

**Proposal Title:** **Five Review of Requirements for a Discernment Committee Process in relation to an Individual's call to ministry.**  
**Origin:** **Rideau Park United Church**  
**Ottawa Presbytery Action:** **Transmit with concurrence**

**The 40th General Council:**

Direct the Education and Vocations: Congregational, Educational, and Community Ministries Committee of General Council to review the requirements for the Discernment Committee process, particularly the requirements that Presbytery representatives must be in place and call the first meeting in order for the process to begin, and the length of the process.

**Background:**

- Section 22 of the *The Manual* stipulates that a Discernment Committee must meet with an Inquirer (a person who believes they have been called to ministry) periodically over a period of 12 months, and that the Discernment Committee must include one or two representatives of the Presbytery who shall call its first meeting. The last part of these requirements cannot always be met in a timely way. Lengthy delays, even a delay of a year, in commencing a discernment process can result when a Presbytery cannot keep up with the demand for representatives on Discernment Committees.
- It is important for the Inquirer to be able to organize and plan enrollment in theology school and their internship according to a particular timeline, yet this is very difficult to do when a significant delay happens. A delay in the start of the discernment process, even by a couple of months, can mean that at least one term if not a year of study or study and work, is missed. This can be particularly problematic when an inquirer has dependants to consider, must relocate in order to attend school, and/or has already planned an exit from an existing career.
- It is appropriate to ask Inquirers to go through a process of discernment with other members of their church and for Presbytery to exercise oversight of the process. Given the potential for delay in beginning the Discernment Committee meeting process when Presbytery cannot meet the demand for representatives in a timely way, it would be useful to review the requirement that Presbytery representatives be appointed to and call the first meeting of the Discernment Committee. It would be useful to consider also whether there should be more flexibility with regard to the length of the discernment period, e.g., by stipulating an eight to twelve month process.