

**RHUC AGM  
26th February 2017**

**General Council Remits Process.**

**Context:-**

The General Council #42 met in Cornerbrook in August 2015 and approved a number of changes within the United Church. In order to bring these changes into effect, Pastoral Charges and Presbyteries are required to vote on a series of Remits.

**8 Remits are required to be approved by a majority of governing bodies.** Non-response is assumed to be a negative vote.

In broad strokes, RHUC Council, as the governing body, is responsible for making the decisions on the Remits and agreed that we would start the process of approval in September 2016 and each month one Remit has been reviewed and discussed. Council will vote on the Remits at a meeting following the AGM.

The purpose of this paper is to share with the congregation information on the Remits and the process. Hard copies of material provided here will be available at the AGM.

**We will be engaging the congregation in Table Groups at the AGM to provide the opportunity to answer questions and receive input.**

**Remits:-**

The following is a list of Remits that will require approval:-

**CATEGORY THREE...voted on by Pastoral Charges & Presbyteries**

Remit 1 – Three Council Model...vote by 30th June 2017

Remit 2 – Elimination of Transfer and Settlement...vote by 30th June 2017

Remit 3 – Office of Vocation...vote by 30th June 2017

Remit 4 – Funding a New Model...vote by 30th June 2017

The following Remits will not be discussed at the AGM

Remit 6 – One Order of Ministry...vote by **28 February 2018**

**CATEGORY TWO...voted on by Presbyteries only**

Remit 5 – Ministry Partners within Mutual Recognition Agreements...vote by 17 February 2017

Remit 7 – Candidacy Pathway...vote by 17 February 2017

Remit 8 – A Step Towards a New Model of Membership...vote by 17 February 2017

**Appendix A (attached) provides the description and wording for each Remit Questions that will be discussed at the AGM.**

**It is recommended that you refer to the Remits web-site of the General Council if you would like further detail on any of the remits...[www.GC42remits.ca](http://www.GC42remits.ca)**

**Appendix A...Description of Remits to be voted on by Council by 30th June 2017**

## **Remit 1 – Three Council Model**

### **Background:**

The 42nd General Council 2015 approved, subject to remit, a new three-council model for the United Church. This is 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.

### **Outcome**

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**

- 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.

#### **2. 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.

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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.

### 3. 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.

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

#### The Question:

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?

## Remit 2 – Elimination of Transfer and Settlement

### Background:

The 42nd General Council 2015 approved, subject to remit, the elimination of the transfer and settlement processes for members of the order of ministry within the United Church, including the elimination of the General Council Transfer Committee.

**“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.

### **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.

#### **The Question:**

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?

## **Remit 3 – Office of Vocation**

### **Background:**

The 42nd General Council 2015 approved, subject to remit, the establishment of a denominational office of vocation in the structure of the United Church with the following responsibilities and structure:

#### **Office of Vocation - Responsibilities (extract):**

- establishing standards for training and accreditation of ministry personnel according to denominational policies;
- establishing expectations and standards for continuing education, formation, and professional development of ministry personnel according to denominational policies;
- determining the person's fitness and readiness for accreditation to ministry;
- disciplining of ministry personnel including formal hearings and complaints;
- maintaining a list of trained conflict resolution facilitators;
- maintaining a list of recognized Interim Ministers; and
- establishing and implementing standards for admitting ministers from other denominations and re-admitting ministers.

#### **Office of Vocation - Structure:**

The office of vocation would be overseen by an elected body honouring and living into intercultural mission and ministry, as described in Vision for Becoming an Intercultural Church; consisting of a balance of ministers whether ordained, diaconal, or designated lay ministers and lay people, with a variety of active experience.

#### **The Question:**

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?

## Remit 4 – Funding a New Model

### Background:

The 42nd General Council 2015 approved, subject to remit, a new funding model for the denomination with the budgeting process to be guided by the principles outlined below.

As an immediate step, the 42nd General Council 2015 approved the practice of spending only the revenue received, and make all staffing decisions based on this basis.

### Mission & Service

The work of The United Church of Canada across the country and around the world is currently funded by Mission & Service. 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.

### Single Assessment

This remit proposes a single assessment model to fund the General Council 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.

### 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**, adjusted for outward giving, bequests, and asset sales. (For example, Mission & Service giving and refugee sponsorship donations would be subtracted from the assessment base.)

### The Question:

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 and 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.