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United Church of Canada to Investigate 'Effectiveness' of Minister Who Professes Atheism

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BY MICHAEL GRYBOSKI, CHRISTIAN POST REPORTER

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A regional body of the United Church of Canada will interview a clergywoman who is an outspoken atheist to see about her "effectiveness."

In June, the Toronto Conference of the UCC will enact a formal process known as a review regarding the Rev. Gretta Vosper, an author and founder of the Canadian Centre for Progressive Christianity who is also a professed atheist.

The Rev. David W. Allen, executive secretary of the UCC Toronto Conference, told The Christian Post about the investigative process.

"A review is a formal process within the United Church which is ordered when serious questions have been raised about a minister's

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effectiveness," said Rev. Allen.



"In this case, a team of five people will interview Ms. Vosper. They will report to a larger committee of 40 people, and that committee will give its opinion to the sub-Executive of Toronto Conference on whether Ms. Vosper is suitable for ministry within The United Church of Canada."

For Rev. Vosper, Allen explained that the review process will involve interviewing Vosper to see if she continues to affirm certain questions asked during her ordination.

Allen said these specific questions are "Do you believe in God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and do you commit yourself anew to God?" "Do you believe that God is calling you to the ordained ministry of Word, Sacrament and Pastoral Care, and do you accept this call?" and finally "Are you willing to exercise your ministry in accordance with the scriptures, in continuity with the faith of the Church, and subject to the oversight and discipline of The United Church of Canada?"

According to her website, Vosper came out as an atheist back in 2001 and wants the UCC, which she describes as "probably the most progressive Christian denomination in the world," to be more welcoming of atheism.

"After I spontaneously preached a sermon in which I completely deconstructed the idea of a god named God, rather than fire me, the congregation chose to step out on an unmarked path," reads the About section of her site.

"With them, I've laboured, lamented, lost, and loved. It's hard road but a worthy one with no finish line in sight. Let's walk this road together. I promise you'll be inspired."

The UCC refers to defrocking of being when a minister is placed on the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary). Willful removal involves being placed

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on the Discontinued Service List (Voluntary).

Allen told CP that being place on the DSL(D) has many steps and is "lengthy process because we want to be extremely careful out of concern for both the minister and the church."

Reverend Gretta Vosper did not return comment to The Christian Post by press time.

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