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The “One Order of Ministry” proposal affirms many aspects of my understanding of ministry, both lay and ordered. My over-arching understanding of ministry is that all people in the church offer various forms of ministry (as has been poetically reflected in our most recent statement of faith, “A Song of Faith”). Within those forms of ministry, some are called into paid, accountable ministry, while others continue to be called to express their ministries as lay people in the church and in the world. I believe this proposal challenges the church to move to a non-hierarchical understanding of ordered ministry by including DLMS as ordered ministers. This move is in keeping with my understanding of the broader concept of ministry in the Protestant tradition: the priesthood of all believers. At the same time, retaining an order of ministry also upholds the Reformed emphasis on good order being part of faithful witness to the ministry of Jesus Christ and the mission of God as expressed through particular churches.

The "One Order" paper focuses on the function of ministry, rather than a quasi-ontological understanding of ordination and commission. Baptism, not ordination or commissioning, is the ritual of admittance to all forms of ministry in the church. An understanding of ordination and commissioning as the sole expressions of a commitment to lifelong ministry, reflects a modern, rather than postmodern, understanding of identity and practice. I believe that ministry is best ordered in ways that can reflect the real complexity of the current context of world and church, and in ways that are attentive to the sources for theological reflection: experience, scripture, tradition, and reason. Like the authors of the 1940 Statement of Faith, I believe that we are called to revise and re-claim our theology (theologies) of ministry “in terms of the thoughts of their own age and with the emphasis their age needs” (Statement of Faith, 1940). The “One Order” paper explicitly names our current context as one of the motivating factors for moving toward one order of ministry, allowing for both flexibility and structure, as we continue to navigate a postmodern, pluralistic context in which we seek to live out our call to be faithful people in God’s world.

Attentiveness to the traditions of ecumenism is also important, and noted in the “One Order” paper; one could argue the move to ordination for all streams of paid, accountable, ordered ministry in the United Church moves us closer to our ecumenical partners. For instance, some current DLMS are not particularly welcome in their local ministerials because they are not recognized as “real” ministers (i.e., not ordained).

Scripture reminds us of the many ways in which ministry can be ordered. The clear foundation in the Pauline letters is the call from God and the gifts of the person called (as expressed in functions of ministry, such as teaching, preaching, healing, speaking in tongues, etc.). An emphasis on function in ministry can be read in scripture; in this way, we could argue that the “One Order” paper re-orient us to a particular biblical understanding of ministry, which is for the common good, according to Paul. “One Order” acknowledges the various gifts of those called into paid, accountable ministry, and would allow (in our polity) for more freedom and flexibility in expressing, honing, and utilizing those gifts (already realized in our practices, since some in ministry focus more on chaplaincy; some focus more on teaching; some focus more on proclamation; etc.).

I fully affirm the value of educated ministry and appreciate the MDiv degree as preparation for paid, accountable ministry. As someone who sought additional theological education and formation beyond the MDiv (PhD), I fully value and affirm the depth and breadth of education that is offered in the traditional academic degrees at United Church theological colleges. At the same time, I also recognize the depth and breadth of education that is offered in different ways through other theological education programs of the United Church (VST's Native Ministry school; Sandy Saulteaux's diploma program; the Centre for Christian Studies' diploma program; the Designated Lay Ministry program; AST's summer ministry program). Valuing "an educated clergy" does not need to mean an uncritical adherence to a degree as the sole form of theological education for ministry in the church. The paper retains our historical emphasis on an educated clergy and identifies barriers that had previously kept some people from being able to answer God's call to paid, accountable ministry in the United Church. Barriers include different learning styles and needs; life stages; class and educational backgrounds. Opening up other educational pathways to ministry for people of diverse educational, class, and geographic backgrounds is another way of living into our commitment to become an intercultural church.

Ensuring we establish a baseline of theological education, competencies, and formation for ministry is key. I believe there is still significant work to be done on ascertaining the baseline for theological education in the United Church, and assessing **all** forms of theological education/educational pathways against this baseline, however. One of the inherent contradictions in "One Order" is the suggestion that a revised and lengthened DLM program might become the baseline for theological education. However, the suggested ways of reforming that program in "One Order" imply that the traditional MDiv in fact remains the baseline for theological education.

The United Church, with our emphases on the ministry of all, equity, justice; non-hierarchical ways of being community together, and democratic process would now more fully reflect these ethical principles and commitments in our theology, polity, and practice of paid, accountable ministry. The "One Order" paper suggests some helpful ways forward for us as a church, so we can continue the good work of preparing people for ministry.

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