

Interim United Church of Canada Process for Mutual Recognition of Ministries between the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea and The United Church of Canada

In September 2015 The United Church of Canada and the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) formally entered into an agreement for the Mutual Recognition of Ministries. This memo outlines the current status of the implementation of this agreement within The United Church of Canada.

The agreement is a significant and historic step of mutual recognition between the United Church and the PROK. Its full implementation in the United Church will take several years and include the establishment of a new category of ministry called “ministry partner.” As a ministry partner, a PROK minister would be eligible to apply to any United Church congregation and be able to receive a call (without time limit) or an appointment (with a time limit) to ministry in that congregation. *It is important to understand that Canadian immigration requirements are separate from church processes and can be initiated only after a call or appointment has been secured.*

The critical aspect of the agreement is that PROK ministers, as ministry partners, will serve in the United Church with the same status and responsibilities as ordained ministers of The United Church of Canada without being required to seek admission to the United Church ministry.

This new category can only be established through a remit to all the presbyteries of the church seeking their agreement for the change of the Basis of Union. The remit question is currently before the church and, if passed, must be subsequently approved by the 43rd General Council meeting in August 2018. Therefore full implementation of the agreement (eligibility for call) will not be available before 2019. However, in the interim, the United Church will implement the spirit of the agreement through interim appointment of “ministry partnerships” under existing policies.

In the spirit of the Mutual Recognition Agreement, the following steps have been in place since November 2016 for PROK ministers interested in serving in The United Church of Canada.

1. The Mutual Recognition Agreement requires all applicants to first discern with the Ecumenical Office of the PROK their call to serve in The United Church of Canada. This will involve an interview with the Ecumenical Relations Committee and, if approved, a letter of recommendation from an appropriate body of the PROK. Please contact the Ecumenical Office of the PROK for more information.
2. While the United Church does have a number of Korean-speaking congregations, the majority of congregations of the church are English-speaking and courts of The United Church of Canada function primarily in English. French is spoken in some regions of Canada; however, United Church pastoral charges in these regions generally have the capacity to also function in English. PROK ministers interested in serving in The United Church of Canada will demonstrate in written submissions and interviews their capacity to communicate effectively in English.
3. Under the Mutual Recognition Agreement, ministry applicants are required to gain an adequate understanding of the historical and cultural contexts of the other church. The United Church will provide resources and recommended study materials for this purpose. Included in these

resources is the text “An Introduction to The United Church of Canada: Key Texts with Introductions and Commentary” published in both English and Korean. The Ecumenical Office of the PROK will have copies of this text available for sale. A brief Statement on Ministry (2015) in The United Church of Canada is available in Korean through the PROK Ecumenical Office or is available in English online. Other Web-based resources will be developed and made accessible online at www.united-church.ca (search “mutual recognition”).

4. PROK ministers must complete the two Web-based study programs that are mandatory for all United Church of Canada ministers before submitting their application for ministry partner status. Visit the United in Learning website (<https://www.united-in-learning.com/index.php/webinars>) to register for the following workshops: *Sexual Abuse Prevention and Response Policy* (also known as *Boundary Issues for Church Leaders*), and *Racial Justice Awareness*. Each study process takes approximate 3–4 hours to complete.
5. All ministers serving in the United Church are required to provide a police records check report. The PROK minister must provide to the United Church General Council Office a current (within six months) criminal records check. If there has been a conviction, a conversation will be held with the United Church General Council Office about the type of conviction, when it occurred, and discernment about whether it is a deterrent to proceeding.
6. PROK ministers seeking ministry partnership in the United Church will be invited to submit with their letter of recommendation an application to the staff for Mutual Recognition Agreements in the General Council Office. The application documents will be available online and will include a personal statement of why they are interested in serving in The United Church of Canada, and how their journey of faith relates to ministry in the United Church.
7. Following receipt of the materials listed above, the applicant will be invited to a video conference interview. The primary focus of the interview will be the understanding of the context and ministry of the United Church and the applicant’s interest in serving in the church.
8. PROK ministers who have completed the above process and who have been cleared by the General Council Office for ministry partnership in The United Church of Canada will receive access to the ministry vacancies list. PROK ministry partners are responsible for applying and seeking an interview with a United Church of Canada congregation. Upon completion of a successful search and appointment by a presbytery, the applicant will begin the Canadian immigration process. Applicants who have not been cleared for ministry partnership will be advised by the General Council Office when and if they may reapply.

MEMBERSHIP

PROK ministers in mutual recognition appointments will retain standing in their PROK presbytery as well as in The United Church of Canada presbytery of their appointment.

DISCIPLINARY PROCESS

Mutual recognition ministers must maintain good standing in their home denomination and continue to meet its ongoing requirements for good standing. In the event of any complaint of misconduct or criminal charges, the processes of the host denomination will be followed. This may result in a directed program of remediation or termination of the current appointment and withdrawal of eligibility to serve in the United Church. The PROK will be advised when any review is initiated and any subsequent determinations made as a result of the review. The ongoing ecclesial standing will be determined by the PROK.

The mutual recognition agreement between The United Church of Canada and the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea is a historic commitment for both churches. While it will take some time to fully implement, the spirit of the agreement will be carried forward and celebrated in these initial steps.

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