

Clergy Consultative Committee
Origin: ECORC

1. What is the issue? (describe in broad terms)

The General Council sets various requirements of employment for United Church of Canada Order of Ministry Personnel and Designate Lay Ministers (hereafter clergy). It also sets the terms of pension contributions, the group benefits package offered/required, and the minimum salary to clergy. These terms form the basis for compensation negotiations in communities of faith, and in other cases define the total compensation offer of the church to the clergy.

2. Why is this issue important?

When the United Church of Canada makes decisions regarding the terms of employment or remuneration of clergy, it must honour previously made statements committing itself to supporting the clergy who serve their vocation across the denomination.

Through the pandemic, several decisions have been made which will have a long-term effect on the financial wellbeing of clergy and their households. Examples include

- Pausing the triennial cost-of-living group reassignment, at a time when the cost of housing across Canada has increased dramatically.
- Eliminating the Optional Health and Dental Benefit plan, effective January 1, 2022.
- Threatening to garnish the wages, via ADP, of clergy who had not completed their annual police records declaration.

These decisions and actions were undertaken with neither the consultation of a diverse group of clergy, nor with an effective communication plan. In each case, clergy were blindsided by the communication after the fact.

Senior staff of the General Council Office then entered social media groups to defend the decisions they had recommended. The results of these defences are, at best, mixed; some clergy feel the additional information is helpful, while others were offended by some of the suggestions made.

Not taking action will continue a process of decision making and communication that supports the growth of cynicism and “opting out” on behalf of clergy. Other clergy will seek to support a formal “union drive” to ensure the denomination must consult and negotiate.

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

This proposal could assist us to live into our commitments of equity by bringing diverse clergy voices to consider the implications of decisions made.

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

The East Central Ontario Regional Council proposes that the General Council could:

- A. Hold a conversation on the above-named issues.
- B. Invite clergy supporting a “union drive” to share their reasons with the General Council.
- C. Undertake new research on how the issues affecting clergy have changed or developed since the last-time such research (e.g. “Isolation in Ministry Report”) was completed.
- D. Offer preliminary terms of reference for the nomination of a diverse clergy consultative committee that could further develop a consultation plan.

5. For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council:

Are there comments, affirmations, suggestions you would like to make with respect to this proposal? Is this proposal in response to a previous proposal, motion or action? If so, please name the previous action(s) and proposal number(s).

If you have questions regarding this proposal, please send them to info@generalcouncil44.ca.