

Proposal 23

Title: Extension of Voting Privileges by mail-in ballot within the Pastoral Charge and/or Congregational setting in the United Church of Canada

Originating Body: Humphrey Memorial United Church Congregational Council

Proposal: Humphrey Memorial United Church Council, through Chignecto Presbytery and Maritime Conference, proposes that the 40th General Council:

- Review The Manual Appendix III, section 7(d) as it relates to pastoral charges and congregations;
- Prepare guidelines and limitations which would allow pastoral charges and congregations to allow mail-in ballots for members who are in full membership; and
- Implement the guidelines and recommendations and communicate them to the Pastoral Charges of the United Church of Canada.

Background:

In the past two plus years, Humphrey Memorial United Church has found itself bringing a number of motions before the congregation which could have far-reaching consequences on the future direction of the congregation. The motions and their implications were always well communicated in advance (by a telephone-tree system, announcements in the worship bulletin and from the pulpit, on our church website and in our worship ad in the local newspaper). Invariably there were members in full-membership unable to attend the meeting where the motions were voted on because of employment, unchangeable travel arrangements, or educational demands (e.g. class schedule) and (though, not often) illness. Additionally, at some meetings motions were tabled to a future date and members who attended the original meeting and debate were unable to attend the subsequent meeting to vote.

Some members were unaware of Section 7(d) of Appendix III and had been in congregations which allowed proxy or mail-in votes, or knew of congregations which did. Many of the members being denied a vote because of circumstances beyond their control are regular attendees and contributors, both in time and money, to the functioning of the Congregation. These members, being in full-membership, find it difficult to accept that, due to circumstances beyond their control, they are unable to exercise their voting privilege.

WHEREAS members in full membership of a Pastoral Charge or Congregation voluntarily choose to become members of a Pastoral Charge or Congregation and are not elected or appointed as is the case within other courts of the United Church of Canada;

WHEREAS the members of a Pastoral Charge or Congregation often contribute considerable time, money and effort into the functioning of the Pastoral Charge or Congregation;

WHEREAS the pastoral charge or congregation would cease to exist without the membership and their commitment;

WHEREAS absence at a meeting is not, in and of itself, an indication of disinterest;

WHEREAS, current employment and educational commitments, travel schedules and occasional illnesses are often beyond the control of members;

WHEREAS employment and educational demands on members of pastoral charges and congregations are an increasing factor and are likely to continue to be a factor in the ability of members to attend all congregational or pastoral charge meetings;

WHEREAS, due to the local nature of pastoral charges and congregations, members are often informed in advance of the issues surrounding major impending motions through bulletin announcements or from the pulpit; and

WHEREAS all members of the body of Christ as it is expressed in the pastoral charge or congregation are of equal importance;

Intermediate Court Action : Chignecto Presbytery voted to transmit with concurrence on May 20, 2009

It is moved by Bob Johnson, seconded by Peter Smith that the 84th Annual Meeting of Maritime Conference concur with Proposal #23 entitled “Extension of voting privileges by mail-in ballot within the pastoral charge”

MOTION DEFEATED

It is moved by Bob Johnson, seconded by Peter Smith that the 84th Annual Meeting of Maritime Conference not transmit proposal #23 entitled “Extension of voting privileges by mail-in ballot within the pastoral charge” to the 40th General Council of The United Church of Canada.

MOTION CARRIED