

Questions from 2016 Webinar on One Order of Ministry

Does One Order of Ministry minimize the diaconal identity?

The task group that developed the proposal did not feel that One Order of Ministry would minimize diaconal identity. It would still be formed at the Centre for Christian Studies for those who are attracted to this educational program and approach to the vocation of ministry, and called to be part of the diaconate. The distinctive identity of diaconal ministry and association with the global Diakonia will continue to be encouraged and facilitated.

Would theological schools change their curriculum based on the new Order of Ministry?

It is intended, and affirmed in the comprehensive study guide, that the current diaconal ministry training program would continue at the Centre for Christian Studies. It is anticipated that there could be an enhanced role for the schools in preparation for ministry with the expanded educational component for those acquiring the Diploma in Theology and Pastoral Care (an expanded version of what is now the DLM training program). The Master of Divinity program would not be changed by this proposal.

Aren't diaconal and ordained ministers already considered One Order of Ministry?

Yes, but they are separate streams within the Order of Ministry. Diaconal ministers are commissioned to the ministry of education, service, and pastoral care. Ordained ministers are ordained to the ministry of word, sacrament, and pastoral care. They also have different responsibilities. For example, ordained ministers can preside at the sacraments. Diaconal ministers cannot; they must be licensed separately by the Conference at each call or appointment.

What are the implications of the One Order on the current educational training centres?

The remit itself would not directly result in a change in the existence or programming of the current education centres.

Formation is different from education, so I'm wondering about the role of formation.

Distinctive formation would continue to be an element of preparation for a vocation of ministry. For example, the diaconal program of the Centre for Christian Studies would still prepare ministers in diaconal formation and identity.

The United Church has many ecumenical partners that still have diaconal ministers. Why bring ours into the One Order of ministry?

Many of our ecumenical partners still have diaconal ministers. However, the way many of them understand and use the term differs from our practice in the United Church. For example, in the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches, the office of deacon is usually an intermediate step on the way to the priesthood. The Roman Catholic Church does have the concept of a permanent deacon, but at present that category is composed of married men who, by virtue of their

marriage, are ineligible to be ordained as priests. The United Methodist Church ceased to continue setting people aside for their category of Diaconal Ministry, which was a lay order for them. The United Methodist Church does have deacons, and these deacons are part of the order of ministry. The deacons have a particular emphasis on ministries of service, as has been historically true for diaconal ministers in the United Church. However, the deacon in the United Methodist Church is much more restricted in terms of their functioning in the liturgical or worship life of the denomination as compared to diaconal ministers in our tradition. In addition, deacons in the United Methodist Church, as is true of the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches, are ordained. So, the intention in the One Order of Ministry document to ordain people who will continue to belong to the global Diakonia community will, in fact, bring us more in line with many of our ecumenical partners than is currently the case.

I went from being a designated lay minister (DLM) to being an ordained minister. If there is one stream, what would this path look like in the future?

There would not be a path, as the first liturgical action of recognition would be ordination.

Why is the rite to entrance to ministry under One Order called ordination?

We call it ordination because that is the common language our ecumenical partners use.

It was stated that one of the goals of this remit is to bring clarity to the different streams. So far, I have not heard how the remit does that.

There is little difference between what ordained, diaconal, or designated lay ministers do when they are serving a pastoral charge in solo leadership. Multi-staff ministry situations are rare, for the most part, and all ministry personnel end up doing a bit of everything. This proposal eliminates the lack of clarity around why one minister doing the same ministry function as another minister is called something else and subject to different authorities and processes.

How do we address different types of calls with One Order of Ministry, as we need different ways of becoming ministers?

The intention is that there be multiple educational pathways into vocational ministry, which honour different types of calls as well as different styles of learning.

Would existing designated lay ministers (DLMs), if the remit is ratified, be automatically accepted into the One Order or would they have to fulfill other requirements?

People who are recognized DLMs at the time, if the remit vote is affirmative, would not need to do anything further. One detail not yet worked out that would need to be considered in the implementation process would be whether anything further would be required of those who were “in process” at that point but who had not yet been recognized.

What are the regulations and permissions around sacraments elders, and how would those change in the new proposed One Order of Ministry?

The sacraments elder process begins with a presbytery working with a pastoral charge to identify the need in the pastoral charge for a sacraments elder, with the Conference then licensing someone for a 12-month term to serve as sacraments elder. Under the One Order model, there could still be pastoral charges that aren't being served by an ordained minister and need a licensed sacraments elder. Thus the current regulations and permissions would not change.

How would this affect community ministries and other non-traditional ministries?

All of those ordained under One Order would be able to serve in these ministries if they meet the current criteria for that ministry. Those called to a site- or task-specific ministry would serve under the status of staff associate in a team setting.

My understanding is that designated lay ministers (DLMs) are not asked about being in essential agreement with our doctrine. Is that true? If the remit passes and is enacted, will current DLMs be asked about their essential agreement?

According to *The Manual*, a DLM must be in essential agreement with the doctrine of the United Church in order to be recognized.

What would happen if we lost all the titles and called everyone "ministers"? Would that equalize it enough to be acceptable to ecumenical partners?

The task group considered a number of alternatives, but ecumenical partners suggested that we use the language of ordination. Specifically, our partners in the Anglican Church of Canada through the Anglican–United Church Dialogue offered appreciation for the direction represented in the One Order model. The direction of this model is consistent with the ecumenical consensus found in the World Council of Churches' *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* document.

Will One Order of Ministry allow all ministers to be called rather than just appointed on an annual basis?

Yes, under the One Order model ordained ministers will all be called, except when they are receiving pension and are ineligible to be in a call and would need to serve under appointment.

Can you please speak further to the language of "grandparenting"?

The motion from the 42nd General Council uses the language of grandparenting to refer to a process to incorporate into the ordained ministry all diaconal ministers, as well as directing the General Secretary to establish a process to incorporate into the ordained ministry recognized DLMs. These details will be developed and come to the next General Council, if the remit passes.

How does this proposed structure compare to what others are doing around the world? Do others have this simplified structure, and if so, how has their experience been?

Some of our partners are very specific and rigid about status and function distinctions. Other church partners, more like us, that have blurred lines of distinction find themselves wrestling with many of the questions we are attempting to address in this proposal. Our full communion partner, the United Church of Christ, is currently proposing a model similar to our One Order model, where three streams of authorized ministry will be combined into one ordained stream.

How will the One Order help those who minister to the wider community, which is often outside of the congregation?

It would ensure that all are well trained and fully authorized to practise word, sacrament, pastoral care, education, and service in the places where they are ministering.

Will ordained ministry likewise be dismissed by One Order of Ministry? Will a greater percentage of candidates choose a less lengthy and less costly pathway? If so, how will that impact the scholarship of ministry?

The One Order proposal envisions all three streams of professional church leadership (ordained ministry, diaconal ministry, and recognized designate lay ministry) being integrated and known as ordained ministry. It will be difficult to predict what educational path candidates in the One Order model will choose, as this choice will be based on vocational call and personal lifestyle. However, all educational paths will be for the same length of time. In terms of the scholarship of ministry, the model was developed with a continued commitment to an educated and informed clergy as a core identity of the United Church. The United Church of Christ in the United States moved to a competency-based assessment for ordination several years ago. Their experience is that it has not significantly impacted the decision to seek a traditional MDiv.

Lay leaders are restricted to worship leadership: they are encouraged NOT to do all the pastoral care, plus worship and education functions. Is there any value in having presbyteries (or whatever body) go back to the idea of designated lay ministers (DLMs) being geographically bound and time-limited?

It would be difficult to go back. The nature of designated lay ministry has changed. It is no longer seen as time-limited, with most DLMs and the wider church understanding their ministry as a lifelong commitment, and for most purposes no longer localized, with DLMs frequently moving throughout the church. Licensed lay worship leaders, as the name suggests, are licensed (after a period of training) to lead worship, but not other functions of ministry.

Will everyone have to meet the current standards of education for ordination or commissioning before they are accepted into the One Order, or will there be another “grandparenting” process that ultimately lowers the standard of an educated ministry?

Grandparenting those who are currently commissioned or recognized is part of this proposal. Details will be developed if the remit passes and considered by the next general council.

Would an existing designated lay minister or diaconal minister who has completed the educational portion at the time of remit have a covenanting service of ordination, to be formally recognized?

If the remit passes, all diaconal ministers will be incorporated into the ordained ministry by virtue of their existing membership in the order of ministry of the church. There will be no “liturgical act of ordination.” Designated lay ministers are not currently part of the order of ministry, so incorporation into the ordained ministry will involve the liturgical action of ordination. The One Order proposal recognizes that there is the need for a process to be developed, and asks the Executive of the General Council to assign this to the General Secretary.

What about Indigenous understanding of ministry and leadership?

The One Order proposal presented at the 42nd General Council affirmed that there is a distinctive reality for Indigenous ministries that requires a program specifically addressing the context of Indigenous communities. For this reason, the One Order model affirms that the Sandy-Saulteaux program should continue, as it specifically addresses preparation for the order of ministry for Indigenous people.

Currently there is a process for ordained ministers to switch to diaconal ministry, and vice versa. Could that process not be refined to include those serving as designated lay ministers who are not time- and location-limited as per the original purpose?

The One Order proposal does not focus on process. It presents a model that has theological integrity in describing professional church leadership in our denomination.

How would this affect lay leaders who do not feel called into lifelong vocation? What remains for them?

The One Order model and the current [Statement on Ministry](#) (see Resources at bottom of webpage) affirms the Reformed theology of a priesthood of all believers. Lay leaders could seek to be trained and licensed as licensed lay worship leaders. Lay leaders could serve in ministry leadership as staff associates in congregational accountable positions.