changes.

How much money is projected to be saved by changing to a three-council structure, as proposed by remit 1?

There is a need to reduce the broader church cost structure in any case—whether any or all of the remits pass. The structural changes proposed in remit 1 aim to streamline governance and help us achieve those cost savings in a way that serves our mission. Taken together, we hope to save at least \$10 million. A portion of that has already been achieved, but more reductions are required.

Will moving to a three-council structure allow the church to operate with less staff?

Regardless of what structure we move to, job loss will likely be in the magnitude of 20–40 staff across regions and the General Council Office as we live within our means. As much as possible, this job loss will be dealt with through retirement and attrition. The General Council staff level is already at about 60 percent of what it was a decade ago.

Remit 2 (Elimination of Transfer and Settlement) questions

Is there any financial help to help get newly ordered ministry personnel to their new charge, especially in remote or rural areas?

Moving funds are currently available only for commissionands/ordinands being transferred and settled. Candidates securing a conditional call or appointment do not qualify. They need to negotiate with the pastoral charge for moving expenses.

If a community of faith is looking for staff, does this remit change the role of the Ministry and Personnel (M&P) Committee of the Local Ministry Unit (LMU)? Would it change the support available to the LMUs?

Transfer and settlement have not effectively provided ministers for pastoral charges for a couple of decades. The conclusion of the Comprehensive Review Task Group was that this was a model and process that had its time but is no longer serving the church. If settlement is eliminated, that would not change the role of the M&P Committee or change the support available to local ministries.

(Older questions below)

Can the church ensure that every minister has a pastoral charge and every pastoral charge has a minister?

Transfer and settlement were once the way the church ensured that every minister had a pastoral charge and every pastoral charge had a minister. In recent years, however, more and more candidates were declaring limiting conditions, restricting where they could be settled, meaning that more distant and small pastoral charges were remaining vacant. Transfer and settlement are no longer seen as an effective means to place ministers in rural or distant pastoral charges. They are also possibly barriers for people considering ministry.

How will pastoral charges that are not popular (in rural and remote areas) attract ministers?

Consideration is being given to a location allowance for ministry personnel serving in remote communities. There are also various local experiments and conversations about serving pastoral charges through cooperative ministries or using technology to provide worship leadership from other locations.

What analysis has been done to gauge the impact of making transfer and settlement optional at ordering, as envisioned by this remit?

There has not been a review of the outcomes of the policy change, implemented in 2011, that made transfer and settlement optional at ordering. This is not unusual, though, as ideally we would need to look at results over a seven- to 10-year period. What we have seen since 2011 is

a decline in the number of candidates seeking transfer and settlement (there were none this past year). The number of requests by pastoral charges for settlement also declined.

What would be the process for dealing with a ministry vacancy, currently handled through the Joint Needs Assessment Committee and search committees made up of local volunteers?

It is too early to say what the pastoral relations processes will be. The General Council motion says that this will be done in cooperation with the region. With the various effective leadership and healthy pastoral relationship projects, various models are being tested for describing a congregation's mission and its ministry needs. These will provide valuable learnings for new processes if the remit passes.

If remit 2 is passed, will ministry personnel be tracked as they move from one pastoral relationship to another?

Remit 2 proposes the elimination of transfer and settlement processes, both the process of a national transfer and settlement of ministers (usually newly ordered, though not exclusively) and the process of Conferences authorizing the settlement of ministers into ministries in their jurisdiction. What it does not eliminate is "cooperation with the regional council" in "calling, appointing and covenanting" with ministry personnel. Also, with the membership of ministry personnel residing with the region, a record would be retained there.

Remit 3 (Office of Vocation) questions

How would elected members of the proposed Office of Vocation be elected, and what would be the proportion of lay people to clergy?

Those details would be developed if the remit passes. However, it has been suggested that the board could comprise 50 percent lay and 50 percent ministry personnel, with members elected by the General Council or its Executive from a pool nominated by the regions.

Would there be a central "office" for the Office of Vocation, or would there be some functions at the region level?

Since regions (if remit 1 passes) would be responsible for the support of pastoral relationships and the mission of local communities of faith, there would always need to be a close collaboration between the Office of Vocation and the regions. A core of staff would likely be housed in the General Council Office, but it is likely that a role similar to that of the current Conference personnel ministers would be regionally based.

Would the Office of Vocation provide support to ministers undergoing disciplinary action?

The Office of Vocation would be responsible for all aspects of disciplinary action. Support to ministers undergoing disciplinary action would be continued, as that is a standard of the United Church. Details would be developed if the remit passes, but it would likely involve some form of cooperation with the region/Conference/presbytery.

If the Office of Vocation is created, the study guide notes that “numerous volunteer committees would cease to exist in all four courts of the church.” What are the implications at the pastoral charge/community of faith level, and would there be implications for the role of the Ministry and Personnel (M&P) Committee or the use of local discernment?

The local ministry would continue to provide direction and support through an M&P Committee. The candidacy pathway proposal (remit 7) that is before presbyteries envisions a further streamlining of discernment and candidacy processes in preparation for vocational ministry, but the local ministry would still have a role in the early discernment of call and support throughout the period of preparation. The primary advantage of an Office of Vocation is that in the event of a complaint against a minister, it would be investigated, resolved, or moved to formal proceedings much more quickly and professionally.

(Older questions below)

Is it expected that the Office of Vocation will be funded from assessments?

Yes. The Office of Vocation, as with its precursor, the College of Ministers, was not predicated on the funding remit passing. The college was conceived quite independently of the change in assessment authorities. However, if the Office of Vocation remit passes—moving the oversight and discipline of ministry personnel to General Council—the funding responsibility will also move to General Council, relieving the presbyteries and Conferences that currently bear these expenses.

Is there a term of office for those sitting on the board of the Office of Vocation?

This is a detail that would be worked out if the remit passes. As with all other General Council—related committees, there would likely be term limits for members. Most are one triennium (the three years between General Councils), renewable once for a maximum of six years.

How many paid staff will be employed in the Office of Vocation? What is the estimated annual budget, and what portion of that would be for staff salaries?

Details of an Office of Vocation will come to the 43rd General Council if the remit passes. If the current staff of six at the General Council Office who now support pastoral relations policy and

programs move to the Office of Vocation, there will be no new costs. Currently a network of about 30 staff in the Conferences support pastoral relations (Conference personnel ministers and administrative staff). These roles, or some form of them, would likely remain in the regions, thus not incurring additional costs. The administrative costs of a Board of Vocation is anticipated to be less than the collective costs of 85 presbytery and 13 Conference committees and associated structures. It is also anticipated that there will be significant legal cost savings with improved and consistently implemented practices. The rationale for an Office of Vocation is to increase the consistency and timeliness of resolution of conflicts and complaints. For most presbyteries (and some Conferences), the professionalism to do that with due diligence and transparency is beyond the scope and capacity of volunteers.

How will the proposed Office of Vocation, plus regional councils, be able to provide the grassroots support and oversight that presbyteries now provide?

The oversight and discipline of ministers cannot be done effectively or faithfully in isolation from the context of the local pastoral relationship. So there will always be a local component through the regional council, its staff, and whatever volunteer structure is appropriate in that region. The Effective Leadership and Healthy Pastoral Relations testing authorized by the 41st General Council 2012 and underway in a number of Conferences is testing the effectiveness of moving the current presbytery pastoral relations responsibilities to the Conference, with many positive results being realized. If an Office of Vocation is approved, we will have the benefit of these tests to inform the roles of the Office of Vocation and its relationship with the regions.

Remit 4 (Funding a New Model) questions

The background material for remit 4 talks about spreading out costs more equitably across the church. How much has the budget of the General Council Office (GCO) been cut in recent years?

Ten years ago, the GCO budget was in the \$45- to \$47-million range. By 2018, we expect to have reduced GCO expenses to approximately \$30 million, while absorbing inflation. The broader church is seeking to balance budgets.

To figure out our pastoral charge's assessment base, the remit 4 study guide says to take line 32D and subtract lines 36, 37, 38, and 39, and then multiply by 0.045. Where do I find those line numbers?

The statistical information is printed in the hardcopy *Year Book* each year and is also distributed on spreadsheets, but it appears it is not widely shared. This report is available online if your congregation files electronically. (The portal <https://webapps.united-church.ca> is available to all pastoral charges.) For most congregations, total revenue would include A1 plus A2 plus A3 plus A4. However, be sure to exclude bequests. If a transfer from reserves is a draw on capital, it should also be excluded. You then need to subtract your outward directed revenues (UCW,

M&S, local outreach, etc.). Forms are being adjusted to better capture the data, and in future we may even be able to use annual Canada Revenue Agency data (T3010) to streamline things further. The 4.5 percent is a target level, but there is provision to cap the initial increase at 10 percent.

What principles are driving this remit?

The overall principles underlying the remit are as follows:

- All congregations participate in some transparent, proportional way in funding the shared support service and governance of the broader church—including national supports currently funded by M&S.
- Mission & Service is to be transformed to focus exclusively on mission work, which will hopefully be more attractive to future and new donors.
- We want to ensure that broader church costs are scale-appropriate and constrained.

Under the proposed assessment formula, line 38 (other church appeals) is excluded from net revenue. Could you provide examples of such appeals that would not be counted?

This is for money raised for work outside the church, such as refugee programs, national emergency relief appeal, support for a local foodbank, and so on.

If a congregation receives \$150,000 from an estate with the condition that the money must be used for capital improvement projects, should that \$150,000 be included in line 39, bequests, and therefore deducted when calculating net revenue for assessment?

Actual one-time bequests (and asset sale) proceeds are excluded from revenue.

Is rental income included as part of “total revenue” in the new funding model? Some pastoral charges have substantial income in this category.

Yes. An underlying principle is that congregations with additional revenue streams should be assessed on them.

Has any financial modelling been done to project the long-term effects on the church’s financial viability if remit 4 passes?

Having all congregations participate in funding the work of the broader church would mean that the church is more sustainable as a whole. There could still be cuts to programs or service as we find ways to be cost-effective and free up resources for mission.

Is the income generated by a trust fund considered part of the general church revenue when calculating our assessment?

Investment income is considered part of total revenue for assessment purposes. Congregations that have supplemental sources of revenue should pay more than those that do not.

(Older questions below)

After proposing a new funding model for the church, remit 4 notes that “a majority of congregations will see an increase in levied assessment costs in the first year of implementation.” How is that fair?

Budget cuts are unavoidable across the church. While remit 4 will result in cost increases for many congregations, it will also create a system where all congregations equitably fund the broader church while more directly aligning the whole church with financial realities. This remit contemplates three scenarios, the first being that a congregation’s assessment could go down if it is already paying at a higher level. If the assessment goes up, members can elect to cap the increase at 10 percent of the prior year’s level. The third scenario is that those facing more than a 10 percent increase can move to “full pay” right away, for the benefit of the church of the whole. The single funding formula proposed in remit 4 should be more equitable and transparent, as it is based on an assessment of total revenue, adjusted for any bequests, asset sales, and income raised for outward spending. That should benefit smaller and more rural congregations that may not have supplemental revenue sources such as investment and rental income.

How will this new system be more equitable?

If this remit passes, all pastoral charges will pay their fair share of the common costs of running the church. While over 90 percent of pastoral charges now make some contribution to Mission & Service, the proportional contribution varies widely (42 percent of people who give to the local church also give to Mission & Service). The passage of this remit would see certain core costs shared proportionally by all congregations. All regions will get the same core funding from assessment (which means some redistribution from have to have-not areas), as the formula is based on ability to pay. Regions with additional sources of revenue could potentially supplement the core assessment funding with other sources of local income, as is the case today.

How will Mission & Service change if remit 4 is approved?

Mission & Service giving, the free-will offering of the people of the United Church, is currently allocated to support mission and ministry programs conducted locally, nationally, and globally—including the staff support services at the General Council Office needed to deliver and sustain these programs. General Council salaries fall into three broad categories: direct mission work, support services, and governance support. By having an assessment cover the latter two elements, we will free up more Mission & Service giving for mission work and, we hope, make Mission & Service attractive to more donors.

What if a pastoral charge is hard-pressed to pay more?

As a transition measure, a 10 percent cap on assessment increases in the first year is being proposed, with that level to be frozen for the next two years. The three-year phase-in period would allow for evaluation and living into the new model, and the billing and collecting of assessment will be as streamlined as possible. The General Council/Denominational Council will work with Conferences/regional councils to assess each pastoral charge/community of faith annually and distribute the amounts collected regionally or nationally as agreed in advance. To the extent that Mission & Service today funds activity that would be funded by assessment in the new model, some congregations may need to consider offsetting part of the increase in annual cost from what donors allocate to Mission & Service.

Remit 4 proposes a 4.5 percent assessment of our church's gross income. We feel the 4.5 percent of gross income is excessive and that the assessment should be on the church's net income, not gross income.

The proposed assessment is based on the principle of equity across the church. Given that there are numerous ways to arrive at net income, an equitable assessment across the church is not possible using net income as the basis. If a congregation has difficulty reaching the 4.5 percent, there are ways of phasing this in over time, as described in the study guide for remit 4.

Is the proposed 4.5 percent assessment formula up for discussion after the vote, and could it change?

At future General Council/Denominational Council meetings, regional representatives from all communities of faith will be able to review spending before deciding what the assessment percentage should be for the coming triennium.

Will the regional councils receive any funding from the 4.5 percent assessment?

Yes, the single national assessment of 4.5 percent would fund governance and shared services in the regions and in the denomination.

Would spending capital from investment funds be considered revenue?

Spending down of capital is not considered revenue and would not be assessed. However, investment income is revenue and would be subject to assessment.

Will funds tied to a particular presbytery still be used for projects in that area after the presbytery ends?

The purpose of these funds would continue to be honoured so that they could continue to support local mission and ministry work such as day camps or local programming.

Who will collect the assessment money when there are no presbyteries?

Regional councils would be the “inheritors” of the responsibilities of presbyteries and Conferences and would have the right to assess.

What was the rationale in the original decision-making in 1925 for General Council expenses to be taken from Mission & Service funds, if needed?

Since the General Council currently has no means of assessment, its funding has come from a variety of sources over the years, including the predecessor to Mission & Service. This remit would ensure that all governance and support service costs are paid by assessment, while donations to Mission & Service are used solely for the mission and ministry of the church.

What is the current breakdown of grant/program and General Council administrative costs for Mission & Service ministry and programs?

As outlined in [*Mission & Service at a Glance 2015*](#), Conference leadership and General Council leadership and governance accounted for \$3.3 million of the total Mission & Service budget of \$26.3 million, or 12.5 percent. Conference leadership costs of \$3.8 million have been funded by a combination of Mission & Service donations and other revenue. Note that Conference leadership includes a range of leadership, governance, and program work. The \$4.6-million cost of General Council leadership and governance has been funded from other revenue, identified as investment income, retail sales, draw down of capital reserves, additional donated revenue, and government co-financing.

How do you define ministry and mission?

In short, ministry and mission is all of the work of the denomination that is funded by Mission & Service and is not assessment-funded governance and support services. As people of The United Church of Canada, our denominational call to God’s mission through ministry and mission is well documented and articulated and lived out across Canada and around the world, and it will continue to grow and develop as our understanding of God’s mission develops.

Remit 5 (Ministry Partners within Mutual Recognition of Ministry Agreements) questions

In regard to Remit 5, will there be discussion on mutual recognition of Anglican diaconal ministers?

While there is a long-standing Anglican—United Church dialogue, there is no current discussion of a mutual recognition of ministry personnel agreement. If discussion does move to this, all aspects of our ordered ministries will be considered.

Remit 6 (One Order of Ministry) questions

If this remit is approved and there is One Order of Ministry, would all three existing categories of ministry use the title “Reverend”?

Yes. Currently recognized designated lay ministers would be grandparented into the order of ministry, and all members would be entitled to use the title “Reverend.” Going forward, there would be no recognizable designated lay minister (DLM) group. All new entrants to the order would be ordained.

Can relevant experience count as equivalent educational requirements?

This is now done to a limited extent in the designated lay ministry program. However, a proposal to the last General Council to introduce a competency model that would assess educational equivalencies was sent back to the General Secretary for further work. A revised proposal could go to the next General Council in 2018.

How are ministers with greater responsibility or accountability (such as supervisory responsibilities) compensated?

General Council has established minimum salary levels based on local cost of living (the six cost-of-living regions that have been identified) and seniority (six steps, A–F, topping out at 14 years). A handbook on compensation encourages congregations to consider other factors, such as specialized education required for their position, supervisory responsibilities, etc., as well as other cost of living considerations pertinent to their particular location, in arriving at an appropriate salary over the minimum.

If the lay leader must work with oversight from ordained ministry, what is the relationship between the ordained ministry and the faith community? Are there financial implications for the faith community?

Designated lay ministers are, technically, lay members of local congregations who have been recognized after a series of study to provide ministry leadership. In practice, however, they are considered ministry personnel, and most serve in unsupervised solo ministry positions. One Order of Ministry proposes folding DLMS into the order of ministry and recognizing them as ordained. There are also licenced lay worship leaders, who undertake limited training focused on worship leadership. In regions with a shortage of ministers, they often assume more responsibilities. A pastoral charge supervisor, however, is appointed by the presbytery (or Conference) to provide oversight of the local ministry. Minimum payment guidelines are provided by the General Council.

What happens if a community of faith wishes to have someone who specializes in a specific ministry, such as youth ministry or social justice outreach?

Under One Order of Ministry, these people would be recognized as lay leaders, or staff associates. It would be expected that this ministry would be specific to that location, focused on a particular aspect of the local ministry, and supervised by ministry personnel in that congregation. Sometimes an ordained or commissioned minister would be called to a specialized ministry position, in which case they would still be ordered with all of the privileges and responsibilities associated with ordered ministry.

Is it true that a person who is ordained but took the shorter course is not eligible to serve as a chaplain in the Canadian Armed Forces?

Yes. The Canadian Armed Forces requires its chaplains to have a Master of Divinity.

Would the One Order of Ministry remit affect our ecumenical relationships?

No. The United Church—Anglican Church dialogue, in fact, has affirmed the proposed direction. What is problematic in some of our ecumenical relationships is the idea of people who have not been ordained having sacramental privileges. The United Church of Christ in the United States, following our lead, is proposing to move to a “single authorization” called ordination, bringing together their three streams. A Master of Divinity, while common, is not a single standard among our partners for ordination.

(older questions below)

How does One Order affect the discernment process? Some people have many great gifts but may not have the desire or the skills needed to go into ordained ministry.

The One Order proposal does not affect the discernment process. That is a separate phase of the candidacy process and of Remit 7: Candidacy Pathway, if that remit passes. Both involve a period of discernment of both call and call to a particular expression of vocational ministry. Under One Order, discerning the course of preparation one chooses—Centre for Christian Studies, Master of Divinity Diploma—will contribute to the candidate’s formation and orientation to an ethos of ministry practice.

If remit 6 passes and all designated lay ministers become ordained ministers, will they receive the same salary and benefits?

The proposal for One Order of Ministry contemplates all those who are currently recognized designated lay ministers (DLMs) in appointments (most are in appointments to solo pastoral ministry now) being folded into the order of ministry with commissioned and ordained ministers, effectively discontinuing the DLM category. If this remit passes, they would be paid under the same salary schedule as ordered ministers (currently the differential is about 2.5 percent). All other expense reimbursements and allowances are already the same. There would

still be lay ministries in some congregations, focused on one aspect of the congregation's ministry and practised under the supervision of an ordered minister.

After watching the One Order of Ministry webinar, it doesn't sound like the members of the current streams of ministry (diaconal, lay leader, and ordained) are in favour of this proposal, or understand it.

Some ministry personnel are concerned that the increased educational requirements for designated lay ministers will make it more difficult for prospective applicants. The One Order proposal acknowledges this but concludes that additional educational competency is warranted to meet an equivalency. Some diaconal ministers are concerned that One Order will diminish the distinctiveness of their vocational call. The proposal also acknowledges this. However, since diaconal ministry is mostly exercised in solo pastoral positions, it was considered reasonable to have a common designation (ordained). The formation of the diaconal study will ensure that their distinctive approach to the practice of their vocation will remain.

The longer remit 6 study guide talks about how the lower salary of designated lay ministers "can at times offer an incentive to financially struggling congregations to choose the less-expensive option." It is then suggested that "a minimum salary scale for all ministers offers greater equity," benefiting churches with low funds. But how do we ensure that the opposite doesn't happen and that all ministry personnel will be too expensive for some churches to hire?

One Order does not provide a means to assist congregations with low funds to secure a minister. What it does do is eliminate the modest (roughly \$80/month) differential between designated lay ministry and ordered ministry salaries in recognition that most designated lay ministers serve in solo pastoral ministry, unlike the vision that originally defined lay ministry as "localized and limited."

What are the proposed expanded educational requirements for the current designated lay ministers stream if remit 6 passes?

The full development of a Diploma in Pastoral Theology would follow only if remit 6 is approved. However, more information about its general proposed design can be found in the One Order proposal, which is in the [GC42 Record of Proceedings 2015](#) (TICIF 2, pp. 256–266). There it suggests that it might be lodged in an existing theological institution and expanded into a five-year model; require one year of university studies in an established undergraduate program; and require eight, rather than three, academic courses.

Remit 7 (Candidacy Pathways) questions

Would local communities of faith still have a time when they walked

with an “inquirer” contemplating ordered ministry (via a discernment committee or something new) before they moved into wider circles of support, or will someone interested in ordered ministry immediately be dealing with a circle of support at the regional level?

The requirement for a formal “discernment process” with a specified length of time would be removed. Those interested in exploring suitability for ministry will still need to discern a sense of call—however, this will be done in a more self-guided way. This may include attending a discernment retreat, organizing a group in their community, meeting with ministry personnel, seeing a spiritual director, etc. However, if the individual is truly discerning a call to ministry, it can be assumed they would be seeking support, feedback, and guidance from their community.

The study guide for remit 7 states that the Candidacy Board or similar board of Conference will decide which candidates will be ordained/commissioned. The study guide for remit 3 suggests that the Board of Vocation will decide and assess fitness for ordination, commissioning, or recognition. What will happen if both remits pass?

The Candidacy Pathway remit presumes the current structure and policies. However, it is readily adaptable to a three-council model (remit 1) and/or Office of Vocation. If the Candidacy Pathway remit passes, and either or both of the other remits, the Candidacy Pathway will automatically be adapted to reflect the changes authorized by the other remits following the principle of *mutatis mutandis*, meaning “once the necessary changes have been made.” As noted in another FAQ below, remits are independent of one another, meaning that if some are voted down, others can still be approved. However, changes sparked by the approval of one remit will automatically be applicable to the others.

Remit 8 (Towards a New Model of Membership) questions

Remit 8 proposes that adherents be allowed “to vote on all matters that come before meetings of the local ministry.” The study guide for that remit also states: “These issues will be more fully explored in the study on membership, which is expected to be available May 2016.” Where’s that document?

This document was delayed but is now online. The Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee invites everyone to respond to its [study on membership](#) titled “Our Model of Church Membership: Time for a Change?” The issues around membership—in both theoretical and practical terms—are quite different from what is involved in the remit on extending further the right of adherents to vote on congregational matters, so remit 8 should be considered on its own merits.

General Questions

If a remit is passed by both pastoral charges and presbyteries, can General Council still decline the change proposed in the remit?

Yes. If a remit is passed by an absolute majority of pastoral charges and of presbyteries, General Council still has the responsibility of deciding whether or not to enact it. That provision is in our Basis of Union to provide for one final “sober second [in this instance fourth] thought.” Reasons why this could happen would include that the remit barely received the 50-plus-one votes needed, or perhaps some significant new information has come to light that challenges the wisdom of proceeding with the change proposed in the remit.

What is the pathway to make changes in the Basis of Union, considering that our church came into being by an Act of Parliament?

If any of the remits are approved by pastoral charges and presbyteries, we would have preliminary conversations about the amendment process. If the remit is then approved by the 2018 General Council, we would then be in a position to take immediate steps to seek parliamentary approval. Under The United Church of Canada Act, the church was given significant power to amend its own structure with only a few limitations in the Basis of Union and Model Trust Deed. Much of the new structure could be implemented without parliamentary approval. For example, if remit 1 is passed, we could move toward full implementation of the three-council model while actively seeking parliamentary approval. Changes in legislation would also have to be obtained from provincial legislatures.

Can ministers vote and make motions at official board and trustees meetings?

Ministers are members of both the official board and the board of trustees. As such, they have the right to make motions and to vote. The only exception would be where the minister is serving as the chair, as the chair does not vote except in the case of a tie. While ministers have these rights, it is not the practice for ministers to exercise them. Many ministers are concerned that their vote in a matter might influence the votes of others because of the authority inherent in their role.

How many new members have joined the United Church in the last 10 to 20 years? How many are expected in the next 10 years?

We don't track that directly. We do, however, track new members by profession of faith, and that is 3,000 per year now, about half what it was 10 years ago. This level may well continue but doesn't begin to offset the societal trends we are facing.

(Older questions below)

If pastoral charges (or presbyteries) are planning to amalgamate before

the remit return date, do they each get a vote on the remits?

We calculate remit results as of the return date (the date at which the remit ballots must be postmarked), so only the votes from pastoral charges/presbyteries that are in existence as of that date will count. Those that are amalgamating before the return date must vote as the new pastoral charge/presbytery for their vote to be included in the count. If they have already voted separately, those votes will not be counted on the return date. Amalgamated pastoral charges/presbyteries can use the ballots they already have by simply crossing out the incorrect information and writing in the new information. Alternatively, they can obtain a new ballot by contacting the General Council Office at ajordan@united-church.ca.

If a pastoral charge/presbytery is planning to close before the date a remit is due, should it still vote?

If a pastoral charge/presbytery ceases to exist before the remit return date, its vote will not be included in the count. It may still choose to participate in the remit process by voting and then returning the remit ballot. We will record it separately to possibly use as background information in a report to GC43.

Our official board includes several representatives from UCW and a few committees. Are they all allowed to vote on remits? As a presbytery rep, am I allowed to vote at both presbytery and at my pastoral charge board for the same remit?

As long as there is quorum, the full “board” votes as one. Secondly, our conciliar structure has overlap, so yes, you can vote at both levels.

Can ministers vote on remits?

All ordered and designated lay ministers can cast a vote on all remits at the presbytery level. If they have been settled in or appointed to a pastoral charge, they are members of a pastoral charge’s board/council and can also vote there. Congregation members do not have a vote on remits, but pastoral charge boards/councils can solicit their opinions.

Can the chair of our pastoral charge board vote on the remits?

The chair of the board can vote on remits (and other board motions) only to break a tie after the rest of the board members have cast their vote.

When boards/councils of pastoral charges/presbyteries vote on remits, must the motions be passed by an absolute majority of board members?

Pastoral charge boards/councils and presbyteries can treat remit votes like a regular motion. If they have quorum at the meeting, the motion needs to achieve just 50 percent plus one of the votes of the board or council members who are present and eligible (explained in the next question) to vote.

If a board member is an adherent, but not a member of the church, can they vote?

Only United Church members may participate in the votes on remits. People who are not church members but who serve on the pastoral charge's governing body may participate in the discussion on the remits but cannot vote.

If presbyters are unable to attend an upcoming meeting where remits will be voted on, can they vote in advance/absentia?

Members must be present at the presbytery meeting at which the voting takes place in order to be eligible to vote. Advance polls, mail-in ballots, or voting in absentia are not permitted in the United Church.

Do we know where United Church Women would fit in with the changes proposed in the remits, especially Remit 1: Three Council Model?

The UCW has played a big part in the growth and development of the church. There will undoubtedly be additional decisions for the General Council to make in order to fully flesh out the new governance model, including positioning the UCW within the structure, but that has yet to be determined.

It has been stated that pastoral charges/presbyteries that are amalgamating before the remit return date must vote as the new pastoral charge/presbytery. But what about a pastoral charge that will become part of an ecumenical shared ministry before the return date?

In the United Church, an [ecumenical shared ministry](#) (see handbook at bottom of the latter webpage) is considered to be either a pastoral charge or a mission of the United Church that is shared with one or more other denominations. The distinction is important because missions do not vote on remits. Only pastoral charges do. If the governing body of the ecumenical shared ministry will include representatives from all other denominations, only United Church members in that governing body can vote on remits.

In the past, remits showed the old wording in the Basis of Union and the new wording that would replace it. Why is this language absent from this set of remits?

The 42nd General Council approved the remits without the old and new wording because they wanted people to focus on the policy changes, not the actual wording to be included in the Basis of Union. Since the changes are so extensive, there would be pages and pages of revised wording, and that could be a major distraction from the policy changes themselves. For example, remit 1 on the three-council model would have been 20-plus pages long by itself. In short, it's the role of presbyteries (and sometimes pastoral charges) to decide whether to

approve a policy change for the Basis of Union. It's the role of the Executive of the General Council to make sure the policy change is accurately reflected in the Basis of Union.

Can you remind us of the deadlines for voting on the remits?

Ballots related to Remit 5: Ministry Partners within Mutual Recognition of Ministry Agreements), Remit 7: Candidacy Pathway), and Remit 8: Towards a New Model of Membership) must be postmarked no later than February 17, 2017, when they are received by the General Council Office. Ballots related to Remit 1: Three Council Model, Remit 2: Elimination of Transfer and Settlement, Remit 3: Office of Vocation, and Remit 4: Funding a New Model must be postmarked no later than June 30, 2017. Ballots for Remit 6: One Order of Ministry must be postmarked no later than February 28, 2018.

What is a remit?

A remit is the middle step of a three-step process required to change the Basis of Union, and hence the church. The first step is that General Council must approve a remit for a proposed change. The remit question is then put to presbyteries and possibly pastoral charges, which must approve it with an absolute majority. If that approval is given, the third step is for the next General Council to also agree to the proposed change. According to *The Manual, 2013* (F.2, page 125): a remit is "a vote by presbyteries or by presbyteries and pastoral charges to change the Basis of Union." The Basis of Union is the document that was drawn up when The United Church of Canada was founded in 1925.

What does it mean that an "absolute majority" of presbyteries (and pastoral charges with category 3 remits) are needed to pass a remit?

An absolute majority means a majority of all church bodies eligible to vote, not just those that vote. An example: If there were 100 presbyteries, 51 would have to vote "yes" for the remit to pass. Not voting would count as a no. When it comes to remits, our Basis of Union requires absolute majorities to ensure there is broad support across the church for fundamental changes.

Who votes on a remit?

At the pastoral charge level, the board (or council or other governing body) is the only body that may vote on the remit. The board may not delegate this function to the pastoral charge/congregation. However, the board may wish to hold a meeting of the pastoral charge/congregation to get their views on the issue before the board itself votes. It's up to the board to decide whom it wishes to seek input from. That might mean just the members, or it could be members and adherents.

How is this voting done?

The vote is generally conducted by a show of hands unless the board (or council or other governing body) decides (through adopting a motion) that they wish to vote by secret ballot. At

least one-third of the membership must be in attendance at the board meeting in order for it to be valid. The vote is decided by a simple majority of the board members at the meeting: 50 percent + 1.

Five of the remits are called category 3 remits, and three others are category 2. What is the difference?

Category 3 remits must be approved by both an absolute majority of pastoral charges and presbyteries, and then by the next General Council. In comparison, category 2 remits are for proposals that will not bring significant changes to the Basis of Union. This might include minor wording changes or a change to an existing policy that is not substantive. They need only be approved by presbyteries and General Council.

The study guide for remit 1 talks about replacing the church's current four "court" system with a three "council" model. Why the word change?

Originally a secular term, the word "court" was used in the original Basis of Union in 1925. Today, however, it is an archaic word to describe the different bodies forming the church, and one that is not readily understood by many people. The church will retain its conciliar system, which means decision-making authority rests with councils in the church, not individuals.

What if the remits do not pass? Or if some do and some don't?

The remits are independent of one another, meaning that if some are voted down, the others can still be approved. However, changes sparked by the approval of one remit will automatically be applicable to the others. For example, if remit 1 passes, changing the church's four-council structure to three, all references to the four-council structure in other remits should be considered a reference to the three-council system. Even if the remits do not pass, cost reduction activities across the broader church will be implemented.

Why is the church doing all this?

The Comprehensive Review approved by the 41st General Council recommended major changes to revitalize ministry, simplify governance, and enable the church to live within its resources. The approval of any or all of the five remits being considered by both pastoral charges and presbyteries will bring about substantive, denomination-shaping changes to our church. These will allow us to better respond to declining membership numbers and financial resources since we will be a nimbler, more efficient organization. Remit 4 aims to more directly and financially align the broader church with congregations that ultimately fund its work, either through assessment or Mission & Service.

What are we looking to achieve?

These remits are designed to achieve more than financial savings. The hope is that more of our time, talent, and treasure will be devoted to mission and ministry and less toward bureaucracy, forms, and procedure. Commissioners at last summer's 42nd General Council agreed that

assessments should be shared “equitably across the whole church,” plus we must “encourage sharing of all resources across the church.” We must only spend what we receive (as opposed to balancing budgets by depleting needed reserves). They also endorsed financial modelling that projects a need for an up to \$11-million reduction from 2015 spending levels in order to maintain key grant programs and reinvest in new ministries.

What will we do at our meetings if we don't have to have ponderous procedural debate all the time?

The approval of some or all these remits will allow more time for mission and ministry as people come together for reasons other than governance. Administratively, there will be fewer meetings with more focused debate.

I still have questions. How can I get them answered?

E-mail remits@united-church.ca and a staff member will respond. Also watch for informative webinars on some of the remits. Information and dates will be posted on GC42.ca/remits.