



**The United Church
of Canada
General Council**

GCE44 BOV 01 Additional Mandatory Training for Ministry Personnel for March 2025

True Document Date: March 7, 2025

1. What is the issue?

The Standards for Accreditation Committee brought a proposal to the Board of Vocation to offer a way forward after the 43rd General Council (2018) passed proposals regarding additional mandatory training for ministry personnel on topics like mental health, anti-homophobia/antitransphobia, and the Kairos Blanket Exercise.

2. Why is this issue important?

Since 2019, the Standards for Accreditation committee has had a lot of conversation about the continuing education of ministry personnel, including what to do about the decisions of the 43rd General Council on the topic on additional mandatory training of ministry personnel. One part of the conversation has been on the question of the denomination's expectations on ministry personnel once the training is complete, such as more effective leaders, safer communities, sharing learning with community of faith or another ministry site. If the latter, then wouldn't our training be offered to both ministry leaders and congregants? Is mandatory training of ministry personnel effective in shifting culture? How do we assess impact? Some of these questions were the basis for a consultation with the GCE in 2021. The consultation asked further questions. What are our assumptions and expectations about mandatory training for ministry personnel? Is the training about knowledge or practice or

both? Does it meet our call/hopes for the church? The listening team heard that there's an assumption that ministry personnel are doing learning that will speak to them but then will be shared within the church. This is not necessarily a reality. It was also shared that there's a sense that not every problem can be solved with mandatory training. It is one solution. Training is not the only pedagogical way to accomplish learning outcomes. Have I ticked a box or have I developed the skill/behaviour? Finally, GCE members noted that there is not a lot of clarity about what the purpose is when there is a proposal. Another discussion question focused on if there are other ways the denomination could address the needs and hopes for the church and leadership raised in the various proposals for mandatory training. In this area, the listening team heard wondering about whether we need to identify competencies for communities of faith, similar to the competencies for ministry personnel. It was also shared that if the goal is to change the church, then that requires a different methodology than a workshop model for ministry personnel.

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

The Board of Vocation proposes that the General Council Executive respond to this issue by:

- **a) taking no further action on these decisions of the 43rd General Council (Mental Health Training 2018-09-29-221, ANW 7, and MAR 1; anti-homophobia/anti-transphobia GC43 2018-24, M&O 04; and the Kairos Blanket Exercise (GC43 2018-29) for additional mandatory training; and**
- **b) affirming the work of the Standards for Accreditation Committee in: i. developing learning outcomes for new learning opportunities focused on affirming and anti-transphobia education for ministry personnel; and ii. developing an interpretive bulletin on the continuing education standard to highlight the importance of continuing education on the topics of Indigenous justice and reconciliation, and mental health and how learning in these areas would fit into the framework of the continuing education standard.**

The learning opportunities would not be mandatory for all ministry personnel to complete. The affirming course is being developed in partnership with Affirm United.

The antitransphobia course is being developed in relation to a case before the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal.

The Kairos blanket exercise is undergoing revisions and is not currently available widely across the church.

4. For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council Executive:

The Board of Vocation passed a proposal at its November 2024 meeting, to encourage the General Council Executive to take no further action on the proposals, given the work the Standards for Accreditation Committee is doing.

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

a) KAIROS BLANKET EXERCISE Motion:

GC43 2018-29

That the 43rd General Council affirm proposal TOR 02 TRC Call 60/Blanket Exercise, including the recommendations from Toronto Conference, and direct it to the General Secretary for implementation.

The proposal asked that:

The General Council establish a policy that all current and future ministry personnel and church leaders undergo immersive education on the history and legacy of Canadian colonialism using a tool such as the KAIROS Blanket Exercise.

b) MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING Motion:

2018-09-29-221

Approve the way forward proposed by the Governance and Agenda Committee for the following non-prioritized proposals - ANW 7 – Mental Health and the Mission of the Church; MAR 1 – Mental Health Training

That the Executive of the General Council acknowledge the importance of mental health

issues and refer proposals ANW 7 – Mental Health and Mission of the Church and MAR 01 – Mental Health Training to the General Secretary with the request that she identify and implement actions to enable the United Church to respond to mental health needs.

Included in the proposal from Maritime Conference was a request:

That as a means of strengthening their ability to work with people with mental health problems, all paid accountable clergy be required to receive training on mental health. In addition, mental health training to become a module in the curriculum for candidates for Ordered Ministry.

The Mental Health Working Group report to the General Secretary in January 2021 proposed that:

- i) Ministry personnel be equipped with the capacity and competencies needed to keep a person safe until a mental health professional arrives and that the Standards for Accreditation of Ministry Personnel Committee create learning outcomes for ministry personnel around mental health that either is similar to or draws upon existing training programs (such as the Mental Health First Aid program).
- ii) Ministry personnel be provided with sufficient resources to direct a person to qualified mental health professionals, including region councils creating and maintaining lists of ministry personnel who are dually credentialed as mental health practitioners (eg. psychiatrists, psychologists, psychotherapists, counsellors, social workers, etc.), and to make those lists available to ministry personnel. These lists need to be provincially appropriate, informed by regulatory realities, and easily accessible on the denominational website. There is also a need for cultural sensitivity around how stigma functions in different communities.

c) ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA TRAINING Motion:

GC43 2018-24

That the 43rd General Council affirm proposal M&O 04 Mandatory Training for All United Church of Canada Ministry Personnel and directs the General Secretary to implement its recommendations.

This proposal requested the following:

As a further step along the pathway of making the United Church a safe and welcoming community of faith, we propose that the General Council develops a curriculum, and implements mandatory training that will explore issues surrounding homophobia, and sensitize its ministry personnel to how homophobia affects the life and work of the church, in

order to stop homophobia from being promulgated.

The parameters of Mandated Training for all clergy/paid accountable ministers, should be extended to training workshops dedicated to the issues, concerns and consequences of homophobia towards our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer-questioning, twospirited (LGBTQ2) brothers and sisters, and to their families of origin and families created, in an effort to help The United Church of Canada continue to live out its principles and engagement with justice and to facilitate an end to homophobia being promulgated in the church.

As the church seeks to formally apologize to the LGBTQ2 community, the implementation of a policy dedicated to combatting further harm on the part of the church is a step in honoring its commitment.

The time frame to develop and implement the training is not to exceed a two-year period.

We ask that the General Council support this proposal to help ensure we honour the commitment to ensure the well-being of all who form the Body of Christ and work to continue to break down barriers and build right relationships and just institutions.

Document Type: [Proposal](#)

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