

Title: Remove the Category “Congregational Designated Ministers”

Originating Body: Halifax Presbytery

Maritime Conference Action: Transmit with non concurrence and note appended

Financial Implications: N/A

Staffing Implications: N/A

Proposal:

Halifax Presbytery proposes, through Maritime Conference, that the 40th General Council (2009):

Remove section 345 from The Manual (2007) (Congregational Designated Ministers)

Background:

The category of Congregational Designated Ministers was included in The Manual (2007), and became effective February 1, 2009, with the procedural handbook published in January 2009. There are significant problems with the new Congregational Designated Ministry policies around implementation, pay equity and justice issues:

New Responsibilities:

- (i) Congregational Ministry and Personnel Committees must establish an educational plan if the Congregational Designated Minister does not have the competencies for his/her position, with no guidelines and no guarantee that any given Ministry and Personnel Committee has the required expertise.
- (ii) Discernment will now be done congregationally, without Presbytery/District guidance. It is unwise for Ministry Personnel in the charge to discern with a parishioner and potential colleague, and there may be no one else in the Congregation with experience of paid accountable ministry to provide guidance, experience or insight.
- (iii) The Congregational Designated Ministry policy is part of a trend that allows less qualified individuals to do ministry, while increasing the load on the committees that screen and equip them.

Process Issues:

- (i) Since discernment is permitted after the Congregational Designated Minister is already in place, there will be pressure to confirm the Congregational Designated Minister's suitability for a position he/she already occupies. This is not discernment as the church has practiced it, but a probationary period.
- (ii) A Congregational Designated Minister may be hired without the competencies for his/her position, provided he/she is “willing” to be trained, and he/she may continue without Presbytery/District recognition if the competencies are not attained. Unqualified

Congregational Designated Ministers may leave us vulnerable in many areas including legal action.

- (iii) Conference Interview Board is now optional. A Presbytery/District Education and Students Committee may now determine readiness for ministry with less input.
- (iv) Committees critical to the implementation of these policies received their first briefing in March 2009, when the policies were already in force. There is a deep systemic concern, that decisions on ministry are being made faster than they can be effectively implemented.

Justice Issues:

- (i) Compensation levels for Congregational Designated Ministry positions are determined by Presbytery/District Pastoral Relations based on guidelines from General Council that do not need to be adhered to.
- (ii) Cash strapped congregations now have incentives to try to hire less qualified ministry personnel.
- (iii) Congregational Designated Ministers are not members of Presbyteries/ Districts, even though they are under Presbytery/ District discipline. CDMs would be disciplined by a body in which they have no voice.

NOTE: The annual meeting of the Maritime Conference wishes to note that the concerns related to the implementation of the policies related to Congregational Designated Ministry have added confusion and raised concern for those in the present programs and for the Presbyteries as the new policy is being sorted through. It was expressed that the implementation of the new policy adds significantly to the work load of the Presbytery in areas which are beyond the expertise of the Presbytery. The annual meeting acknowledged that this proposal contradicts the Proposal titled Clarify Aspects of the Grandfathering of Staff Associates with which it concurs. The concerns related in this proposal are more systemic and ask for a deeper consideration of the whole matter.