

G&A 33 - UNFINISHED PROPOSALS FROM GENERAL COUNCIL 43

Origin: Permanent Committee on Governance and Agenda

1. What is the issue?

General Council discussed but did not make decisions on six proposals in the Ministry Personnel and the Administration of Sacraments themes. These proposals have been referred to the Executive for decision. In addition, the Council referred proposal MNWO 06 to the Executive.

- GCE 20 brings consistency of practice to the issuing of licenses to administer sacraments for diaconal ministers across Conferences / regional councils.
- ANW 4, ANW 10 and MNWO 03 address concerns about licensing for the administration of the sacraments.
- MNWO7 and SK 3 propose eliminating distinctions between designated lay ministers and ordered ministers.
- MNWO 6 proposes removing the requirement that there be a member of the order of ministry or a designated lay minister called or appointed to the pastoral charge where a congregational designated minister is to be hired.

2. Why is this issue important?

Increasingly it is difficult for many, particularly rural or isolated, pastoral charges to appoint or call ministry personnel and to have regular access to sacramental and other ministerial services. In response to this challenge, the distinctions among our multiple streams of lay and ordered ministries have blurred or been functionally eliminated. Remit 6 (One Order of Ministry) attempted to address this in a holistic way but was rejected. Piece meal changes out of the larger context may only exasperate our current situation. The Facilitation Group at the General Council notes that it was clearly articulated that we need a larger discussion regarding choices in keeping vulnerable congregations alive and ensuring viable leadership options for our communities of faith. Discussion groups expressed a lot of mixed feelings. It is evident that there is a lot that needs clarification. There was no consensus to affirm the proposals but an affirmation that the problem is a significant challenge.

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

The Permanent Committee on Governance and agenda proposes

That the Executive of the General Council:

- 1) Receive the reports on the discussion of these proposals from the GC43 Facilitation Group**

- 2) **Affirm the Facilitation Group's recommended ways forward as follows:**
 - a) **GCE 20: That the 43rd General Council affirm proposal GCE 20 – Sacramental Licence for Diaconal Ministers and directs the General Secretary to implement.**
 - b) **MNWO 7: That the 43rd General Council take no further action on proposal MNWO 7 – Equal Pay for Designated Lay Ministers.**
 - c) **SK 3: That the 43rd General Council take no further action on Proposal SK 3 – Eliminating Appointments for Designated Lay Ministers.**
 - d) **ANW 04, ANW 10, MNWO 03: That the 43rd General Council direct the General Secretary to conduct a comprehensive study on these issues (including all issues raised in proposals MNWO 01 and MNWO 02 on rural and small church ministry) and develop a strategy for meeting the ministry needs of all communities of faith, including access to the sacraments; and That the 43rd General Council take no further action on proposals ANW 04, ANW 10, and MNWO 03**

And in response to these decisions:

- 3) **Direct the General Secretary to develop a process for a larger discussion regarding ministry leadership to all of our communities of faith. Such a review could include consideration of "A Statement On Ministry" (41 General Council 2012) and the Basis of Union (9.2) stipulation that "as far as reasonably possible, every Pastoral Charge shall have a pastorate without interruption . . . " and any other resources that seemed relevant;**
 - 4) **Include the concerns of these proposals with the direction of the 43rd General Council, in response to MNWO 1 Rural Prairie Marginalization, that the General Secretary implement GC42 2015-48 by creating a process to consider and make recommendations about the future mission and ministry of the rural and/or remote ministry of the church.**
 - 5) **Take no further action on the referred sections of proposal MNWO 06 appointments of Congregational Designated Ministers.**
4. **For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council Executive:**
The GC43 Facilitation Group reports from the discussion groups and proposed ways forward appended at the end of this proposal

Is this proposal in response to assigned work? Response to GC43 Proposals:

- **GCE 20, MNWO 07, SK 03, ANW 04, ANW 10, MNWO 03, MNWO 06**

GC43 Facilitation Group reports from the discussion groups

GCE 20 - SACRAMENTAL LICENCE FOR DIACONAL MINISTERS

What We Heard:

- General affirmation for the proposal from most groups.
- One group would be in favour of affirming this proposal because proposal ANW 04 would take time because it requires a remit.
- Is this a polity question or a policy issue?
- What about our global/ecumenical partners?
- Why is there no national policy already?
- Support for a larger conversation.
- Some groups needed clarification.
- Agreement because it would only be given when a diaconal minister was in a covenanted call or appointment (as opposed to ANW 04 where it would be at commissioning)
- Favours a study and remit.
- One group divided and uncomfortable.
- One group thought this was the compromise for the church.

Suggested Way Forward:

1) That the 43rd General Council affirm proposal GCE 20 – Sacramental Licence for Diaconal Ministers and directs the General Secretary to implement.

MNWO 7 – EQUAL PAY FOR DESIGNATED LAY MINISTERS

What We Heard:

The groups had mixed response to this proposal.

- There was recognition of the value of the work done by Designated Lay Ministers.
- Some commissioners felt the education required for ordered ministry deserves higher pay; others felt that with similar ministry and job descriptions there should be equal pay for equal work.
- Some groups noted that it is possible to pay both ordered ministers and Designated Lay Ministers more than the minimum; multiple groups noted the difference in current pay minimums is very small.
- One suggested solution was amending the salary schedule to include a matrix that guides communities of faith to consider factors in addition to equal pay for equal work (e.g. education).
- Multiple groups suggested more work is needed on this issue, with some groups expressing concern this was a work around to the failed Remit 6.

Suggested Way Forward:

Motion: Bill Sheaves/Kyle Grant

That the 43rd General Council take no further action on proposal MNWO 7 – Equal Pay for Designated Lay Ministers.

SK 3 – ELIMINATING APPOINTMENTS FOR DESIGNATED LAY MINISTERS

What We Heard:

The groups had mixed responses to this proposal, but the majority were not in favour. We heard the following concerns and questions:

- What is the theology of call vs. appointment?
- Practice and policy are difficult – simplification is needed.
- There could be the possibility for longer term appointments without changing the language of appointment; Recognized Designated Lay Ministers might be eligible for open-ended appointments.
- Concerns about supervision and training.
- Designated Lay Ministers are not accountable to the Office of Vocation; to whom will they be accountable?
- Appointments for Designated Lay Ministers are cumbersome and they cause anxiety; the church needs to address the pain that is there on both sides.
- A few groups suggested more study on this issue.
- There were several groups that raised the concern this proposal is a work around to the failed Remit 6: One Order of Ministry.

Suggested Way Forward:

That the 43rd General Council take no further action on Proposal SK 3 – Eliminating Appointments for Designated Lay Ministers.

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

What We Heard:

- Groups were mixed in response to this proposal. Some supported, some did not.
- Sometimes orders of ministry want to be different, sometimes want to be the same. They are not the same – different training, different processes.
- We have a need to serve communities who don't have access to the sacraments, but don't see a national policy or strategy to make that happen.
- Need for consistency across the country.
- Administration of sacraments is a calling, not a task, and has implications for our relationship with global and ecumenical partners.
- People in the pews often don't make a distinction between orders of ministry – if their minister is ordained or diaconal.
- Conferences give the license because of the need; There are times when licensing is necessary.
- Several groups asked for a study on this issue.
- Several groups noted we are trying to fix a big problem with a band-aid.

ANW 10 – SACRAMENT ELDERS POLICY

What We Heard:

- Some groups were in favour, some were not.
- The creation of sacrament elder was specific to a certain need and time-bound.

- Questions from groups included:
- If there is already ministry personnel, why the need for a sacrament elder?
- Why is this needed?
- How frequently would this be needed and what other options are available?
- Would be helpful for busy ministers and for small/rural communities of faith.

MNWO 03 – SACRAMENTAL LICENCE FOR RETIRED DIACONAL MINISTERS

What We Heard:

- One group suggested the court consider using this wording in ANW 04.
- Need further education about the different streams of ministry.
- One group suggested this should be also extended to diaconal ministers retained on the roll.
- Many groups felt their comments were addressed in response to other proposals.
- Not prepared to give a license to retired diaconal ministers when we might not give license to active diaconal ministers.
- While some groups affirmed this proposal, there was a large degree of uncertainty and a wide spectrum of opinion.

Suggested Way Forward:

That the 43rd General Council direct the General Secretary to conduct a comprehensive study on these issues (including all issues raised in proposals MNWO 01 and MNWO 02 on rural and small church ministry) and develop a strategy for meeting the ministry needs of all communities of faith, including access to the sacraments; and That the 43rd General Council take no further action on proposals ANW 04, ANW 10, and MNWO 03

MNWO 06 – APPOINTMENTS OF CONGREGATIONAL DESIGNATED MINISTERS

What We Heard:

It was clearly articulated that we need a larger discussion regarding choices in keeping vulnerable congregations alive. The proposal highlights there is a pressing need in rural congregations that are not left with any viable leadership options in their communities of faith under our current structure.

Discussion groups expressed a lot of mixed feelings, and it is evident there is a lot that needs clarification. There was no consensus to affirm the proposal, but an affirmation that the problem is a significant challenge.

- There were concerns over availability and consistency of accountability, supervision & discipline.
- There was confusion over the role and accountability of Congregational Designated Ministers as already defined in The Manual.
- Some groups questioned whether other options within our current structure could respond to the problem.

Suggested Way Forward:

That the 43rd General Council refer the first two suggestions in section 3 of proposal MNWO 6 – Appointments of Congregational Designated Ministers to the Executive of the Denominational Council.

Mover: L. Buchanan

Secunder: T. Orlando

CARRIED.