

(3) (4) (5) (6) In the light of the report of the Sessional Committee on Diaconal/Commissioned Ministry by the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education and the continuing study which these matters will require: we recommend that no action be taken on these recommendations and that the information and insight gathered by Project:Ministry become a part of the ongoing study.

The Task Force on Commissioned Ministry/Diaconal Ministry

The Task Force on Commissioned/Diaconal Ministry was set up in 1980 as another result of that consultation. The Task Force included Barbara Elliott, Margaret Fulton, Sylvia Hamilton, Cheryl Kirk, Eric King, Janet MacPherson, Margaret Quigley, Glenys Huws (Co-deputy Secretary, Division of MP & E.)

The Task Force was given the responsibility of "making recommendations to appropriate bodies concerning the issues identified by the [1980] consultation and other CM/DM's, " and " To begin to change attitudes and to educate the Church at large" about the commissioned/diaconal ministry. (31)

Barb Elliott makes the following comments on the Task Force:

They (General Council Executive) asked the steering committee that had planned that one day consultation to continue as a task force for two years, and then come back to General Council with some recommendations. And that group did work for those two years, there were six of us on it and it was a marvellous experience. We got groups set up in the Conferences with contact people, we sent out questionnaires, we compiled data and most importantly of all, since we were a task group that represented different generations and different approaches, we struggled and grew in our understanding of each other.... We took a few recommendations to the General Council in Halifax in 1980, which established that there would one order of ministry made up of those ordained to Word, sacrament and pastoral care; and those commissioned to a diaconal ministry of education, service and pastoral care. We asked that what we would be called in terms of what kind of minister and other references be left until after we had had a full consultation which we were in the throes of planning. (32)

The six recommendations that had been taken to the 1980 General Council and that were subsequently adopted were:

Betty Maylin

For Action

I. The Task Force or Commissioned/Diaconal Ministry
(See especially Part ~~C~~ p. 476 for action) ○

A. Background:

1. Earlier decisions leading up to the Establishment of the Task Force include the following:

1968 1978 -- Confusion arose regarding the use of the term "commissioned minister" and other issues involving deaconesses and Certified Churchmen. Perusal of the Records of Proceeding and General Council Executive Minutes revealed that no clear decision or authorization for these changes in terminology has been made. During this time the term "seeped" into the records and became commonly accepted in church courts as well as the Manual.

1979 -- The Executive of General Council in consultation with the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education asked its Deputy Secretary to convene a consultation of members of the Deaconess Order, Commissioned Ministers, and Certified Churchmen to react to six specific recommendations proposed by Division of Ministry Personnel and Education.

March 4 - 5, 1980 -- Eighty Deaconesses, Certified Churchmen, and Commissioned Ministers attended the consultation in Toronto following which there was strong feeling that the question of name was only one of many issues concerning this group and that these issues were too great and the time too short to deal adequately with them. It was recommended that the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education call together the Consultation's Steering Committee to identify and sharpen the issues that underlay the hopes and concerns expressed through the report from the consultation and to develop strategies to deal with these.

This meeting was held on June 11, 1980. The following six revised recommendations were made:

1. That General Council officially affirm that there is one Order of Ministry, called to proclaim and enact the word, consisting of persons ...

a) ordained to the ministry of Word, Sacraments, and Pastoral Care, and

- b) commissioned to the diaconal ministry of Education, Service and Pastoral Care.
2. That the current clauses in the Manual referring to Commissioned Ministers, Deaconesses and Certified Churchmen be retained for an interim period, pending further consultation and clarification, but that all persons who were earlier 'commissioned as missionaries' by General Council authority, who at the time of that commissioning had the educational qualifications of Deaconesses, be offered inclusion as Commissioned Ministers or Deaconesses, pending further consultation and clarification, and that this offer of inclusion be completed by the 29th General Council.
3. That General Council declare that, for the present, entrance into the Order of Ministry other than by ordination shall be an Act of Commissioning by a Conference to a Diaconal Ministry of Education, Service and Pastoral Care, such commissioning to be understood as including fulfillment of the intent of the Basis of Union's provision for the designation of Deaconesses (IV, 22, (b)).
4. That acknowledgement be made that a major revision of the Manual will be required in relation to the naming and administration of those in the Order of the Ministry, but that this be delayed until such time as the issues needing further clarification have been resolved, to be, at the latest, by the 29th General Council.
5. That, in the interim, editing of the Manual be done so that where the intention is to be inclusive for those currently ordained, commissioned, or designated, the term to be used is "members of the Order of Ministry" or "the Order of Ministry".
6. That a person commissioned to the diaconal ministry ...
- (a) if appointed by a Presbytery, is to be termed "Commissioned United Church Church Supply", analagous to "Ordained United Church Supply" and "Lay Supply";
- (b) if settled/placed/called by or through a Conference, is to be considered in regular pastoral relationship with a pastoral charge.

Further ... in response to the motions from the General Council Executive, a task group (consisting of seven

Deaconesses/Commissioned Minister representing a wide variety of perspectives, experiences, and geographical bases) was formed to deal with the issues raised at the March consultation, with the proposal that it be accountable to Division of Ministry Personnel and Education Division Executive, for the following tasks:

- (a) To make recommendations to appropriate bodies concerning the issues identified by the Consultation on Commissioned Ministry.
- (b) To begin to change attitudes and to educate the church at large about the issues/concerns/contributions of these members of the Order of Ministry.

Members of the Task Force included:

Barbara Elliott, Regina, Sask.
 Sylvia Hamilton, Toronto, Ontario
 Eric King, Moncton/Toronto
 Janet MacPherson, Toronto, Ont.
 Margaret Fulton, Vancouver, B.C.
 Glenys Huws, Toronto, Ont. (Staff)
 Cheryl Kirk, Unionville, Ont.
 Margaret Quigley, Brampton, Ont.

II. Life of the Task Force

The six recommendations listed above were passed at the 28th General Council, and the Task Force began regular meetings, five in all, the first in September 1980. Our first priorities were consultation and education, especially of those affected; the preparation of resource materials; the convening of regional meetings; and the planning of a major consultation of commissioned/diaconal ministers to be held prior to recommendations being made to the 29th General Council through the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education.

Most regional groups held meetings during the spring and discussed the five topics we suggested, namely:

- name and function
- sacraments
- transfer and settlement
- training in preparation for diaconal ministry
- the national consultation in 1982

Our Task Force meeting in February included reports about regional group discussions, and from Transfer and Settlement. We began planning the Consultation for February

1982 at Cedar Glen. We also suggested material that might be produced; a brief pamphlet about diaconal ministers, a fuller booklet on its theology and history; a slide/tape presentation for our consultation and for our report to General Council, to be written and produced through Berkeley Studio. Regional groups reported their discussions during the spring. When the Task Force met again in September the question of ordination to diaconal ministry had become of prime importance. Each of the discussion topics became a special focus for a regional group in their fall meetings. Recommendations from the regional groups would be resource material for the sessional group work at the Consultation.

Through the whole process of meeting and planning for the Consultation, the Task Force members experienced a deepening of their understanding of the meaning and importance of diaconal ministry, a strengthening of the bonds among those involved in this ministry in our church, and new hope for the future. One concrete expression of this change is the following theological statement about diaconal ministry developed by the Task Force:

1. The Ministry of Diakonia

(i) The Centrality of Diakonia

It is apparent through words and actions that Christ's fundamental concern was in living on behalf of others. Many sayings clearly indicate this concern and the powerful image of Jesus washing his disciples' feet reinforces the message that loving service to the neighbour - diakonia - is the essence of abundant life. Diakonia is not a series of separate acts but rather a way of life, a total way of thinking and acting.

It is also clear that the early church realized the centrality of diakonia in its life and work. If Jesus came to serve, then the community that claims to experience and to point to Christ's continuing presence must needs be a community of service, of self-giving love. Equipping the saints for the work of diakonia is the aim of all the gifts which God bestows on the people, according to Paul in his letter to the young church at Ephesus.

(ii) The Community of Diakonia

If Diakonia is an essential element in the life of the Christian community, then all Christians have a part in this ministry. In order to be whole, the whole people of God must understand themselves as servants and act upon that understanding. The context in which their

diakonia - serving, caring, ministering -takes place in both the church itself where Christians work together to build up the body of Christ through worship, study and sharing and also the world God loves, where hurt, hate, poverty, loneliness, injustice and oppression cry out for words and deeds of healing and liberation.

(iii) The Risk of Diakonia

Those who attempt to be in the church and in the world risk rejection in both places. Those who seek to strike at the causes of hurt, poverty and loneliness will be misinterpreted and mistrusted by many. Those who don't fit into traditional patterns of ministry may be overlooked, misunderstood, avoided. Those who are sometimes called to be burden-bearers may grow weary, discouraged, resentful, cynical. Those who seek new ways of being the church and new forms of mission may feel cut-off from and unsupported by the rest of the Community. Those who go out to journey in the wilderness may not reach the Promised Land.

(iv) The Power of Diakonia

- to empower and enable others is to be enabled and empowered by others.
- to be on the edge can mean a clearer vision and more room for dancing.
- to experience brokenness can mean a greater potential for wholeness.
- to be vulnerable is to be open to God's presence and new understandings of God's will.
- to plant a seed is to be a partner in the work of Creation.
- to go out not knowing one's destination can mean joining hands with other pilgrims and with God.

(v) The Diaconate: Paradox of Diakonia

All of God's people are called to serve. Yet early in its life, the church recognized the need to embody this dimension of the life of the community in an office - the diaconate. Similarly and simultaneously, the dimensions of oversight, baptizing, preaching, teaching and presiding at worship were embodied in the office of bishop and presbyter. The church still recognizes the need for these offices. The diaconate is a specific group within the church whose stated purpose is to serve the needs of the church and the world through a ministry of education, service and pastoral care.

ordered

The purpose is two-fold. By its very existence the diaconate holds up, symbolizes and focuses the ministry of diakonia for the church. As well, it embodies the dual context of diakonia, i.e. in the church and in the world; love of God and love of neighbour; Christ present in the act of worship, Christ present in the act of caring for the other. Secondly, the diaconate endeavours to build up the body of Christ by equipping and enabling the whole people of God to own their own ministry. The diaconate is not a substitute for the diaconal ministry of the whole community. Rather, it exists to intensify and make that ministry more effective.

2. The Consultation at Cedar Glen, February 16 - 19, 1982

Sixty-five participants and observers - men and women, young and old, from all regions of the country - took part. A highlight of the first evening was a viewing of the slide/tape presentation "Waiting as Fast as We Can", a moving history of diaconal ministry from New Testament days through to its story in The United Church of Canada. Another highlight was the participation of our theme/resource person, Louise Williams from the Lutheran Deaconess Association.

Much of our work was one in sessional groups, around five issues:

- Ordination/Commissioning
- Support Systems and Education of the Church
- Sacraments
- Name (definition, description, theological base)
- Education for commissioned/diaconal ministry (basic training and Continuing Education).

These groups then brought reports and recommendations back to the total group for decision-making. These reports and recommendations as amended and approved by the Annual Meeting of the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, April 1982 are summarized below.

B. Reports:

1. Commissioning or Ordaining

There was agreement that we are called to diaconal ministry but the question of whether we should be ordained or commissioned to this ministry had been raised by the Task Force on Ministry, and Project: Ministry Reports. The Implementation and

Monitoring Group asked us to consider this question. We knew that as a small minority in the Order of Ministry that some lack of information and misunderstanding about diaconal ministry would remain regardless of the initiating act of the church.

Another concern was that ordination to diaconal ministry might make it harder to exercise our call to education, service and pastoral care, since the distinction between diaconal ministry and ministry of the word and sacraments would be less clear.

Some hoped that ordination to diaconal ministry might emphasize the complementarity and equality of diaconal ministry and ministry of the word and sacraments, and might encourage more of those entering the Order of Ministry to consider becoming diaconal ministers. We wondered whether the assumptions our church holds about ordination would be confining for us. Many believe that our church needs to do much more work on coming to a consensus on the theology of ministry and of ordination. We did only a little discussion of the meaning of ordination, mostly as it was described in the Task Force on Ministry Report.

The motion before the Consultation was that entry into diaconal ministry be by ordination. The motion was amended to include - that ordination to the diaconal ministry of education, service and pastoral care does ...

- (1) a) not mean ordination to word and sacraments as now understood in the church
- b) not necessarily involve the use of the title "reverend"
- c) not required a special service to ordain those who were commissioned or designated.
- (2) have its own distinct preparation
- (3) continue to have its own community; e.g. APCW, DOTA, DIACONIA.

The motion did not gain the required two-thirds majority and was therefore defeated. However, it appears that this will continue to be a question for discussion in the future.

Recommendation:

- WHEREAS the Task Force Report has clarified certain issues about Commissioned/Diaconal Ministry, and
- WHEREAS the Commissioned/Diaconal Ministry have chosen a name that focuses on their function rather than on the rite by which they are admitted to the order of ministry, and
- WHEREAS the consultation discussion about the possibility of being ordained to the Diaconal Ministry raised many questions about the meaning of ordination and the term "ordained ministry",

It was moved, THAT the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education conduct a study to clarify our understanding and use of the term ordination consistent with 1980 General Council as soon as possible and report no later than 1985. CARRIED

2. NameBackground:

The Consultation on Commissioned Ministry in March 1980 recommended that entrance to this category of the Order of Ministry be by commissioning to the diaconal ministry of education, service, and pastoral care. this was affirmed by the 28th General Council. No decision was made in regard to the name used to refer to those in this category of the Order of Ministry. In the interim, we have used the term commissioned/diaconal minister, while we continued discussion and consultation of this issue.

Content:

At our recent Consultation, discussion centred around whether we should take our name from the action of the church to admit us (commissioned ministers) or from a word descriptive of our function (diaconal ministers). The recommendation from the sessional group was that we be called diaconal ministers. Initially, preference was almost evenly divided between the two names. Further discussion within a spirit of compromise led us to approve the following motion.

Recommendation:

(i) That the name diaconal minister be used in the Manual and other official United Church documents to refer to those members of the Order of Ministry who are commissioned to a diaconal ministry of education, service, and pastoral care, and who have been previously known as Commissioned Ministers, Certified Churchmen, and Deaconesses. CARRIED

(ii) That the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education recommend to the 29th General Council that all sections of the Manual referring to Diaconal Ministers be integrated under the category of Order of Ministry, noting distinctions between Ordained and Diaconal Ministers only when necessary. CARRIED

3. SacramentsPREAMBLE:

i) Sacraments are a means of grace, essential to the life and nature of the church. Thus, we recognize that care in granting permission to preside over the sacraments comes from the church's respect for the sacraments. At the same time the policy of the church, as it is laid out in the Manual (177 (c)) is currently open to a wide range of interpretations from conference to conference and it would seem an appropriate development if policies and practices moved closer to a church-wide standard in this important area.

ii) On some occasions it is appropriate for Diaconal Ministers to administer the sacraments. The reason for this stems from the responsibilities that the Diaconal Minister has in her/his recognized ministry. These responsibilities within a congregation frequently include educational functions related to sacramental acts such as preparation for baptism and confirmation. Or Diaconal Ministers may be involved in pastoral care functions in a congregation or in institutional chaplaincies. Diaconal Ministers frequently take part in the conducting of worship, including the preaching of the word, but full participation in leadership is not permitted when the administration of the sacraments is involved.

iii) We assume that the present process involved in requesting permission to administer the

sacraments would remain in place, i.e. that the pastoral charge make application through the presbytery or its executive and that a license may be granted by conference or its executive.

Recommendations

1) The Division of Ministry Personnel and Education in support of this understanding, and in anticipation of its acceptance, approve the following guideline for circulation to conferences for their use with the request that they also be made known to the presbyteries within their bounds. It should be noted that this guideline is the minimum envisaged for church-wide practice and may be expanded by conferences to meet their particular needs.

Guideline (for interpretation of Manual, section 177 [c])

That upon request of the presbytery concerned, conference may grant permission to a Diaconal Minister to administer the sacraments if -

- (a) s/he is a part of a team where the administration of the sacraments is seen as part of the shared function of the team.
- (b) the Diaconal Minister is the only order of ministry person on the Charge.
- (c) the Diaconal Minister is involved in pastoral-care functions such as chaplaincy in hospitals or other institutions or visitation to shut-ins.

D. p. 477.

2) The Division further affirms that permission to administer the sacraments should be granted to a Diaconal Minister for the period of time that the individual functions in this recognized ministry, and there be no yearly review. A new application would have to be made, however, when the individual commenced another pastoral relationship or appointment. (This proposed change would appear to be in line with the decision made at the 28th General Council regarding an ongoing pastoral relationship for Diaconal Ministers.)

part of main motion

4. Support Systems:

The Consultation made various recommendations to

strengthen the Ministry Personnel and Education support system for commissioned/diaconal ministers. These included the participation of commissioned/diaconal ministers on committees such as Conference Interview Boards and Settlement Committees, the development of both written and audio-visual resources about the history and present situation of diaconal ministry, and the creation of a diaconal association for The United Church of Canada.

5. Education:

The education Sessional Committee submitted a provisional report intended for further study and negotiation which outlined a variety of routes to diaconal ministry but did not alter the professional preparation time now required, i.e. two years of full-time study in order to qualify either for the diploma of the Centre for Christian Studies OR an M.R.E. degree from a theological institution.

There was, however, a minority opinion in the Sessional Committee that a prerequisite to the diploma course be one year of biblical and theological studies at an accredited theological college.

C. Recommendations on Commissioned/Diaconal Ministry to the 29th General Council:

1) Name:

i) That the name Diaconal Minister be used in the Manual and other official United Church documents to refer to those members of the Order of Ministry who are commissioned to a diaconal ministry of education, service and pastoral care, and who have previously been known as Commissioned Ministers, Certified Churchmen, and Deaconesses.

ii) That the 29th General Council request the Manual Committee to integrate all sections of the Manual referring to Diaconal Ministers, ~~under the~~ category of Order of Ministry, ~~noting distinctions~~ between Ordained and Diaconal Ministers ^{should be made} only when necessary.

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2) Sacraments:

That, consistent with the spirit of the Report's recommendations regarding the sacraments, there be created a new section of the Manual (perhaps after 261) to authorize conferences in this regard. Currently the provision is in section 177 where commissioned/diaconal persons are grouped with those who are not members of the Order of Ministry.) Section 177 would need amending accordingly.

Proposed wording:

a. b. c.

d. "That upon application by a Presbytery or its Executive, a license to administer the sacraments for the duration of the pastoral relationship or appointment may be granted to a Diaconal Minister when the position description and the needs of the context are deemed to warrant it."

