

SYNODE MONTREAL & OTTAWA CONFERENCE EXECUTIVE

**Thursday, November 9, 2017 10 am – 9:00 pm Retreat,
at Villa Saint Martin, Gouin Blvd, Montreal. QC
LIVING our 'Living Mission Statement'
Thursday Morning – jeudi matin**

IN ATTENDANCE

Rev. Elaine Beattie	President
Rev. Mead Baldwin	Past-President
Rev. Cathy Hamilton	Clergy Representative to the General Council Executive,
Rick Balsou	Lay Representative to General Council Executive
Rev. Stephen Clifton	Chair, Ottawa Presbytery
Rev. Anne Montgomery	Representative, Ottawa Presbytery
Marc Grenon	Chair, Quebec Presbytery
Dave McCormack	Representative, Quebec Presbytery
Debbie Poirier, D.L.M.	Chair, Seaway Valley Presbytery
Rev. Daniel Hayward	Representative, Seaway Valley Presbytery
Pasteur Samuel Dansokho	Co-Président, Table de concertation régionale des ministères en Français
Carolyn Ruda	Chair, Conference Stewardship
Rev. Rosemary Lambie	Conference Executive Secretary
Rev. Whit Strong	Conference Personnel Minister (West)
Sabrina Di Stefano	Conference Personnel Minister (East)
Larry Richardson	Staff M&O Conference (Ottawa office)
Joel Miller	Staff M&O Conference (Montreal), Recording Secretary

REGRETS/ABSENT

Rev. Pierre Goldberger	Président, Consistoire Laurentien
Rev. Rosa Cruz	Représente, Consistoire Laurentien
Carolle Dallas-Arbuckle	Chair, Conference United Church Women
Nicole Beaudry	Co-Présidente, Table de concertation régionale des ministères en Français

Gathering- find pre-assigned rooms, have coffee

10:00 Welcome, Introductions, Worship incorporating Pilgrimage to Kenya - prepared by Carolyn Ruda and Karen Hovey

ATTENDANCE (in addition to those already present):

Karen Hovey	Mission & Service, Global Pilgrimage to Kenya
The Very Reverend Marion Parady, 37 th Moderator	Boundaries Commission
Rev. Ryan McNally	Boundaries Commission

Opening worship began with an acknowledgment of the ancestral indigenous territory of the Mohawk People, the lighting of the Christ Candle, Call to Worship (inspired by Amos 5:24 and Micah 6:8), the reading of a "Prayer of Wondering" by Sharon Flatten of the Brethren, and the singing of the hymn "God is Good" p. 104 in More Voices. Karen Hovey presented a PowerPoint presentation outlining her pilgrimage to Kenya this year (2017). There were 17 representatives from the United Church of Canada, coming out of each of the Conferences, who made the journey. Karen explained that the pilgrimage to Kenya carried as its theme to pieces of Scripture:

(Amos 5:24)

(Micah 6:8)

But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

The Pilgrimage to Kenya included visiting each of the Global partner offices (Karen provided details about what each of these partners do, and showed slides of the journey):

- NCKK – National Council of Churches of Kenya
- PROCMURA – Program for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa
- WSCF – World Student Christian Federation
- KAACR – Kenya Alliance for Advancement of Children
- AACC – All Africa Conference of Churches
- OAIC – The Organization of African Instituted Churches
- ACT Alliance
- Pembizo Christian Council

Closing worship ended with thanks extended to Karen for her presentation, and the singing of hymn “Walk With Me” p. 649 in Voices United. Karen left a display table for people to continue to peruse and learn about Mission & Service work in Africa.

More information about Mission & Service, Global Pilgrimage to Kenya can be found on the United Church website through the following links:

<http://www.united-church.ca/blogs/round-table/kenya-2017-small-farms-kenya-cultivate-inspiration>

<http://www.united-church.ca/blogs/round-table/kenya-2017-love-reconciles>

<http://www.united-church.ca/blogs/round-table/kenya-2017-roads-travelled>

<http://www.united-church.ca/blogs/round-table/kenya-2017-building-christian-muslim-relationships>

<http://www.united-church.ca/blogs/round-table/kenya-2017-hope-and-perseverance>

10:45 # 2 *Provide leadership in supporting Presbytery efforts to ensure that all Pastoral Charges have ongoing effective pastoral ministry and participate in the formation of new Ministry Personnel - Diriger et soutenir les efforts des consistoires pour que toutes les charges pastorales bénéficient d'un ministère pastoral efficace et sans interruption, et participent à la formation du nouveau personnel ministériel*

➤ Sacraments Elder (Marc Grenon et al)

Marc summarized his report (see Appendix 1) entitled “Report to the Executive of the Synode Montreal & Ottawa Conference concerning the extension of Sacraments Elders privileges to a larger group of individuals” and invited questions. Rosemary explained that members of the Executive wanting to make changes to the existing Conference policy on licensing Sacraments Elders could bring their motions to the Executive Business meeting the following day for decision-making. Today’s meeting was for presentations and discussion only.

Comments: The recommendation to allow Sacraments Elders to move beyond their congregations is counter to the Manual.

Q: Does licensing students currently situated in pastoral charges in western Quebec, and in Ottawa Presbytery fall into this conversation.

A: In part, because this conversation deals with the underlying problem of congregations not having someone to administer the sacraments.

Comment: While this problem encompasses both the category of ‘Sacraments Elders’ and ‘Students’, there is another category which needs to be considered, which perhaps carries more importance, and this

is the category of 'Ordered Ministry' who are not making themselves available to administer the Sacraments to congregations demonstrating the need for it.

Comment: Congregations are even considering Ministry Personnel from other denominations to administer the Sacraments; however this is not acceptable solution.

Q: Does a Military Chaplain have to be of the United Church of Canada in order to administer the Sacraments within the United Church of Canada (Military Chaplains can administer the Sacraments all throughout the military regardless of denomination ties)?

A: Yes, in order to bring someone in from another denomination, this person would first have to clear the steps of the Admission process.

Comment: Allowing too many lay people to administer the Sacraments (i.e., lay who fall outside of definition of belonging to a remote ministry site) can become a deterrent for congregations seek Ordered Ministry Personnel (i.e., cheaper not to hire Ordered and instead use Lay). The risk of this could also undermine the role of Ordered Ministry Personnel.

Q: what is the definition of remote (and is it synonymous with 'reasonable distance' which is the language used in the policy)?

A: The definition of remote is: No all-weather road access, and no or vary rare and limited air and rail passenger services, all-weather road access, however more than 250 km away from a population centre of more than 5000, all locations north of 60 degrees latitude, all locations in Labrador.

Q: In Quebec, what about population centres that may have more than 5000, but do not have Anglophones (i.e., Metis Beach)?

Comment: Regardless of distances, it has already been demonstrated that the problem exists in the reality that Ordered Ministry Personnel are not making themselves available.

Comment/Q: All ministry sites that do not have Called or Appointed Ministry Personnel have a supervisor (not always ordained). Nonetheless, part of the understanding of Supervision is that there is a plan in place allowing for the Sacraments to be administered. How is it then that there are so many retired ministers not willing to provide this sacred ritual?

A: Many of the retired Ministry Personnel are much older and simply cannot make the trip, and newly retired Ministry Personnel are simply not interested in making the trip (whatever the reasoning is, it does not take away from the reality that Ministry Personnel are not making themselves available).

Comment: In Quebec Presbytery there are many congregations (urban and rural) that do not have a Supervising Ministers because there is a shortage of supervisors (people not wanting to travel), and even the ones who are supervisors are lay persons.

Q: What is a reasonable distance and who decides? And for congregations without supervisors, or who want the administration of the Sacraments, where is the Pastoral Care and Oversight committee's involvement in finding the solution (so that congregations are not continuously relying on lay people)?

Comment: Some Ministry Personnel have indicated that they are not willing to travel two hours round trip to administer the Sacraments for only a handful of people.

Comment/Q: It feels uncomfortable to force people to fit into a structure, which can be a barrier for them, and hinder them from participating, receiving and being welcomed at the Lord's Table. Therefore, shouldn't we appoint someone to administer the sacraments (Sacraments Elder or otherwise) until paid accountable ministry personnel, or a Supervising Minister becomes available? (Many expressed agreement)

Q: What about the Theology of this option?

A: The polity of the United Church of Canada already makes it clear it is willing to train Sacraments Elders above the 60th parallel and in other remote locations; therefore, it accepts the theology that allows lay people to administer the Sacraments.

Comment: Despite the fear of encouraging pastoral charges relying on lay people for worship and the administration of Sacraments, in certain areas, there are pastoral charges who cannot afford a full-time minister (and finding Ministry Personnel to work part-time is very difficult), these congregations are waiting 6 to 8 months at a time to partake at the Lord's Table.

Q: Does this table have the authority to perceive the meaning of the Sacraments, beyond the larger ecumenical body of the wider Church, or is this simply a conversation about practicality?

Q: What is it that Ordained have, aside from the authority given to them by the Church, to administer the Sacraments which Lay people do not have?

Comment: There is an understanding for the dismay at hearing that Retired Ministry Personnel are not making themselves available to be 'parachuted' into a worshipping community because of their credentials to preside over the Sacraments, however, it should be also considered that the reason for this position is because retired Clergy are saying to themselves that 'there must be another way (like Sacraments Elders) for a worshipping community to administer the Sacraments (by choosing someone within their community to do so). This is an ecclesiological theological point of view that is shared among clergy today.

Due to the *Order of the Day (11:30)*, the conversation was ended, however, people were invited to translate their passion for this discussion-topic into a motion(s) that could change the existing Conference policy on licencing Sacraments Elders. Moreover, people were invited to continue the conversation at a later time.

➤ Policy statement re Ministry Personnel Involvement In A Former Pastoral Charge (Whit Strong)

Rosemary highlighted item 6.2 of the agenda for the Executive business meeting (scheduled the following day), where the policy will be dealt with. It was explained that Consistoire Laurentien responded that they agreed to the policy in principle and affirmed the policy, and that Ottawa Presbytery Executive agreed with the policy unanimously, and referred it to the Pastoral Relations and Pastoral Care and Oversight committee, who have raised some questions and want further discussion. Seaway Valley did not vote on the policy because they did not have quorum at their last meeting. Quebec Presbytery is aware of the policy statement, but has not met to vote on it yet.

Q: What happens if some presbyteries adopt the policy and others don't, or some presbyteries want to make changes to the policy?

A: If there are questions and need for clarification that is always possible, and it should be highlighted that there are options for extenuating circumstances, which means situations can be dealt with on an individual basis. Nonetheless, if we do not have affirmation from all of the Presbyteries, the Conference cannot set this policy and it remains a proposal.

11:15 **#8. *Provide administrative effectiveness in the "art" of making our Conference life happen. – Fournir l'efficacité nécessaire à la pratique de 'l'art de faire vivre' notre Synode***

➤ Effective Leadership, Office of Vocation and Staff changes (CES, CPMs)

Rosemary provided clarifications regarding the implementation of the new structures: March 15th – final report to determine regional boundaries; July 2018 – General Council 43 to enact remits; August 15th – 6 Regional Ministers chosen to begin staffing regional offices. The new structures will take effect January 1st 2019.

The Executive Secretary, Conference Personnel Ministers and 3 members of the Conference (people involved in Conference Interview Board, Settlement, and Pastoral Relations) recently went to a gathering in London, Ontario, for a consultation on how Effective Leadership projects, happening within various Conferences, might be transitioned over into the Office of Vocations.

Effective Leadership – In Synode Montreal and Ottawa Conference, the Effective Leadership project focused on designing an aid to help face the challenges in the pastoral relations and pastoral care and oversight processes – out of which the pastoral care and oversight Tool-Kit was created and the Joint Assessment Needs Process and the Living Ministry Profile. Toronto Conference, as part of its Effective Leadership project, created a web-interface which matched vacant congregations with anonymous prospective Ministers searching for Calls and Appointments. The search focuses on skill sets and is designed to help eliminate cultural bias. Not all present at this gathering participated in the Effective Leadership project; Bay of Quinte Conference and Manitou Conference worked on a Candidacy Pathways project.

Office of Vocation / Staff Changes – After the consultation, the Conference Personnel Ministers held a separate meeting (as did the Conference Executive Secretaries). It was during this meeting that the sixteen Conference Personnel Ministers from across the country were told to take on work elsewhere if they could find it, because under the new structure, only six positions would be available. Also, Conference Personnel Ministers were told to help in the transitioning phase up to December 31st 2018. Afterwards, Conference Personnel Ministers were encouraged to reapply for one of the six positions that would be created under the Office of Vocations, and were informed that this would be open search across the country. The Conference Personnel, during the consultation, were surprised to learn in front of all attending the meeting, that the region could decide for itself if it wanted a Conference Personnel Minister; which is not what the Conference Personnel Ministers were informed prior to this meeting. There seems to have been a systematic operation of deception at work, which is unjust. Furthermore, falsely using theology and ‘saying/imposing upon’ to someone who is about to lose their job that they are bound by obligation to see the task through to their end, for the Church, because they are ‘called’ to it, is wrong. If this were government sector, these kinds of tactics would have grievance written all over them. It was noted however that, Conference Personnel Ministers are office-holders and therefore outside of the jurisdictions of labour law. It was explained that severance would be offered to those under certain criteria (i.e., refusing to be rehired because location of new job-offer exceeds x number of kilometres, job no longer exists, etc.). Severance packages have not yet been determined. Job descriptions will begin emerging in August after GC43 and applying for new jobs can begin as early as September.

Comment: There will be a consultative process to conduct a 360⁰ review of M&O staff in order for the staff to have a current performance review that they can take with them during their employment search.

Comment: There are professional ways to lay-off staff and to address the circumstances involved, it would seem that General Council was not prepared nor have the expertise to undertake this aspect. All of this while at the same time encouraging those about to be laid off to continue to do their jobs well because there is a small chance for rehiring.

Q: What would be the best practice for this kind of process and where can this information be found? Should these questions be raised at the General Council Executive meeting next week?

Comment: The CPMs conveyed that they did not want the Executive to express disdain in their behalf, as they did not want to jeopardize their search for six positions being created within the office vocations. It was suggested that, instead, the approach be to inquire as to what steps are being taken to ensure the best practices for communicating staff layoffs are being taken.

11:30 **# 5. *Ensure ways of providing a collective Conference voice on public Christian witness – S'assurer de faire entendre la voix collective du Synode comme témoignage chrétien sur la scène publique.***

➤ Social Justice Network of Ontario Conferences, Charles Barrett

The network dates back 20-25 years ago and is governed by a covenant signed by the seven Conferences in the Province of Ontario (excluding The All Native Circle). The Social Justice Network of Ontario has evolved to become a classic learning and sharing network. The members of the committee convene twice a year (usually immediately prior to the General Council Executive meetings), to information from the General Council staff on what is taking place in terms of social justice and outreach issues, holding round table discussions for what is going on within each of the Conferences, which then leads to catalytic intervention in terms of advocacy at Queens Park (Legislative Assembly of Ontario). The total resources contributed by the seven Conferences are about \$10,000 a year. The Network has supported groups like Kairos, Interfaith Council for Social Policy Reform (faith leader's forum), sponsoring research on progressive budgeting issues, etc.

Over the summer, the Network prepared a brief of networking models for the Remit implementation committee because there will be an important role for networks and networking to tie regions together under the new structures.

Q: Is the main role of this Network advocacy (advocating with the Ontario Government)?

A: The network's history has been to create a window for the United Church of Canada to communicate with the Ontario government on a range of social justice and social policy issues. Since its inception the network has also evolved into a mechanism for sharing good practice and sharing information amongst the Conferences (a classic learning network).

Q: The changes within the Church have taken the focus in the recent past; therefore, what are the issues that we should be keeping front and center at the moment?

A: Increase in minimum wage in Ontario (issue the network has been involved in with some success), poverty reduction and its link to the labour market, issues for Palestine, united for mining justice.

Q: What is the value of Presbytery and Conference participation?

A: There is value added whether it be advocacy, educational resources, sharing of good practice while keeping up to date with what is going on in the Province.

Currently Synode Montreal & Ottawa Conference helps the network by providing \$500 per year, and so does Ottawa Presbytery.

11:45 **#3. *Promote the co-ordination of strategic use of resources through exploring regional co-operation - Favoriser la coordination et l'utilisation stratégique des ressources en explorant les possibilités de coopération régionale.***

➤ YAYA, (Rosemary presented on behalf of Georgia Barratt-Lamey) (see Appendix 2)

Rosemary, read the YAYA report and presented power point slides which coincided with the report, both of which were prepared ahead of time by Georgia. *See the attached report to see date for upcoming youth events and registrations links.*

12:00 Lunch

Thursday Afternoon – Jeudi après-midi

1:00 **#6. *Provide an inspirational link between local United Church communities and the United Church of Canada as a whole community - Devenir un pont et une inspiration entre les communautés locales de l'Église Unie et l'Église Unie du Canada comme communauté d'ensemble.***

➤ Boundaries Commission - Conversation with the Very Reverend Marion Pardy and Rev. Ryan McNally

ATTENDANCE (in addition to those already present):

Claire Borel-Christen	Consistoire Laurentien
Rev. Rosa-Elena Donoso-Cruz	Consistoire Laurentien
Rev. David Fines, Past President	Consistoire Laurentien
Phyllis MacRae	Ottawa Presbytery
Norma McCord	Ottawa Presbytery
Rev. Arlyce Schiebout	Ottawa Presbytery
Rev. Jamie Scott	Ottawa Presbytery
Fred Braman	Quebec Presbytery
Rev. Heather McClure	Quebec Presbytery

Rick Sheffer, Past President	Quebec Presbytery
Jim Vanstone, Past-President	Quebec Presbytery
Linda Suddaby	Seaway Valley Presbytery

The Very Reverend Marion Pardy, 37th Moderator of the United Church of Canada and Rev. Ryan McNally led opening worship: Acknowledging the Land, singing *Souffle de Vie*, reading Psalm 100 as a Call and Response, reading Scripture (Ezra 3:10-13 Israelites return from exile, rebuild the temple), Meditation, and Reflection: “How can we be a faithful, effective, caring expression of God’s presence in our governance, in our administration and in our leadership, in order to be God’s people in the Church and in the world that God loves?” Worship ended with the singing of *Pilgrims on a Journey*, and a Closing Prayer.

Marion explained that the role of the Boundaries Commission is twofold: to listen and learn in order to make a decision about 1. the number of Regional Councils (12-15 regions) and 2. the boundaries of those Regional Councils. Ryan provided background information for the members forming the Commission (details are found in the *Report of the Nominations Committee: Boundaries Commission - Origin: The Nominations Committee of the Executive of the General Council*). After listening and learning, the Commission will release a draft report on January 10th, after which there will be a feedback period (21 days), and the final report released March 15th. GC43 meets in July 2018, when the remits will be enacted, whereby the new Regional Councils will come into force on January 1st 2019. The Commission will not name the Regional Councils, will not determine staff (that is the General Secretary’s decision), will not allocate resources (there is a remit outlining this process), and will not determine Regional Council duties (there is a remit outlining these duties). All of the information gathered by the Commissioners is consolidated into reports following each visit to a Conference (along with the Executive Secretary’s report) and made available to all of the Commissioners simultaneously through Dropbox. Questions and comments can also be received from individuals by Commissioners through remits@united-church.ca.

After Marion and Ryan presented contextual information, they invited the group to break off into smaller groups to answer the following listening questions:

1. How do boundaries /borders shape how you live out the mission of the church?
2. What is needed within the boundaries of an effective regional council?
3. Are there any unique situations of which the Boundaries Commission should be made aware?
4. Are there any other criteria of which the Boundaries Commission should be made aware?

After working in groups, and collecting responses, Marion and Ryan invited people to highlight some of the responses that came out of the group discussions, ask questions, and speak to submissions submitted ahead of the Commissioners’ visit (see *Québec Presbytery Rationale for Québec Region, Results (Nov. 4, 2017) Québec Presbytery Feedback on Boundaries and Boundaries Commission and Submission by Ottawa Presbytery November 2017*).

Discussions:

Heather McClure suggested that the Boundaries Commission consider a number higher than the current numbers of proposed Regional Councils (12-15) because this number represents the already existing Conferences, bringing into question if the only change is eliminating Presbyteries.

Rick Sheffer expressed that the Comprehensive Review’s proposals for restructuring was primarily driven for financial reasons. He also explained that many congregations in Quebec Presbytery are struggling financially, and will soon be faced with closing and/or needing to change their own internal structures. Therefore, it is important to work closely (one on one) with communities of faith in order to help them meet these challenges. This kind of help cannot be given at a distance. It was suggested that the United Church considers the Anglican Church’s 30 plus dioceses model for the country, as it has similar membership numbers as the United Church of Canada. New and emerging ministries are taking shape, and are moving away from the traditional congregational model (church building) of the past. As these ministries take shape, it is even more important that the governance be situated

nearer instead of further away. Mead Baldwin expressed that emphasis should be on creating something new, which focuses on local ministries across the entire country, and not a carbon copy of the past.

Steve Clifton, Chair of Ottawa Presbytery highlighted in its report to the Boundaries Commission the criteria it suggests for determining where to 'draw the lines': 1. Diversity within Regions as a Benefit, 2. Primary Affinity be Geographical Proximity and Connectedness, 3. Functional Effectiveness when considering the size of Regions, and 4. Financial Capacity for regional operations and mission possibilities. The Presbytery also highlighted in its report three specific considerations that impact the Ottawa Presbytery: 1. That the Outaouais remain in the same Region as the City of Ottawa, 2. Widening the connection between Ottawa and the smaller Eastern Ontario cities and towns that are within a reasonable commute of Ottawa, and 3. Avoid Using Provincial Boundaries as a determinative guide for Regional Boundaries.

David Fines explained that Consistoire Laurentien emerged 60 years after the Basis of Union in 1925. Since then, one could consider the Consistoire Laurentien to be the link between Francophone communities and the United Church of Canada (for the past 35 plus years). However, under the Regional Model, and in an instant, the Consistoire Laurentien will cease to exist because it does not meet all of the requirements for a Region. Therefore, without some kind of support, the United Church of Canada stands to face the quiet disappearance of the Francophone 'voice'. Despite the General Secretary proposal GS 67 "French Ministries" (see page 115, *Executive of the General Council Workbook, November 18-20, 2017*), dividing up the body / leadership of the Francophone constituency, and have it exist in two separate and distinct ways (Nationally and Regionally), with two budgets and two visions, is not an optimistic endeavor.

Marc Grenon, Quebec Presbytery Chair, also agreed that not separating the Francophone constituency is a better idea than what is being proposed, and explained that this was part of the vision for creating the Quebec Presbytery; to create a stronger, unified Francophone constituency within the United Church.

Samuel Dansokho expressed that emphasis be placed on using language as bridges instead of walls, and that people work together with the tools of language instead of moving in opposite directions.

Rick Balson expressed that much of the talk has been financially driven (church finances), and there has been little focus placed on mission (why we are here and what it means to be church). It is suggested then, that the Boundaries Commission emphasize and educate in its reporting on the latter. Otherwise, the Church risks losing its soul.

Cathy Hamilton expressed that there is a hope that however the regional boundaries are drawn-up, that the administration becomes a lot lighter. There is also the hope that the new structures calls people out to become better.

Debbie Poirier, Chair of Seaway Valley Presbytery expressed that the most important message she has to convey from her Presbytery is that the rural voice is not forgotten.

Ryan McNally encouraged both Seaway Valley Presbytery and Consistoire Laurentien to present their thoughts at remits@united-church.ca.

Fred Braman suggested that this group reconvene during the 21 day period after receiving the draft report to further discuss and report back to the Boundaries Commission prior to the final report being released.

Ryan McNally offered to take back to the Boundaries Commission the question regarding "making the thoughts of the entire country' available for all to see".

After visiting with the representatives from the Boundaries Commission, many felt a deeper sense of trust in the process to determine new regional boundaries. It was suggested that this new level of trust be conveyed back to the Presbyteries in order to reduce the anxiety felt by many over the process.

It was restated that the Boundaries Commission is limited to a maximum of 15 regions. Dave McCormack asked the question if the number of households would determine regional boundaries, expressing concern over this model because the big cities would become regions on their own (i.e., Toronto, Vancouver, Winnipeg). Cathy Hamilton and Marc Grenon made reference to the General Council motion regarding criteria that would be used as guiding factors for creating regional boundaries: the numbers of communities of faith to be serviced, the number of members, their wealth, geographic distances, and sense of belonging.

Debbie Poirier highlighted that Seaway Valley Presbytery values many of its ministries (indigenous, rural, French Ministries), and it brought into question how vital ministries will be preserved and continued in the new regional model. Cathy explained how French Ministries hopes to be continued within the new structure, and she referenced proposal GS 67 "French Ministries" was explained (see page 115, *Executive of the General Council Workbook, November 18-20, 2017*).

Debbie Poirier expressed concerns about the new model is that there may exist a looser framework for establishing/ re-establishing connections/relationships between larger communities and smaller communities who already have strong ties. There is a fear that during the change, smaller communities (especially rural) will lose the support it now has.

There has only been one suggestion out of Seaway Valley (suggested by Blair Patterson), which is that the Presbytery merges with Ottawa Presbytery and most of Bay of Quinte Presbytery, using highway 41 as the boundary north to Pembroke, and east to Belleville using highway 62. There have been no other suggestions, and there is an underlying disposition in Seaway Valley Presbytery will go where they are told. These communities of faith are trying to survive and boundaries, structures are not the focus. The Presbytery is struggling to get Quorum at Presbytery meeting, let-alone begin discussing changes on a National level. That is why they are simply asking that they (in particular) rural ministries not be forgotten during the changes. People are already withdrawing out of fear of change.

Cathy Hamilton explained that currently there are four Presbyteries that 'have to have' four committees. This taxes the existing volunteer-base, which continues to dwindle. The Regional Model is designed to open up possibilities and provide flexibility for volunteers to serve in different ways (and on other committees). If the leadership is willing to step in, encourage and lead in the new space that is being created by the Regional Model, there is a hope that movement can take new direction (particular in directions where there is enthusiasm and hope). This movement may encourage more resources, with renewed energy to be the Church.

Dave McCormack suggested, after listening to the criteria presented about diversity, that the Synode Montreal & Ottawa Conference already has the right 'stuff' to make up a region. Furthermore, there are already existing networks and relationships within the boundaries of Synode Montreal & Ottawa Conference, so why change its boundaries? Elaine Beattie wondered if the boundaries change, then people will have a natural tendency to gravitate back to what is familiar to them. This could make a lengthy process to forge and create new relationship. Therefore, change for the sake of change may be more damaging. What is the purpose of the change and does it warrant the action?

Mead Baldwin expressed that the current state of affairs does warrant action: Finances are a mess; committees remain vacant. There needs to be a renewed sense of purpose, of going out with optimism, joy and hope in following Jesus in mission. The current church structure is overlaid and bogged down. Cathy Hamilton reaffirmed that it was her hope that the change brought about by the new structures will produce more leadership and new energy.

Dave McCormack asked if the Church needed new geographical structures to deal with existing challenges and wondered if this was only going to make it worse (i.e., discussing and debating with strangers about the directions the Regional Councils should take)? The relationships are already in place to work through structural changes coming; why change this as well, instead of simply focusing on the structures of administration?

Anne Montgomery explained that within Ottawa Presbytery, it is the geographical distances that impede people's availability. Most are reluctant to drive more than an hour to attend meetings. The change around the table is nothing more than meeting friend that one has not met yet. Instead, the emphasis may need to be placed on 'throwing the baby out with bath water' and the consequence of losing competent staff without considering their worth beyond finances.

Marc Grenon suggested that another perspective one could take is that, while reducing the administrative layers and relying on congregations to administer themselves, this may lead to a more Congregationalist viewpoint, and have more congregations deciding that they don't want to have anything to do with the Regional Council and governance (i.e., we don't need to do a JNAP, we don't need to hire a minister we can find pulpit supply from within, we don't need to send money to the Regional Council, we will only give to the Mission and Service Fund).

Dan Hayward explained that the heritage of the United Church is connectivity. Theologically, Scripture demonstrates that churches are not operating individually. It is Church leadership that has to help foster this connectivity. It will be important to convey connectivity in January, when the final report is issued from the Boundaries commission in January. Despite the decision coming out of Toronto, it is not Toronto who is making the decision; it is people from all across Canada who have volunteered to take on this task on behalf of the entire Church.

5:45 Supper

Thursday Evening – Jeudi soir

7:00 # 5. *Ensure ways of providing a collective Conference voice on public Christian witness –
S'assurer de faire entendre la voix collective du Synode comme témoignage chrétien sur la scène publique.*

➤ AGM 2018 (Elaine Beattie)

Theme: "From the past will come our future/"Tsi Ni'iotohétston kwah ne Entkáhawe tsi Nia'honkwonhátie/ Du passé viendra notre avenir"

The AGM will take place in two phases, one being an online business meeting (**Friday, May 11th 2018**), and phase two, a day of celebration and the Celebration of Ministry Service, to be held at Wyman Memorial United Church (**Saturday, May 26th 2018**). The logistics for the online business meeting are still being planned, and Stephen Fetter will be providing support (Stephen has experience administering General Council Executive meetings online, as well as the most recent reconvening of General Council 42 meeting online). During the business meeting, there will also be an opportunity for those who do not have high-speed internet connection to listen in and vote using the telephone. The planning committee is still collecting responses from the survey it had created to learn how many people would participate online as well as when, and to learn how people would like to celebrate that last meeting of Conference.

Information was provided regarding correspondence received from St. Paul's Eastern in Ottawa Presbytery, who were asking for a two-day meeting (and they were willing to play host), and it was reiterated that the decision has been made to continue with the plan for an online meeting and a day of celebration. Reassurances were offered by explaining that Stephen Fetter will be providing his expertise during the online business meeting, as well as during the planning leading up to the meeting. It was also explained that part of the reasoning for the decision to go with an online business meeting was so that

everyone would be in their own space, and the feeling of remoteness and exclusion from a centralized location would be eliminated (this issue was raised after last year's meeting). There will be practice runs for people to connect before the meeting to ensure that connections are working.

Discussion: it was reiterated that for those who do not have internet connection and are only able to connect by phone that they feel just as connected to the meeting as the others who are connecting through the internet. They will need to hear the motions in their finality and when the question is asked, they will need to hear the motion read in its finality. It was suggested that the Presbyteries investigate who within their Presbyteries could not connect through the internet and that they be contacted directly to be worked with prior to the meeting. It was suggested that Presbyteries begin familiarizing members with using technology (Adobe Connect) during Presbytery meetings. It was mentioned/suggested that the planning committee have contingencies in place for last minute registrations.

- Nomination Forms for Election of GC 43 Commissioners, President-elect (see Appendix 3 and Appendix 4)
- Proposals templates (see Appendix 5) If there are proposals, there will be an opportunity for those who drafted the proposal to create a YouTube video explaining the proposal which will be made available on the Conference website (It will be the same for committee reports). There will also be an opportunity for proposals (and reports) to be presented through adobe connect webinars, which can be organized through the Conference. During the business meeting, when it comes time to discuss proposals, there will be chat boxes open, as well as speaking into the meeting (2 minutes countdown).

It was noted that the 2018 budget has already been voted on, and because the Conference will cease to exist in 2019, there is no need to have a vote on a proposed 2019 budget.

9:00 Refreshments

Appendices

Appendix 1	Report to the Executive of the Synode Montreal & Ottawa Conference concerning the extension of Sacraments Elders privileges to a larger group of individuals.	Pages 64-65
Appendix 2	Youth and Young Adult Events 2017-18	Pages 66-67
Appendix 3	43rd General Council Commissioner Nomination Form	Page 68
Appendix 4	President-Elect Nomination Form	Page 69
Appendix 5	Proposal templates	Pages 70-75

Appendix 1**Report to the Executive of the Synode Montreal & Ottawa Conference concerning the extension of Sacraments Elders privileges to a larger group of individuals.****BACKGROUND**

The issue was raised at the June 20, 2017, meeting of the expanded Executive of the Synode M&O Conference, and a request was made that the conversation continue after the meeting with a report to be submitted to the Conference Executive at its November 9 and 10 meeting. Marc Grenon, Chair of the Québec Presbytery - Consistoire du Québec volunteered to lead this conversation.

An email was sent out on July 12 to a list of persons named at the June 20 meetings and other names were added on subsequently.

Note that the conversation was limited to the sacrament of COMMUNION, and did not include baptism as the need expressed referred in particular to the former. It is understood, however, that a wider discussion of the celebration of sacraments by our communities of faith would be in order and warrant a more in-depth look (Barbara Reynolds).

Contributions to the conversation were made by Lee Ann Hogle, Heather McClure, Cathy Hamilton, Rosemary Lambie, Martyn Sadler, Samuel Dansokho, Debbie Poirier, Charlotte Griffith, Elizabeth Bryce, Barbara Reynolds, and Carolyn Ruda.

FINDINGS

There is consensus that the need for more Sacraments Elders, particularly for the sacrament of COMMUNION, is real and even pressing.

However, two major roadblocks stand in the way.

The first is that this privilege is granted to a member of a congregation or pastoral charge for the benefit of the congregation or pastoral charge where that person is a member. Policy does not allow for this privilege to be granted so that a licensed individual can serve a larger area, let alone within a town, city or district. Allowing Sacraments Elders to offer COMMUNION to a much larger community would be very helpful.

The second and certainly the most problematic is the need for the adequate and appropriate supervision and mentoring of licensed individuals.

While it would be relatively easy to provide and deliver the training required, there are resources available for that, the oversight and continuing supervision and mentoring of these individuals over time poses a serious difficulty. Reports from Pastoral Relation Committees and other sources indicate that the resources for fulfilling the oversight and mentoring roles are simply too scarce, not to say non-existent within the bounds of Québec Presbytery - Consistoire du Québec and Ottawa Presbytery. One simply needs to look at the difficulty in many cases in Québec Presbytery - Consistoire du Québec in finding Pastoral Charge Supervisors to meet that essential needs to understand the dilemma. This is also true of Ottawa Presbytery.

A few correspondents suggested that intern supply be licensed as Sacraments Elders, given that they have more theological education, are already under supervision and enjoy greater ministry contact in the congregation they serve. As Elizabeth puts it: "If our theology is not one of 'magic fingers', doesn't it make sense that the person who visits the sick, buries the dead, is the one person who breaks bread?" Others argued that students should also be licensed, no doubt on the same grounds, and that there have been precedents for this.

While the current policy at M&O Conference, issued in 2004 and revised in 2012, does not allow for the licensing of students, there be grounds, given how much the context has changed within the UCC in the last 5 years, to revisit once again this policy.

There is the further difficulty of determining which body should oversee the work of the Sacraments Elders. The Québec Presbytery - Consistoire du Québec Pastoral Relations Committee has already stated that the Committee is overstretched as it is and would not have the necessary resources to take on this task.

While extending training in AGAPE rituals is deemed appropriate, AGAPE is not COMMUNION.

RECOMMENDATION

That the criteria of “remoteness” for determining eligibility for the licensing of lay Sacraments Elders be reconsidered and even eliminated, to be replaced by criteria referring to the unavailability of ordered ministry personnel within a given area to administer sacraments.

That the M&O Conference policy on Sacraments Elders be revised and amended to allow Sacraments Elders to administer sacraments beyond the bounds of their particular congregation or pastoral charge, while restricted to a designated area. Or, that rather than allowing current Sacrament Elders to function outside their pastoral charge, that the number of Sacraments Elders be increased to correspond to the number of pastoral charges in need of regular communion service (“one Sacraments Elder – One Charge – One Pastoral Charge Supervisor).

That the M&O Conference policy on Sacraments Elders be revised and amended to allow pulpit supply and students in solo ministry to be licensed as Sacraments Elders where the need for such licensing has been identified and confirmed by the proper authority.

That responsibility for oversight and mentoring of Sacraments Elders be exercised at the Conference level where the pool of suitable individuals for exercising these roles may be greater.

Respectfully submitted,
Marc A. Grenon, Chair
Québec Presbytery - Consistoire du Québec

Appendix 2**Conference Executive – Youth and Young Adult Events**

Yaya at AGM: I would have liked to have been more successful in getting youth and young adults to come to AGM; however those who did come were quite engaged. The youth got to reflect on and share personal stories about journeys of hope; this seemed to be generally well received.

Quebec Presbytery Camp: Camp was one week long (June 25th – July 1st) and held in beautiful Ste-Herménégilde, Qc. Children and youth enjoyed activities such as arts and crafts, waterfront, boating, archery, drama, music, and much, much more. We did morning watch every day after breakfast which usually consisted of a biblical story and a few hymns, and vespers every evening before campfire.

GO Project: A project of Islington United Church in Toronto, Go Project brings together youth from all over Canada to experience the UCCan in new cities and new experiences. Go Project was held in Montreal for the first time this summer over an 11 day period where we explored the themes of community and truth and reconciliation by working on volunteer projects, visiting mission sites around Montreal, participating in a march in Kanehsatà:ke, meeting youth and speaking with elders in Kahnawake, as well as exploring the Old Port, Mount Royal and different Montreal landmarks.

Rendezvous: More than 600 people attended this huge event held at Concordia in Montreal. YaYa got to attend workshops, visit Montreal mission sites, listen to keynote speakers, meet youth from other conferences of the UCCan, do volunteer work, and worship together.

Montreal Pride Parade: The parade took place the day after Rendezvous, many stayed in Montreal an extra day to walk in the parade with a mixed group of United and Anglican YaYa. We offered hugs to the public together.

Youth Forum: This event was held in Waterloo Quebec from the 3rd to the 5th of November. Our theme was De-Stress, De-Clutter, DIY (do it yourself), where we discussed ways to manage stress, to de-clutter our lives, and how to practice self-care. We brought out our baking skills in the kitchen and created our own bath bombs to relax.

Upcoming Events

GC43 Winter Gathering Youth Forum: Five youth delegates, aged 15 to 18, (age in 2017) will be chosen to attend the Winter Retreat, a weekend event February 16-19/2018 at Five Oaks Conference Centre in Ontario. They will also attend the General Council in Oshawa, July 21-28/2018. This Retreat will help to prepare and form the Youth attending Youth Forum at GC 43. At this Retreat, the five youth from Montreal and Ottawa Conference will gather with five youth from each of the other Conferences in Canada.

The GC 43 Youth Forum as a group will elect 13 youth (one from each Conference), and an additional 13 alternates, and recommend them to Conferences for election as commissioners to the General Council.

During summer 2018, the 13 youth commissioners, along with two young adult leaders, will be employed by the General Council to make a pilgrimage across the country to United Church youth events, gatherings, and camps to listen to the dreams and needs of young people. They will also spend some weeks working in their home conference. The whole time of employment will be July 4- August. 24/2018. They will then serve as commissioners at the 42nd General Council in Oshawa, July 21-28/2018.

I have created an application form for YaYa to apply for these positions. The link is <https://form.jotform.com/73048128332250>

The deadline for applications is December 5th at 11:59 p.m.

You can email mandoyouth@gmail.com for the link sent directly to you, for additional information, or to have any questions answered.

Worshiplude: The date is set for February 2nd, 3rd, and 4th. The Worshiplude service will be held on Saturday, February 3rd at 7pm at Parkdale United Church, Ottawa and the guest speaker will be Andrew Hyde. Supper will be served at 5:30 at the cost of 10\$.

Take advantage of all the fun activities happening in the city for the Winterlude festival; Skate on the Rideau Canal, visit a museum, watch fireworks, see amazing ice sculptures, ride ice slides, and more!

For more information and registration forms contact Ottawa Presbytery YAYA Minister, Rev. Hilary Merritt at hmerritt@uccanottawa.org or visit <http://ottawayayauc.com>

Appendix 3

Synode Montreal and Ottawa Conference
Nomination Form

(Submitted to the Conference no later than: April 15, 2018)

43rd General Council Commissioner

The Position of General Council Commissioner is to serve for a three-year term, attending a one-day preparation session prior to attending the General Council meeting (July 21-27), participating in follow-up video conferences, attends the Conference Executive in November and April, and being available to visit ministry sites in their Presbyteries to disseminate information and clarify processes.

Name of Nominee _____

- Ministry Personnel (i.e., Ordained, Diaconal, Designated Lay Minister)
- Lay
- Under 30 before July 1, 2018

With which gender do you identify? _____

Nominated by _____

Seconded by _____

Member Presbytery: _____

Pastoral Charge: _____

Biography (250 word max).

Please provide a Photo (High Resolution) .jpg

Disclaimer: I agree that this information and photo may be posted on the Conference website.

Date signed _____

Nominee

Nominator

Secunder

Appendix 4

Synode Montreal and Ottawa Conference
Nomination Form

(Submitted to the Conference no later than: April 15, 2018)

President-Elect

M&O Conference Nominations Committee is seeking someone to serve as President-Elect to assist in the transition phase as we move to a new governance model. As the President -Elect can only be elected at the Annual General Meeting in May 2018, duties would begin at the rise of Conference and continue for the next seven months. In addition, the President-Elect would be a commissioner to General Council 43 to be held in Oshawa in July 2018.

The position of President-Elect requires participation at Conference Executive meetings (held once every two months), to occasionally respond with the Conference Executive Secretary to correspondence, and to serve as part of the Conference sub-Executive as required.

Name of Nominee _____

Nominated by _____

Seconded by _____

Member Presbytery: _____

Pastoral Charge: _____

Biography (250 word max).

Please provide a Photo (High Resolution) .jpg

Disclaimer: I agree that this information and photo may be posted on the Conference website.

Date signed _____

Nominee

Nominator

Seconder

Appendix 5

PROPOSAL NAME [TEMPLATE]

Origin: [most often Permanent Committee name]

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

We believe God/Jesus/Holy Spirit is calling us to:

- do something about...
- engage the topic of...
- respond to the challenge of...
- etc.

2. Why is this issue important?

What are the key underlying theological, ecclesiological, missional, or justice issues?

What is the history/background of this issue?

What are the principles informing this issue?

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

Name a possible response that the GCE might consider:

- A. Study/Discussion of the issue
- B. Action on the issue

This could include:

- GCE directing that a policy/strategy be developed based on specified principles and parameters
- GCE adopting a policy position/strategy
- GCE encouraging/suggesting action by congregations and other communities of faith on the issue
- GCE forwarding the proposal to GC43

Note to 3.A: The General Council Executive could be asked to have a conversation about a particular issue as an end in itself without making a policy decision or taking other action.

Note to 3.B: Suggestions for wording of a policy/strategy could be offered as possibilities for consideration in the decision-making process but not as expectations of a particular outcome.

4. For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council Executive:

Are there comments, affirmations, suggestions you would like to make with respect to this proposal?

**Is this proposal in response to assigned work – either from General Council or a previous GCE meeting?
Please list proposal / motion numbers.**

“Operational” proposal
example

GS xx FRENCH TRANSLATION OF *THE MANUAL*

Origin: General Secretary, General Council and the Manual Committee

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

We believe God is calling us to honour our commitments to interculturalism, and specifically to equitable key resources such as The Manual in French.

5. Why is this issue important?

Our commitment to interculturalism must be more than just symbolic and theological, it must also be expressed in practical terms such as translating important Church documents and resources into French. Partnering with French ministries in our Church to work toward this goal is vital.

The 2013 edition of The Manual was published in English as a complete re-write of the by-laws contained in the previous edition of The Manual. The 2013 Manual has now been translated into French. Montreal Presbytery and the Consistoire Laurientien have each given their approval to the translated version.

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

Notice the word *could*

The 42nd General Council 2015 could recognize the version of The Manual 2013 posted at the link below as the official French translation of The Manual:

http://www.united-church.ca/fr/files/handbooks/manual_2013.pdf

4. For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council Executive:

(Comments if needed)

Is this proposal in response to assigned work – either from General Council or a previous GCE meeting? Please list proposal / motion numbers.

(Comments if needed)

GS 11 FRENCH TRANSLATION OF *THE MANUAL*

Origin: General Secretary, General Council and the Manual Committee

From GC42

The General Secretary proposes that:

The 42nd General Council 2015 recognize the version of The Manual 2013 posted at the link below as the official French translation of The Manual:

This became sect. 3

http://www.united-church.ca/fr/files/handbooks/manual_2013.pdf

Background:

The 2013 edition of The Manual was published in English as a complete re-write of the by-laws contained in the previous edition of The Manual. The 2013 Manual has now been translated into French. Montreal Presbytery and the Consistoire Laurientien have each given their approval to the translated version.

This became Parag 2 sect. 2

Complex but still
"Operational" proposal
Example using TorConf mat'l

Proposal – becoming an Affirming Ministry

1. What is the issue?

We believe the Holy Spirit is calling us to implement the fruits of the conversations and work Toronto Conference has engaged in regarding becoming an Affirming Conference.

2. Why is this issue important?

For many years The United Church of Canada has spoken about God's vision of inclusion of all people including those who are marginalized because of sexual orientation, gender identity, physical or mental abilities, etc.

For the last two years the Conference has been engaged in conversation about whether to become an Affirming Ministry within The United Church of Canada, as have many communities of faith, presbyteries and Conferences, and other institutions and organizations.

Affirming Ministries have a particular focus on being open and welcoming to people of any sexual orientation and gender identity, but the focus is also on those who are marginalized in other ways. Some resources for this conversation have come from Affirm United at <http://affirmunited.ause.ca/affirming-ministries-program/>.

In a world with increasingly overt forms of intolerance and prejudice, it's important that Toronto Conference join others in declaring that Conference is a safe and welcoming place for those who may experience discrimination in other parts of their lives. Conference can make such a statement on its own behalf, but it does not presume that others in the church take a similar action. Each part of the church's conciliar system has the right to make its own decisions. If approved, the vision statement and plan of action would outline what Toronto Conference itself is going to do; it is not what we're telling others to do.

A task group was appointed to guide the process. They conducted conversations at previous annual meetings, met with all Conference committees and/or working groups, drafted a vision statement and a plan of action, and gave all this work to the Conference Executive for consideration. The material was translated into a number of languages, was put on the Conference's website, and a request for feedback was sent out. The Executive reviewed the feedback on the Affirming Ministry vision statement and plan of action and engaged in extensive discussion and changes to the documents that had been circulated.

3. How might Toronto Conference respond to this issue?

Toronto Conference could [*agree in principle to*] implement the program outlined in appendix A.

Rather than demanding agreement with a line-by-line program this wording encourages “agreement in principle” and DESCRIBES a process without the need to fight over every word – and gives freedom to modify during implementation.

Appendix A

The Executive discussed numerous practical ways in which the vision statement and plan of action could become living documents that reflect changes in attitude and practice. Some of those ideas include:

- Maintain its properties, striving to ensure accessibility for all people
- Hold Conference events and meetings in locations that are accessible
- Prepare and publicize an inventory of accessible locations within Toronto Conference communities of faith
- Engage guest speakers/preachers at events to reflect diversity
- Follow the practice of having introductions/name tags that indicate gender pronoun preferences.
- Review all policies with an affirming lens
- Monitor diversity in its nominations procedures
- Identify, challenge and/or eliminate barriers in hiring or ministry development processes
- Develop consistency in signage acknowledging the Conference as being an Affirming Ministry

The Conference’s Executive is proposing that the annual meeting approve the following Affirming Ministry vision statement and plan of action:

Vision statement

Striving to be faithful followers of Jesus in our time and place, Toronto Conference will continue to remove barriers to participation in the life and work of the Conference and society, committing itself to be open to the Spirit. Resisting all forms of oppression, we welcome and celebrate people of any sexual orientation and gender identity, and those who are marginalized.

Plan of action

The Executive and Executive Secretary will report annually on actions taken to fulfill the vision statement: “Striving to be faithful followers of Jesus in our time and place, Toronto Conference will continue to remove barriers to participation in the life and work of the Conference and society, committing itself to be open to the Spirit. Resisting all forms of oppression, we welcome and celebrate people of any sexual orientation and gender identity, and those who are marginalized.” The reports will focus on...

Removing barriers to participation in the life and work of the Conference

Toronto Conference will...

- Review all policies and actions with a view to removing barriers
- Commit itself to relationship building in its business and activities
- Engage in education continually

Removing barriers to participation in society

Toronto Conference will...

- Advocate for municipal, provincial and federal government policies and laws that reflect a diverse and inclusive society
- Speak out on current events that demean, stigmatize or incite violence against others
- Encourage conversation with interchurch or interfaith groups

Being open to the Spirit

Toronto Conference will...

- Listen together for God's on-going revelation
- Discern new voices and seek them out
- Strive to hear and engage the diverse voices within the Conference

Welcoming and celebrating people of any sexual orientation and gender identity

Toronto Conference will...

- Encourage communities of faith to engage in conversations about being safe spaces for people of any sexual orientation and gender identity within the church and community
 - Provide education on evolving gender identity language

Celebrating and acknowledging diversity

Toronto Conference will...

- Conduct its business and activities in a respectful manner that allows for open discussion and shared opinions

PENSION BOARD AND GOLDCORP**Origin: Maritime Conference**

NB – this was a working copy to help re-write their proposal in the new format.
This is NOT their final version!

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

We believe God is calling us to act in accordance with our professed social justice values.

8. Why is this issue important?

We believe the United Church has a responsibility to respond to the ethical imperative of our faith as expressed in the social policies of The United Church of Canada, and commitments to partnership and right relations including support for free, prior and informed consent.

A proposal was passed at General Council 42 calling on The United Church of Canada Pension Board (UCCPB) to divest of its shares in Goldcorp and make public that divestment. The UCCPB responded that it was not able to act on this request due to fiduciary responsibility to the pension plan members.

This has revealed a disconnect between the Church's desire to try to act ethically in accordance with our social justice values and the realities of the limits of our ability to directly influence organizations that are connected to our Church but operate at arm's length from it.

The Maritime Conference Mining the Connections Working Group sent a letter in April 2017 to the General Council Executive, as the Administrator of the United Church Pension Plan, asking that the General Council Executive request that the Pension Board re-consider its decision, based on the detailed information and analysis outlining the grievous environmental and social harms of Goldcorp mining projects in Guatemala provided by the Mining the Connections Working Group in its letter of April 2017.

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

The General Council Executive could ask the UCCPB to re-consider its decision to refuse to divest from Goldcorp.

The General Council Executive could draft (or seek to draft) /or refine a set of guiding principles for ethical investments.

The General Council Executive could develop educational and resource materials, in partnership with existing environmental justice groups within the church, to raise this discussion within communities of faith across the Church.

Notice the inclusion of actions for communities of faith!