

RECONSIDER DECISION REGARDING CDM ROLE IN LOCAL COUNCIL

Origin: Region 15

1. What is the issue?

The General Council Executive decision to alter the possible parameters of Congregationally Designated Ministers (CDM) employment leaves considerable ambiguity about the scope of practice being considered. The revisions raise significant concerns for the well-being and unity of the church and should either be withdrawn or significantly clarified.

2. Why is this issue important?

In its meeting of November 2022, the General Council Executive amended the *Manual* section regarding the employment of CDMs (I.1.11.4) by adding the following (changes are underlined):

- a) the person must be a baptized Christian and, if that person is the primary individual leading worship, the person must be a full member of the United Church;
- and
- d) either there must also be a member of the order of ministry or a designated lay minister called or appointed to the community of faith or the regional council must ensure there is adequate and appropriate support and oversight of the ministry.

While recognizing the shortage of ministry personnel and supporting innovative approaches in local leadership, the criteria for CDM appointment do not include training in doctrine, polity, and/or leadership. While within the bounds of accepted understandings of polity, the changes made by the GCE pose significant challenges to the unity and well-being of the church at large and, potentially, to communities of faith. For instance, the changes appear to open the possibility of a CDM to effectively be considered as ministry personnel for purposes of quorum in meetings of the Community of Faith Council. By contrast, candidates in ministry placements are required to have both Educational and Pastoral Charge supervisors and we have concerns that the somewhat vague language of “adequate and appropriate support and oversight” as determined by the Region opens the possibility of widely differing standards across Regions and the Church. We have experiences of Communities of Faith retaining leadership that, while nominally “United Church” demonstrates convictions and actions at odds with the ethos of the denomination and we are concerned for what liability (legal, spiritual, and moral) the church might be taking on with this change. Finally, our understanding is that the insurance coverage that applies to ordered clergy and others in regular calls/appointments may not apply to these individuals, placing them and the church at risk. As CDM position descriptions must be approved by the Region, both Regions and Communities of Faith would be assisted by greater clarity in this section.

3. How might the General Council or the General Council Executive respond to the issue?

Name a possible response that the GC / GCE might consider:

A. Action on the issue. This could include:

- **Region 15 Council Annual Meeting** direct the Executive Minister, in consultation with appropriate staff and committees, to develop a policy/strategy to clarify the Region's response to this Manual change, **and**
- **If the GCE or GC elect not to reconsider revising the section**, direct the Executive Minister, in consultation with appropriate staff and committees, to develop a definition and parameters for "adequate and appropriate support and oversight of the ministry" within Region 15

AND

Transmit the proposal to the General Council

- **The GC or GCE could reconsider the decision to include the words "or the regional council must ensure there is adequate and appropriate support and oversight of the ministry"** I.1.11.4 d)

OR

- **The GC or GCE could amend** I.1.11.4 d by providing a more fulsome and complete definition of the terms adequate and appropriate support and oversight of the ministry", perhaps in terms of existing standards of supervision for candidate appointments

OR

- **The GC or the GCE could offer a** more complete discussion of the proposal and possible impacts to the Regions and Local Councils

4. What will be the impact?

The impact of undertaking this change addresses aspects of risk to which the revision adopted by the GCE exposes individuals and the church. It allows for continued discussion of the impact of leadership in living out the Strategic Plan

5. How does this proposal help us live into the commitments on equity?

Equity in leadership requires responsible consideration of the risks to which we may be exposing communities and church membership in the absence of appropriate equipping and mentoring.

6. For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council or the General Council Executive:

Are there comments, affirmations, suggestions you would like to make with respect to this proposal?

If this proposal is in response to previous work – either from General Council or a previous GCE meeting, please list proposal / motion numbers.

Way Forward 16 v. 2: GCE06 Ministry Leadership to Meet the Needs of the Church in the 2020's November 2022

Further notes: Proposals received in the triennium between General Councils will be dealt with by the General Council Executive. Proposals received after the General Council Annual Meeting (generally in October) prior to a General Council year will be dealt with at the next full General Council meeting.