



# The United Church of Canada General Council

## GC44 GCE08 Ministry Leadership to Meet the Needs of the Church in the 2020s, Part B (DLM)

Document Date  
October 21, 2023

[GC44 GCE08 Introduction to DLM Proposal.mp4](#)

### 1. What is the issue?

We believe God/Jesus Christ/the Holy Spirit is calling the church to recognize the lifelong call to ministry and faithful service in response to that call of many current Designated Lay Ministers.

While their practice of ministry is indistinguishable from that of ordered ministers in the eyes of many church members, DLMs have been frustrated, hurt and disappointed at continuing to be limited to appointments and not eligible for call, paid at lower minimum salary schedule than ordered ministers, and retaining no status as ministry personnel between appointments and in retirement in many regional councils.

It has been suggested that these functional distinctions simply be eliminated for DLMs in current appointments. The conclusion of the “Ministry Leadership in the 2020s” study was that by simply eliminating the distinctions in both practice and function, Designated Lay Ministry and Ordered Ministry would become identical. Therefore, why continue the distinction for DLMs who are effectively functioning as ordered ministers, not as a category of time-limited and localized lay leadership as was conceived for designated lay ministry in 2000?

Please read the background information (appendix in this proposal) as this provides more detail to support the proposals here.

## **2. Why is this issue important?**

This issue is important because the church has drawn readily on the ministry and service of Designated Lay Ministers since the inception of the stream, effectively treating them as ordered ministers, without the same recognition or rights. In addition, the ongoing lengthy discussion (for the last 15 years or more) about the status of designated lay ministry has left many DLMs feeling undervalued by the wider church.

## **3. How might the General Council respond to the issue?**

*(We suggest that the General Council deal with each proposal seriatim.)*

**The General Council Executive recommends that the General Council take the following actions.**

1. For Current Designated Lay Ministers  
Honour and value designated lay ministers’ many years of faithful service to the church; recognize the lifelong vocational call of many current designated lay ministers; and direct the General Secretary to develop an appropriate acknowledgement for the 45th General Council (2025).
2. Possible Pathway to Testamur for Current DLMs and Current DLM Candidates
  - a. direct the General Secretary, in cooperation with the Credentialing Committee of the Board of Vocation, to develop and implement a process that would allow current designated lay ministers who have discerned and

practiced a lifelong vocational call to ministry to demonstrate that they meet the requirements for Testamur and readiness for commissioning or ordination, and

- b. grant authority to the Board of Vocation, on the recommendation of its Credentialing Committee, to grant Testamur to those DLMs. This process would also be open to current DLM candidates who have discerned a lifelong vocational call to ministry.

3. For Lay Ministry Going Forward,

- a. request that regional councils permit currently recognized DLMs and those who are current students who do not choose to request ordering, to move to different communities of faith;
- b. acknowledge that the need identified in 2000 for localized lay leadership still exists (in the “Ministry Together” Report on Ministry for the 21st Century received by the 37th General Council, 2000); and
- c. refer the original intent of designated lay ministry (in the “Ministry Together” Report on Ministry for the 21st Century received by the 37th General Council, 2000) to the on-going conversations about trained lay leadership in collaborative ministry settings.

4. For Future Candidates without undergraduate degrees

- a. recognize that most of our theological schools do not require an undergraduate degree for entry into degree and diploma programs leading to ordination or commissioning;
- b. affirm the theological schools’ development of a variety of programs of study for theological education and formation leading to commissioning or ordination; and
- c. encourage the Board of Vocation and candidacy boards to direct people without an undergraduate degree, who are discerning a call to life-long church-wide ministry, towards ordered ministry preparation and formation.

5. For People who Retired as Designated Lay Ministers

- a. strongly encourage regional councils to review their practices under C.2.1 b) and I.2.4.1 b) of The Manual to consider, in light of the leadership roles and acquired experience of many lay members who retired as designated lay minister, granting both licence to administer the sacraments, and membership in the regional council to lay members who retired as designated lay ministers and are resident within the regional council; and

- b. encourage regional councils to review their policies on voluntary associate ministry and eligibility to practice other functions of ministry as may apply to lay members who have retired as designated lay ministers.

## **4. What will be the impact?**

This will involve staff and elected member time in: a) further developing the assessment pathway and process leading to testamur and thus to ordination or commissioning

This aligns with S2.02.002 “Resolve: Address the long-term role and trajectory of Designated Lay Ministry, developing a transition plan towards implementing the decision.”

## **5. How does this proposal help us live into the commitments on equity?**

This proposal helps us live into equity in terms of honouring and valuing the ministry provided faithfully by Designated Lay Ministers over the years, recognizing their lifelong call to ministry in the church, which has been no different than ordered ministers.

## **6. For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council Executive:**

We strongly encourage reading the background document “DLM Background Information” (appendix) as this provides more detail to support the proposals here.

**If this proposal is in response to assigned work - either from General Council or a previous GCE meeting, please list proposal / motion numbers.**

- GC43EX: GS 128 Ministry Leadership to Meet the Needs of the Church in the 2020s
- General Council 44: WF16 GCE06 Ministry Leadership to Meet the Needs of the Church in the 2020s
- General Council 44: GS16 Re: GCE06 Ministry Leadership to Meet the Needs of the Church in the 2020s, Part B

- GC44EX: GCE 2022-11-18-009 GS15 Ministry Leadership to Meet the Needs of the Church in the 20202 (Part B)
- GC44EX: GCE 2023-09-22-053 GS57 Ministry Leadership to Meet the Needs of the Church in the 20202 (Part B)

Document Type: [Proposal](#)

General Council: [GC44](#)

Originating Body: [General Secretary](#)