Celebration of Ministries
Laying on of Hands
Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Regional Council

Theological Rationale

This statement does not treat the subject of the laying on of hands exhaustively or finally. The sovereignty of God, acting through Christ in the church and the world by the Spirit, is a mystery, which immeasurably exceeds the confines of our formation. Full answers to such large questions as the nature of the church and the means of grace by which the authority of Christ is handed on, enabling his ministry to the church and the world, are beyond the scope of this policy, are always subject to renewed reflection and insight.

In The United Church of Canada, we believe that Jesus Christ calls all to ministry. Some are called to specific ministries, as variously defined over time in this denomination, through our experience of God's gracious action through the Spirit. It is for the purpose of enabling people to carry out these specific ministries with the blessing of the Holy Spirit and with the authority acknowledged by the church that the church ordains/commissions individuals into the Order of Ministry and recognizes those to serve as Designated Lay Ministers.

The United Church has devised a polity consisting of three levels of governance and accountability. The Region has been assigned the privilege and responsibility of ordination/commissioning and recognition to act for all three levels. It is therefore appropriate and prudent for representatives of each level to participate in the laying on of hands in the spirit of accompaniment for the individual's faith journey.

Ordination/commissioning and recognition are not a graduation or celebration of personal achievement, nor are they primarily a social or familial action. It is rather an engraving of the one upon whom hands are laid with the servanthood of Jesus Christ. In its action calling for humility and submission to authority, even as privileges, responsibility and authority, ensue.

Ordination/commissioning is an action of admittance to the Order of Ministry of the Christian church. Institutional churches imperfectly discern the body of people whom Christ calls his own, and in The United Church of Canada, we trust that by God's grace, this discernment continues to grow. The founding inspiration of this denomination inspires us today with a fervent desire to recognize even more clearly and widely the body of Christ, and to act in the spirit of broad ecumenical invitation, hospitality and collegiality.

In the consequences of these considerations, and in continuity with our experience of God's grace in The United Church of Canada, ordination/commissioning and recognition in and by Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Regional Council:

1. Will be conducted by the President or a Past-President (if necessary)

2. Participating in the laying on of hands will be,
    a. Representatives of the Region, the President and the Executive Minister;
    b. A representative of the General Council (if present), in addition to the Executive Minister;
    c. The Office of Vocation Minister of the Region;
    d. A representative of the community of faith of the person being ordained/ commissioned or recognized; (the individual to confirm the community of faith)
    e. Two people chosen by the person being ordained/commissioned or recognized who have been instrumental in shaping their call to ministry;
    f. Representing members of the body of Christ gathered outside of the denominational boundaries of the United Church, a person so invited by the Region.

3. Any of these participants, may be a layperson (member of the United Church) or Ministry Personnel in the United Church. (Exception e. and f.)

4. Anyone participating in the laying on of hands shall be a person who recognizes the significance of ordination/commissioning/recognition and ministry in The United Church of Canada and who, in faith, can participate.

5. Ordination/commissioning or recognition is not invalidated by the absence from the laying on of hands of any one of the representatives stipulated in this policy.