



The United Church of Canada General Council

GC44 GCE01 Financial Support for Ministry Personnel Suspended While in a Directed Program

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1. What is the issue?

The policy regarding financial support for ministry personnel (*The Manual* J.6.7) lacks flexibility and discretion of application. It currently reads:

J.6.7 Financial Support

This section (J.6.7) applies if

1. the appropriate body within the Office of Vocation requires the ministry personnel to take a directed program, and the ministry personnel is not serving in a community of faith while taking the directed program; or

2. the appropriate body within the Office of Vocation has suspended the ministry personnel for a specified period of time.

The ministry personnel is entitled to financial support from the Office of Vocation for the time period set by the appropriate body within the Office of Vocation. The financial support must be equal to the minimum salary and allowances set by the General Council. It will be discontinued if the ministry personnel does not take or complete any directed program as required.

The Office of Vocation since its inception in January 2019 is building a body of experience around the various situations where a ministry personnel is suspended and engaged in a directed program. A proportion of those ministry personnel are retired and may or may not be re-engaged pensioners. It is the wisdom of the Board of Vocation having consulted with both the Response and Remedial Committees within the Office of Vocation that flexibility around financial support is appropriate.

The Board of Vocation at its meeting on June 8 2021 amended the *Procedures for Addressing Concerns about Ministry Personnel* (Appendix A Office of Vocation: Structure and Responsibilities) including the following:

27. For a period of up to six (6) months, while a ministry personnel is on administrative leave/suspension and actively engaged and fully compliant with the processes of the Office of Vocation, the Office of Vocation will provide the ministry personnel with Personnel Emergency Funding equal to the ministry personnel's standard remuneration (less travel allowance) from their community of faith, **provided the ministry personnel is otherwise without remuneration from the Church, including pension income.** Ministry personnel will not accrue vacation or sabbatical leave credits while in receipt of Personnel Emergency Funding. In exceptional circumstances, the Office of Vocation, may, in its sole discretion, extend the Personnel Emergency Funding beyond six (6) months.

2. Why is this issue important?

The Personnel Emergency Fund within the Financial Assistance Committee is the source of salary continuance for ministry personnel who are on administrative leave or suspended from performing the functions of ministry. Since the denominational restructuring there is no income stream for this fund. Good stewardship suggests that this fund be invested in those ministry personnel who have future service ahead of them. Creating flexibility in the policy for Financial Support (*The Manual* J.6.7) would give discretion for situations where there is not the possibility of future service. As a matter of respect and dignity, on a few occasions a Memorandum of Agreement between the ministry personnel and the Remedial Committee includes full retirement from the functions of ministry rather than disciplinary processes.

3. How does this proposal help us to live into our church's commitments on equity?

In 2021, three bodies within the Office of Vocation – Response Committee, Remedial Committee and the Board of Vocation itself, considered under what circumstances financial support ought to be provided. Each of these bodies reflects the diversities outlined in our commitments. With respect to the Indigenous Church, the Grandmothers' Circle (the advisory committee to the 'Indigenous Office of Vocation within the Office of Vocation') would have the discretion about how the policy applies in the case of a ministry personnel serving an Indigenous Community. The proposed change provides discretion to the appropriate body relating to provision of salary continuance to ministers in the remedial process, thereby allowing for the fair and equitable use of the General Council resources.

4. How might the General Council respond to the issue?

The General Secretary recommends

That the 44th General Council approve a change to the policy for financial support for ministry personnel who have been suspended by the appropriate body within the Office of Vocation or who are engaged in a remedial program, with the change set out below in the following proposed wording for *The Manual* 2023.

J.6.7 Financial Support

This section (J.6.7) applies where the appropriate body within the Office of Vocation has:

- a. suspended a ministry personnel; or**
- b. required ministry personnel, who is not actively serving in a community of faith and who is otherwise without remuneration from the United Church, to engage in a directed program for the improvement of their pastoral skills**

The appropriate body within the Office of Vocation may provide Personnel Emergency Funding in an amount not less than the minimum salary set by the General Council, for a period of time and subject to terms as set by the appropriate body.

5. For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council.

A review of the *Procedures for Addressing Concerns about Ministry Personnel* (Appendix A of *Office of Vocation Structure and Responsibilities for Ministry Personnel*) was completed Spring 2021 and changes adopted by motion of the Board of Vocation June 8, 2021. This is the only change in the procedures that requires action of the General Council. At this time the Board of Vocation is accountable to the General Council through the General Council Executive.

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