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February 2016

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Ever since its inception in 1925, The United Church of Canada has embraced change as it strives to better serve its members. Accepting new ideas is in keeping with the Bible's teaching, which instructs us to "Be strong and courageous...for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).

Pastoral charges might keep those words in mind as they consider remits approved at last summer's 42nd General Council in Corner Brook, Newfoundland. Delegates there authorized that five remits should be considered by pastoral charges and presbyteries (three others are being considered by presbyteries only), as the approval of any or all of these five will bring about substantive, denomination-shaping changes to our church's Basis of Union. The five remits being voted on by pastoral charges 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.

It is vitally important that every pastoral charge cast a vote on all five remits, as an absolute majority is needed for them to pass, not just a majority of those who vote. If passed by an absolute majority of pastoral charges, plus an absolute majority of presbyteries, each remit will then go to General Council 43 for approval in 2018, to be held in Oshawa, Ontario.

Please note: If a pastoral charge does not vote, that is considered a vote AGAINST the remit question.

The five remits and comprehensive study guides are available on the 42nd General Council website at GC42.ca/remits. Paper copies are being sent only to those lacking electronic access. For the sake of the environment, and in recognition of modern communications practice, the majority of the remit material will be online.

Each study guide explains how the church's operations would change if the remit is approved, along with detailing what is currently in place. As noted above, each pastoral charge needs to vote on all five of the remits. **Please note the deadlines, highlighted at the end of this document.**

Explanatory videos and webinars will also be offered on GC42.ca/remits. During the webinars, senior staff and elected members will answer questions from participants across the country about a specific remit. These live video conferences will focus on, for example, the proposed Office of Vocation (accreditation and discipline of ministers), Assessment and Finances (how the United Church is funded), and One Order of Ministry (moving from having three streams of ministry to one).

If you can't catch these webinars live, look for links on GC42.ca/remits to view them at any time after they are first shown. To receive e-mails alerting you to upcoming videos or webinars, subscribe to news updates (gc42.ca/news—click "Subscribe here" in the first line). In addition, church members at any level can e-mail their questions about the proposed changes to remits@united-church.ca. All queries will be answered by one of our staff members.



Keep in mind that while each of the remits should be considered separately, 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.

Please follow the instructions on the ballots you receive in the mail and send us back the ballots by the dates highlighted at the end of this letter. If you need a replacement ballot, contact Alison Jordan at ajordan@united-church.ca. In voting, you will be responding to both the question posed and the proposed new wording of the Basis of Union.

These are exciting times for us, and times of change provide the perfect opportunity to reflect deeply on what it means to be a church—this church—and to act on those reflections.

So please carefully read the study guides, and prepare to make important decisions about the future of The United Church of Canada.

Yours in Christ,



Nora Sanders
General Secretary, General Council
The United Church of Canada

Important remit deadlines

Remits 1, 2, 3, and 4 results must be received by June 30, 2017.

Remit 6 results must be received by February 28, 2018.

Mail ballots to:

Alison Jordan
The United Church of Canada
3250 Bloor St. West, Suite 300
Toronto, ON M8X 2Y4
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Category 3 Remit

Study Guide for Remit 1: Three Council Model

Approved by the 42nd General Council 2015

Between February 2016 and 30 June 2017, each presbytery and pastoral charge will formally be asked in a category 3 remit to approve the implementation of a three-council model for The United Church of Canada.

This is the question to be voted on:

Does the presbytery/pastoral charge agree that:

- (a) the United Church be re-organized into the three-council model approved by the 42nd General Council 2015; and that
- (b) the Basis of Union be amended to reflect this change?

Summary

This remit proposes a major change to the structure of The United Church of Canada. Currently we have four courts, or levels, of church decision-making structure: pastoral charges, presbyteries, Conferences, and General Council. It is proposed that the church have three councils, or levels, with specific ministries and responsibilities. The proposal does not simply remove one of the existing courts, but replaces both of the current middle courts with a new regional council.

The intent of this reorganization is to create a sustainable and workable church structure in the face of a declining volunteer base and financial resources.

Background

The three-council model is intended to provide a church structure through which God's mission can be more effectively lived and expressed in diverse, faith-filled, and hopeful communities of faith. The model maintains our identity as a "united" church through relationships and connections among the three councils:

1. communities of faith
2. regional councils
3. a denominational council

The number of regional councils will be in the range of 12 to 15. The exact number of regional councils and the regional boundaries are expected to be decided by a commission. That commission would include representation from across the United Church, and it would be given a mandate to listen broadly to views and advice from the wider church, and to issue and receive comments on a draft report, before making the final determination.

This commission would not be appointed or start its work unless or until Remit 1: Three Council Model received the required threshold of approvals. (Voting on this remit is to be in by June 30, 2017.) The commission's decision on boundaries would come into effect only if Remit 1: Three Council Model is enacted by the next General Council.

Alongside the three councils, there will be clusters and networks. These will not be formal governance bodies but organically formed communities of common interests, mission, and support.

Staff for the regions will be deployed regionally, as they are now, but given the financial framework recognized by the Comprehensive Review Task Group it is likely most regional staff will serve more than one region.

Please see the appendix for detailed descriptions of all of these bodies.

For further information, we recommend you read and view some of the other resources related to this remit:

- the [GC42 Workbook](http://www.gc42.ca/workbook), CRTG 3 A Three-Council Model, PLENARY 14–21 (pages 336–343): www.gc42.ca/workbook
- [Video: The Proposed Three-Council Model](http://www.gc42.ca/comprehensive-review-report): www.gc42.ca/comprehensive-review-report, under Resources
- [Backgrounder 5: A Three-Council Model](http://www.gc42.ca/comprehensive-review-report): www.gc42.ca/comprehensive-review-report

Characteristics of a three-council model

A three-council model would be a more flexible, sustainable, and simplified structure.

- The current four-court model incorporates the different governance and oversight structures of, primarily, the three major founding denominations. It contains checks and balances in decision-making that were important in 1925. The proposed three-council model relaxes some of those checks and balances by lodging more decision-making with the local ministry, with the support and oversight of a regional body that is larger than the current presbytery.
- The proposed new structure retains our conciliar model, whereby significant theological and policy initiatives originate with the local community of faith and make their way through the wisdom of the larger regional body to the wisdom of the whole church represented in the denominational council.
- Clusters and networks will provide more contemporary vehicles for local ministries and members to connect and work with one another regionally and nationally.
- The three-council model should result in fewer committees requiring fewer volunteers.

From pastoral charges to communities of faith

- Communities of faith will include congregations as we know them, but increasingly may also include new kinds of communities that gather to worship, learn, and serve, such as outreach ministries, house churches, online communities, and so on.
- They will have more freedom to nurture and live out their faith in a variety of ways, including recognizing, receiving, and celebrating new members; making decisions on their structure and governance, mission, and property; and covenanting with ministers and staff. They will still be subject to denominational and regional policies and accountable through the covenantal relationship between the community of faith and the regional council.

- They will receive support from the regional and denominational councils to meet their responsibilities for governance, human resources, property, pastoral relations, and other functions.
- They will be more closely connected to decision-making bodies through their direct participation in regional councils, enhancing their understanding of decisions related to ministry and mission priorities and support services and governance.
- Members of communities of faith will still be elected to serve in other councils of the church.

From presbyteries and Conferences to regional councils

- The membership of regional councils will be made up of lay and ministry personnel.
- Regional councils will covenant with and provide advice, support, and services to communities of faith in areas such as human resources and property, and in making connections to national and global partners for social justice, pastoral relations, and outreach.
- Regional councils will be involved in preparing and training church leadership and will provide support to the relationships between communities of faith and ministry personnel, which currently occurs at both the presbytery and Conference levels. They will accompany students, provide mentors, and appoint supervisors for internships, and celebrate ordinations, commissionings, admissions, recognitions, and retirements.
- They will ensure communities of faith are living up to their covenantal relationship, attempt to resolve disputes, and step in if a community is not functioning effectively or is failing to meet its responsibilities.
- Regional councils or their executives will meet at least annually, just as Conferences or their executives do now.
- Staff located regionally will support the work of the regional councils and will have accountability to those councils. Those staff may support more than one regional council.

From General Council to a denominational council

- The denominational council will continue the primary role of the current General Council—to provide a denominational, national, global voice and identity, setting policies and directions, and electing a Moderator.
- It will make decisions on denomination-shaping issues, such as public witness, theology, and governance structure.
- It will have a much smaller executive than the current one, facilitating more timely decision-making.
- The number of staff of the denominational council office will be determined by the financial resources available.

Clusters and networks

Alongside the three-council structure there would be

- clusters: local clusters of 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: groups of people in different parts of the country working on specific issues (e.g., supportive housing, intercultural ministry, youth ministry) or on a project (e.g., planning an event)

These would offer opportunities for communities of faith and people with shared interests and passions to connect outside decision-making bodies.

What is a category 3 remit?

A category 3 remit is required for substantive, denomination-shaping changes to the Basis of Union (*The Manual*, s. F2). A category 3 remit also requires that a study process be available in the church before the remit is released.

The proposed change must be sent to all presbyteries and the governing body of every pastoral charge for a vote. If an absolute majority of the presbyteries and an absolute majority of the pastoral charges vote in favour of the proposed change—not just a majority of those that vote—then the next General Council must also vote in favour of the proposed change for it to take effect.

NB: If a presbytery or pastoral charge does not vote, that is considered a vote AGAINST the proposal.

Appendix “A” to Remit 1 - Three Council Model

The United Church of Canada, organized as a three-council structure, would consist of communities of faith, regional councils, and a denominational council as follows:

1. COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

A. Description

A community of faith is any community of people within the United Church that:

- gathers to explore faith, worship, and serve, including but not limited to pastoral charges, congregations, outreach ministries, chaplaincies, faith-based communal living, house churches, and online communities; and
- is recognized as a community of faith within the United Church by the regional council through a covenantal relationship between the community of faith and the regional council.

B. Membership

The members of the community of faith are:

- people admitted to membership by the community of faith, within denominational guidelines;
- eligible for election to denominational council and regional council; and
- entitled to vote on all community of faith matters; and entitled to extend the right to vote on financial and administrative matters to adherents.

C. Authority and responsibility

The community of faith has authority and responsibility for:

Mission

- living in covenant with the regional council with mutual responsibilities for the life and mission of the community of faith, and fulfilling its responsibilities under the covenant;
- doing regular self-assessments of the ministry of the community of faith; and filing the report with the regional council;
- joining the hearts, voices, and resources of the community to witness to the gospel and vision of Jesus for a compassionate and just society, both in Canada and around the world;
- local, regional, national and global initiatives and partnerships (community, ecumenical and interfaith) for ministry, mission and justice work;
- ministry with children and youth and young adults;
- honouring and living into intercultural mission and ministry;

Becoming an Intercultural Church

- living in covenant with Mother Earth and All My Relations in the Earth community;

Governance and administration

- making decisions about the life of the community of faith, including worship, care, spiritual practice, and learning; local administration, finances, and governance, and local mission, justice, and evangelism;
- meeting at least annually;
- complying with denominational and regional policies;
- buying, selling, leasing, and renovating community of faith property in cooperation with the regional council, within denominational guidelines;

Spiritual life

- setting policies for membership, within denominational guidelines and receiving and celebrating new members in the community of faith;
- helping members deepen their faith while exploring their faith journey;
- ensuring the proper administration of the sacraments;

Ministry and other leadership

- cooperation with the regional council, within denominational guidelines, 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;
- encouraging members to consider ministry roles a responsibility shared through the whole community of faith;
- recommending to the appropriate body suitable lay members as inquirers, candidates, and licensed lay worship leaders, as and if required under denominational policy;

Participation in regional and denominational life

- helping to fund the cost of sending members to the meetings of the regional council;
- electing members to serve on regional council with shared funding of the cost; and
- receiving, dealing with, and forwarding on proposals from members of the community of faith to regional councils.

D. Limitations

All authority and responsibility of the community of faith is subject to:

- policies set by the denominational council on membership, governance, pastoral relations, property, and any other area within the authority of the denominational council;
- the covenantal relationship between the community of faith and the regional council; and
- the authority of the regional council to assume control of the community of faith in extraordinary circumstances where the community of faith is unable to or refuses to meet its responsibilities or acts outside of denominational or regional policies.

2. REGIONAL COUNCILS

A. *Description*

A regional council is a decision-making body responsible to serve and support communities of faith within its bounds and provide necessary oversight.

B. *Membership*

The regional council is composed of:

- all ministry personnel within the geographic bounds served by the regional council; and
- lay members elected by the community of faith, respecting the balance of lay and ministry personnel where possible.

C. *Authority and responsibility*

The regional council has authority and responsibility for:

Covenanting:

- recognizing a new community of faith by entering into a covenantal relationship with it;
- living in a covenantal relationship with each community of faith, with mutual responsibilities for the life and mission of the community of faith, and fulfilling its responsibilities under the covenant;
- living in a covenantal relationship with ministry personnel;

Services for communities of faith:

- providing support, advice, and services to communities of faith in human resource matters;
- providing support, advice, and services to communities of faith in dealing with congregational property;
- managing regional archives;
- providing on-going leadership training for ministers and lay persons;
- providing funding partnerships with United Church educational and leadership training centres and camps as determined regionally;

Serve, support and provide oversight of communities of faith:

- reviewing and periodically auditing the self-assessments of communities of faith in light of the covenant between the community of faith and the regional council;
- supporting emerging new ministries;
- supporting communities of faith in their life and work;
- serving, supporting and providing oversight when necessary of camps and incorporated ministries in the region;
- promoting articulation of mission and ministry;

- ensuring compliance with the policies and polity of The United Church of Canada and reviewing any relevant records;
- assuming control of a community of faith in extraordinary circumstances where the community of faith is unable to or refuses to meet its responsibilities or acts outside of denominational policies;

Mission and ministry:

encourage and engage in:

- joining our collective hearts, voices, and resources to witness to the gospel and vision of Jesus for a compassionate and just society, both in Canada and around the world;
- local regional national and global initiatives and partnerships (community, ecumenical and interfaith) for ministry, mission and justice work;
- ministry with children, youth and young adults;
- honouring and living into intercultural ministry and mission; and
- living in covenant with Mother Earth and All My Relations in the Earth community;

Policy and finance:

- administering policy set by the denominational council, and setting appropriate regional policy;
- buying, selling, leasing, and renovating community of faith property in cooperation with communities of faith, and distributing any proceeds within denominational guidelines;
- buying, selling, leasing, and renovating regional property, and distributing any proceeds within denominational guidelines;
- receiving, dealing with, and forwarding on proposals from communities of faith to the denominational council based on denominational policy;
- setting and managing its annual budget including revenue from the denominational assessment and setting any additional regional assessment for any additional services the regional council wishes to undertake;
- participating in determining priorities for mission and ministry work through Mission and Service;
- meeting at least annually as the entire regional council or through its executive;

Preparation for Ministry:

- recruitment and discernment of persons for ministry;
- accompaniment and supervision of persons in the preparation process;
- ordination and commissioning of members of the order of ministry;
- recognition of Designated Lay Ministers;
- licensing of Licensed Lay Worship Leaders;
- celebrations of admissions and re-admissions;

Pastoral Relations:

- cooperating with communities of faith in recruiting, choosing, calling, appointing and covenanting with ministry personnel and communities of faith, and in ending calls and appointments/covenants with ministry personnel and other staff;
- celebrating retirements;

Oversight of ministry personnel:

- encouraging and supporting ministry personnel towards health, joy and excellence in ministry practice;
- assisting with informal conflict resolution processes;

- maintaining the roll of ministry personnel and informing the office of vocation of those ministry personnel in good standing;

Participation in denominational life:

- electing members to serve on denominational council.
- receiving, dealing with, and forwarding on proposals from members of the community of faith to the denominational council; and
- promoting and fostering direct dialogue between communities of faith and the denominational council.

D. Limitations

- policies set by the denominational council on membership, governance, pastoral relations, candidacy, ministry personnel, property, and any other area within the authority of the denominational council; and
- the authority of the denominational council to assume control of the regional council in extraordinary circumstances where the regional council is unable to or refuses to meet its responsibilities or acts outside of denominational or regional policies.

E. Staffing

Each region has staff to assist the regional council in meeting its responsibilities:

- staffing numbers are based on assessments, grants from Mission and Service, and any other regional income;
- staffing is based on priorities and needs as determined regionally;
- staff are hired and managed by a regional secretary who reports to the General Secretary of the denominational council and relates to the regional council executive; and
- regional councils with more resources are free to retain more staff, and sharing of all resources across the church is encouraged.

3. DENOMINATIONAL COUNCIL

A. Description

The denominational council is the decision-making body for the United Church as both a denomination and a legal corporation.

B. Membership

The denominational council consists of:

- those elected by the regional councils according to an agreed-upon formula
- the presiding officer or elder of each regional council;
- the Moderator and the immediate Past Moderator;
- the General Secretary of the denominational council; and
- other members and guests as determined.

C. Authority and responsibility

The denominational council has authority and responsibility for:

Mission:

- joining our collective hearts, voices, and resources to witness to the gospel and vision of Jesus for a compassionate and just society, both in Canada and around the world;
- engaging denominational-level ministry and mission including resource development and being a resource to regional councils and communities of faith;

- encouraging local and regional mission and ministry, partnerships, ecumenical and interfaith;
- engaging in national and global partnerships, ecumenical and interfaith relationships;
- honouring and living into intercultural mission and ministry;
- living in covenant with Mother Earth and All My Relations in the Earth community;

Policy:

- setting policies for the denomination on doctrine, worship, membership, governance, pastoral relations, property, and the entrance to paid accountable ministry;
- making decisions on denomination-shaping issues relating to public witness;
- dealing with proposals received from regional councils;

Governance:

- electing a Moderator;
- electing the executive of the denominational council;
- referring all unfinished matters to the executive of the denominational council;
- meeting once every three years in person, with members having the option of full participation through electronic or equivalent means;
- meeting more frequently as required through electronic or equivalent means;
- approving the number and boundaries of regional councils, supporting them and promoting parity of service across regions;

Finance and administration:

- setting a three-year budget framework for the church
- determining the assessment formula for communities of faith and assessing them to meet the requirements of the budget; and
- maintaining the denominational archives.

D. Limitations

The authority and responsibility of the denominational council is subject to the following limitations:

- *remit*: the Basis of Union may only be changed through the remit process, which requires the approval of a majority of the presbyteries and also, if the General Council considers it advisable because the change is substantive or denomination-shaping, pastoral charges;
- *membership requirements*: no terms of admission to full membership may be prescribed other than those laid down in the New Testament;
- *freedom of worship*: the freedom of worship enjoyed by churches at the time of union in 1925 may not be interfered with in the United Church; and
- *property*: all policy on congregational property adopted by the denominational council must comply with the requirements set in The United Church of Canada Act, 1925.

E. Executive of the denominational council

The executive of the denominational council is the decision-making body for the United Church between meetings of the denominational council, living into covenantal relationship and mutually accountable with the denominational council, regional councils, and communities of faith, with the following membership, authority and responsibility:

membership:

a fixed number between 12 and 18 members, with the exact number set by the denominational council;

authority and responsibility:

- dealing with all unfinished matters referred to it by the denominational council;
- dealing with all routine and emergency work of the denominational council between meetings of the denominational council;
- establishing standing and other committees; and
- exercising additional authority and subject to any limitations as set by the denominational council.

F. Staffing

The denominational council has staff to assist it in meeting its responsibilities through:

- staffing based on assessments of communities of faith, grants from Mission and Service, and other denominational income;
- staffing based on the priorities and needs as determined denominationally;
- administering denominational policies;
- providing centralized technical services such as information technology, communication, payroll, accounting, human resources, administration, and pension plan;
- supporting the Moderator; and
- providing leadership in global partnerships and national-level ministry and mission work.

4. CLUSTERS AND NETWORKS

Alongside the three-council structure, there are clusters and networks that, while not formal governance bodies, are central to the living out of the faith of the United Church:

- *clusters*: local clusters of communities of faith that provide community and support for communities of faith and their leaders, and focus on worship, mission, learning, collegiality, and strategic planning; and
- *networks*: linking people 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.



Category 3 Remit

Study Guide for Remit 2: Elimination of Transfer and Settlement

Approved by the 42nd General Council 2015

Between February 2016 and 30 June 2017, each presbytery and pastoral charge governing body will formally be asked in a category 3 remit to approve the elimination of transfer and settlement.

This is the question to be voted on:

Does the presbytery/pastoral charge agree that

- (a) the processes of transfer and settlement for members of the order of ministry within the United Church be eliminated, including the elimination of the General Council Transfer Committee; and that
- (b) the Basis of Union be amended to reflect this change?

Summary

“Transfer” is the process of moving members of the order of ministry from one Conference to another for the purpose of settlement, or call and settlement. The transfer of membership between Conferences is completed by the General Council Transfer Committee.

“Settlement” is the process of matching members of the order of ministry with United Church pastoral charges that request settlement. Settlement also means ratifying calls made by pastoral charges and presbyteries. The settlement of members of the order of ministry is done by the Conference Settlement Committee.

“Member of the order of ministry” is a diaconal or ordained minister of The United Church of Canada. Only members of the order of ministry are eligible for call and settlement. The more familiar term “ministry personnel” refers to members of the order of ministry, designated lay ministers, candidates serving under appointment, diaconal supply, and ordained supply. “Ministry personnel” is not used in this remit because designated lay ministers, candidates, diaconal supply, and ordained supply are not eligible for settlement.

Currently, the Conference Settlement Committee can place any member of the order of ministry who does not have a call in any pastoral charge that is vacant as of the 30th of June. However, this policy is rarely used.

Transfer and settlement is currently optional for candidates being ordained or commissioned.

Background

The 42nd General Council approved the elimination of the transfer and settlement process (see the [CRTG Final Document](http://www.gc42.ca/comprehensive-review-report): www.gc42.ca/comprehensive-review-report).

Since 2011, transfer and settlement have been optional for candidates for ordination and commissioning (an early version of this study guide gave incorrect date for when it changed from being a requirement). Since transfer and settlement became an option, fewer and

fewer candidates have chosen to be settled. In 2015 only one minister and no candidates chose transfer and settlement; all of the other candidates across the church chose to search for their own calls or appointments. Only two pastoral charges requested settlement in 2015.

Currently, a member of the order of ministry already serving in the church can request a new placement through transfer and settlement.

Proposed new processes

Current	Proposed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer and settlement happens once a year. • A community of faith requests a minister through transfer and settlement. • A candidate for ordination or commissioning, or a member of the order of ministry, requests to be placed (“settled”) through transfer and settlement. • The Transfer Committee of the General Council matches the requests from individuals with specific Conferences. • The Settlement Committee of Conference meets with all parties, reviews their requests, and matches each individual with a ministry according to their skills, gifts, and ministry needs. • The Settlement Committee also considers recommendations from presbyteries for each call issued and decides whether to approve the call. • The Transfer Committee transfers the individual from their current Conference to the one they are being settled in. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A community of faith seeking a minister conducts a needs assessment and a search process. • The vacancy is posted and made known. • Candidates and members of the order of ministry seeking a call may register their names on the church’s list of those available for call or use other tools offered by their Conference for seeking ministry positions; they send applications to specific ministries. • The ministry receives applications for the vacancy, and in cooperation with the Conference/region, interviews applicants and makes a decision to offer the call.

Implications of eliminating transfer and settlement

Communities of faith (pastoral charges, congregations, presbytery-accountable ministries, missions, outreach ministries, presbytery-recognized ministries, etc.) will have to find their own ministers through their needs assessment and search committees. All members of the order of ministry will seek their own calls, assisted by tools at the Conference/regional level.

Settlement and Transfer committees will no longer exist, meaning fewer volunteers will be needed, and calls made by communities of faith and presbyteries will no longer have to be approved by Settlement Committees.

Eliminating transfer and settlement may make it more difficult for communities of faith that have traditionally relied on this system for ordered ministers. However, since transfer and settlement became optional for candidates in 2009, very few candidates have been available

through the settlement process because very few are choosing to be settled, even with incentives. At the same time, fewer pastoral charges are requesting settlement.

What is a category 3 remit?

A category 3 remit is required for substantive, denomination-shaping changes to the Basis of Union (*The Manual*, s. F2). A category 3 remit also requires that a study process be available in the church before the remit is released.

The proposed change must be sent to all presbyteries and the governing body of every pastoral charge for a vote. If an absolute majority of the presbyteries and an absolute majority of the pastoral charges vote in favour of the proposed change—not just a majority of those that vote—then the next General Council must also vote in favour of the proposed change for it to take effect.

NB: If a presbytery or pastoral charge does not vote, that is considered a vote AGAINST the proposal.



Category 3 Remit

Study Guide for Remit 3: Office of Vocation

Approved by the 42nd General Council 2015

Between February 2016 and 30 June 2017, each presbytery and pastoral charge governing body will formally be asked in a category 3 remit to approve the creation of a denominational Office of Vocation.

This is the question to be voted on:

Does the presbytery/pastoral charge agree that

- (a) a denominational office of vocation be established in the structure of the United Church, with responsibilities and structure as approved by the 42nd General Council 2015; and that
- (b) the Basis of Union be amended to reflect this change?

Summary

If passed, this remit would create a new permanent Office of Vocation as part of the General Council structure. The Office of Vocation would ensure the United Church continues to be served by trained, skilled, competent, and responsible ministers, with accountability to an elected Board of Vocation.

Background

The 42nd General Council voted to establish a permanent Office of Vocation that would set standards for and accredit candidates for ministry, support ministry personnel, and oversee discipline of ministry personnel.

For more detail, please see

- the Comprehensive Review report [United in God's Work](http://www.gc42.ca/comprehensive-review-report)'s proposal for a College of Ministers (this was changed at GC42 to an Office of Vocation that is lodged within and accountable to the General Council through its elected Board, but some of the background thinking from this report is still relevant): www.gc42.ca/comprehensive-review-report
- the [News](http://www.gc42.ca/news/council-moves-away-college-ministers) section of the 42nd General Council website, www.gc42.ca/news/council-moves-away-college-ministers

Proposed new processes

	Current	Proposed
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each of the four courts (pastoral charge, presbytery, Conference, and General Council) elects people to do education, students, pastoral relations, oversight, and discipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Office of Vocation is part of the General Council. • General Council elects a Board of Vocation consisting of 12–16 ministers and lay people from across the church with a variety of relevant skills.

	work.	
Candidates for ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conferences and presbyteries have Education and Student Committees, and Interview Boards, made up of elected volunteers. • These committees ensure candidates fulfill the requirements for ordination, commissioning, or being designated and are suitable for ministry. • Other volunteers serve on Conference commissions that look into objections received about candidates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board of Vocation establishes standards for education, training, admissions, and accreditation. • Regional assessment boards, made up of volunteers, accompany candidates for ministry. These boards make recommendations to the Board of Vocation about a candidate's fitness and readiness for accreditation. • The Board of Vocation decides whether a candidate will be ordained, commissioned, or recognized.
Support and oversight of candidates and ministry personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and oversight is carried out by volunteer committees at the presbytery, Conference, and General Council levels. • These committees make recommendations and decisions on ordination, commissioning, and admissions of ministers from other denominations. • The committees ensure all candidates have completed the required training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected members at the Conference (or region) accompany and support candidates through their discernment and formation. • Conferences (or regions) continue to have a role in supporting the local pastoral relationship. • General Council staff • maintain a registry of accredited ministry personnel • maintain a list of recognized Interim Ministers and those trained for the Ministry of Supervision • establish and implement standards for admitting ministers from other denominations and readmitting ministers
Discipline of ministry personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers in all four courts respond to disciplinary issues. • Volunteers may have limited experience in conducting investigations, running formal hearings, and hearing appeals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board of Vocation can order reviews of the conduct of ministry personnel, make recommendations, and convene ad hoc formal hearing panels. • General Council staff initiate investigations when concerns or complaints are received about ministry personnel and can recommend reviews to the Board of Vocation. • Investigations are conducted by

		trained investigators.
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Implications of creating an Office of Vocation

A new working unit called the Office of Vocation would be created at the General Council Office. Numerous volunteer committees would cease to exist in all four courts of the church, and staff time at the Conference and presbytery levels would be used more effectively.

The Office of Vocation would consist of paid staff as well as a Board of Vocation with equal numbers of elected ministers and lay people. The staff would deal with procedural and administrative matters. The Board of Vocation would be responsible for making decisions. These changes will ensure greater consistency in practice across the church.

Candidates for the order of ministry would continue to be accompanied and interviewed by volunteers on the regional assessment boards. If Remit No. 1: Three-Court Model passes, creating regional councils, fewer volunteers will be needed at the regional levels.

What is a category 3 remit?

A category 3 remit is required for substantive, denomination-shaping changes to the Basis of Union (*The Manual*, s. F2). A category 3 remit also requires that a study process be available in the church before the remit is released.

The proposed change must be sent to all presbyteries and the governing body of every pastoral charge for a vote. If an absolute majority of the presbyteries and an absolute majority of the pastoral charges vote in favour of the proposed change—not just a majority of those that vote—then the next General Council must also vote in favour of the proposed change for it to take effect.

NB: If a presbytery or pastoral charge does not vote, that is considered a vote AGAINST the proposal.



Category 3 Remit

Study Guide for Remit 4: Funding a New Model

Approved by the 42nd General Council 2015

Between February 2016 and 30 June 2017, each presbytery and pastoral charge governing body will formally be asked in a category 3 remit to approve a new funding model for the church.

This is the question to be voted on:

Does the presbytery/pastoral charge agree to a new funding model for the United Church with the budgeting process guided by the following principles?

- (1) use Mission & Service to fund ministry and mission activities;
- (2) fund governance and support services of other courts/councils by assessing communities of faith/pastoral charges;
- (3) share assessments equitably across the whole church;
- (4) permit Conferences/presbyteries/regional councils to use additional resources for regional purposes; and
- (5) encourage sharing of all resources across the church.

Summary

This remit would approve giving the General Council the power to assess pastoral charges to cover the costs of governance and support services for the denomination.

Currently, presbyteries have the power to assess pastoral charges to cover their expenses. Conferences also have the power to assess, and their funding comes from the assessments as well as grants from the General Council. These grants are funded through Mission & Service as well as from other donations. The General Council does NOT currently have the power to assess, so its costs are covered by Mission & Service, donations, investment revenues from funds held in reserve, and donations.

This remit proposes a single assessment model to fund the General Council (or Denominational Council, if Remit 1 passes) and regional levels of the church that will be both more equitable and transparent. If approved, it would mean that governance and associated support services at all levels of the church, beyond the local pastoral charges, would be funded through assessments.

For the rationale behind the original proposal adopted by the 42nd General Council 2015, see [Backgrounder #10: Finances](http://www.gc42.ca/comprehensive-review-report) (www.gc42.ca/comprehensive-review-report).

Why a new funding model?

These are some of the principles that guided the Comprehensive Review Task Group's original proposal:

- The General Council (or Denominational) Office would spend only what it receives.
- The amount of revenue received would determine the number of regional and General Council staff and their functions.

- The General Council would fund governance and associated services by annually assessing pastoral charges/communities of faith on behalf of both the General Council and the regions.

Funding both regional and national support and governance work from assessment will also mean that all pastoral charges will bear their fair share of broader church costs. This would result in equitable contributions to the work of the church, and the regional and national church structures would become more aligned with pastoral charges/communities of faith, growing or shrinking as they do.

Having assessments fund governance and associated services at all levels of the church is an approach that is consistent with the way most denominations in Canada and around the world are funded, although the rate proposed here is much lower than those of other denominations.

A consistent, revenue-based assessment formula—first proposed to General Council by Manitou Conference—would replace over 30 different formulas now in place. The revenue-based model was approved by the General Council Executive because it:

- is easiest to explain
- more fairly recognizes the ability to pay, particularly for rural and smaller congregations
- is transparent
- is externally verifiable

Presbyteries currently use various permutations based on operating cost, membership, number of donors, households, and so on. Newfoundland and Labrador Conference and a few presbyteries have already moved to a revenue-based formula. In-depth analysis suggests that revenue is a fairer measure of ability to pay, and is fairer to smaller and more rural settings. A standard formula is more transparent and easier to explain.

Mission & Service

The work of The United Church of Canada across the country and around the world is currently funded by Mission & Service. Most of this funding comes from voluntary gifts of members or adherents, or through estate gifts. Mission & Service funds programs delivered by General Council Office staff as well as associated common office services, grants for community ministries, chaplaincies, pastoral charges in need of support, plus grants for running the Conferences.

Switching to an assessment method would make a clear distinction between funds used for the governance of the church and those used for Mission & Service. Donations to Mission & Service will only be used for mission and ministry expenditures made regionally or nationally, including grants to global partners and community ministries in Canada.

Considering how vital Mission & Service is to this church, it can be hoped that congregations or donors do not choose to decrease Mission & Service donations in order to pay for a higher assessment. The clearer purpose for Mission & Service may also attract new and younger donors.

The proposed assessment formula

The overall concept is to consider all revenues received and subtract outward giving and one-time amounts. The exact assessment formula, to be approved by General Council/Denominational Council, will be refined over the next two years but will not be higher than 4.5 percent of total revenues raised for pastoral charge operations (Column 32D in the annual statistics report), adjusted for outward giving, bequests, and asset sales. For example, Mission & Service giving and refugee sponsorship donations would be subtracted from the assessment base.

A more equitable assessment framework for pastoral charge assessment

Assessment Base:	Total revenue less outward revenues		
	Line 32D		Total revenue
	minus	line 36	M&S raised congregation
		line 37	M&S raised UCW
		line 38	Other church appeals
		line 39	Other outreach, bequests, and asset sales
	Net revenue for assessment calculation x 0.045		

(If the increase is less than 10 percent, the calculated number will apply. If the increase is greater than 10 percent, a pastoral charge may elect to limit the increase to not more than 110% of the previous year's assessment.)

Transition factors

National statistical reporting will be changed so that asset sales and bequests are reported separately.

To allow for unusual fluctuations year over year, the average of the prior three years' statistics will be used (as is commonplace today).

It is unlikely to ever be a factor, but for assurance, 4.5% of line 32D has been set as the maximum level for assessment, and most pastoral charges are expected to be below that. For the foreseeable future, any increases will be focused on completing the transition to all pastoral charges contributing in equal proportion.

It is already a common practice to use a multi-year average for assessment formulas, and this practice would continue to be applied to smooth out unusual year-over-year fluctuations in revenue.

The mechanics of the model outlined in this document have been approved by the General Council Executive and will go to the next General Council for its approval. Phased-in transitioning is part of this model.

Pastoral charges could choose to implement the new formula right away. However, since a majority of congregations will see an increase in levied assessment costs in the first year of implementation (either 2018 or 2019), a phase-in approach is recommended. Pastoral charges could elect an option that would limit the increase in the first year of implementation to 10 percent more than the prior year's assessment, with that level of assessment frozen for the next two years. General Council/Denominational Council would need to approve any subsequent cost-of-living adjustment or further steps to fully implement the new funding formula. The three-year phase-in period would allow for evaluation and living into the new model.

In approving the move to a national assessment, the General Council directed that there be room in the funding model for regional (or Conference, if Remit 1 does not pass) differences, as is the case today. First, existing regional investments and any other funding sources and the ability to deploy them regionally are not affected by the decision on this remit. Second, a regional council could choose to assess pastoral charges/communities of faith over and above the core assessment paid to the General Council/Denominational Council.

If this remit is approved, the billing and collecting of assessment will be as streamlined as possible. The General Council/Denominational Council will work with Conference/regional bodies to assess each pastoral charge/community of faith annually and distribute the amounts collected regionally or nationally as agreed in advance.

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