

Dear friends in Christ!

I greet you with excitement in my heart, as I think about our time together this coming Saturday. We will be ordaining one of our candidates for ministry, and the United Church Moderator, Rt Rev. Dr. Carmen Lansdowne will be sharing in leadership.

Blessings abound!

Please follow this link if you have not yet registered for our Fall General Meeting at Emmanuel United in Odessa. The in-person registration closed on Monday, October 23 but Zoom option is still available - [2023 ECORC Annual Fall Meeting - East Central Ontario Regional Council of the United Church of Canada \(ecorcuccan.ca\)](https://ecorcuccan.ca)

Finally, I want to draw your attention to a conversation we will have as part of the presentation by your General Council commissioners. At a meeting on Saturday October 21, General Council passed a proposal that lays out a path for Designated Lay Ministers (DLM) to be ordained into the order of ministry, and asking Regional Councils to give membership and Voluntary Associate Minister (VAM) status to those who retired from active ministry as a DLM. The full text of the GC44 proposals are attached.

Please consider and prepare for the following motion:

Moved / Seconded (names): That the ECORC grant membership, sacramental privileges and Voluntary Associate Membership privileges to all those who are retired from active ministry as Designated Lay Ministers. Furthermore, that those who continue to be Designated Lay Ministers or who are currently completing studies to be DLMs be permitted to carry their status and serve other communities of faith.

We appreciate your consideration of this work ahead of time, and ask for God's blessings and inspiration to guide us into new ways of being church, and to strengthen and comfort us in a time of vast and far-reaching changes: may we always rest in the arms of love, may we always feel the presence of the risen One beside us as we boldly reach out in Christ's name.

With anticipation and gratitude for all your ministries,

Rev. Wanda Stride
Speaker, Assembly of Elders
East Central Ontario Regional Council

The General Council Executive recommends that the General Council take the following actions:

1. For Current Designated Lay Ministers
Honour and value designated lay ministers' many years of faithful service to the

church; recognize the lifelong vocational call of many current designated lay ministers; and direct the General Secretary to develop an appropriate acknowledgement for the 45th General Council (2025).

2. Possible Pathway to Testamur for Current DLMs and Current DLM Candidates

- a) direct the General Secretary, in cooperation with the Credentialing Committee of the Board of Vocation, to develop and implement a process that would allow current designated lay ministers who have discerned and practiced a lifelong vocational call to ministry to demonstrate that they meet the requirements for Testamur and readiness for commissioning or ordination, and
- b) grant authority to the Board of Vocation, on the recommendation of its Credentialing Committee, to grant Testamur to those DLMs. This process would also be open to current DLM candidates who have discerned a lifelong vocational call to ministry.

3. For Lay Ministry Going Forward,

- a) request that regional councils permit currently recognized DLMs and those who are current students who do not choose to request ordering, to move to different communities of faith;
- b) acknowledge that the need identified in 2000 for localized lay leadership still exists (in the “Ministry Together” Report on Ministry for the 21st Century received by the 37th General Council, 2000); and
- c) refer the original intent of designated lay ministry (in the “Ministry Together” Report on Ministry for the 21st Century received by the 37th General Council, 2000) to the on-going conversations about trained lay leadership in collaborative ministry settings.

4. For Future Candidates without undergraduate degrees

- a) recognize that most of our theological schools do not require an undergraduate degree for entry into degree and diploma programs leading to ordination or commissioning;
- b) affirm the theological schools’ development of a variety of programs of study for theological education and formation leading to commissioning or ordination; and
- c) encourage the Board of Vocation and candidacy boards to direct people without an undergraduate degree, who are discerning a call to life-long church-wide ministry, towards ordered ministry preparation and formation.

5. For People who Retired as Designated Lay Ministers

- a) strongly encourage regional councils to review their practices under C.2.1 b) and I.2.4.1 b) of The Manual to consider, in light of the leadership roles and acquired experience of many lay members who retired as designated lay minister, granting both licence to administer the sacraments, and membership in the regional council to lay members who retired as designated lay ministers and are resident within the regional council; and

b) encourage regional councils to review their policies on voluntary associate ministry and eligibility to practice other functions of ministry as may apply to lay members who have retired as designated lay ministers.