

**Discussion Paper**  
**Conference Ministry, Annual Meetings and Ministry Funding**  
**May 2011**

**THE MISSION OF LONDON CONFERENCE**

To be a people involved in Christ's ministry in the world by encouraging leadership, support and oversight so that we may

*“Bring good news to the poor, ...  
proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
let the oppressed go free  
and proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.”* (LUKE 4:18-19, NRSV)

**THE GOALS OF LONDON CONFERENCE**

To actively support clergy, congregations and Presbyteries as they struggle to fulfill the Mission.

To encourage people to dare to explore new frontiers of faith, witness and caring in terms of the evangelism and stewardship of the whole of life.

Continually to affirm in the world the biblical concept of justice in partnership with the whole people of God.

To be a people determined by the Spirit of Christ and freed from bondage to culture and tradition.

**THE OBJECTIVES OF LONDON CONFERENCE**

To challenge the church to understand, integrate and act upon the Mission and Goals.

Regularly to examine and evaluate existing structures of the Conference as to their effectiveness in achieving the Mission and Goals.

To initiate a review of the existing structures of The United Church of Canada in terms of their effectiveness in carrying out the mission of Christ in the World.

Conference Ministry: What is the new Funding Formula?

London Conference has changed its assessment formula used to fund the conference ministry, to using Column 40 in the Yearbook—Expended for Operation of Pastoral Charge (i.e. cost of doing ministry that each pastoral charge records in the yearly statistic forms) to a ceiling of 3% and this funding formula be phased in over three years, starting at the rise of conference 2011.”

- This means we have ceased using resident membership as the criteria for determining conference assessments.
- London Conference Executive has approved the proposed Budget 2012 with a conference ministry fee / contribution from presbyteries of \$584,717
- This amount of \$584,717 for presbyteries is being recommended to the Annual Meeting of London Conference. This amount represents 2.25% of the total of Col. 40 for all London Conference Presbyteries in the 2010 Yearbook.
- All Presbyteries are assessed less than in 2011, except for Elgin, and adjustment has been made for them, as we roll out this new formula over the next 3 years.

#### Conference Ministry: Why did the Formula Change?

##### **1. It allows for clearer communication.**

- Conference cannot assess pastoral charges, but by using a resident member costing in the past, it implies that conference does assess congregations. Only Presbytery can assess congregations.

##### **2. It allows for predictable budgeting into the future.**

- By using the current Yearbook available, conference can work with Presbyteries and let them know their Conference ministry fee by September, if not earlier, rather than by year's end, which has always made budgeting next to impossible, because the data arrives so late.

##### **3. It equitably distributes the cost of the Conference's ministry across all the presbyteries.**

- Currently some Presbyteries have been paying more than their fair share.

##### **4. Using a ceiling of 3% of Column 40 in the Yearbook, namely, Expended for Operation of Pastoral Charge [ie. the cost of doing ministry that each pastoral charge records in the yearly statistic forms], means it functions as an income cap.**

- Conference will need to work within its income rather than seeking income that it wants to do its work. This 3% cap is like your paycheck. It is all you get, so you have to be thoughtful and creative in how to provide the most effective ministry we can.

#### What is the Work and Ministry of Conference?

The work of conference is to:

- ordain/commission/admission candidates,
- receive proposals,
- deal with matters referred to the General Council,
- determine the number and boundaries of the Presbyteries, and to have oversight of them, and to review their records,
- elect commissioners to the meeting of General Council
- see that, as far as reasonably possible, every Pastoral Charge shall have a pastorate without interruption, and that every Order of Ministry member shall have a Pastoral Charge, as far as reasonably possible,
- consider an application from a Presbytery to grant a licence to administer the sacraments

- decide if a member of the Order of Ministry is to be removed from the rolls of Presbytery and Conference and placed on the Discontinued Service List [Disciplinary] or Discontinued Service List [Voluntary]
- where there has been an amalgamation and the Presbytery has declared the property to be surplus, such surplus property shall be applied for such purpose for the benefit of the United Church as the Conference may determine.
- where a congregation has disbanded as of a specified date by Presbytery's decision, its property shall be applied for such purpose for the benefit of the United Church as the Conference may determine.
- Provide oversight and support for all incorporated ministries [our 9 camps, outreach ministries, extension councils, Iona College, Metropolitan United Church Foundation, senior housing] which includes letters patent, bylaws, adequate insurance and proper independent financial reviews
- Submit a proposed budget to the annual meeting to fund the work of conference as listed above, plus the work of :

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Settlement</li> <li>• Education and Students Interview board</li> <li>• Archives</li> <li>• Finance</li> <li>• Interim Ministry</li> <li>• Internship Committee</li> <li>• Mission in Canada including UCW,</li> <li>• World Outreach</li> <li>• Nominations</li> <li>• Staff Support</li> <li>• Stewardship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth and Young Adults</li> <li>• Faith Formation</li> <li>• Youth Forum</li> <li>• Church in Society</li> <li>• Social Justice</li> <li>• Mission Support</li> <li>• Rural &amp; Small Membership Churches</li> <li>• Congregational Futures Development</li> <li>• Joint Needs Assessment</li> <li>• Sexual Abuse Awareness and Response</li> <li>• Christian Development</li> </ul>
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Plus the work of the conference staff to resource all the above and to help Presbyteries and congregations fulfill their ministries.

I only wish that everyone could see what I see from this office as Acting Executive Secretary. I wish you could see what all has been accomplished. Together we really have accomplished something big!

- If you have questions about these ministries, ask your minister or someone at Presbytery to find out [see sections 400 to 470 in The Manual 2010 for full details]

### What Decisions and Actions Need to Happen at our Annual Meeting?

We need to do the following:

1. ordain/commission/admission of accepted candidates and admit them to the Order of Ministry of The United Church of Canada
2. approve the budget
3. receive reports by which our committees are accountable for the ministry they have done on our behalf in the past year
4. consider proposals and resolutions
5. be a worshipping community together
6. challenge and stimulate the vision of Conference as we plan for the future

### How Often Must A Conference Meet?

The Manual 2010 states that “it shall be the duty of the Conference to meet at least every third year, or more frequently, as determined by the Conference provided the Conference shall meet in the same calendar year but prior to, a meeting of the General Council. [Basis 7.6.1(1)]

### What do Other Conferences Do?

- Some meet every other year. Some meet each year.
- Some have a faith renewing conference in the year when they don't have a conference annual meeting.
- One conference has a 3 day annual meeting each year, but day 2 is a day set apart for spiritual renewal and faith formation that the public are invited to attend.

### How Much Do Annual Meetings Cost?

It depends upon location, but usually our annual meeting costs about \$40,000. It currently represents approximately 4% of our conference budget.

- In 2008, it cost \$44,000. In 2009, it cost \$58,500. In 2010, it cost \$35,000.

### What Value is Added by Participating in the Annual Meeting?

Some individuals talk about the transformative experiences they have had as a result of becoming part of the larger church at conference, like worshipping and singing with 400 – 500 people, and hearing about all that this United Church of ours is doing.

Others find the whole thing boring.

Per usual in the United Church our responses and opinions are widespread.

What value is added for you?

### What Value is Lost by Not Participating in an Annual Meeting Each Year?

Some individuals would say loss of the significant contact with others, and with being part of electing a President and knowing who that person is when they come to visit Presbytery. Others would say the loss would be the opportunity in hearing from our overseas personnel and from other church leaders. Others would say no loss at all.

Again our responses and opinions vary.

What value would be lost for you?

If we did not have a yearly annual meeting, how would the work be accomplished?

In the same way that the powers of London Conference are given to the Executive at the end of the annual meeting in accordance with The Manual 2010 of The United Church of Canada, the Executive acts for the Conference between its regular meetings. The Executive would set a date for the celebration of ministry service and invite all to attend. The Executive would be charged with rest of the work of the annual meeting.

What Impact would Having a Conference Meeting every Second or Third Year have?

The role of President might be significantly changed. It could lead to a new way of having leadership preside at the executive meetings, if there were only an annual meeting every second or third year.

While the cost of the annual meeting is approximately 4%, the planning and preparation for the annual meeting on behalf of the planning committee [registrar, worship, local arrangements, education and students, ministry personnel and education, mission in Canada, pensions, youth, children at conference, tellers, world outreach], the executive secretary and the conference administrative staff is considerably more than 4% of their time. So it would save some time in the non-meeting year.

What would be the impact of having the annual meeting in one central location?

It would cost less dollars, and the planning and organizing of the meeting would be more streamlined. How much less? About 15%.

If it were held in London, and the 8 Presbyteries took turns hosting it as they do now, allowance on the agenda would be made for a block of time for the "host" to showcase their Presbytery and tell their story of ministry.

Heather McLean

April 15, 2011