



Isolation in Ministry

In the supplement to *Connex* 20, you were introduced to the Working Group on Isolation in Ministry. Frequently, other committees and groups, although not directly linked to this initiative, approach their work by examining it through the lens of isolation in ministry. One of these is the Steering Group for Oversight and Discipline of Ministry Personnel. Its work is related to the first and seventh recommendations arising from the Isolation in Ministry Study.

Focus on Recommendations 1 and 7

1. Initiate and fund programs that assist presbyteries, ministry personnel, and pastoral charges in the creation and sustaining of faithful, healthy pastoral relationships.
7. Institute the policy of clearly defining the roles and relationships of paid accountable leaders within the governance and employment structure of The United Church of Canada, with clear lines of accountability and authority.

Update: Steering Group for Oversight and Discipline of Ministry Personnel

The Steering Group for Oversight and Discipline of Ministry Personnel of the Permanent Committee on Ministry and Employment Policies and Services (PC-MEPS) is mandated by the 39th General Council to review the current policies and procedures of the oversight and discipline of ministry personnel in the United Church. Members of this group are Tracy Murton (chair), Peter Bishop, Rick Chambers, Ken Clark, Anne Duncan,

Kirsty Hunter, Heather MacDougall, and Erin Sterling. Through consultation with ministry personnel, lay leaders, congregational members, and presbytery and Conference staff, the steering group seeks to consider changes to the polity and policies of the United Church that will result in fair and effective oversight of ministry personnel throughout the church.

The steering group began its work in September 2008, and has met four times since inception. The group's work, to this point, has focused on contextual and historical knowledge, and has been framed by intentional reflection on the United Church's Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice for Ministry Personnel. With time for biblical reflection as well, the steering group has examined the history of oversight and discipline policy in the United Church; the current structure of oversight, discipline, and conflict management policy in the church; the oversight and discipline policy structures of other Canadian and international denominations; and standards and processes for professional conduct in various secular organizations.

Having completed the first major piece of work, which was to understand the context of oversight and discipline in the United Church, the steering group is currently moving toward the second stage, which is primarily consultative. At its most recent meeting, the group developed six key concepts for use in considering and understanding United Church policy, processes, and practices for the oversight and discipline of ministry personnel:

1. the covenantal relationship (the pastoral relationship between ministry personnel, pastoral charge or ministry unit, and presbytery)
2. supervision, oversight, and accountability
3. discipline, including remedial, corrective, and/or punitive



The Church Leadership Network is a new online community that offers a space for ministry personnel from across the country to connect as well as to share resources, wisdom, experiences, and questions. The network is administered by the Ministry Personnel Support staff of the General Council Office.

To sign up, visit <http://churchleadership.united-church.ca>. Click on "sign up." Look for the Ministry Personnel group once you're on the Church Leadership Network site.

4. human resource capacity, including staff, volunteer, and professional expertise, know-how, and training
5. peer support and collegiality
6. justice and peace

It is through these lenses, and the continued reflective lens of biblical passages and the Ethical Standards and Standards of Practices, that the steering group will continue its work through to the 41st General Council, reporting at regular intervals to PC-MEPS.

The future goals are inclusive of a legal opinion of the United Church's formal disciplinary and conflict processes, and a critique of the current oversight and discipline policies and practices of the United Church. The latter will be gained through consultation with identified stakeholders within the church, and continued communication of the ongoing work of the steering group with the constituency of the United Church.

If you have questions, concerns, or comments about the work of the Steering Group for Oversight and Discipline of Ministry Personnel, please feel free to contact Wendy Cranston, Ministry Personnel Administration, at the General Council Office at 1-800-268-3781 ext. 3113 or by e-mail: PC-MEPS@united-church.ca.

Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice, adopted by the 39th General Council, can be viewed online at www.united-church.ca/minstaff/pastoral/guidelines. To obtain hard copy brochures for your pastoral charge or presbytery, contact United Church Resource Distribution at 1-800-288-7365 or ucrd@united-church.ca.

What Do You See through the Isolation in Ministry Lens?

The Working Group on Isolation in Ministry has been busy seeking input from a number of sources. Key to its work is input from ministry personnel, and the working group has been able to take advantage of Conference gatherings to gain input from focus groups.

To gain a greater insight on where the priorities lie with ministry personnel, the working group is seeking feedback from *Connex* readers. Specifically, the working group wants to know which three of the eight Isolation in Ministry recommendations listed below should be given the highest priority.

The following are the eight recommendations that were presented to the 39th General Council:

1. Initiate and fund programs that assist presbyteries, ministry personnel, and pastoral charges in the creation and sustaining of faithful, healthy pastoral relationships.
2. Provide a nationally administered program that will equip presbyteries with paid ministers whose sole function is to deliver pastoral care and vocational support to ministry personnel and their families.

3. Institute a national policy to provide programs and funding that promote collegial, supportive relationships among ministry personnel based on their call to a common vocation.
4. Institute a national policy to adequately resource the educational programs of the denomination in order to ensure that ministry personnel receive educational support from discernment to retirement, thereby continuing to affirm the principle of an educated ministry.
5. Institute a national policy to provide appropriate communication technology in order to provide networking capabilities among all ministry personnel.
6. Institute a national compensation system that recognizes education, years of service, and special circumstances.
7. Institute the policy of clearly defining the roles and relationships of paid accountable leaders within the governance and employment structure of the United Church with clear lines of accountability and authority.
8. Revise *The Manual* as necessary to accommodate these changes.

Responses from the *Connex* readership will be added to the feedback from the face-to-face meetings. This will give the working group a more complete picture of what ministry personnel consider most important. Please take some time to respond: PC-MEPS@united-church.ca or Attn: Catherine O'Brien, Ministry Personnel Leadership, The United Church of Canada, 3250 Bloor St. West, Suite 300, Toronto, ON M8X 2Y4.

The Working Group on Isolation in Ministry is a part of the Permanent Committee on Ministry and Employment Policies and Services (PC-MEPS).

Human Resources Contacts

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