



Category 2 Remit

Study Guide for Remit 8: A Step Towards a New Model of Membership

Approved by the 42nd General Council 2015

Between February 2016 and 17 February 2017, each presbytery will formally be asked in a category 2 remit to approve a change in membership for The United Church of Canada.

This is the question to be voted on:

Does the presbytery agree that:

- (a) the full members of a local ministry unit may consent to allow adherents to vote on all matters that come before meetings of the local ministry unit; and that
- (b) the Basis of Union be amended to reflect this policy?

Summary

This remit proposes that full members of a pastoral charge/presbytery-recognized ministry/community of faith may allow adherents to vote on all matters being considered at meetings of the community of faith.

Background

The 42nd General Council approved a church-wide study of the meaning of membership, with a new model of membership to be proposed to the 43rd General Council. This proposal to allow full members to extend the right to vote to adherents on all matters before a congregational meeting is an interim step.

The proposed change recognizes that many local ministry units wish to extend voting rights on matters currently restricted to full members. These include spiritual matters, such as oversight of worship and the call of a minister, and property matters, such as the sale of property. Currently *The Manual* restricts adherents to voting on temporal matters only, such as a financial or administrative question, and does not allow the full members to vary this policy.

Full membership consists of those who have been baptized, have made a profession of faith, and have had their membership recorded by a church's governing body (with a different process for armed forces chaplaincies). The church's understanding of membership is linked to traditional models of church and belief. For alternative forms of faith communities (house churches, for example) current understandings of membership may not fit. There has also been a shift in how people see and understand membership. These issues will be more fully explored in a study on membership, which is expected to be available in early January 2017. (An earlier version of this study guide erroneously stated that it would be available in May 2016.)

This proposed interim step allows local ministry units to vary membership policy to suit their particular situations. If approved, full members will have to vote at each meeting to extend the right to vote to adherents to the specific agenda items of that meeting. In other words, full members of a congregation may choose to maintain the existing limitations on voting or to extend voting rights to all matters before the meeting.

For more detailed background information related to this remit, please see

- the [GC42 Workbook](#), TICIF 3 Towards a New Model of Membership, PARTRIDGEBERRY 13–22 (pages 626–635): www.gc42.ca/workbook
- the [News](#) section of the 42nd General Council website: www.gc42.ca/news/new-model-membership

Proposed changes

Current policy	Proposed policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full members of a local ministry unit can vote on all matters that come before a meeting of the local ministry. • Adherents may vote only if the full members allow them to vote. • Adherents may be allowed to vote on only “temporal matters”—those related to finances and administration. • Adherents cannot be allowed to vote on any decisions related to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – pastoral relationships (including searches, calls, or appointments) – the elections or appointments to the governing body, trustees, presbytery representatives, or other committees or groups – anything involving the order of worship – amalgamating, disbanding, or realigning the pastoral charge or congregation – property matters requiring presbytery approval 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full members of a local ministry unit can vote on all matters that come before a meeting of the local ministry. • Adherents may vote only if the full members allow them to vote. • Full members may allow adherents to vote on all matters, with no restrictions.

Implications of adopting the new model

Adopting this proposal would give full members more latitude in extending to adherents the right to vote.

Adherents who are regularly participating in the life and work of a ministry unit may have a greater sense of being part of the community if they can vote on all matters, including those related to pastoral relations, electing leaders, and so on.

What is a category 2 remit?

A category 2 remit is needed for changes to the Basis of Union that are significant but not denomination-shaping (*The Manual*, s. F2). A category 2 remit also requires that a study process be available in the church before the remit is released.

The proposed change must be sent to all presbyteries to vote on. If an absolute majority of presbyteries vote in favour of the proposed change—not just a majority of those that vote—then the next General Council must also vote in favour of the proposed change for it to take effect.

NB: If a presbytery does not vote, that is considered a vote AGAINST the proposal.