

Resources for Remit 6 – One Order of Ministry

The Comprehensive Study Guide

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Remit 6 (One Order of Ministry) questions

If this remit is approved and there is One Order of Ministry, would all three existing categories of ministry use the title “Reverend”?

Yes. Currently recognized designated lay ministers would be grandparented into the order of ministry, and all members would be entitled to use the title “Reverend.” Going forward, there would be no recognizable designated lay minister (DLM) group. All new entrants to the order would be ordained.

Can relevant experience count as equivalent educational requirements?

This is now done to a limited extent in the designated lay ministry program. However, a proposal to the last General Council to introduce a competency model that would assess educational equivalencies was sent back to the General Secretary for further work. A revised proposal could go to the next General Council in 2018. How are ministers with greater responsibility or accountability (such as supervisory responsibilities) compensated? General Council has established minimum salary levels based on local cost of living (the six cost-of-living regions that have been identified) and seniority (six steps, A–F, topping out at 14 years). A handbook on compensation encourages congregations to consider other factors, such as specialized education required for their position, supervisory responsibilities, etc., as well as other cost of living considerations pertinent to their particular location, in arriving at an appropriate salary over the minimum.

If the lay leader must work with oversight from ordained ministry, what is the relationship between the ordained ministry and the faith community? Are there financial implications for the faith community?

Designated lay ministers are, technically, lay members of local congregations who have been recognized after a series of study to provide ministry leadership. In practice, however, they are considered ministry personnel, and most serve in unsupervised solo ministry positions. One Order of Ministry proposes folding DLMs into the order of ministry and recognizing them as ordained. There are also licenced lay worship leaders, who undertake limited training focused on worship leadership. In regions with a shortage of ministers, they often assume more responsibilities. A pastoral charge supervisor, however, is appointed by the presbytery (or Conference) to provide oversight of the local ministry. Minimum payment guidelines are provided by the General Council.

What happens if a community of faith wishes to have someone who specializes in a specific ministry, such as youth ministry or social justice outreach?

Under One Order of Ministry, these people would be recognized as lay leaders, or staff associates. It would be expected that this ministry would be specific to that location, focused on a particular aspect of the local ministry, and supervised by ministry personnel in that congregation. Sometimes an ordained or commissioned minister would be called to a specialized ministry position, in which case they would still be ordered with all of the privileges and responsibilities associated with ordered ministry.

Is it true that a person who is ordained but took the shorter course is not eligible to serve as a chaplain in the Canadian Armed Forces?

Yes. The Canadian Armed Forces requires its chaplains to have a Master of Divinity.

Would the One Order of Ministry remit affect our ecumenical relationships?

No. The United Church–Anglican Church dialogue, in fact, has affirmed the proposed direction. What is problematic in some of our ecumenical relationships is the idea of people who have not been ordained having sacramental privileges. The United Church of Christ in the United States, following our lead, is proposing to move to a “single authorization” called ordination, bringing together their three streams. A Master of Divinity, while common, is not a single standard among our partners for ordination.

How does One Order affect the discernment process?

Some people have many great gifts but may not have the desire or the skills needed to go into ordained ministry. The One Order proposal does not affect the discernment process. That is a separate phase of the candidacy process and of Remit 7: Candidacy Pathway, if that remit passes. (Sue’s note: Remit 7 did pass) Both involve a period of discernment of both call and call to a particular expression of vocational ministry. Under One Order, discerning the course of preparation one chooses—Centre for Christian Studies, Master of Divinity Diploma—will contribute to the candidate’s formation and orientation to an ethos of ministry practice.

If remit 6 passes and all designated lay ministers become ordained ministers, will they receive the same salary and benefits?

The proposal for One Order of Ministry contemplates all those who are currently recognized designated lay ministers (DLMs) in appointments (most are in appointments to solo pastoral ministry now) being folded into the order of ministry with commissioned and ordained ministers, effectively discontinuing the DLM category. If this remit passes, they would be paid under the same salary schedule as ordered ministers (currently the differential is about 2.5 percent). All other expense reimbursements and allowances are already the same. There would still be lay ministries in some congregations, focused on one aspect of the congregation’s ministry and practised under the supervision of an ordered minister.

After watching the One Order of Ministry webinar, it doesn't sound like the members of the current streams of ministry (diaconal, lay leader, and ordained) are in favour of this proposal, or understand it. Some ministry personnel are concerned that the increased educational requirements for designated lay ministers will make it more difficult for prospective applicants.

The One Order proposal acknowledges this but concludes that additional educational competency is warranted to meet an equivalency. Some diaconal ministers are concerned that One Order will diminish the distinctiveness of their vocational call. The proposal also acknowledges this. However, since diaconal ministry is mostly exercised in solo pastoral positions, it was considered reasonable to have a common designation (ordained). The formation of the diaconal study will ensure that their distinctive approach to the practice of their vocation will remain.

The longer remit 6 study guide talks about how the lower salary of designated lay ministers “can at times offer an incentive to financially struggling congregations to choose the less-expensive option.” It is then suggested that “a minimum salary scale for all ministers offers greater equity,” benefiting churches with low funds. But how do we ensure that the opposite doesn't happen and that all ministry personnel will be too expensive for some churches to hire?

One Order does not provide a means to assist congregations with low funds to secure a minister. What it does do is eliminate the modest (roughly \$80/month) differential between designated lay ministry and ordered ministry salaries in recognition that most designated lay ministers serve in solo pastoral ministry, unlike the vision that originally defined lay ministry as “localized and limited.”

What are the proposed expanded educational requirements for the current designated lay ministers stream if remit 6 passes?

The full development of a Diploma in Pastoral Theology would follow only if remit 6 is approved. However, more information about its general proposed design can be found in the One Order proposal, which is in the GC42 Record of Proceedings 2015 (TICIF 2, pp. 256–266). There it suggests that it might be lodged in an existing theological institution and expanded into a five-year model; require one

year of university studies in an established undergraduate program; and require eight, rather than three, academic courses.