
BC Conference Executive

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Leadership Development

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Summary

The present context presents both challenge and opportunity for BC Conference of The United Church of Canada. This reality is felt no more acutely than by church leaders, both paid accountable and lay.

This initiative proposes an integrated, cohesive, multi-dimensional approach to the development of leaders within BC Conference. It is ambitious, particularly for a Conference, but also achievable. It is grounded in present practice and experience but also imaginative in its scope and development of new relationships to shape its work. It also draws upon present Conference strengths and people to enable smoother implementation.

Core to the proposal is the establishment of a **Leadership Institute**.

The Leadership Institute refers to the platform for the coordinated provision of programs, courses, resources and events aimed at building the capacity of effective leadership for churches and their mission in BC Conference.

The community of instructors, researchers, and faculty associated with the goals of the Leadership Institute and contributing directly to its provision of expertise in leadership development is known as the **collegium**.

Eight **strategic opportunities** currently lie before the Conference which can be leveraged to dramatically impact the capacity of leaders within the Conference. These include: the critical need to recruit new leaders; support and development of ministry personnel within their first five years of paid service; the Sowing Promise leadership event; the growing need for coaching of our current leadership and mentorship of new leaders; the programs, courses and events offered by or through the Vancouver School of Theology and Naramata Centre; the expressed desire for more regional training events for ministry personnel and lay leaders; and the growing availability of immersion and exposure tours.

It is proposed that this initiative be accepted for a three year trial with the potential of continuing further if successful.

Background

BC Conference has recognized for a number of years that the support of church leaders, particularly ministry personnel, is crucial in a time of significant change. This is reflected in the Priority Policy adopted in November 2004:

To fulfill its mission, the present priority of the BC Conference Executive is Effective Leadership.

“Effective” means that leaders:

- *help their communities embrace change and achieve their goals*
- *are rooted in the biblical narrative*
- *are passionate about their Christian faith*
- *have lives that bear witness to their faith*
- *are clear about their call*
- *have evident spiritual gifts*

“Leadership” means that these people:

- *are called and set apart*
- *are well supported and challenged*
- *are fittingly trained and equipped*
- *move the community deeper into its covenanted relationship with God*
- *dare to risk speaking the truth in love*

The following groups of people will receive priority attention:

- a. *Ministry Personnel*
 - *ministry personnel will be able to receive safe and expert Pastoral Care and/or Spiritual Guidance within church structures*
- b. *youth*
- c. *major Conference, presbytery and congregational leaders*
- d. *First Nations*
- e. *Ethnic and Multicultural Ministries*

Following through on this priority has resulted in the development of a strong Personnel Team of staff and committees. It also allowed us to develop the “Sowing Promise” program and opened up the possibility of being a “test Conference” for the new Candidacy Pathway and Effective Leadership initiatives.

It has long been recognized, however, that a more proactive development and training approach was needed to provide the church with the leadership needed for the years ahead. It was also becoming clear that the focus on ministry personnel, while important, was not going to be enough in the future where professional ministry is becoming less and less viable as the primary centre of church leadership.

The adoption of new Ends policies related to Church Leadership (refer to the policies in the [Conference Executive Policies](#)) have now provided the grounding for a new initiative that builds upon our present work yet expands it in a significant way into more proactive programming. By focusing on “leadership” rather than the ways we have previously divided our work between ordered and lay, this new initiative will be opened up to all who are providing various forms of leadership in our church. Differences can be recognized through particular programming options while recognizing that all types of leadership need support as we move forward.

More Details

Leadership Institute

The Leadership Institute is a platform for coordinating the provision of programs, courses, resources and events aimed at building the capacity of effective leadership for the church in BC Conference – its congregations and their missional agencies, innovations and commitments.

This emerging model would provide accessible (multi-campus, webinar, distance, local mentors, etc.) education and formation for the practice of ministry in ways that serve preparation and enhancement in a variety of streams of ministry, from lay to ordered, in a variety of stages of ministry from foundational disciplines to advanced professional development.

The Institute would develop relationships with institutions such as the Vancouver School of Theology and the Naramata Centre to provide cross-institutional benefit for both the institutions and beneficiaries.

Collegium

The Institute will draw upon a collegium (collective of instructors or faculty) equipped to offer programs and services in either formal, institutionally-based formats (such as theological colleges and education centres) or in more informal, contextually-based and planned ways.

The collegium is a loosely organized group of professionals who would gather occasionally for mutual support and accountability and to encourage a commitment to advanced study and practice in their areas of expertise. They would help identify additional resource people that would be available to the Conference and be able to refer beneficiaries to a wide range of support and training resources.

SOAR

The Strategic Oversight and Advisory Roundtable (SOAR) will guide the Institute in its work. This will be a group comprised of staff and volunteers from around the Conference knowledgeable about leadership in the church. A critical role of SOAR will be to function as the Keeper of the Vision. SOAR needs to be aware of and responsive to the underlying struggles, challenges and possibilities of the practice of leadership in our current situation and helps the Conference respond to these in a timely and effective way.

The focus of the Roundtable's work will be to:

- identify trends in leadership development needs and opportunities within the Conference and throughout the larger church;
- help identify, recruit and encourage those who can assist the church and its leaders in their development;
- help develop opportunities and programs for the practice of leadership that are strategic for the life of the Conference and the development of its leaders; and
- encourage church leaders to develop and implement an intentional learning and development program that reflects their context, call, and personality and the needs of the United Church within BC Conference.

Types of Programs and Supports

The following activities, programs and possibilities are key leverage points to develop:

1. Recruitment
2. The First Five Years
3. The Sowing Promise initiative
4. Coaching and Mentorship
5. Regional Events
6. Programs, Courses and Events offered by or through the Vancouver School of Theology and Naramata Centre
7. Immersion and Exposure Tours