

Frequently Asked Questions by Focus Group attendees regarding the Proposed Structure

1. Won't the requirement that local chapters must pay the full cost of their representative to annual meeting, instead of half of the cost (or that the representatives must pay their own way) result in either (1) reduced local programming or (2) privileging more affluent ministerial leaders and churches in leadership roles?

First of all, the reason that the cost is shared presently is because each senator is legally responsible for the governance of the Ministers Council nationally and so the organization must help cover the expenses. Under the new structure the local chapter representatives will no longer have that legal responsibility. Moving from a Senate to an Annual Meeting of representatives from local chapters puts the focus on the local chapters being responsible to help cover the expenses of their representative. Second, we understand that this is a culture shift and so we are considering reducing the national share by 10% each year over the next few years to give time to adjust to the new system. Third, it is our hope that the local chapters will see the value in maintaining their representation at the Annual Meeting which will guide the vision and focus of the National Ministers Council. Fourth, it is our hope that the Annual Meetings in the future will be scheduled to go along with the Biennial/Mission Summit meetings one year and the Ministers Conference on the other years. This should help with the costs since people will already be attending these meetings for their own development in ministry and some of the costs might be shared by their local church or place of ministry. Fifth, and the meetings will be in various places across the country rather than always in the Midwest at Green Lake. With all of these changes we hope that the local chapters programming will not be negatively impacted and that ministers of various financial ability will all be able to serve. We are looking at ways to have stipends to make sure that no one is left out of serving because they cannot afford to serve.

2. Why such an emphasis on a national meeting open to all? Will it draw broad participation? How will it compare to the Ministers Renewal Conferences that have been held in Orlando? Will it replace the pre-Biennial educational event done by MC in past years? Is it more important than local meetings?

For decades, the annual Ministers Council Senate meeting at Green Lake offered those who attended an energizing and inspirational experience. It brought colleagues in ministry together from across the country to share worship, make crucial decisions for the life of Ministers Council, and learn more about ABC ministry in its many forms. There are advantages to opening up attendance to all ministers who wish to come.

First, we hope to extend the benefits of learning and relationship beyond the 40 or so people that Senate has involved in recent years. Mutual learning, deepening spirituality and collegiality are hallmarks of the Ministers Council especially as they help to strengthen Ministers Council chapters locally. (The annual gathering by no means supersedes local

council meetings; its intent is to provide experiences that can enhance the life of local councils.) By widening the circle for this annual experience, we hope to better fulfill our purpose.

Second, we believe that a larger annual gathering will be a better use of the Ministers Council resources that are used for this event, especially since the new proposal asks all participants to share in the cost to some extent. From a cost/benefit perspective, we hope to build broader participation and, with that, more benefit relative to the cost.

We envision an annual meeting that will not only include a national gathering of representatives from local Ministers Council chapters, but also include all ministers who wish to attend in mutual learning, enhanced collegiality and renewed support for professional ministry. While we cannot expect broad participation to occur right away, we hope to build enthusiasm for it over time. We hope that the annual meetings can be scheduled to coordinate with the Mission Summit and the ABC orientation conference, to make it possible for more to attend.

3. What is the relationship between the national MC and the local MC chapters? If the most effective impact of MC is local, how do the changes increase the effectiveness of the local chapters?

According to our Bylaws, members may organize into chapters that are recognized by the national body as being a constituent part of the whole organization. The national council establishes the vision and direction for the body, which helps to guide and direct the work at the local level. The changes in governance can help the national council to be more flexible and responsive to local council needs. The main governance will be undertaken by a smaller group, while chapter representatives will be freed up to take on programs and other services that can benefit local chapters and individual members. In addition, more streamlined by-laws, with robust standing rules, mean that future changes can be made as needed in response to changing circumstances, including changing chapter needs

4. Have you projected what impact in dollar amounts the new policies might have?

The projections we could make, with regard to the MC budget would be to say; were the MC not to have any financial obligation with regard to the participation of “representatives” at the Annual Meeting, the expense segment in the annual budget would be reduced by the amount saved in what have, heretofore, been “Senate” expenses.

In 2013 those expenses were: \$17,118. The previous year, 2012, those expenses were \$29,787. A significant amount of the reduction was by not having to pay week-end rates at Green Lake and that individual members and councils reimbursed the national council for Senate expenses. There were also other factors, like savings in transportation costs.

What might reasonably be said is that we could anticipate a budget reduction of \$20,000 were the new policy to be enacted. However, were the national council to grant stipends to representatives the amount saved would be reduced by that amount.

On the income side, it is not possible to predict what impact the proposed dues structure, were it to be adopted, would have.

5. Who has real authority? Why would local chapters pay to send a representative if he/she has no authority?

The local chapter continues to have authority in this structure because the local chapter representatives must ratify the proposed directions and plans of the organization. [see Article X, section 2 - The representatives sent by local chapters must approve the Nominating Committee, all elected members of the Governing Board, members of the Advisory Council, new local chapters, national membership categories and dues, the provisional annual budget, and changes to Standing Rules, By-Laws, or the Code of Ethics.]

The local chapter representative no longer has fiduciary responsibility to the organization with this new structure. This is a positive because no representative should want the risk of financial liability for an organization in which he/she makes governing decisions once a year. In our current structure, Senators assume this risk because they have fiduciary responsibility. In the proposed structure the Board of Governors has fiduciary responsibility and assumes this risk.

Perhaps more important than the “control” side of authority is the “influence” side. In the proposed structure, the local chapter representatives have an ongoing role in identifying best practices and making them known to colleagues. They will take full advantage of electronic means to stay in regular contact with one another in order to encourage effective programming on both the local and national levels. [see Article IX , section 4]

6. What does an Executive Director contribute to the organization? Why prioritize that position?

As with all effective organizations, the Ministers Council requires a leader dedicated to the task of discerning direction and doing the difficult work of leading decision-making and implementing those decisions. This is the work of the Executive Director. The Executive Director is the primary voice and presence of the Ministers Council throughout the constituency and the denominational family. As the only full-time person working for the Ministers Council, the Executive Director is the one with the primary responsibility for providing leadership to the organization. The Executive Director is the primary administrator of the Ministers Council and all effective organizations require effective leadership and administration. Without an Executive Director, an entirely different way of being the Ministers Council would be required.

As for prioritization, the primary role of the Executive Director is to bring forth the gifts and skills of the constituency for the sake of ministry. Calling forth gifts, skills, and time does not happen automatically -- somebody has to do it and that somebody is the Executive Director.

It is clear that the only way that most of the constituency will experience the Ministers Council is through the regional and local Ministerial gatherings. As such, it stands to reason that the role of the Executive Director is somewhat modified in its importance, but not much. The Executive Director is the one person in our denominational family who is absolutely committed to bringing the constituents together in this way. This position must be prioritized to ensure the presence of a leader whose priority is the work of the Ministers Council.

7. Will the Advisory Council replace the Executive Director as primary locus of fundraising efforts? Will MC become known as always having its hand out for donations?

The Advisory Council will not replace the Executive Director in her responsibility as leader in the fundraising efforts of the organization. Rather, the Advisory will work with her as a team. An experienced Advisory Council can provide strategic guidance, valuable contacts and resources to nonprofit organizations.

Working with a development board will enhance the work of the Executive Director. While people in these volunteer positions will not be able to get involved in the minutia of the day-to-day operation of the Council, they will want their fiduciary responsibilities be taken seriously.

The Ministers Council is a nonprofit professional organization in which members need to take responsibility for its financial survival and thriving. Like in any such organization, the scope of services and benefits will depend on available resources. The Ministers Council does not want this to be its main emphasis, but fundraising will be an essential component of our life together for a long time.

8. What are the benefits of being a member of MC? What is the value of such an organization?

Ministerial leaders are professionals. Because we are ordained or licensed to minister, we are not simply individuals doing a job. Each of us represents the whole profession. Those watching us will define Christian ministers by our behaviors. We have a responsibility to minister effectively. A professional association helps us both enrich our profession and nurture our individual careers.

Even those outside the profession recognize membership in the Ministers Council as validation of one's credentials, and as a personal commitment to professional values.

Within the profession, the Ministers Council provides structures for distributing knowledge, sharing best practices, and addressing professional issues. Members who choose to be active in the Council gain a network of colleagues, opportunities for professional development, resources in print and online to assist in problem-solving, and vendor discounts. [see details at www.ministerscouncil.org]

Ministerial leaders, more than many other professions, need collegial connections. As Kent Piil, who has been pastor in Molina, OR for over 30 years shared, “Why would I want to stand alone? It’s a lonely place being a pastor.” Ministerial leaders need continuing spiritual development as well as continuing pastoral education, and the Ministers Council focuses its offerings in both areas. The Ministers Council keeps the goals of collegiality, centeredness, and competency before its members and helps its members excel in them before the watching world.