



**The United Church
of Canada
General Council**

GC45 TICIF01 Vocations of the Whole People of God: Ministries for Our Time for Summer 2025

True Document Date: June 28, 2025

Origin: Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee

1. What is the issue?

In 2021, the Ministry Streams task group submitted a report and proposal, “Ministry Leadership to Meet the Needs of the Church in the 2020s”, which acknowledged and commissioned the church to address the reality that United Church of Canada communities of faith are on the whole smaller, older, and less able to employ paid ministry personnel, making ordered ministry a less viable profession and lay leadership burdened by professional standards of accountability.

The 44th General Council received the report in 2022 and mandated a revision of the 2012 Statement on Ministry, particularly to include a focus on lay ministries and the vocational life of all believers. A small task group was established with members from the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee and the Board of Vocation, with staff support from the General Council Office.

The joint task group reviewed the 2012 Statement on Ministry, as well as previous related statements. They also reviewed the “Ministry Leadership” report and feedback from designated lay, diaconal, and ordained ministers as well as lay people from communities of faith without stipendiary/ paid accountable ministers. In reviewing this data and previous reports, the task group determined that a revision of the 2012 Statement on Ministry was not sufficient. The 2012 Statement on Ministry did not reflect adequately or strongly enough the vocations of lay people, who offer ministry in the church and in the world, nor did it reflect

understandings of the three streams of paid, accountable ministry in the United Church. The joint task group therefore has developed a new statement on the baptismal vocations, and therefore ministries, of the whole people of God, for consideration by the General Council.

At every moment, our individual occupations, professions and vocations, and the vocation of the church itself, are gathered into a creative and interconnected gesture of divine love for the world. A statement on the ministries of the whole people of God is a statement about the how the church participates in the Spirit-led work of love in our time, including through inspiring discipleship in community.

This statement

- a. defines ministry broadly as participation in God's creative purposes
- b. centres on the call of the baptized into ministries of love and service
- c. reframes the focus of ministry from the individual to the communal
- d. considers the shape of communities which support these ministries
- e. names implications for ordered and lay leadership of such communities
- f. makes recommendations for policy and practice

2. Why is it important?

By virtue of baptism, Christians are called into a life of discipleship for the sake of God's creation. This is the foundational vocation of all Christians; how this vocation is expressed and how the church recognizes it varies over time and from community to community.

Re-locating the locus of faith and vocation from solely residing in individuals to a communal orientation is a step in living into intercultural and decolonizing commitments. The role of community in calling forth and supporting the gifts of persons is one that is foundational to Indigenous worldviews and practices; this also resonates in other cultures, all of whom are present within the United Church. This re-focusing also reconnects us to Pauline metaphors of the church as the body of Christ, where all parts, all members, are equally important and necessary to the body. Our conciliar model of governance continues to reflect this theological and scriptural foundation. The work of decolonization in church and society is inseparable from a metanoia (radical re-orientation) – a transformation in self-understanding.

Christianity offers a path from individualism to communion through the affirmation of our being made in the likeness of a community: a divine Trinity.

3. What is the recommendation?

The Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee recommends that the General Council:

- a. approve the statement, “Vocations of the Whole People of God: Ministries for Our Time”, including the recommendations made in section F, immediately below:

Section F:

A move to embrace more fully a model of ministry inspired by divine interdependence will require attention to certain principles and practices related to models of ministry.

Regarding the ministry of the whole people of God, the General Council affirms the priorities of communities of faith to:

1. focus attention on nurturing and supporting people’s lives of faith as the primary sphere of the church’s ministry in the world,
2. bring the faith expressed in secular professions and vocations from the margins to the centre of the community of faith

Regarding models of ministry inspired by divine inter-dependence, the General Council directs the General Secretary to give priority to:

1. Working from an image of the desired whole, not from a collection of the surviving parts
2. Calling and equipping people for cooperative models of ministry
3. Freeing governance at the local level for maximizing cooperation, teaming, novelty and creativity
4. Focussing governance at the regional level on resourcing, support and oversight
5. Focussing governance at the denominational level on enabling and safe-guarding policy development, standards and accountability
6. Developing an accessible forum for exchange of experience and resource sharing

Regarding lay and ordered ministry within the church, the General Council directs the General Secretary to:

1. Clarify means of support for all roles in ministry (see appendix of report)
2. Build mentorship into all roles in ministry
3. Clarify lines of accountability for all roles in ministry (see appendix)

4. Ensure means of teaming for all roles in ministry
5. Ensure that the pathway to ordered ministry takes into account flexibility to maintain second profession/occupation.

4. What will be the impact?

The recommendations above, made in the statement “Vocations of the Whole People of God: Ministries for Our Time”, align with the strategic plan in its commitment to strengthen and grow new and existing ministries, including collaborative ministries of lay and ordered people serving ministries together.

- S2.01.001 Whole People of God Training
- S2.02.003 Reimagine Theological Education
- S2.02.004 Cooperative Ministry and Mentorship Pilot
- S5.01.004 Moderator's Initiative: Church Workshops
- S5.01.006 Supporting Renewal in Rural Ministries
- S5.02.002 Regional/Identity Communities
- S5.03.001 Engage with Call and Vision
- S1.05.003 Radical Accompaniment: People to People
- S1.06.003 Moderator's Initiative: Events and Book Club

Foundational to this commitment are renewed efforts in discipleship formation for the sake of deepening faith and growing capacity for ministries within and beyond current models. Enhancing an understanding of ministry that is collective will require alignment of formation and governance for collaboration of lay and ordered ministers in service to their communities.

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

The commitment to nurture the capacity of *communities* rather than *individuals* to live out their ministries, turns the church's attention to any obstacles or barriers to full participation in shared leadership.

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

The statement, “Vocations of the Whole People of God: Ministries for Our Time” was approved by the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee and by the Board of Vocation at their meetings in February 2025.

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

- General Council 44 WF16 GCE06 Ministry Leadership to Meet the Needs of the Church in the 2020s
- GCE 2021-11-19-180: GS 128 Ministry Leadership to Meet the Needs of the Church in the 2020s

For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council:

Please select the appropriate option and provide the key discussion points for items being forwarded to the General Council:

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree without forwarding to the General Council
- ☐ Disagree and forwarding to the General Council
- ☐ Take no action at this time

If you have questions regarding this proposal, please send them to: GCinfo@united-church.ca

Document Type: [Proposal](#)

General Council: [GC45](#)

Originating Body: [Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee](#)