

## **Invitation to Respond to the Revised Statement on Ministry**

General Council 40 adopted a “Statement on Paid Accountable Ministry” and directed the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee to “develop a statement on the subject of the ministry of the whole people (thus including laity) of The United Church of Canada with congregational consultation” and report to the 41st General Council 2012 with the intention (of creating) a conclusive “Statement on Ministry.” The Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee offers this revised version of the GC40 Statement for testing across the church as a comprehensive “Statement on Ministry.” Additions to the GC40 version are underlined. There have been no deletions or other changes.

Responses to this draft statement and to the following questions are invited prior to May 15<sup>th</sup> 2011.

*In what ways do you find your understanding and experience of ministry in The United Church of Canada reflected in this statement? What is missing or needs revision?*

*In what ways does this statement serve (or not) the future needs of ministry in The United Church of Canada?*

Please indicate in your response who you are as an individual (clergy, lay etc.) or as a group (session, study group, etc.) and respond to [theology@united-church.ca](mailto:theology@united-church.ca) or write to:

Theology, The United Church of Canada, 3250 Bloor St. West, Suite 300,  
Toronto, Ont. M8X 2Y4

### **Statement on Ministry in The United Church of Canada Revised for Church Response**

The church is a community of believers (*ecclesia*) called into existence by the presence of Jesus Christ and the call to continue Christ’s ministry in the world. Through the Spirit, who enlivens and renews the church, all members are called to discipleship to contribute to Christ’s ministry, the work of the church. The church is about God’s mission in the world; that there will be shalom for God’s creatures and healing for God’s creation. Mission and ministry cannot be separated.

The United Church of Canada since its beginning has upheld a central tenet of the Reformation, traditionally understood as the “priesthood of all believers.” At various points in its history the church has affirmed that all the people of God, the Laos, are called to ministry and it is as members of the people of God, as members of Christ’s body that all Christians share in his

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ministry. In other words the ministry of Christ always begins with the community of people that constitute the church and it is through their active participation in God's mission that Christ's ongoing ministry is expressed in all its diversity. The ministry and discipleship of all is also reflected in the conciliar structures of the church conferring power and authority in all matters equally to lay and ordered members of the church.

While all members share in Christ's ministry, the church from its earliest days has recognized that God calls some from within the community through specific gifts to ordered expressions of ministry. These ordered ministries are based in God's call and therefore serve to remind the community to whom we belong. The capacity to respond to God's call is tested by the community and is therefore a reminder that these ministries belong to the body of Christ. The United Church of Canada recognizes ordained and diaconal orders of ministry. The church also has recognized the emergence of lay expressions of ministry in local and time-limited contexts, and identifies them as designated lay ministry.

Ordered and designated lay ministries are called to distinctive roles of leadership within the church by virtue of their membership in a presbytery (or district). Through this membership, they are called to exercise governance and leadership, shared with elected elders, in the ministry of the church. Ordered ministers and designated lay ministers in paid accountable ministry positions are paid office holders within The United Church of Canada. While there may be elements similar to employment, the essential nature of the relationship is a covenant with the presbytery, pastoral charge or presbytery recognized ministry, and God.

The various ordered ministries of the church can be expressed in the following ancient expressions given current meaning: sacramental remembrance and enlivening worship (*leitourgia*); being faithful inheritors and communicators of the tradition (*kerygma*); responding to the needs of the community and the world (*diakonia*); nurturing faith, making the wisdom of the ages relevant for today (*didache*); and building up the community of faith as the beloved community of God (*koinonia*). The present social context of the church in Canada calls the church to acknowledge aspects of societal witness at the heart of ordered ministry (*marturia*); in other words, being sent into the midst of society as representatives of Christ and the church, in particular to bring the theological witness of the church into engagement in these contexts. Ordered and designated lay ministries always function within and on behalf of the community and are constituted by the community.

The ministry of all is prophetic in character, meaning that it enables communities formed by God's Word and Spirit to resist the powers of evil, and to be living messengers of the kingdom of God that is to come. Ordered and designated lay ministries are called to leadership in forming the prophetic community by God's Word, in discerning the signs of the times and in presiding over the liturgy.

The ministry of all is representational in character, meaning that it is on behalf of someone else. It reflects the character of Jesus, who is among us as one who serves. Ordered and designated lay ministries are representative of the community of faith—the body of Christ—in words and action, and of the presbytery, which represents the unity of the church.

The ministry of all is relational in character in that it is based in the gifts of the Spirit given to build up the body of Christ. Ordered and designated lay ministries belong to the community and are brought into being in relationship with the community. Modelling the ministry of Jesus, ordered and designated lay ministries are also enabling in character, meaning that they are primarily focused on supporting and strengthening the ministry of the members of the community of faith.

The ministry of all is collaborative in character, in that the church's life is based in partnership. Ordered and designated lay ministries are always exercised in partnership with members of the community and collegially within the presbytery.

The ministry of all is accountable in character, in that it is exercised on behalf of and therefore with the authority of the faith community. Ordered and designated lay ministries in their various forms begin with a call that is tested by the community and is exercised under the discipline of a presbytery.

The ministry of all is of the heart and soul as well as of the mind. Spiritual depth, wisdom, sensitivity, and compassion are all attributes that define ministry, and are gifts or charisms of the Spirit that can be found in all effective leaders. Ordered and designated lay ministries require attention to spiritual life, authenticity, integrity, and passion.

### **Offices of Ministry Leadership**

Ordered ministry and designated lay ministry are the offices of ministry leadership appointed within The United Church of Canada. They encompass ordained, commissioned, and designated lay ministries in which members of the church experience and discern a call to ministry, and are tested and authorized by the church to provide accountable leadership in the mission and ministry of the church.

*Ordained and diaconal ministers* are ordered by the denomination and serve the mission and ministry of the whole church. Preparation for ordered ministry involves a minimum of university theological study and an extensive assessment process. As such, ordered ministry personnel are seen to be those who carry the responsibility of inheritors and communicators of the tradition enacted either in word and sacrament or in education and service. Ordered ministers therefore maintain the historic connection of the United Church to the church catholic through the witness to apostolic succession and through the faithful interpretation of the living faith tradition. Ordered ministers in particular serve as the church's resident theologians, called to bring the church's theological heritage into the context of God's mission in the world.

Ordained ministers function in all aspects of ministry and are formally called to word, sacrament and pastoral care. This involves presiding in worship and sacrament, care for the faithful inheritance and communication of the tradition, nurturing and strengthening the beloved community of God, making the wisdom of the ages relevant for today, and being representatives of Christ in the world in seeking justice and wholeness for all of creation.

Diaconal ministers also function in all aspects of ministry and are called to a specific emphasis on education, service, social justice, and pastoral care. Diaconal ministry, rooted in the tradition and history of diakonia, encourages a growing faith, speaks truth to power, seeks mutual empowerment, proclaims prophetic hope, nurtures life-giving community, and fosters peaceful, right relationship within the church and the whole of creation.

By virtue of their training and recognition, ordered ministry personnel are representatives of the church, expressed through their lifelong membership in presbytery. Consistent with the historic traditions of the church, ordination and commissioning take place through the laying on of hands and once enacted, ordination or commissioning is not re-enacted. Ordination and commissioning are liturgically enacted at a Conference level.

Their training and recognition by the denomination also affords ordered ministers flexibility in their exercise of ministry leadership, including the possibility of being retained on the roll of ministry without appointment. Because their ordered ministry is to the mission and ministry of The United Church of Canada (within the Holy Catholic Church), their ordination or commissioning can function in any presbytery recognized ministry, or they may be retained on the roll of presbytery while engaging other vocational or personal activities. Ordered ministers, by virtue of their training and accountability, are entrusted to initiate new forms of ministry, including the possibility of non-stipendiary ministries authorized and accountable to presbytery.

Ordered ministries encompass lifelong accountability and function everywhere.

*Designated lay ministers* are members of the church who exercise gifts for leadership in mission and ministry that emerge from within a local congregation or community ministry. Their ministries are presbytery accountable and serve local communities. Because their ministry emerges out of a local pastoral or ministry need, educational preparation may vary. Designated lay ministers are required to complete an educational program while under appointment, and completion of the program provides eligibility for subsequent appointments. While under appointment, designated lay ministers function in the aspects of ministry leadership relating to their appointment and they are also accorded membership in presbytery. At the end of an appointment, the presbytery and designated lay minister discern together questions of ongoing ministry and presbytery membership. Because designated lay ministry is dependent on appointment, it is celebrated (re-enacted) at each appointment. The appointment of a designated

lay minister is liturgically enacted by the presbytery either in a presbytery meeting or in the local ministry.

Designated lay ministry is flexible, responsive to local need and responsive to the gift of the Spirit. Designated lay ministers are appointed to varied leadership in the ministries of the church specific to the work undertaken.

*Paid accountable ministry* takes form in The United Church of Canada in ordered and designated lay ministry roles. Ordered and designated lay ministers are called by God to exercise leadership within the church. They respond to the yearning of the church to be faithful in its participation in God's mission in the world. To be faithful and effective in that mission, paid accountable ministers need to be grounded in their spiritual life; secure in their identity; passionate in their mission; and effective in their organization, directed toward equipping the members of the body for engaging the mission and ministry of Christ's church. Because of the importance of all of these tasks, the church recognizes ordered and designated lay ministers and holds them accountable for the faithful exercise of leadership.

The ministry of the whole people of God takes place as the Spirit moves in known and unknown ways; bringing into the community of faith and sending into the world, the gifts of its people. "For the sake of the world," says A Song of Faith, "God calls all followers of Jesus to Christian ministry. In the church, some are called to specific ministries of leadership, both lay and ordered; some witness to the good news; some uphold the art of worship; some comfort the grieving and guide the wandering; some build up the community of wisdom; some stand with the oppressed and work for justice. To embody God's love in the world, the work of the church requires the ministry and discipleship of all believers."

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