

## **TICIF 2 A PROPOSAL FOR ONE ORDER OF MINISTRY**

**Origin: Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee**

**The Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee proposes that the Executive of General Council:**

- 1. Receive the report A Proposal For One Order of Ministry;**
- 2. Express its appreciation for the joint work of the Theology and InterChurch InterFaith Committee and the Permanent Committee Ministry and Employment Policy and Services in the development of the report;**
- 3. Recommend to the 42<sup>nd</sup> General Council the approval of the report.**

### **BACKGROUND**

The Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee is a standing committee of the General Council and reports directly to the Council. However, the report “A Proposal for One Order of Ministry” was developed jointly with the Permanent Committee, Ministry and Employment Policy and Services, a committee of the Executive. The report is also denominationally shaping in that it proposes a significant change in the nature of ministry for the church. For these reasons the TICIF Committee believes it appropriate to invite the Executive to review the report and consider the proposed action of recommending the report for approval to the 42<sup>nd</sup> General Council.

### **A PROPOSAL FOR ONE ORDER OF MINISTRY**

**The Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee proposes:**

**THAT the 42<sup>nd</sup> General Council recognize one order of ministry within The United Church of Canada, known as the ordained ministry;**

- 1. provide within the ordained ministry of the church, for those who so choose through an appropriate educational program, ordination to the diakonia;**
- 2. develop multiple paths of educational formation to the ordained ministry based on an overall equivalency of educational and spiritual formation;**
- 3. authorize remits to Presbyteries and to Pastoral Charges to test the will of the United Church with respect to this recognition;**
- 4. incorporate (grandparent) into the ordained ministry all diaconal ministers who so choose**
- 5. incorporate (grandparent) into the ordained ministry all recognized designated lay ministers who so choose and who are currently serving in recognized or accountable ministries;**
- 6. Direct the General Secretary to edit the Statement on Ministry to reflect the decision of the church in regards to this proposal.**

### **Background**

The Permanent Committee, Ministry and Employment Policies and Services and the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee, (the Committees) following the directions of the 41<sup>st</sup> General Council (2012), have continued in a long process of exploring critical issues related to Paid Accountable Ministry in

The United Church of Canada. The Committees have tested in surveys and workshops assumptions that the issues identified here are significant and need to be resolved; that what is at stake relates to the integrity of the church's ministry; and that current practices cannot continue without damage to the ministry and ministers of the church.

At the heart of these issues is the identity and functioning (as expressed in the Statement on Ministry 2012), of: Designated Lay ministers, who "are members of the church called to exercise gifts for leadership in mission and ministry that respond to a need within a local congregation or community ministry"; Diaconal ministers, who "serve in all aspects of ministry and are formally called to education, service, social justice, and pastoral care"; Ordained ministers, who "serve in all aspects of ministry and are formally called to word, sacrament and pastoral care", and paid staff in other forms of lay ministry.

The Committees have developed this proposal believing that the current definitions and expressions of ministry do not have theological integrity, and cannot be explained simply and theologically to ourselves and to others.

The Committees have noted that most of the ministry personnel of the church, in spite of the purported differences between the streams, are called or appointed to the same function (i.e. solo pastoral ministry). It also believes that most members of the church do not understand the differences between the various streams of ministry, and that candidacy processes in many cases have not been able to adequately differentiate between them. (In 2014 there were 1709 Ordained ministers of which 1543 were in pastoral appointments; 141 Diaconal ministers of which 125 were in pastoral appointments; and 143 recognized (and 75 applicants) Designated Lay ministers in pastoral appointments.)

Finally, the Committees have heard in numerous surveys the expectation of an educated clergy at the heart of the identity of the church. They note however the tension between this desire and the need for ministry personnel to serve small, part time or remote churches. The Committees believe that these needs must be held in tension, but fundamentally the church cannot sacrifice the expectation that all ministers of the church should have a basic equivalency in educational preparation for ministry leadership.

### **The Problem in Greater Detail**

The Statement on Ministry (2012), offers a theological reference point for understanding ministry in The United Church of Canada. It outlines in three sections: the Ministry of All (the ministry of the whole people of God); the Ministry of Leadership (those both paid and unpaid, who serve in many aspects of oversight and leadership in the church); and Paid Accountable Ministry (those who are called to designated lay, diaconal, or ordained ministries.) This report deals with the third category of Paid Accountable Ministry.

The Permanent Committee, Ministry and Employment Policy and Services and the Theology and InterChurch InterFaith Committee were tasked to examine two proposals related to the Statement directed to them by the 41<sup>st</sup> General Council (2012). The first of these issues related to the proposal for the study of "local ordination" as an alternative to the existing category of designated lay ministers (DLMs) serving in pastoral ministry roles. The second involved a proposal for the sacramental authorization of diaconal ministers as a rite of commissioning. The Committees, through a Joint Working Group determined that an underlying issue present in both assignments is the church's lack of clarity in its current multiple streams of ministry and the complexity and confusion that they create.

The processes that lead to the first version of the Statement on Ministry in 2009 (The Meaning of Ministry Task Group 2006-2009) pointed to the difficulties the church has in differentiating the various streams of

ministry. That Task Group struggled to give adequate definition to the streams and found particular difficulty in articulating a difference between designated lay ministry and ordained ministry. It noted the challenge in defining “lay” in the Designated Lay Ministry category and particularly rejected definitions that emphasized designated lay ministry as having a closer relationship to people than those who were commissioned or ordained. Of significant concern was the clear statement of many designated lay ministers themselves that the current definition does not represent their self-understanding and that many find the name itself offensive, and therefore unacceptable.

In the current process (2012-2015) the Joint Working Group of the Committees was also challenged to differentiate the three streams of ministry.

The Working Group noted that the proposal for [local ordination](#) was an attempt to resolve the difficulty present in designated lay ministers serving in pastoral ministry in ways indistinguishable from ordained ministry. Many DLM personnel speak of their life-time commitment to ministry within the whole church that arises from a deep and personal call to ministry. Most are authorized for sacraments and, while still requiring yearly appointments, are effectively functioning as if available for call. Recent decisions have also extended the option for life-time membership in Presbytery to those retiring designated lay ministers who request it.

The Committees heard and agreed with challenges to the concept of local ordination; particularly that the “local” in local ordination was not clear or enforceable. It also noted concern over the differences in educational preparation for designated lay ministry and ordered ministry.

The Committees also noted the importance of considering what forms of educational preparation are required for effective leadership in paid accountable ministry today and for the future. They believe that the inability to effectively differentiate commissioned/ordained and designated lay ministry could ultimately situate the DLM program as the basic level of educational preparation for ministry.

However, Designated Lay Ministry was developed with an understanding that it *would* be time limited and localized. “Ministry Together” (GC 2000) set in place the criteria for Designated Lay Ministry as follows:

“The report offers the perspective that the vocation of the Ordained or Diaconal Minister involves lifelong service and accountability to the church. It is ordination or commissioning to the church universal. The vocation of the lay minister, on the other hand, is spontaneous, localized, and temporary in its service and accountability. This report affirms that there is a place for designated lay ministry alongside ordered ministry. Given the demands of ministry today, the church needs to be confident that the spiritual, theological, interpersonal, and educational competencies are the same for comparable ministries.” (Page 614 Record of Proceedings GC 2000).”

Because of this, the DLM educational program was also more limited than other programs. However, designated lay ministers themselves as well as significant parts of the church have affirmed that a different understanding has emerged: that designated lay ministry is now seen as a life time call serving the whole church. This understanding was also affirmed by the 2009 General Council in the changes made to the Statement on Ministry. If designated lay ministry is now understood to be a life time vocation to ministry, serving the whole church, then the Committees believe that the educational requirements must change.

As it was expressed by the Ministry Together report above, the Committees believe that the church does want to be assured that the “spiritual, theological, interpersonal and educational competencies are the same

for comparable ministries.” The Committees believe that there needs to be a variety of educational paths to ministry leadership, as will be further outlined. This will include a stream of educational preparation that lifts up the circle and experiential model of the current DLM program. However, the Committees believe that there needs to be a basic educational equivalency between these different paths.

The Committees similarly struggled with the difference between ordained and diaconal, particularly given the request referred from the 41<sup>st</sup> GC, that diaconal ministers be afforded sacramental authority as a rite of commissioning.

While there are possible distinctions in emphasis and in training, and certainly in the intentional identification with the world-wide *diakonia* movement for diaconal ministers, the challenge is articulating functional and theological differences between the ordained and diaconal ministries as they live out their specific call to ministry in the church today. The Working Group particularly had difficulty with anecdotal comparisons between the two ordered streams: of ordination focused on power and authority in comparison to diaconal commitments to mutuality and empowerment; or of diaconal ministry as lacking theological depth or missing the skills for overall congregational leadership.

In considering the proposal for authorizing diaconal ministers for the sacraments as a rite of their commissioning, the Committees note that a large majority of diaconal ministers are serving in pastoral ministry roles, often as solo paid accountable ministers, in ways that are functionally indistinguishable from ordained ministers. While the training and commitment of diaconal ministers is focused on teaming and mutuality in ministry, their opportunities to serve in team ministry positions within the United Church are limited (and dwindling). Other diaconal ministers serve in community ministries where sacramental actions, such as gathering around the common table in communion, or being able to baptize individuals when serving in a housing or health-care facility as a chaplain or outreach minister, are important options within worship experiences in those settings.

The Committees note that the Statement on Ministry chose not to distinguish between streams of ministry by sacramental authority. It did so because of the long established patterns in the church of extending authorization for sacramental ministry to those in many forms of pastoral leadership, including most recently sacraments elders. While authorization for sacraments for all those who are not in ordained ministry is still required, the practice of almost universal approval in most conferences, particularly for diaconal and designated lay ministers in solo pastoral ministry, suggests that the church has moved well beyond the more traditional understanding that authority for the sacraments resides solely with the ordained ministry. For this reason, the Committees believe that authorization for sacramental ministries should be extended to diaconal ministers as a rite of commissioning. However such a position reinforces that challenge in distinguishing diaconal and ordained ministry.

The Committees acknowledge that diaconal ministry is more than a question of what functions are performed. [\*The Working Group on Diaconal Ministry\*](#), which recently reported to the Permanent Committee on Ministry and Employment Policies and Services, noted that educational formation for the diakonia emphasizes teaming, mutuality and non-hierarchical style, with commitment to justice, diversity, and at its heart a rootedness in community and transformation. The report affirmed that “while these characteristics are not exclusive to diaconal ministry, they are characteristics explicitly associated with a diaconal identity and approach to the practice of ministry.”

The long ecumenical history of the diakonia, its foundations in the scriptures and in the early church, and its ongoing support within the United Church, suggested to the Committees that a diaconal option and

emphasis in both study and function should continue in some form. The Committees believe, however, that this would best be done as part of one ordained ministry. This is particularly important as we move into consideration of mutual recognition of ministry with partner churches.

The work of the Comprehensive Review Task Group reinforces the reality that we will be a much different church in the future. We will likely be smaller, more congregational and will need to be more effective in our use of resources. We must be more open to diversity while greatly simplifying our structures and our polity. This proposal for “one order of ministry” represents the desire of the Committees to prepare the ministry of the church for such a future. In particular, the committees believe that the move to one order of ministry does not reduce the diversity of ministries within the church, but rather opens a unified ministry up to much greater diversity; in other words, one ministry, many different expressions.

### **The Proposal: One Order of Ministry**

*“The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way unto him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love.”* Ephesians 4:11-16

*“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All of these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.”* 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

The Scripture passages above point to a number of principles underlying the thinking of the Permanent Committee, Ministry and Employment Policy and Services and the Theology and InterChurch InterFaith Committee, in making this proposal for one order of ministry. They wish to affirm that there is a fundamental unity to all expressions of paid accountable ministry in the church; that the church’s understandings of ministry need to be as consistent as possible with a global ecumenical consensus; that interpretations of the nature and function of ministry within the church need to be able to be expressed simply, clearly and with theological integrity; and that a commitment to an educated clergy capable of equipping people to live out their faith in meaningful, loving and mature ways is fundamental to United Church identity.

The Committees propose the following understanding of ministry within the United Church of Canada:

**There shall be one order of ministry of The United Church of Canada, known as the ordained ministry. The rite of ordination in the United Church includes for those who so choose, through the appropriate educational processes, ordination to the diakonia.**

The Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry document of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, published in 1982, remains the most significant consensus document on the nature of ministry in the global Christian community. The centrality of the term “ordination” within the Ministry section of that document provides the strongest rationale for maintaining the term within The United Church of Canada. The document references a traditional three-fold pattern of ordination for bishop, presbyter and deacon. In reformed traditions, the document notes, the episcopal role of the bishop is carried by councils. This is the understanding and practice of the United Church. Throughout the history of the church, the place of deacons or the diakonia has changed as well, but there is significant historical precedent for speaking of ordination to the diaconate.

The proposal for one order offers a return to this understanding. Those who choose to be ordained to the diakonia would prepare themselves through a specific educational path and would commit themselves to the values and principles of the worldwide movement of the diakonia. They will be ordained ministers of the church who offer a commitment to uphold the values and principles of the historic global community of the diakonia. While more detail will have to be developed about the nature of this commitment and the language that will accompany it, for all those ordained ministers who make such a commitment, and for those who do not, there will no difference in respect to authority and function within the church.

### **Staff Associates**

In this proposal, the Committees also affirm the continued valid place of Staff Associates in the overall ministry of churches. Staff Associates are lay people (their membership remains in a congregation) who are congregationally employed and always function in relationship with an ordained minister or ordained minister candidate.

The Committees note that Designated Lay Ministry, initiated in 2000, was an attempt to incorporate into one category a broad range of “lay” ministries in the church, among them Lay Pastoral Ministers and Staff Associates. The Working Group has heard and accepted that the grouping of this broad collection of paid accountable positions into one category has not been satisfactory for most of the personnel. It believes that the proposal for one order of ministry addresses the challenges in the situation of Designated Lay Ministers serving in solo pastoral ministry who are responding to a life-long call to the vocation of ministry that is not limited to a specific place and time. It proposes a return to a familiar language and practice for those who were formerly called staff associates. The further implication of this proposal would be that “Congregational Designated Ministry” would end and be subsumed into the Staff Associate category.

The emphasis in this category of ministry would be on “associate.” In other words, those functioning in a staff associate position would always be understood to be functioning in association (or team) with an ordained minister or candidate. Staff associates would continue to be lay persons meaning that their membership would continue to reside in a congregation and the call and definition of their work would be focused on, and limited to that local ministry.

In the current terminology, these positions would also be congregational designated positions, or those employed and accountable to the congregation. While these positions will need to meet standards of employment, the congregation will be the sole employer.

The Committees note that the majority of staff associates will be congregational accountable; among them Christian Education workers, pastoral visitors and caregivers, parish nurses, youth workers and music directors. There is, however, an important exception that needs to be considered: those who see themselves functioning as a “staff associate” but who have sought out specialized training and preparation for a

particular expression of their ministry. Examples of this would be youth workers who have completed specialized programs, or Christian education workers with a Masters of Religious Education. In these circumstances there has been a desire for some process of recognition of the specialized training that they have undertaken. The Committees' encouragement is that such individuals see the ordained ministry as expansive and able to incorporate such specialized ministry. This will be increasingly true as new expressions of faith communities emerge. Ministry leadership in these new expressions should be seen to be a full part of the ordained ministry of the church.

The proposal then recognizes two stages of ordained ministry, as ordained candidate and as ordained. The intention is that everyone who is in paid and accountable pastoral leadership of a community of faith must be approved through a discernment process and committed to and entered into one of a number of educational paths to ordained ministry.

Within this model, the current category of designated lay ministry is incorporated within the ordained ministry of the church. The Committees understand this to be consistent with the overall direction of designated lay ministry as a life time call to the ministry of the whole church. It does not understand this to be a "lay" ministry, but rather one indistinguishable from ordained ministry. The critical issue, the Committees believe, are rather the educational requirements for this path of ministry, to be addressed in the next section.

The structure of ministry in the church, as expressed in this proposal would therefore be as follows:

Staff Associate	Ordained Ministry (Candidate)	Ordained Ministry
Congregational Accountable	Presbytery Accountable	Presbytery Accountable
	Conference Recognition	Conference Ordination
Congregational membership	Presbytery membership (while under appointment)	Presbytery membership
	Sacramental authority (while under appointment) approved by Conference	Sacramental authority
Always in team with ordained minister or candidate	Team or solo leadership in congregation or ministry unit with supervision by an ordained minister.	Team or solo leadership in congregation or ministry unit.

The Joint Working Group has developed this proposal independently of the Comprehensive Review Task Group but has been in conversation with them throughout the process. While it has not incorporated the proposal for a College of Ministers into this proposal, it does believe that the concept of one order of ministry would be workable either in that structure or the current one.

**Multiple Streams of Educational Preparation**

An important concern in the development of this proposal for one order of ministry is the question, "What educational requirements are necessary for paid accountable ministry leadership?"

The Committees believe that that there should be an equivalent educational expectation for all members of the order of ministry of The United Church of Canada. What "equivalency" looks like is a critical factor of this proposal. Educational requirements will need to be expanded to prepare for a greater range of ministries; and there will need to be a variety of educational programs that address different learning styles.

The Committees believe that there are options already existing within the church that represent the approximate level of equivalency that is desired. In particular the committee notes the basic equivalency that has already been established between the various Master of Divinity (M.Div.) programs, the [Centre for Christian Studies \(CCS\) program](#) and the [Sandy Saulteaux program for Aboriginal Ministry](#). The CCS and the Sandy Saulteaux models provide for four to five year non-residential programs based on an integration of ministry and learning circles and both grant a diploma on graduation. M.Div. programs are also available throughout the church in a variety of formats from distance learning programs to the more traditional three year residential models. Part of the requirement for ordination for M.Div. students includes a full time internship of eight months or equivalent. (St. Andrews's has developed a model with a 20 month ministry internship.) The Atlantic School of Theology offers a five year distance learning program for those engaged in ongoing ministry. Thus M.Div. programs also correspond to a four to five year preparation time.

The Centre for Christian Studies and the Sandy Saulteaux programs are usually undertaken while in part-time employment. Many M.Div. students also serve in paid part-time ministry appointments during their studies in addition to their paid supervised ministry placement (either the eight month or two year options.) The end result is that these two streams and the M.Div. stream require a similar amount of time in preparation and are approximately equivalent in personal financial cost. The somewhat greater cost of the residential M.Div. program (primarily from forgone earning from full time studies) is offset by the gaining of an academic degree.

The Committees affirm that there is a distinctive reality for aboriginal ministries that requires a program specifically addressed to the context of First Nations communities. For this reason it believes that the Sandy Saulteaux program should continue, as it addresses specifically preparation for the order of ministry for First Nations peoples. The Committees also believe that the Centre for Christian Studies program should continue as an educational path specifically focused on those who are committed to the diakonia.

The church therefore recognizes both degree and diploma paths for ministry formation. Both the degree and diploma schools carry "testamur" authority from the church, to certify that their candidates are prepared for ordination or commissioning.

The Committees propose that a fourth diploma educational path be developed following the model of the Designated Lay Ministry formation program.

### **Diploma in Theology and Pastoral Care**

The Designated Lay Ministry Program currently requires three years of non-residential theological education, in residential learning circles (two two-week learning circles a year with assigned work in between circles), and in Supervised Ministry Education (supervision) while in appointments of at least 50% time. In addition, students are required to take three additional university level courses. The Committees believe that the Designated Lay Ministry Program can fulfill the level of equivalency expected by extending the program to five years and modeling it on the Sandy Saulteaux or Centre for Christian Studies program, or the lay and summer distance programs of other schools.

The current Designated Lay Ministry program, under this proposal, would therefore need to be renamed, possibly lodged within an existing theological institution and expanded into a five year model. The Committees propose the terminology of a "Diploma in Theology and Pastoral Ministry" and for the sake of clarity will use that term in the remainder of this paper.

The Committees acknowledge that the proposal for one order of ministry will likely lead towards a greater convergence of theological schools and training for ministry. While continuing to uphold the M.Div. as the traditional standard for congregational ministry leadership, it is also possible, given the transitions that seem inevitable in the social context, that initiatives such as a Diploma in Theology and Pastoral Ministry might, in the future, become the primary entry point for ministry leadership. Therefore, the Committees have explored several questions:

First, what should be the prerequisite for entrance into a Diploma in Theology and Pastoral Ministry stream? Or in other words, what will be the minimum prerequisite for beginning studies towards ministry leadership in the United Church?

Currently there are four prerequisite options for entry into the Designated Lay Ministry program. (One of: Successful completion of a Licensed Lay Worship Leader (LLWL) program; Successful completion of the Leadership Development Module at the Centre for Christian Studies; Successful completion of a lay certificate in ministry (at a United Church theological college); Successful completion of a Prior Learning Assessment that demonstrates a basic level of competence in critical theological reflection.)

The Committees propose that one year of university studies within an established undergraduate program should be an expectation for anyone entering into ministry leadership in the United Church. The Committees believe that a commitment to life-long learning is required for effective ministry. They believe that completion of (at least) a first year level of university study would be a minimum indication of capacity and discipline necessary for such a commitment. A first year university program would also provide a basic introduction to humanities as a prerequisite for the Diploma in Theology and Pastoral Ministry study. The Committees expect that the Aboriginal community would continue to establish its own prerequisite requirements in order to best suit the needs of their communities.

Second, the Committees note that the current DLM program requires completion of three academic courses offered by other United Church theological institutions. The Committees propose that in the new Diploma program, this should be expanded to eight courses (such as that required by the CCS program) to ensure that there is deeper connection with candidates of all educational streams into the experience of theological studies and its interrelationship with critical thinking around mission and ministry. It also notes that a wide range of courses are now available through on-line options.

Finally, not all candidates for ministry in the various programs of study complete their course within the minimum time frames of the respective programs. This parallels the reality of many undergraduate and certainly graduate degree programs in general university studies. Therefore it is to be expected that candidates for ministry in any of the educational streams will vary in the time taken to complete the program. However, there is also a benefit to the church and to the individual to set a maximum time for completion of the program. The Committees propose that eight years is a realistic time frame to complete the educational requirements for ordained ministry.

### **Competency Based Assessment**

Consideration of competency based educational models that are currently underway throughout North America and in the United Church can also provide further opportunities to explore the meaning of equivalency in educational expectations. This report is addressed primarily to the theology and function of the order of ministry and is not directly linked to these proposals. However the use of competencies does offer a mechanism to continue to ensure that “the spiritual, theological, interpersonal, and educational

competencies are the same for comparable ministries” and that life experience is taken into account in assessing overall fitness for ministry leadership.

### **Candidates for the Order of Ministry**

The Committees note that it has become a common practice for many students in all streams of ministry to be appointed into ministry positions either as part of their educational or candidature processes or as a means of funding their education. They therefore propose that a common terminology be established for all candidates who are appointed into paid accountable leadership that affirms their status and acknowledges their ongoing journey towards ordained ministry. It is proposed that the simple language of “candidate” accompany the term ordained. In other words, all individuals in any of the educational streams who have been appointed to a recognized ministry of the church would be able to identify themselves in this way. Ordained Candidates appointed to a recognized ministry would, in this model, have their membership held in a Presbytery.

### **Can this model meet the needs of the church for Ministry Personnel?**

In this model, a person who feels called to broader, longer-term ministry leadership to the church would be required to apply to the Order of Ministry before appointment. There would be a discernment, interview and appointment process that would lead to the status of Ordained Ministry (Candidate) and a requirement of entering one of the educational streams. The assumption that underlies this approach is that everyone in solo ministry leadership in a community of faith would be on a journey towards, or have achieved an equivalency in educational preparation and be committed to formal life-long learning. For an individual called later in life to offer a number of years of service in ministry, the educational stream might never be finished, but it would represent a commitment to life-long learning and continuing preparation for more effective ministry leadership. For someone in early or mid-life, the expectation is that the educational work would be completed within eight years. In both cases the educational work would be undertaken while in either full-time or part-time ministry depending on the learning style and life circumstances of the individual.

If a person has gifts for some aspects of ministry but is not able to or chooses not to enter into one of the educational streams for ordained ministry, then the Working Group would encourage that his or her gifts for ministry be used either in a staff associate role, or possibly in a regional team model. This model is outlined [here](#) and offers an important option for ensuring that the varied gifts of ministry are available and effectively used for the ministry of the church.

The Committees recognize that the current structures of the church might change dramatically in the future. The committees believe however that this proposal can be adapted to whatever structure the church ultimately adopts. What this proposal offers, the Committees propose, is theological integrity, ecumenical consistency and simplicity in structure and understanding. They also believe that this proposal honours and does not diminish, the various gifts currently shared by ministry personnel within the United Church today.