

ANW 4 - THE GRANTING OF THE RIGHT TO ADMINISTER SACRAMENTS TO ALL DIACONAL MINISTERS AT THE TIME OF THEIR COMMISSIONING

Origin: Alberta and Northwest Conference

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

The issue is one of inequality.

2. Why is this issue important?

If the church indicates that ordained and diaconal ministers are part of the Order of Ministry, and each can serve as single ministers leading congregations/communities of faith in all of their worship and faith life, then they should receive the same Sacramental privileges.

A key injustice issue is also that Diaconal Ministers who have administered Sacraments for their whole ministry lose that licensing upon retirement, even if they are no longer employed but still serve the church as Sunday Supply.

When Remit #6 was defeated, it contained so many items that this issue of Sacramental Privileges was also defeated, but was not necessarily the reason for the defeat of the Remit.

Background:

Within Ordered Ministry there are two streams of equal value in our denomination, and many Diaconal Ministers currently serve as the sole minister in Pastoral Charges. Even in shared ministry, much of the work of Diaconal Ministers in their ministry of Education, Service and Pastoral Care leads logically into a sharing of the sacraments of communion and baptism. As part of their preparation for ministry, Diaconal Ministers study the theology and practise of the administration of the sacraments. The current practice where permission is required for Diaconal Ministers to administer the sacraments is confusing to congregations who are under the impression that The United Church of Canada believes in and demonstrates equality in ministry; it also results in time consuming work at Congregational and other church court levels leaving some congregations without access to Sacraments.

The current restrictions also do not allow Retired Diaconal Ministers, or Diaconal Ministers undertaking Sunday Supply to offer Sacraments. Congregations who have received sacraments from Diaconal Ministers are puzzled as to why the sacramental privilege disappears from Diaconal Ministers when it does not do the same for Ordained Ministers.

As written in 1 Peter 4:10-12 from The Inclusive Bible: "As generous distributors of God's manifold grace, put your gifts at the service of one another, each in the measure you have received. The one who speaks should deliver God's message. The one who serves should do so with the strength provided by God, so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, who has been given all glory and dominion throughout the ages. Amen."

Granting Diaconal Ministers the right to administer the sacraments at the time of their commissioning would eliminate inconsistency and confusion, and also uphold the valuing of all members of the Order of Ministry by The United Church of Canada.

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

- a. direct the Executive of General Council to review the current guidelines for the Commissioning of Diaconal Ministers and add the right to administer the sacraments as part of the responsibilities they undertake at their Commissioning; and**
- b. authorize a Category 3 Remit to test the will of the church regarding this change.**

4. For the courts transmitting this proposal to the General Council:

Presented by Coronation Presbytery to the 85th Meeting of Alberta and Northwest Conference.

Transmitted with concurrence by Alberta and Northwest Conference to the 43rd General Council.

If you have questions regarding this proposal, please send them to info@generalcouncil43.ca.