

# The Manual **2026**



The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada

The Manual, 2026



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## Preface

This is the 44th (2026) edition of *The Manual* of The United Church of Canada, and comes into effect on January 1, 2026.

The changes to the bylaws in this edition are indicated by the year 2025 in parentheses in the right-hand margin at the end of the changed text.

The text of *The Manual* is now available in a number of ways, including online and in translation. In all cases, the most recent English-language edition posted on the website [united-church.ca](http://united-church.ca) will govern.

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## Introduction

The first edition of *The Manual* was issued in 1928, under the authority of the Second General Council (1926). Since then, *The Manual* has been a valuable resource for members and organized bodies of The United Church of Canada.

*The Manual* consists of the Basis of Union and the bylaws. It is a living, working document that is regularly amended by the General Council and, with respect to the Basis of Union, through the remit process.

The General Council and its executive have established certain principles to guide the writing of *The Manual*, including the following:

- a) *The Manual* must strike a balance between enough regulation for the United Church to function in a fair and orderly way, and enough flexibility so that courts/councils and people are free to carry out ministry in ways, both traditional and innovative, that meet local needs;
- b) it must reflect that mission is the United Church's focus, and that polity exists only to support mission rather than as an end in itself; and
- c) it must serve the reader by providing the greatest possible clarity and accessibility to people of different backgrounds, including people for whom English is not a first language.

Both the style and content of the 2025 edition of *The Manual* reflect these principles.

The United Church exists in a wide variety of contexts. There have always been challenges in setting policies and procedures for ministry settings that may be urban, rural, large, small, and that differ in the strength of their human and financial resources. The focus in *The Manual* is on broad policy statements rather than specific provisions for every conceivable situation because broad policy statements address all factual situations in a general sense. They invite people to think for themselves by acting in the spirit of the policies with good will and common sense to achieve a just result in a particular situation.

At the same time, *The Manual* is clear and precise on the roles of each of the councils, the Office of Vocation, and their respective bodies and officers to avoid any uncertainty in governance requirements. The content of *The Manual* has also been designed to fulfill the legal requirements for corporate bylaws, since The United Church of Canada was formed as a corporation for legal purposes.

*The Manual* contains annotations that provide additional policy and procedural information to assist in accessing resources outside of *The Manual*. There are also annotations with basic information about church structures and policies to help readers who may not be very familiar with polity. Where there are changes in the Basis of Union and bylaws from one edition of *The Manual* to the next, the year of the change is noted in the margin.

The preamble to the bylaws reminds readers that *The Manual* works best when applied in a spirit of open conversation, when all those involved in making a particular decision consult with each other. The intent here is to facilitate and support relationships among people, councils, and other church bodies.

Limitations shaped by a form of Christianity rooted in European origins had a profoundly negative impact upon the Indigenous peoples of Canada. Growing awareness of this tragic history has also made us more conscious of the ways our contemporary practices may continue to hamper our embrace of diversity as a fundamental spiritual reality. Desire to open ourselves to this dimension of God's call brought the 2012 General Council to expand our common Declarations within *The Manual*, and to include the Indigenous church within the story of the Formation of The United Church of Canada.

## Declarations

### from the Basis of Union

1. The name of the Church formed by the union of the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational Churches in Canada shall be “The United Church of Canada.”
2. It shall be the policy of the United Church to foster the spirit of unity in the hope that this sentiment of unity may in due time, so far as Canada is concerned, take shape in a Church which may fittingly be described as national.

### from *The United Church of Canada Act, 14–15 George V, c. 100, s. 28*

3. Notwithstanding anything in this Act contained, it is hereby declared:
  - a) That the said union of negotiating Churches (Preamble: The Presbyterian Church in Canada, The Methodist Church, and The Congregational Churches of Canada) has been formed by the free and independent action of the said Churches through their governing bodies and in accordance with their respective constitutions, and that this Act has been passed at the request of the said Churches in order to incorporate the United Church and to make necessary provision with respect to the property of the negotiating Churches and the other matters dealt with by this Act.
  - b) That nothing in this Act contained shall be deemed to limit the independent and exclusive right and power of the United Church to legislate in all matters concerning its doctrine, worship, discipline and government, including therein the right and power from time to time to frame, adopt, alter, change, add to or modify its laws, subordinate standards and formulas, and to determine and declare the same or any of them, but subject to the conditions and safeguards in that behalf contained in the Basis of Union.
  - c) That the United Church, by virtue of its independent and exclusive right and power to legislate in respect of the matters mentioned in the next preceding subsection, has the right to unite with any other Church or religious denomination without loss of its identity upon such terms as it may find to be consistent with the principles, doctrines and religious standards set forth in the Basis of Union, or any amendment thereof made by the General Council under the provisions of the Basis of Union.

### from the Declaration of Faith

The following Declaration of Faith, based upon ten years' experience of the United Church, was adopted by the Executive and approved by the General Council: “On this its Tenth Anniversary, The United Church of Canada reaffirms before the world its faith in the ideals and principles which brought it into being. In the light of ten years' experience it has found these ideals to be eminently practicable in their out-working, and in the quest of them its members have found an enriched and deepened fellowship, human and divine. In a renewed conviction of the worth of inclusive Christian fellowship, The United Church of Canada enters its second decade, prepared, as the opportunity may offer and as God may direct, to seek with other Christian communions further development of its ideals, whether by increased co-operation, organic union, or otherwise, and so fulfill its purpose of being not merely a united, but a uniting Church.”

*This Declaration was reaffirmed in 1950, which marked the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of Union.*

## Declarations

*The ideals of inclusive Christian fellowship that moved the founders of The United Church of Canada were only very imperfectly practised in the relationship of the churches with the Indigenous peoples. The incoming European Christians brought along with the gospel a conviction of cultural superiority. Believing that spiritual values amongst the Indigenous peoples were inferior or even non-existent, they did not recognize or acknowledge the profound spirituality that was practised. These attitudes led to the imposition of cultural norms and institutions that were European in origin. This then encouraged agreement and co-operation with the government's goal of assimilation to the non-Indigenous society.*

*The practices of The United Church of Canada for many years resulted in the exclusion of Indigenous peoples from visioning, leadership, and decision-making. We are still struggling to address the consequences of this tragic history.*

### **Apology to First Nations Peoples (1986)**

Long before our\* people journeyed to this land your people were here, and you received from your Elders an understanding of creation and of the Mystery that surrounds us all that was deep, and rich, and to be treasured.

We did not hear you when you shared your vision. In our zeal to tell you of the good news of Jesus Christ we were closed to the value of your spirituality.

We confused Western ways and culture with the depth and breadth and length and height of the gospel of Christ.

We imposed our civilization as a condition for accepting the gospel.

We tried to make you be like us and in so doing we helped to destroy the vision that made you what you were. As a result you, and we, are poorer and the image of the Creator in us is twisted, blurred, and we are not what we are meant by God to be.

We ask you to forgive us and to walk together with us in the Spirit of Christ so that our peoples may be blessed and God's creation healed.

General Council: 31st General Council, 1986  
Record of Proceedings Page Ref. ROP, pp.83–85, 94, 230–44, 666.

\*Original document reads "my." Changed with permission of the Very Rev. Robert Smith.

*Living into this struggle, The United Church of Canada continues to seek new ways of addressing old patterns of silencing and exclusion.*

*In 2006, the 39th General Council committed The United Church of Canada to becoming an intercultural church, inviting the Aboriginal, francophone, ethnic, and other minority constituencies to lead the way.*

### **Intercultural and Intentionally Anti-Racist**

*In 2006, the 39th General Council committed The United Church of Canada to becoming an intercultural church, inviting Indigenous, francophone, racialized, and diverse minority constituencies to lead the way.*

*In 2020, the General Council committed The United Church of Canada to becoming an anti-racist denomination, building on decades of anti-racist work and the anti-racism policy "That All May Be One" from 2000.*

*The United Church of Canada has a long history of condemning racism:*

*For decades, the United Church has condemned all forms of racism, named racism as sin, and worked to eliminate systemic racial discrimination. People in the United Church have developed anti-racism*

## Declarations

*policies and education programs, worked towards reconciliation and Indigenous justice, adopted the Calls to the Church, and created intercultural policies and initiatives. In spite of this steadfast and faithful work by committed people over generations, the reality of racism in the church is ever-present.*

– *Working Towards Becoming an Anti-Racist Denomination* (2022)

### **from the Calls to the Church (2018)**

*In 2018, the 43rd General Council approved the Calls to the Church from the Caretakers of Our Indigenous Circle, which were offered with the following preamble:*

The Indigenous ministries of The United Church of Canada have been about the work of ministry since the beginning in 1925 with roots in the 19th Century work of Methodist and Presbyterian ministries. 2018 marks the 193rd Anniversary of the Grand River Methodist Mission. This long history has seen bright beginnings and dark days and is poised on the brink of a Kairos moment as it faces the future.

Canada's Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration): The TRC Calls to Action embrace of the UN Declaration. The United Church adopted the UN Declaration and reported how their policies in reference to their Indigenous constituents reflect this on March 31, 2016. As the church implements this framework for reconciliation it has committed to developing mechanisms to report on its progress. The UN Declaration is about establishing and maintaining respectful relationship, Indigenous self-government, and Indigenous land rights in their traditional territories. This means the Indigenous faith community must exercise a truly Indigenous self-determination and possess a sustainable land-based support.

The Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples has been embraced by the United Church. The Right Rev. Jordan Cantwell, 42nd Moderator has noted the obligation to ensure "our policies, practices, and programs align with the "principles, norms, and standards" of the Declaration. The United Church has apologized for its colonial application of the policy of assimilation and acknowledged its impoverishment by the rejection of an Indigenous understanding of spirituality.

It is the desire to live into right relations with a repentant church and pursue the original Indigenous desire for friendship, peace and the strength that comes from respect that the following calls are made. May they be received in the spirit of reconciliation in which they are made.

We, the Indigenous ministries and communities of faith of The United Church, declare that we will tell our own story of what ministry means for us. We will decide for ourselves who we are, who constitutes our ministries groups and practices. Colonialism took community control away from us and placed it in a colonial center of authority. Recovery from colonialism is our path moving forward. We will determine an Indigenous Testamur, a training program for ministry preparation, that will help our leaders be competent as the healers and helpers our communities are crying out for. We will recruit and oversee the development of our ministry training students and assist their placement and support in our communities.

## The Formation of The United Church of Canada

The spirit of fellowship, which has always been distinctive of Canadian life, found expression in the political union of Canada in 1867, and in a succession of unions within various branches of the Christian church from 1817 to the early years of the twentieth century. The four sections of Presbyterianism then existing united in 1875, taking the name "The Presbyterian Church in Canada"; the four sections of Methodism united in 1884, forming "The Methodist Church"; and the various Congregational churches organized "The Congregational Union of Canada" in 1906. The desire for wider fellowship and closer church relationships was expressed in 1874 by the Quebec Diocese of the Church of England in the appointment of a committee to promote church union, and by The Congregational Union of Ontario and Quebec in a resolution in favour of union with other churches; in 1885 by the Ontario Provincial Synod of the Church of England in inviting the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches to confer on church union, and in arranging a conference the following year; in 1892 by the Presbyterian General Assembly in approaching the Congregational Church, and in 1893 in appointing a committee to confer with other churches on the general subject of church union; and in 1894 by the Methodist General Conference in proposing a plan of federation of local congregations. These developments deepened the sense of Christian fellowship, revealed more clearly the hindrances to the Christian church through unnecessary overlapping in the work of its different branches, and prepared the way for various forms of co-operation.

The Indigenous peoples of the lands that became Canada welcomed those who brought the Christian Gospel, finding in it a confirmation of their understanding of relationship with the Creator, and in Jesus Christ an inclusiveness that embraced the wider human community. Under the Wesleyan Methodist Board of Foreign Missions a church was begun among the Mohawks on the Grand River in Ontario in 1822, and three years later with the Mississauga on Grape Island in the Bay of Quinte. In the late 1830s Wesleyan Methodist clergy, both Ojibwa and English, began ministering in what are now Northwest Ontario and the Prairie provinces. Within months of the arrival of Ontario Methodist ministers on Vancouver Island in 1859, there were ministries being established amongst the various Indigenous peoples in several areas of the future British Columbia. For their part, Canadian Presbyterians came into the Prince Albert region of the Northwest in 1866. Beginning in 1899 formal collaboration between the Boards of Home Missions of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches was a precursor to the union movement.

The actual negotiations leading up to the consummation of Church Union on June 10, 1925, began 26 years earlier, when the Presbyterian General Assembly, on the request of its Board of Home Missions, appointed a committee "to confer with representatives from other evangelical Churches, having power to enter into any arrangement with them that will tend to bring about a more satisfactory state of things in our Home Mission fields, so that the overlapping now complained of may be prevented." The General Board of Missions of The Methodist Church appointed a similar committee. After three joint meetings, an effective plan of co-operation was adopted.

The next step was taken by the Methodist General Conference in 1902, when it was declared that in its opinion the time was opportune for a definite movement, concentrating attention on, and aiming at, the organic union of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, The Congregational Churches of Canada, and The Methodist Church. It also resolved that it would regard with gratification a movement with this object in view, would facilitate the formulation of a Basis of Union, and would educate the people interested into that deeper spirit of unity and mutual concession on which the successful consummation of such movements ultimately depends. A committee on Church Union was appointed, "to confer with committees that may be appointed by such Churches, and report to the next General Conference."

## The Formation of The United Church of Canada

Each of the Churches named appointed committees. The first meeting of the Joint Union Committee was held in Toronto, on April 21, 1904. It reached the unanimous conclusion “that organic union is both desirable and practicable.” The experience of the Canadian Churches, which had united their own various branches, was vitally related to certain positive spiritual convictions. Among these was the belief, held by these Churches in common, that the church is the body of Christ; that Canada’s deepest need could be met only by Christ’s gospel, and that, being by their very constitution and history uniting churches, their task of preaching his gospel and building his kingdom throughout the Dominion would be more effectively accomplished through organic union than as separate religious bodies. The Committee further commended the whole subject to the sympathetic and favourable consideration of the chief assemblies of the Churches concerned, for such further action as they might deem wise and expedient. Following this meeting, a friendly letter was sent to the Church of England in Canada and the Baptist Churches in Canada, explaining the decisions already reached by the Joint Union Committee and extending cordial invitations to them to send delegates to participate in the further discussion of Church Union, should they consider it advisable to do so. These Churches replied in courteous terms, but did not appoint committees to participate in the negotiations.

The Joint Union Committee met year by year to consider the reports of its special Committees on Doctrine, Polity, the Ministry, Administration, and Law. In 1908 it agreed upon a Basis of Union. This was sent to the supreme courts of the three Churches with the recommendation that they submit it to their lower courts and to the membership of their respective Churches. The Basis as then prepared was approved in general by the supreme courts in 1909, 1910, and 1911, and referred to the lower courts and to the membership, according to the constitutional procedure of each Church.

Under this plan the vote was taken throughout these Churches. In the Presbyterian Church, 50 Presbyteries voted for approval and 20 Presbyteries non-approval (793 votes for and 496 against); in the Methodist Church, 11 Conferences voted for approval and 1 Conference non-approval (1,579 votes for and 270 against).

The vote of the elders, office bearers, and membership in the respective Churches was as follows. In the Congregational Church the vote was on the Basis, and, of 10,689 members, 2,933 voted for and 813 against. In the Presbyterian Church two questions were submitted, seeking the attitude first toward organic union and second toward the Basis. The vote on the first question was, of 9,675 elders, 6,245 voted for and 2,745 against; of 287,944 communicants, 106,755 voted for and 48,278 against; of adherents, 37,175 voted for and 14,174 against. The vote on the second question was 5,104 elders voted for and 2,197 against; 77,993 communicants voted for and 27,197 against; 27,756 adherents voted for and 10,316 against. In the Methodist Church the vote concerned the Basis only. The result of the vote was, of 29,820 officials, 23,475 voted for and 3,869 against; of 293,967 members 18 years of age and over, 150,841 voted for and 24,357 against; of 29,373 members under 18 years of age, 17,198 voted for and 2,615 against; of adherents, 42,115 voted for and 7,234 against.

Subsequent to these plebiscites, the supreme courts of the respective Churches adopted the following resolutions.

The Congregational Union, whose membership had voted some months previous to the vote in the other Churches, stated: “We consider the action already taken as sufficient and will now wait until the other negotiating bodies have had an opportunity of testing to a corresponding degree the feeling of their constituencies.”

The Methodist General Conference Special Committee declared “that the Methodist Church is now prepared to proceed toward the Union of the three negotiating Churches on the Basis of Union heretofore agreed upon.”

## The Formation of The United Church of Canada

The Presbyterian General Assembly resolved “that in view of the extent of the minority, which is not yet convinced that organic union is the best method of expressing the unity sincerely desired by all, the Assembly deems it unwise to immediately proceed to consummate the union, but believes that by further conference and discussion practically unanimous action can be secured within a reasonable time.”

The yearly meetings of the Joint Union Committee were continued. Progress towards consummation was continuously manifest. In 1914, acting upon suggestions from the negotiating Churches, the Basis was revised in some of its statements, and the name “The United Church of Canada,” with the names of its courts, approved.

The Presbyterian General Assembly in 1915 approved the revised Basis of Union, and submitted it to the lower courts and membership with the following result: of 76 Presbyteries, 53 approved, 13 disapproved, 3 tied, 2 sent irrelevant returns, 1 rejected, and 4 did not reply; of pastoral charges, 1,331 approved and 494 disapproved; of elders, 7,066 approved and 3,822 disapproved; of communicants, 106,534 approved and 69,913 disapproved; of adherents, 36,942 approved and 20,004 disapproved. When this report was received, the General Assembly of 1916, by a vote of 406 for union and 90 against, resolved “that this General Assembly now resolves to unite with the Methodist Church, and the Congregational Churches of Canada, to constitute The United Church of Canada, on the Basis of Union approved by the General Assembly of 1915, and by the majority of Presbyteries since consulted under the Barrier Act; that a Committee be appointed to carry out the policy of the Assembly,” and “report to the first Assembly following the end of the first year after the close of the War.” In 1921 the General Assembly reached the decision “to take such steps as may be deemed best to consummate Church Union with the above named Churches as expeditiously as possible.”

In the meantime, there came into existence in Western Canada a large number of local union churches, which formed “The General Council of Local Union Churches.” From 1921 representatives of this Council were welcomed to the yearly meetings of the Joint Union Committee. The negotiating Churches also, in anticipation of organic union, developed practical plans of co-operation, including delimitation of territory, local church union by affiliation with one or other of these Churches, and other methods. By the year 1924 there were in union in various forms, and with the approval of the parent Churches, more than 1,200 pastoral charges, including in them not less than 3,000 congregations or worshipping units.

By the time of Church Union there were Methodist and Presbyterian Indigenous congregations from Quebec to Vancouver Island, all under the denominational Boards of Home Missions. Some of these congregations were informed and even consulted before 1925, but none were given any role in the actual decision making. Nonetheless, at least 60 Indigenous congregations, predominantly Methodist, entered The United Church of Canada in 1925 on the decision of Home Missions.

Draft bills for Parliament and legislatures were prepared and carefully considered during the years 1921 to 1924. These were approved by the supreme courts of the Churches. The necessary legislation was enacted in 1924 by the Parliament of Canada, and in 1924 to 1926 by the legislatures of the various provinces. The dominion United Church of Canada Act recites that The Presbyterian Church in Canada, The Methodist Church, and the Congregational Churches of Canada had represented that they had the right to unite without loss of their identity, and declares that the said Churches, “by their free and independent action, through their governing bodies and in accordance with their respective constitutions,” had united to form The United Church of Canada. Congregations were given the right to decide by majority vote not to enter the Union. Those that voted non-concurrence retained their congregational property, and provision was made through the appointment of a dominion Commission by which they would receive their equitable share of the general property of the Church to which they formerly belonged. In certain provinces Commissions were appointed for the adjustment of cases of extreme hardship of minorities in relation to congregational property.

## The Formation of The United Church of Canada

On June 10, 1925, the union of the three Churches was solemnly consummated in the Mutual Street Arena, Toronto, in the presence of more than 8,000 members of the Church. The Basis of Union was formally signed by the chief officers of the supreme courts of the uniting Churches. This historic act was followed by prayer constituting the First General Council of The United Church of Canada (1925). This Council was composed of 350 Commissioners: the General Conference of The Methodist Church and the General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada each having appointed 150; The Congregational Union of Canada having appointed 40; and 10 having been appointed by The General Council of Local Union Churches. The Commissioners and the assembled Church members participated in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and in the service of hallowing and consummating the Union, as the three streams of Christian life flowed together and formed the United Church. The approximate strength of the United Church at the time of Union was 8,000 congregations, 600,000 members, and 3,800 ministers.

The concluding words of the final report of the Joint Union Committee are these: "We draw attention to the fact that the spirit of unity has characterized the Churches of Canada from the dawn of her history. Each of the Churches now uniting is itself a United Church. The present Union, now consummated, is but another step toward the wider union of Evangelical Churches, not only in Canada, but throughout the world."

From 1855 until 1874, the Wesleyan Methodists of Bermuda were organized as a District of the Wesleyan Conference of Eastern British America and became part of the Nova Scotia Conference when the Methodist Church of Canada was formed in 1874. As such, they passed into the legal corporation known as The Methodist Church, Canada, Newfoundland and Bermuda, when that church was formed in 1884. In 1925 a foreign religious corporation could not hold property in Bermuda, and various factors led the Methodists there to decide not to become part of The United Church of Canada. An arrangement was approved by the Fourth General Council (1930) whereby the Synod of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Bermuda affiliated with The United Church of Canada as a Presbytery of the Maritime Conference, without interference with the rights and powers conferred on the Synod by the Legislature of Bermuda.

A further significant step was indeed taken by the 22nd General Council (1966) when it adopted unanimously the Plan of Union between the Canada Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church and The United Church of Canada. The Plan was the result of extensive discussion between the two bodies. Urgency had been given to it by the impending union in the United States of the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren to form the United Methodist Church. The Canadian negotiation was independent, but received encouragement and approval from the parent Evangelical United Brethren Church. The actual union took place at the beginning of January, 1968, and the service of inauguration took place in Zion (Evangelical United Brethren) Church, Kitchener, Ontario, on January 10, 1968, although the Western Canadian Conference elected to stay out of the union, as did a very small number of ministers and congregations of the Canada Conference. The Canada Conference brought into the United Church 58 congregations, 9,898 members, and 40 ministers. Among the assets it brought to the United Church were two fine camp sites, at Silver Lake and Golden Lake.



# The Basis of Union

AS PREPARED BY THE JOINT COMMITTEE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA, THE METHODIST CHURCH, AND THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES OF CANADA, AND APPROVED BY THE SUPREME COURTS OF THESE CHURCHES, AS AMENDED BY THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

## GENERAL

- 1.1 The name of the Church formed by the union of the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational Churches in Canada shall be “The United Church of Canada.”
- 1.2 It shall be the policy of the United Church to foster the spirit of unity in the hope that this sentiment of unity may in due time, so far as Canada is concerned, take shape in a Church which may fittingly be described as national.

## DOCTRINE

- 2.1 The United Church recognizes the primacy of scripture.
- 2.2 The United Church recognizes as doctrine the following standards subordinate to scripture:
  - 2.2.1 the 20 articles of doctrine, set out in sections 2.3.0 through 2.3.20;
  - 2.2.2 “A Statement of Faith, 1940,” set out in sections 2.4.0 through 2.4.12;
  - 2.2.3 “A New Creed,” set out in section 2.5; and
  - 2.2.4 “A Song of Faith,” set out in section 2.6.

### Twenty Articles of Doctrine

- 2.3.0 We, the representatives of the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational branches of the Church of Christ in Canada, do hereby set forth the substance of the Christian faith, as commonly held among us. In doing so, we build upon the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. We affirm our belief in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the primary source and ultimate standard of Christian faith and life. We acknowledge the teaching of the great creeds of the ancient Church. We further maintain our allegiance to the evangelical doctrines of the Reformation, as set forth in common in the doctrinal standards adopted by The Presbyterian Church in Canada, by The Congregational Union of Ontario and Quebec, and by The Methodist Church. We present the accompanying statement as a brief summary of our common faith and commend it to the studious attention of the members and adherents of the negotiating Churches, as in substance agreeable to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures.
- 2.3.1 **Article I. *Of God.*** We believe in the one only living and true God, a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His being and perfections; the Lord Almighty, who is love, most just in all His ways, most glorious in holiness, unsearchable in wisdom, plenteous in mercy, full of compassion, and abundant in goodness and truth. We worship Him in the unity of the Godhead and the mystery of the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, three persons of the same substance, equal in power and glory.

## The Basis of Union: Doctrine

- 2.3.2 **Article II. *Of Revelation.*** We believe that God has revealed Himself in nature, in history, and in the heart of man; that He has been graciously pleased to make clearer revelation of Himself to men of God who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit; and that in the fullness of time He has perfectly revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, who is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person. We receive the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, given by inspiration of God, as containing the only infallible rule of faith and life, a faithful record of God's gracious revelations, and as the sure witness of Christ.
- 2.3.3 **Article III. *Of the Divine Purpose.*** We believe that the eternal, wise, holy, and loving purpose of God so embraces all events that, while the freedom of man is not taken away, nor is God the author of sin, yet in His providence He makes all things work together in the fulfilment of His sovereign design and the manifestation of His glory.
- 2.3.4 **Article IV. *Of Creation and Providence.*** We believe that God is the creator, upholder, and governor of all things; that He is above all His works and in them all; and that He made man in His own image, meet for fellowship with Him, free and able to choose between good and evil, and responsible to his Maker and Lord.
- 2.3.5 **Article V. *Of the Sin of Man.*** We believe that our first parents, being tempted, chose evil, and so fell away from God and came under the power of sin, the penalty of which is eternal death; and that, by reason of this disobedience, all men are born with a sinful nature, that we have broken God's law, and that no man can be saved but by His grace.
- 2.3.6 **Article VI. *Of the Grace of God.*** We believe that God, out of His great love for the world, has given His only begotten Son to be the Saviour of sinners, and in the Gospel freely offers His all-sufficient salvation to all men. We believe also that God, in His own good pleasure, gave to his son a people, an innumerable multitude, chosen in Christ unto holiness, service, and salvation.
- 2.3.7 **Article VII. *Of the Lord Jesus Christ.*** We believe in and confess the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and man, who, being the Eternal Son of God, for us men and for our salvation became truly man, being conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, yet without sin. Unto us He has revealed the Father, by His word and Spirit, making known the perfect will of God. For our redemption, He fulfilled all righteousness, offered Himself a perfect sacrifice on the Cross, satisfied Divine justice, and made propitiation for the sins of the whole world. He rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven, where He ever intercedes for us. In the hearts of believers He abides forever as the indwelling Christ; above us and over us all He rules; wherefore, unto Him we render love, obedience, and adoration as our Prophet, Priest, and King.
- 2.3.8 **Article VIII. *Of the Holy Spirit.*** We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who moves upon the hearts of men to restrain them from evil and to incite them unto good, and whom the Father is ever willing to give unto all who ask Him. We believe that He has spoken by holy men of God in making known His truth to men for their salvation; that, through our exalted Saviour, He was sent forth in power to convict the world of sin, to enlighten men's minds in the knowledge of Christ, and to persuade and enable them to obey the call of the Gospel; and that He abides with the Church, dwelling in every believer as the spirit of truth, of power, of holiness, of comfort, and of love.
- 2.3.9 **Article IX. *Of Regeneration.*** We believe in the necessity of regeneration, whereby we are made new creatures in Christ Jesus by the Spirit of God, who imparts spiritual life by the gracious and mysterious operation of His power, using as the ordinary means the truths of His word and the ordinances of divine appointment in ways agreeable to the nature of man.

## The Basis of Union: Doctrine

- 2.3.10 **Article X. *Of Faith and Repentance.*** We believe that faith in Christ is a saving grace whereby we receive Him, trust in Him, and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered to us in the Gospel, and that this saving faith is always accompanied by repentance, wherein we confess and forsake our sins with full purpose of and endeavour after a new obedience to God.
- 2.3.11 **Article XI. *Of Justification and Sonship.*** We believe that God, on the sole ground of the perfect obedience and sacrifice of Christ, pardons those who by faith receive Him as their Saviour and Lord, accepts them as righteous, and bestows upon them the adoption of sons, with a right to all privileges therein implied, including a conscious assurance of their sonship.
- 2.3.12 **Article XII. *Of Sanctification.*** We believe that those who are regenerated and justified grow in the likeness of Christ through fellowship with Him, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and obedience to the truth; that a holy life is the fruit and evidence of saving faith; and that the believer's hope of continuance in such a life is in the preserving grace of God. And we believe that in this growth in grace Christians may attain that maturity and full assurance of faith whereby the love of God is made perfect in us.
- 2.3.13 **Article XIII. *Of Prayer.*** We believe that we are encouraged to draw near to God, our Heavenly Father, in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and on our own behalf and that of others to pour out our hearts humbly yet freely before Him, as becomes His beloved children, giving Him the honour and praise due His holy name, asking Him to glorify Himself on earth as in Heaven, confessing unto Him our sins, and seeking of Him every gift needful for this life and for our everlasting salvation. We believe also that, inasmuch as all true prayer is prompted by His Spirit, He will in response thereto grant us every blessing according to His unsearchable wisdom and the riches of His grace in Jesus Christ.
- 2.3.14 **Article XIV. *Of the Law of God.*** We believe that the moral law of God, summarized in the Ten Commandments, testified to by the prophets, and unfolded in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, stands for ever in truth and equity, and is not made void by faith, but on the contrary is established thereby. We believe that God requires of every man to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God; and that only through this harmony with the will of God shall be fulfilled that brotherhood of man wherein the Kingdom of God is to be made manifest.
- 2.3.15 **Article XV. *Of the Church.*** We acknowledge one Holy Catholic Church, the innumerable company of saints of every age and nation, who being united by the Holy Spirit to Christ their Head are one body in Him and have communion with their Lord and with one another. Further, we receive it as the will of Christ that His Church on earth should exist as a visible and sacred brotherhood, consisting of those who profess faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to Him, together with their children and other baptized children, and organized for the confession of His name, for the public worship of God, for the administration of the sacraments, for the upbuilding of the saints, and for the universal propagation of the Gospel; and we acknowledge as a part, more or less pure, of this universal brotherhood, every particular church throughout the world which professes this faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to Him as divine Lord and Saviour.
- 2.3.16 **Article XVI. *Of the Sacraments.*** We acknowledge two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which were instituted by Christ, to be of perpetual obligation as signs and seals of the covenant ratified in His precious blood, as a means of grace, by which, working in us, He doth not only quicken but also strengthen and comfort our faith in Him, and as ordinances through the observance of which His Church is to confess her Lord and be visibly distinguished from the rest of the world.
- 2.3.16.1 Baptism with water into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is the sacrament by which are signified and sealed our union to Christ and participation in the blessings of the new covenant. The proper subjects of baptism are believers and infants presented by their

## The Basis of Union: Doctrine

parents or guardians in the Christian faith. In the latter case the parents or guardians should train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and should expect that their children will, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, receive the benefits which the sacrament is designed and fitted to convey. The Church is under the most solemn obligation to provide for their Christian instruction.

- 2.3.16.2 The Lord's Supper is the sacrament of communion with Christ and with His people, in which bread and wine are given and received in thankful remembrance of Him and His sacrifice on the Cross; and they who in faith receive the same do, after a spiritual manner, partake of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ to their comfort, nourishment, and growth in grace. All may be admitted to the Lord's Supper who make a credible profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus and of obedience to His law.
- 2.3.17 **Article XVII. *Of the Ministry.*** We believe that Jesus Christ, as the Supreme Head of the Church, has appointed therein an ordained ministry of Word, Sacrament, and Pastoral Care and a diaconal ministry of Education, Service, and Pastoral Care, and calls men and women to these ministries; and that the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, recognizes and chooses those whom He calls, and should thereupon duly ordain or commission them to the work of the ministry.
- 2.3.18 **Article XVIII. *Of Church Order and Fellowship.*** We believe that the Supreme and only Head of the Church is the Lord Jesus Christ; that its worship, teaching, discipline, and government should be administered according to His will by persons chosen for their fitness and duly set apart to their office; and that although the visible Church may contain unworthy members and is liable to err, yet believers ought not lightly to separate themselves from its communion, but are to live in fellowship with their brethren, which fellowship is to be extended, as God gives opportunity, to all who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.
- 2.3.19 **Article XIX. *Of the Resurrection, the Last Judgement, and the Future Life.*** We believe that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust, through the power of the Son of God, who shall come to judge the living and the dead; that the finally impenitent shall go away into eternal punishment and the righteous into life eternal.
- 2.3.20 **Article XX. *Of Christian Service and the Final Triumph.*** We believe that it is our duty, as disciples and servants of Christ, to further the extension of His Kingdom, to do good unto all men, to maintain the public and private worship of God, to hallow the Lord's Day, to preserve the inviolability of marriage and the sanctity of the family, to uphold the just authority of the State, and so to live in all honesty, purity, and charity, that our lives shall testify of Christ. We joyfully receive the word of Christ, bidding His people go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, declaring unto them that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and that He will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. We confidently believe that by His power and grace all His enemies shall finally be overcome, and the kingdoms of this world be made the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ.

## **A Statement of Faith, 1940**

### **2.4.0 Introduction.**

No attempt is made to answer all the questions which devout men may reasonably ask in regard to God and man and salvation. But we believe that we have included what is essential to the life of the Church. If our purpose were apologetic we should have to use more of the language of modern science and philosophy. Because our purpose is affirmative we have as far as possible adopted rather the language of Scripture, a language which matches the supreme facts it tells of, God's acts of judgment and of mercy.

The Church's faith is the unchanging Gospel of God's holy, redeeming love revealed in Jesus Christ. It is declared in Scripture; it is witnessed to both in the creeds of the Universal Church and in the Confessions of the Reformed Churches; and it is formulated for a specific purpose in our Basis of Union. But Christians of each new generation are called to state it afresh in terms of the thought of their own age and with the emphasis their age needs. This we have attempted to do for the people of The United Church of Canada—seeking always to be faithful to Scripture and to the testimony of the Universal Church, and always aware that no statement of ours can express the whole truth of God.

### **2.4.1 I. God**

We believe in God, the eternal personal Spirit, Creator and Upholder of all things.

We believe that God, as sovereign Lord exalted above the world, orders and overrules all things in it to the accomplishment of His holy, wise, and good purposes.

We believe that God made man to love and serve Him; that He cares for him as a righteous and compassionate Father; and that nothing can either quench His love or finally defeat His gracious purpose for man.

So we acknowledge God as Creator, Upholder, and Sovereign Lord of all things, and the righteous and loving Father of men.

### **2.4.2 II. Jesus Christ**

We believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, Who, for us men and our salvation became man and dwelt among us.

We believe that He lived a perfect human life, wholly devoted to the will of God and the service of man.

We believe that in Him God comes face to face with men; so that they learn that God loves them, seeks their good, bears their sorrows and their sin, and claims their exclusive faith and perfect obedience.

We believe that in Jesus Christ God acted to save man, taking, at measureless cost, man's sin upon Himself; that the Cross reveals at once God's abhorrence of sin and His saving love in its height and depth and power; and that the Cross is for all time the effectual means of reconciling the world unto God.

We believe that Jesus was raised victorious over death and declared to be the Son of God with power; and that He is alive for evermore, our Savior and our Lord.

So we acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Son of God Incarnate, the Savior of the world.

**2.4.3 III. The Holy Spirit**

We believe in the Holy Spirit by whom God is ever at work in the minds and hearts of men, inspiring every right desire and every effort after truth and beauty.

We believe that the Spirit of God moves men to acknowledge their sins and accept the divine forgiveness and grace.

We believe that the Spirit was present with power at the beginning of the Church, enabling the disciples to bear witness to what they had seen and heard, filling them with love of the brethren, and hope of the coming Kingdom, and sustaining them in the sense of Christ's continuing presence in their midst.

We believe that by the same Spirit the Church is continually guided and empowered, and her members fortified against temptation, fear and doubt, and built up in faith and holiness unto salvation.

So we acknowledge the Holy Spirit as the Lord and Giver of life, through whom the creative, redeeming love of God is ever at work among men.

**2.4.4 IV. The Holy Trinity**

Knowing God thus, as Creator and Father, as Redeemer in Christ, and as Holy Spirit working in us, we confess our faith in the Holy Trinity.

So we acknowledge and worship one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**2.4.5 V. Man and Man's Sin**

We believe that God gave to man, as He did not to the lower creatures, capacity to share His thought and purpose, and freedom to choose whether he would or would not love and serve Him.

We believe that man has used his freedom of choice for low and selfish ends, thus estranging himself from God and his brother man, and bringing upon himself the judgment and wrath of God, so that he lives in a world of confusion and distress, and is unable of himself to fulfill God's high purpose for him.

So we acknowledge man's sin, God's righteous judgment, and man's helplessness and need.

**2.4.6 VI. Redemption**

We believe that in the greatness of His love for man God has in Christ opened up a way of deliverance from the guilt and power of sin.

We believe that Christ, by living our life without sin, by dying at the hands of sinful men with faith unshaken and unfaltering love, has done for man what man could not do for himself. On the Cross He bore the burden of sin, and He broke its power; and what He did there moves men to repentance, conveys forgiveness, undoes the estrangement, and binds them to Himself in a new loyalty.

We believe that by His resurrection and exaltation Christ stands victorious over death and all evil, and that He fills those who commit themselves to Him with such grace and strength that in Him they, too, are conquerors. His redemption of man is at once an awful mystery and a glorious fact; it is the Lord's doing and marvelous in our eyes.

So we acknowledge the unmerited love and the mercy of our God in giving His only-begotten Son that we might not perish but have everlasting life.

**2.4.7 VII. The Church**

We believe that the Church, the society of the redeemed, was brought into existence by God Himself through the work and risen power of Christ, Who in calling men into fellowship with Himself calls them by the same act into fellowship with one another in Him.

We believe that the Church is the organ of Christ's mind and redemptive will, the body of which He is the Head. Under Him the Church is called to the proclamation of the everlasting Gospel with its offer of salvation, to the worship of God, Creator and Redeemer, to the loving service of mankind, and to the care and nurture of the flock.

We believe that all members of the Church are one in Him, and that the life of the Church in every age is continuous with that of the first apostolic company. The groups commonly known as "churches" are called to share in the life of the whole Church, of all ages and of all lands, entering freely into the full heritage of thought, worship, and discipline, and living together in mutual confidence.

We believe that for the fulfillment of her mission in the world God has given to the Church the Ministry, the Scriptures and the Sacraments.

So we acknowledge one holy, catholic, apostolic Church, the Body of Christ, the household and family of God.

**2.4.8 VIII. The Ministry**

We believe that God has appointed a Ministry in His Church for the preaching of the Word, the administration of the Sacraments, and the pastoral care of the people.

We believe that the Church has authority to ordain to the Ministry by prayer and the laying on of hands those whom she finds, after due trial, to be called of God thereto.

We believe that, for the due ordering of her life as a society, God has appointed a government in His Church, to be exercised, under Christ the head, by Ministers and representatives of the people.

So we acknowledge the Holy Ministry appointed by God for the spread of the Gospel and the edification of His Church.

**2.4.9 IX. The Holy Scriptures**

We believe that the great moments of God's revelation and communication of Himself to men are recorded and interpreted in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

We believe that, while God uttered His Word to man in many portions progressively, the whole is sufficient to declare His mind and will for our salvation. To Israel He made Himself known as a holy and righteous God and a Savior; the fullness of truth and grace came by Jesus Christ. The writings were collected and preserved by the Church.

We believe that the theme of all Holy Scripture is the redemptive purpose and working of God, and that herein lies its unity.

We believe that in Holy Scripture God claims the complete allegiance of our mind and heart; that the full persuasion of the truth and authority of the Word of God contained in the Scripture is the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts; that, using Holy Scripture, the Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

So we acknowledge in Holy Scripture the true witness to God's Word and the sure guide to Christian faith and conduct.

**2.4.10 X. The Sacraments**

We believe that the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are effectual means through which, by common things and simple acts, the saving love of God is exhibited and communicated to His people, who receive them in faith.

We believe that in Baptism men are made members of the Christian society. Washing with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit signifies God's cleansing from sin and an initial participation in the gifts and graces of the new life. The children of believing parents are baptized and nurtured in the family of God so that they may in due time take upon themselves the yoke of Christ.

We believe that the Lord's Supper perpetuates the fellowship between Christ and His disciples sealed in the upper room, that at His table He is always present, and His people are nourished, confirmed, and renewed. The giving and receiving of bread and wine accompanied by His own words signifies the gracious self-giving of Christ as suffering and living Lord in such wise that His faithful people live in Him and He in them.

So we acknowledge Baptism as God's appointed means of grace at initiation into the Christian fellowship; and the Lord's Supper as His appointed means of maintaining the fellowship in health and strength, and as the act of worship in which the whole soul of man goes out to God and God's grace comes freely to man.

**2.4.11 XI. Christian Life and Duty**

We believe that the Christian life is the life lived in fellowship with Christ and His Church. It begins with repentance and faith. In repentance men turn from sin to serve the holy and forgiving God with new and glad obedience. In faith they entrust themselves to Christ and rest upon Him alone for salvation.

We believe that by the teaching and example of Jesus the Holy Spirit shows men the way and the end of the Christian life, what it means to love God with all the heart and soul and mind and strength, and to love their neighbour as themselves.

We believe that Christian men are called to abide within the fellowship of the Church, to maintain its peace and unity, and to give diligent heed to prayer, to the reading of Scripture, to common worship and the sacraments.

We believe that they are likewise called to live as those who are of the Kingdom of God, and to seek His righteousness both in individual and social life, serving their fellow-men in love for Christ's sake, and striving and waiting in prayer for an ordered common life where the will of God for the well-being and peace of men shall be done over all the earth.

We believe that in denying themselves and in following Christ men are enabled by the Spirit of God more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness; that they are, under the hand of a faithful Father, in labour, love, and duty, in suffering, sorrow and defeat, renewed in the inner man after the image of the crucified and victorious Christ; and that they receive in this life a foretaste of the final redemption, assurance of the divine favour, peace and joy, and the confidence that He is able to keep them to the end.

So we acknowledge the Christian life as the life lived within the family of God, with the graces and privileges, the duties and discipline, through which the Christian man grows up in all things into Christ.

2.4.12 **XII. The Consummation**

We believe that the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, following on His crucifixion, gives assurance that the long struggle between sin and grace will have an end, the Kingdom be revealed in its fullness, and God's eternal purpose accomplished.

We believe that God will judge all men by Jesus Christ, the Son of Man.

We believe that, while salvation is offered to all, God does not take away or override the freedom with which He has endowed men. If they stubbornly refuse His mercy and prefer sinful ways they shut themselves out from the light and joy of salvation and fall under the righteous judgment of God.

We believe that those who accept the offer of salvation and persevere in the Christian way do after death enter into the joy of their Lord, a blessedness beyond our power to conceive. They see God face to face, and in the communion of saints are partakers with the Church on earth of its labours and prayers.

So we acknowledge the righteous and merciful judgment of God and we wait for the coming of the Kingdom which shall have no end.

"We know Whom we have believed, and are persuaded that He is able to keep that which we have committed to Him."

"To the only wise God our Savior be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever."

**A New Creed**

2.5 We are not alone,  
we live in God's world.

We believe in God:  
who has created and is creating,  
who has come in Jesus,  
the Word made flesh,  
to reconcile and make new,  
who works in us and others  
by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:  
to celebrate God's presence,  
to live with respect in Creation,  
to love and serve others,  
to seek justice and resist evil,  
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,  
our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death,  
God is with us.

We are not alone.

Thanks be to God.

## A Song of Faith

1 2.6 God is Holy Mystery,  
2 beyond complete knowledge,  
3 above perfect description.  
4 Yet,  
5 in love,  
6 the one eternal God seeks relationship.  
7 So God creates the universe  
8 and with it the possibility of being and relating.  
9 God tends the universe,  
10 mending the broken and reconciling the estranged.  
11 God enlivens the universe,  
12 guiding all things toward harmony with their Source.  
13 Grateful for God's loving action,  
14 We cannot keep from singing.  
15 With the Church through the ages,  
16 we speak of God as one and triune:  
17 Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.  
18 We also speak of God as  
19 Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer  
20 God, Christ, and Spirit  
21 Mother, Friend, and Comforter  
22 Source of Life, Living Word, and Bond of Love,  
23 and in other ways that speak faithfully of  
24 the One on whom our hearts rely,  
25 the fully shared life at the heart of the universe.  
26 We witness to Holy Mystery that is Wholly Love.  
27 God is creative and self-giving, generously moving  
28 in all the near and distant corners of the universe.  
29 Nothing exists that does not find its source in God.  
30 Our first response to God's providence is gratitude.  
31 We sing thanksgiving.  
32 Finding ourselves in a world of beauty and mystery,  
33 of living things, diverse and interdependent,  
34 of complex patterns of growth and evolution,  
35 of subatomic particles and cosmic swirls,  
36 we sing of God the Creator,  
37 the Maker and Source of all that is.

## The Basis of Union: Doctrine

38 Each part of creation reveals unique aspects of God the Creator,  
39 who is both in creation and beyond it.  
40 All parts of creation, animate and inanimate, are related.  
41 All creation is good.  
42 We sing of the Creator,  
43 who made humans to live and move  
44 and have their being in God.  
45 In and with God,  
46 we can direct our lives toward right relationship  
47 with each other and with God.  
48 We can discover our place as one strand in the web of life.  
49 We can grow in wisdom and compassion.  
50 We can recognize all people as kin.  
51 We can accept our mortality and finitude, not as a curse,  
52 but as a challenge to make our lives and choices matter.

53 Made in the image of God,  
54 we yearn for the fulfillment that is life in God.  
55 Yet we choose to turn away from God.  
56 We surrender ourselves to sin,  
57 a disposition revealed in selfishness, cowardice, or apathy.  
58 Becoming bound and complacent  
59 in a web of false desires and wrong choices,  
60 we bring harm to ourselves and others.  
61 This brokenness in human life and community  
62 is an outcome of sin.  
63 Sin is not only personal  
64 but accumulates  
65 to become habitual and systemic forms  
66 of injustice, violence, and hatred.

67 We are all touched by this brokenness:  
68 the rise of selfish individualism  
69 that erodes human solidarity;  
70 the concentration of wealth and power  
71 without regard for the needs of all;  
72 the toxins of religious and ethnic bigotry;  
73 the degradation of the blessedness of human bodies  
74 and human passions through sexual exploitation;  
75 the delusion of unchecked progress and limitless growth  
76 that threatens our home, the earth;  
77 the covert despair that lulls many into numb complicity  
78 with empires and systems of domination.  
79 We sing lament and repentance.

## The Basis of Union: Doctrine

80 Yet evil does not—cannot—  
81       undermine or overcome the love of God.  
82 God forgives,  
83       and calls all of us to confess our fears and failings  
84       with honesty and humility.  
85 God reconciles,  
86       and calls us to repent the part we have played  
87       in damaging our world, ourselves, and each other.  
88 God transforms,  
89       and calls us to protect the vulnerable,  
90       to pray for deliverance from evil,  
91       to work with God for the healing of the world,  
92       that all might have abundant life.  
93 We sing of grace.  
94 The fullness of life includes  
95       moments of unexpected inspiration and courage lived out,  
96       experiences of beauty, truth, and goodness,  
97       blessings of seeds and harvest,  
98       friendship and family, intellect and sexuality,  
99       the reconciliation of persons through justice  
100       and communities living in righteousness,  
101       and the articulation of meaning.  
102 And so we sing of God the Spirit,  
103       who from the beginning has swept over the face of creation,  
104       animating all energy and matter  
105       and moving in the human heart.  
106 We sing of God the Spirit,  
107       faithful and untameable,  
108       who is creatively and redemptively active in the world.  
109 The Spirit challenges us to celebrate the holy  
110       not only in what is familiar,  
111       but also in that which seems foreign.  
112 We sing of the Spirit,  
113       who speaks our prayers of deepest longing  
114       and enfolds our concerns and confessions,  
115       transforming us and the world.

## The Basis of Union: Doctrine

116 We offer worship  
117 as an outpouring of gratitude and awe  
118 and a practice of opening ourselves  
119 to God's still, small voice of comfort,  
120 to God's rushing whirlwind of challenge.  
121 Through word, music, art, and sacrament,  
122 in community and in solitude,  
123 God changes our lives, our relationships, and our world.  
124 We sing with trust.

125 Scripture is our song for the journey, the living word  
126 passed on from generation to generation  
127 to guide and inspire,  
128 that we might wrestle a holy revelation for our time and place  
129 from the human experiences  
130 and cultural assumptions of another era.  
131 God calls us to be doers of the word and not hearers only.

132 The Spirit breathes revelatory power into scripture,  
133 bestowing upon it a unique and normative place  
134 in the life of the community.  
135 The Spirit judges us critically when we abuse scripture  
136 by interpreting it narrow-mindedly,  
137 using it as a tool of oppression, exclusion, or hatred.

138 The wholeness of scripture testifies  
139 to the oneness and faithfulness of God.  
140 The multiplicity of scripture testifies to its depth:  
141 two testaments, four gospels,  
142 contrasting points of view held in tension—  
143 all a faithful witness to the One and Triune God,  
144 the Holy Mystery that is Wholly Love.

145 We find God made known in Jesus of Nazareth,  
146 and so we sing of God the Christ, the Holy One embodied.

147 We sing of Jesus,  
148 a Jew,  
149 born to a woman in poverty  
150 in a time of social upheaval  
151 and political oppression.  
152 He knew human joy and sorrow.  
153 So filled with the Holy Spirit was he  
154 that in him people experienced the presence of God among them.  
155 We sing praise to God incarnate.

## The Basis of Union: Doctrine

156 Jesus announced the coming of God's reign—  
157 a commonwealth not of domination  
158 but of peace, justice, and reconciliation.  
159 He healed the sick and fed the hungry.  
160 He forgave sins and freed those held captive  
161 by all manner of demonic powers.  
162 He crossed barriers of race, class, culture, and gender.  
163 He preached and practised unconditional love—  
164 love of God, love of neighbour,  
165 love of friend, love of enemy—  
166 and he commanded his followers to love one another  
167 as he had loved them.

168 Because his witness to love was threatening,  
169 those exercising power sought to silence Jesus.  
170 He suffered abandonment and betrayal,  
171 state-sanctioned torture and execution.  
172 He was crucified.

173 But death was not the last word.  
174 God raised Jesus from death,  
175 turning sorrow into joy,  
176 despair into hope.  
177 We sing of Jesus raised from the dead.  
178 We sing hallelujah.

179 By becoming flesh in Jesus,  
180 God makes all things new.  
181 In Jesus' life, teaching, and self-offering,  
182 God empowers us to live in love.  
183 In Jesus' crucifixion,  
184 God bears the sin, grief, and suffering of the world.  
185 In Jesus' resurrection,  
186 God overcomes death.  
187 Nothing separates us from the love of God.

188 The Risen Christ lives today,  
189 present to us and the source of our hope.  
190 In response to who Jesus was  
191 and to all he did and taught,  
192 to his life, death, and resurrection,  
193 and to his continuing presence with us through the Spirit,  
194 we celebrate him as  
195 the Word made flesh,  
196 the one in whom God and humanity are perfectly joined,  
197 the transformation of our lives,  
198 the Christ.

## The Basis of Union: Doctrine

199 We sing of a church  
200 seeking to continue the story of Jesus  
201 by embodying Christ's presence in the world.  
202 We are called together by Christ  
203 as a community of broken but hopeful believers,  
204 loving what he loved,  
205 living what he taught,  
206 striving to be faithful servants of God  
207 in our time and place.  
208 Our ancestors in faith  
209 bequeath to us experiences of their faithful living;  
210 upon their lives our lives are built.  
211 Our living of the gospel makes us a part of this communion of saints,  
212 experiencing the fulfillment of God's reign  
213 even as we actively anticipate a new heaven and a new earth.

214 The church has not always lived up to its vision.  
215 It requires the Spirit to reorient it,  
216 helping it to live an emerging faith while honouring tradition,  
217 challenging it to live by grace rather than entitlement,  
218 for we are called to be a blessing to the earth.

219 We sing of God's good news lived out,  
220 a church with purpose:  
221 faith nurtured and hearts comforted,  
222 gifts shared for the good of all,  
223 resistance to the forces that exploit and marginalize,  
224 fierce love in the face of violence,  
225 human dignity defended,  
226 members of a community held and inspired by God,  
227 corrected and comforted,  
228 instrument of the loving Spirit of Christ,  
229 creation's mending.  
230 We sing of God's mission.

231 We are each given particular gifts of the Spirit.  
232 For the sake of the world,  
233 God calls all followers of Jesus to Christian ministry.  
234 In the church,  
235 some are called to specific ministries of leadership,  
236 both lay and ordered;  
237 some witness to the good news;  
238 some uphold the art of worship;  
239 some comfort the grieving and guide the wandering;  
240 some build up the community of wisdom;  
241 some stand with the oppressed and work for justice.  
242 To embody God's love in the world,  
243 the work of the church requires the ministry and discipleship  
244 of all believers.

## The Basis of Union: Doctrine

245 In grateful response to God's abundant love,  
246 we bear in mind our integral connection  
247 to the earth and one another;  
248 we participate in God's work of healing and mending creation.  
249 To point to the presence of the holy in the world,  
250 the church receives, consecrates, and shares  
251 visible signs of the grace of God.  
252 In company with the churches  
253 of the Reformed and Methodist traditions,  
254 we celebrate two sacraments as gifts of Christ: baptism and holy communion.  
255 In these sacraments the ordinary things of life  
256 —water, bread, wine—  
257 point beyond themselves to God and God's love,  
258 teaching us to be alert  
259 to the sacred in the midst of life.

260 Before conscious thought or action on our part,  
261 we are born into the brokenness of this world.  
262 Before conscious thought or action on our part,  
263 we are surrounded by God's redeeming love.  
264 Baptism by water in the name of the Holy Trinity  
265 is the means by which we are received, at any age,  
266 into the covenanted community of the church.  
267 It is the ritual that signifies our rebirth in faith  
268 and cleansing by the power of God.  
269 Baptism signifies the nurturing, sustaining,  
270 and transforming power of God's love  
271 and our grateful response to that grace.

272 Carrying a vision of creation healed and restored,  
273 we welcome all in the name of Christ.  
274 Invited to the table where none shall go hungry,  
275 we gather as Christ's guests and friends.  
276 In holy communion  
277 we are commissioned to feed as we have been fed,  
278 forgive as we have been forgiven,  
279 love as we have been loved.  
280 The open table speaks of the shining promise  
281 of barriers broken and creation healed.  
282 In the communion meal, wine poured out and bread broken,  
283 we remember Jesus.  
284 We remember not only the promise but also the price that he paid  
285 for who he was,  
286 for what he did and said,  
287 and for the world's brokenness.  
288 We taste the mystery of God's great love for us,  
289 and are renewed in faith and hope.

## The Basis of Union: Doctrine

290 We place our hope in God.  
291 We sing of a life beyond life  
292 and a future good beyond imagining:  
293 a new heaven and a new earth,  
294 the end of sorrow, pain, and tears,  
295 Christ's return and life with God,  
296 the making new of all things.  
297 We yearn for the coming of that future,  
298 even while participating in eternal life now.

299 Divine creation does not cease  
300 until all things have found wholeness, union, and integration  
301 with the common ground of all being.  
302 As children of the Timeless One,  
303 our time-bound lives will find completion  
304 in the all-embracing Creator.

305 In the meantime, we embrace the present,  
306 embodying hope, loving our enemies,  
307 caring for the earth,  
308 choosing life.

309 Grateful for God's loving action,  
310 we cannot keep from singing.  
311 Creating and seeking relationship,  
312 in awe and trust,  
313 we witness to Holy Mystery who is Wholly Love.

314 Amen.

## **POLITY**

### **I. Background**

- 3.0 We believe God is doing a new thing and is calling The United Church of Canada to be part of a new creation.

Following the meeting of the 41st General Council in 2012, the Church engaged in conversations, consultations, research, analysis, and prayer. The 42nd General Council in 2015 responded by approving a new structure to focus our resources on supporting, enlivening, and accompanying Communities of Faith to live out God's call. This structure was approved by the Church through remits which were enacted by the 43rd General Council in 2018.

This flexible and responsive structure enables us to come together to embody the gospel and vision of Jesus Christ in our current context. (2019)

### **II. The Church**

- 4.1 The members of pastoral charges and congregations shall continue to be members of the United Church. (2019)
- 4.2 The United Church of Canada is organized as follows: (1) a three-council structure, consisting of communities of faith, regional councils and a Denominational Council, and (2) an autonomous National Indigenous Church. (2025)
- 4.3 In its own time and through its own processes, the autonomous National Indigenous Organization will determine its structure and processes. (2025)
- 4.4 Once the new autonomous National Indigenous Organization is established, it will have its own mechanism to make any future changes to its structure and processes, and, therefore will not be subject to the remit process under section 7.4.1 of the Basis of Union. (2025)
- 4.5 The final wording describing the structure and processes of the autonomous National Indigenous Organization will be recorded here. (2025)

### **III. Communities of Faith**

- 5.1 Description. A Community of Faith is any community of people within the United Church that: (2019)
- 5.1.1 gathers to explore faith, worship, and serve, including but not limited to pastoral charges, congregations, outreach ministries, chaplaincies, faith-based communal living, house churches, and online communities; and (2019)
- 5.1.2 is recognized as a Community of Faith within the United Church by the Regional Council through a covenantal relationship between the Community of Faith and the Regional Council. (2019)
- 5.2 Membership. The members of the United Church are the members of its Communities of Faith. The members of the Community of Faith are: (2019)
- 5.2.1 people admitted to membership by the Community of Faith, within denominational guidelines; (2019)
- 5.2.2 eligible for election to the Denominational Council and Regional Council; and (2019)

## The Basis of Union: Polity

- 5.2.3 entitled to vote on all Community of Faith matters; and entitled to extend the right to vote to adherents on all such matters. (2019)
- 5.3 Authority and responsibility. The Community of Faith has authority and responsibility for: (2019)
- 5.3.1 Mission
- 1) living in covenant with the Regional Council with mutual responsibilities for the life and mission of the Community of Faith, and fulfilling its responsibilities under the covenant;
  - 2) doing regular self-assessments of the ministry of the Community of Faith; and filing the report with the Regional Council;
  - 3) joining the hearts, voices, and resources of the community to witness to the gospel and vision of Jesus for a compassionate and just society, both in Canada and around the world;
  - 4) local, regional, national and global initiatives and partnerships (community, ecumenical and interfaith) for ministry, mission and justice work;
  - 5) ministry with children and youth and young adults;
  - 6) honouring and living into intercultural mission and ministry; and
  - 7) living in covenant with Mother Earth and All My Relations in the Earth community; (2019)
- 5.3.2 Governance and administration
- 1) making decisions about the life of the Community of Faith, including worship, care, spiritual practice, and learning; local administration, finances, and governance and local mission, justice, and evangelism;
  - 2) meeting at least annually;
  - 3) complying with denominational and regional policies; and
  - 4) buying, selling, leasing, and renovating Community of Faith property in cooperation with the Regional Council, within denominational guidelines; (2019)
- 5.3.3 Spiritual life
- 1) setting policies for membership, within denominational guidelines and receiving and celebrating new members in the Community of Faith;
  - 2) helping members on their journey as they explore and deepen their faith; and
  - 3) ensuring the proper administration of the sacraments; (2019)
- 5.3.4 Ministry and other leadership
- 1) cooperation with the Regional Council, within denominational guidelines, in recruiting, choosing, calling, appointing, and covenanting with ministry personnel and other staff, and in ending calls, and appointments and covenants with ministry personnel and other staff;
  - 2) encouraging members to consider ministry roles a responsibility shared through the whole Community of Faith; and
  - 3) calling forth individuals for ministry leadership; (2019)
- 5.3.5 Participation in regional and denominational life
- 1) helping to fund the cost of sending members to the meetings of the Regional Council;
  - 2) electing members to serve on Regional Council with shared funding of the cost; and
  - 3) receiving, dealing with, and forwarding proposals from members of the Community of Faith to Regional Councils. (2019)

## The Basis of Union: Polity

- 5.4 Limitations. All authority and responsibility of the Community of Faith is subject to: (2019)
- 5.4.1 policies set by the Denominational Council on membership, governance, pastoral relations, property, and any other area within the authority of the Denominational Council; (2019)
- 5.4.2 the covenantal relationship between the Community of Faith and the Regional Council; and (2019)
- 5.4.3 the authority of the Regional Council to assume control of the Community of Faith in extraordinary circumstances where the Community of Faith is unable to or refuses to meet its responsibilities or acts outside of denominational or regional policies. (2019)
- 5.5 Pastoral Charges Existing Previous to the Union
- 5.5.1 In the management of their local affairs, the various churches, charges, circuits, or congregations of the negotiating Churches shall be entitled to continue the organization and practices (including those practices relating to membership, church ordinances, Sunday schools, and young people's societies) enjoyed by them at the time of the Union, subject in general affairs to the legislation, principles, and discipline of the United Church. Their representatives in the next higher governing body or council shall be chosen as at present.
- 5.5.2 Subject to the provisions of the next succeeding paragraph hereof, all property, real and personal, under the jurisdiction of the Parliament of Canada, held in trust for or to the use of a church, charge, circuit, or congregation of any of the negotiating Churches shall be held by trustees appointed by or on behalf of such church, charge, circuit, or congregation, upon trusts set forth and declared in a Model Trust Deed. This Model Trust Deed should be a schedule to the Act, and should contain, among others, a provision to the following effect: that the property is held for the church, charge, circuit, or congregation as a part of the United Church, and that no property so held shall be sold, exchanged, or in any manner encumbered, unless the Regional Council shall, at the instance of the church, charge, circuit, or congregation, have given its sanction, subject to an appeal, if desired, to the Denominational Council.
- 5.5.3 Any property or funds owned by a church, charge, circuit, or congregation at the time of the Union solely for its own benefit, or vested in trustees for the sole benefit of such church, charge, circuit, or congregation, and not for the denomination of which the said church, charge, circuit, or congregation formed a part, shall not be affected by the legislation giving effect to the Union or by any legislation of the United Church without the consent of the church, charge, circuit, or congregation for which such property is held in trust.
- 5.5.4 Churches, charges, circuits, or congregations received subsequent to the Union, into the United Church, with the approval of Presbyteries or Regional Councils, shall be entitled, if they so desire, to the privileges of sections 5.5.1. and 5.5.3.
- 5.6 Pastoral Charges to Be Formed Subsequent to the Union
- All lands, premises, and property acquired for the use of a local church or a Pastoral Charge of the United Church shall be held, used, and administered under the trusts of the above Model Trust Deed.
- 5.7 Church Membership
- The members of the Church entitled to all church privileges are those who, on a profession of their faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to Him, have been received into full membership. The children of such persons and all baptized children are members of the Church, and it is their duty and privilege, when they reach the age of discretion, to enter into full membership. Admission to full membership and granting of certificates of transfer or removal shall be:

## The Basis of Union: Polity

- 1) by the action of the governing body of the Pastoral Charge or by the action of those in full membership when desired by the Pastoral Charge; or
- 2) by a Chaplain in the Canadian Forces, with the approval of, and in association with, two or more members in full communion with the United Church, for persons under that Chaplain's pastoral care.

### IV. Regional Councils

- 6.1 Description. A Regional Council is a decision-making body responsible to serve and support Communities of Faith within its bounds and provide necessary oversight. (2019)
- 6.2 Membership. The Regional Council is composed of: (2019)
- 6.2.1 all ministry personnel within the geographic bounds served by the regional council; (2019)
- 6.2.2 ministers of denominations within mutual recognition agreements while under appointment or call; and (2019)
- 6.2.3 lay members elected by the Community of Faith, respecting the balance of lay and ministry personnel where possible. (2019)
- 6.3 Authority and Responsibility. The Regional Council has authority and responsibility for: (2019)
- 6.3.1 Covenanting:
- 1) recognizing a new Community of Faith by entering into a covenantal relationship with it;
  - 2) living in a covenantal relationship with each Community of Faith, with mutual responsibilities for the life and mission of the Community of Faith, and fulfilling its responsibilities under the covenant; and
  - 3) living in a covenantal relationship with ministry personnel; (2019)
- 6.3.2 Services for Communities of Faith:
- 1) providing support, advice, and services to Communities of Faith in human resources matters;
  - 2) providing support, advice, and services to Communities of Faith in dealing with congregational property;
  - 3) managing regional archives;
  - 4) providing on-going leadership training for ministers and lay persons; and
  - 5) providing funding partnerships with United Church educational and leadership training centres and camps as determined regionally; (2019)
- 6.3.3 Serve, support and provide oversight of Communities of Faith:
- 1) reviewing and periodically auditing the self-assessments of Communities of Faith in light of the covenant between the Community of Faith and the Regional Council;
  - 2) supporting emerging new ministries;
  - 3) supporting Communities of Faith in their life and work;
  - 4) serving, supporting and providing oversight when necessary of camps and incorporated ministries in the region;
  - 5) promoting articulation of mission and ministry;
  - 6) ensuring compliance with the policies and polity of the United Church and reviewing any relevant records; and
  - 7) assuming control of a Community of Faith in extraordinary circumstances where the Community of Faith is unable to or refuses to meet its responsibilities or acts outside of denominational policies; (2019)

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### 6.3.4 Mission and ministry. Encouraging and engaging in:

- 1) joining our collective hearts, voices, and resources to witness to the gospel and vision of Jesus for a compassionate and just society, both in Canada and around the world;
- 2) local, regional, national and global initiatives and partnerships (community, ecumenical and interfaith) for ministry, mission and justice work;
- 3) ministry with children, youth and young adults;
- 4) honouring and living into intercultural mission and ministry; and
- 5) living in covenant with Mother Earth and All My Relations in the Earth community; (2019)

### 6.3.5 Policy and finance:

- 1) administering policy set by the Denominational Council, and setting appropriate regional policy;
- 2) buying, selling, leasing, and renovating Community of Faith property in cooperation with Communities of Faith, and distributing any proceeds within denominational guidelines;
- 3) buying, selling, leasing, and renovating regional property, and distributing any proceeds within denominational guidelines;
- 4) setting and managing its annual budget including revenue from the denominational assessment and setting any additional regional assessment for any additional services the Regional Council wishes to undertake;
- 5) participating in determining priorities for mission and ministry work through Mission and Service; and
- 6) meeting at least annually as the entire Regional Council or through its executive; (2019)

### 6.3.6 Preparation for Ministry:

- 1) calling forth of persons for ministry;
- 2) accompanying persons in the preparation process;
- 3) ordaining and commissioning of members of the order of ministry;
- 4) recognizing Designated Lay Ministers;
- 5) licensing of Licensed Lay Worship Leaders; and
- 6) celebrating admissions and re-admissions; (2019)

### 6.3.7 Pastoral Relations: cooperating with Communities of Faith in recruiting, choosing, calling, appointing and covenanting with ministry personnel and Communities of Faith, and in ending calls, appointments AND covenants with ministry personnel and other staff; (2019)

### 6.3.8 Celebrating retirements; (2019)

### 6.3.9 Oversight of ministry personnel;

- 1) encouraging and supporting ministry personnel towards health, joy and excellence in ministry practice;
- 2) assisting with informal conflict resolution processes; and
- 3) maintaining the roll of ministry personnel; (2019)

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### 6.3.10 Participation in denominational life:

- 1) electing members to serve on Denominational Council.
- 2) receiving, dealing with, and forwarding proposals from members of the Community of Faith to the Denominational Council; and
- 3) promoting and fostering direct dialogue between Communities of Faith and the Denominational Council. (2019)

### 6.4 Limitations

- 1) policies set by the Denominational Council on membership, governance, pastoral relations, candidacy, ministry personnel, property, and any other area within the authority of the Denominational Council; and
- 2) the authority of the Denominational Council to assume control of the Regional Council in extraordinary circumstances where the Regional Council is unable to or refuses to meet its responsibilities or acts outside of denominational or regional policies. (2019)

### 6.5 Staffing

Each region has staff to assist the Regional Council in meeting its responsibilities:

- 1) staffing numbers are based on assessments, grants from Mission and Service, and any other regional income;
- 2) staffing is based on priorities and needs as determined regionally;
- 3) staff are hired and managed by a regional secretary who reports to the General Secretary of the Denominational Council and relates to the Regional Council executive;
- 4) Regional Councils with more resources are free to retain more staff; and
- 5) sharing of all resources across the Church is encouraged. (2019)

## V. Denominational Council

7.1 Description. The Denominational Council is the decision-making body for the United Church as both a denomination and a legal corporation. (2019)

7.2 Membership. The Denominational Council consists of:

- 1) those elected by the Regional Councils according to an agreed-upon formula
- 2) the presiding officer or elder of each Regional Council;
- 3) the Moderator and the immediate Past Moderator;
- 4) the General Secretary of the Denominational Council; and
- 5) other members and guests as determined. (2019)

7.3 Authority and responsibility. The Denominational Council has authority and responsibility for: (2019)

7.3.1 Mission:

- 1) joining our collective hearts, voices, and resources to witness to the gospel and vision of Jesus for a compassionate and just society, both in Canada and around the world;
- 2) engaging denominational-level ministry and mission including resource development and being a resource to Regional Councils and Communities of Faith;
- 3) encouraging local and regional mission and ministry, partnerships, ecumenical and interfaith;
- 4) engaging in national and global partnerships, ecumenical and interfaith relationships;

## The Basis of Union: Polity

- 5) honouring and living into intercultural mission and ministry; and
  - 6) living in covenant with Mother Earth and All My Relations in the Earth community; (2019)
- 7.3.2 Policy:
- 1) setting policies for the denomination on doctrine, worship, membership, governance, pastoral relations, property, and the entrance to paid accountable ministry;
  - 2) making decisions on denomination-shaping issues relating to public witness; and
  - 3) dealing with proposals received from Regional Councils; (2019)
- 7.3.3 Governance:
- 1) electing a Moderator;
  - 2) electing the executive of the Denominational Council;
  - 3) referring all unfinished matters to the executive of the Denominational Council;
  - 4) meeting once every three years in person, with members having the option of full participation through electronic or equivalent means;
  - 5) meeting more frequently as required through electronic or equivalent means; and
  - 6) approving the number and boundaries of Regional Councils, supporting them and promoting parity of service across regions; (2019)
- 7.3.4 Finance and administration:
- 1) setting a three-year budget framework for the Church
  - 2) determining the assessment formula for Communities of Faith and assessing them to meet the requirements of the budget; and
  - 3) maintaining the denominational archives. (2019)
- 7.4 Limitations. The authority and responsibility of the Denominational Council is subject to the following limitations: (2019)
- 7.4.1 changing the Basis of Union—with the exception of section 4.4 (under section II “The Church”), the Basis of Union may only be changed through the remit process, which requires the approval of a majority of the Regional Councils and also, if the Denominational Council considers it advisable because the change is substantive or denomination-shaping, pastoral charges; (2025)
- Substantive or denomination-shaping changes include but are not limited to changes that:
- i. alter the nature of the councils of the Church;
  - ii. significantly change the structures of the Church;
  - iii. redefine the Church’s understanding of ministry;
  - iv. affect the articles of faith except for gender language applied to human beings;
  - v. change the baptismal formula or vows made upon ordination or commissioning;
  - vi. move a section from this Basis of Union to the By-Laws; or
  - vii. alter the Church’s understanding of membership; (2019)
- 7.4.2 membership requirements—no terms of admission to full membership may be prescribed other than those laid down in the New Testament; (2019)
- 7.4.3 freedom of worship—the freedom of worship enjoyed by churches at the time of union in 1925 may not be interfered with in the United Church; and (2019)

## The Basis of Union: Polity

- 7.4.4 property—all policy on congregational property adopted by the Denominational Council must comply with the requirements set in The United Church of Canada Act. (2019)
- 7.5 Executive of the Denominational Council. The executive of the Denominational Council is the decision-making body for the United Church between meetings of the Denominational Council, living into covenantal relationship and mutually accountable with the Denominational Council, Regional Councils, and Communities of Faith, with the following membership, authority and responsibility: (2019)
- 7.5.1 membership: a fixed number between 12 and 18 members, with the exact number set by the Denominational Council; (2019)
- 7.5.2 authority and responsibility:
- 1) dealing with all unfinished matters referred to it by the Denominational Council;
  - 2) dealing with all routine and emergency work of the Denominational Council between meetings of the denominational council;
  - 3) establishing standing and other committees; and
  - 4) exercising additional authority and subject to any limitations as set by the Denominational Council. (2019)
- 7.6 Staffing. The Denominational Council has staff to assist it in meeting its responsibilities through: (2019)
- 7.6.1 staffing based on assessments of Communities of Faith, grants from Mission and Service, and other denominational income; (2019)
- 7.6.2 staffing based on the priorities and needs as determined denominationally; (2019)
- 7.6.3 administering denominational policies; (2019)
- 7.6.4 providing centralized technical services such as information technology, communication, payroll, accounting, human resources, administration, and pension plan; (2019)
- 7.6.5 supporting the Moderator; and (2019)
- 7.6.6 providing leadership in global partnerships and national-level ministry and mission work. (2019)

## VI. Denominational Office of Vocation

- 8.0 The denominational Office of Vocation of the United Church is established with the following responsibility and structure: (2019)
- 8.1 Responsibility:
- 8.1.1 establishing standards for training and accreditation of ministry personnel according to denominational policies; (2019)
- 8.1.2 establishing expectations and standards for continuing education, formation, and professional development of ministry personnel according to denominational policies; (2019)
- 8.1.3 determining the person's fitness and readiness for accreditation to ministry; (2019)
- 8.1.4 maintaining registry of accredited ministry personnel; (2019)
- 8.1.5 disciplining of ministry personnel including formal hearings and complaints; (2019)
- 8.1.6 supporting and responding to requests for assistance from Regional Councils; (2019)
- 8.1.7 administering the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary and Voluntary); (2019)

## The Basis of Union: Polity

- 8.1.8 maintaining a list of trained conflict resolution facilitators; (2019)
- 8.1.9 maintaining a list of recognized Interim Ministers, and those trained for the Ministry of Supervision; and (2019)
- 8.1.10 establishing and implementing standards for admitting ministers from other denominations and re-admitting ministers. (2019)
- 8.2 Structure. Oversight of the Office of Vocation is by an elected body that: (2019)
  - 8.2.1 honours and lives into intercultural mission and ministry; and (2019)
  - 8.2.2 consists of a balance of ministers whether ordained, diaconal, or designated lay ministers and lay people, with a variety of active experience. (2019)

## VII. Clusters and Networks

- 9. Alongside the three-council structure, there are clusters and networks that, while not formal governance bodies, are central to the living out of the faith of the United Church: (2019)
  - 9.1 clusters: local clusters of Communities of Faith that provide community and support for Communities of Faith and their leaders, and focus on worship, mission, learning, collegiality, and strategic planning; and (2019)
  - 9.2 networks: linking people working on specific issues (supportive housing, intercultural ministry, youth ministry) or for project work (e.g. event planning) that function through the whole Church, depending on the issue. (2019)

## MINISTRY PERSONNEL

- 10.0 The Order of Ministry shall be open to persons of all gender identities. (2021)
- 10.1 The pastoral relationship, when initiated by call, shall be without time limit.
- 10.2 The policy of the Church shall be that, as far as reasonably possible, every Pastoral Charge shall have a pastorate without interruption, and that, as far as reasonably possible, every effective member of the Order of Ministry shall have a Pastoral Charge or Community of Faith. (2019)
- 10.3 Every member of the Order of Ministry shall, subject to the rules and regulations of the United Church:
- 1) be a member of the Regional Council; and
  - 2) be subject to the discipline of the Office of Vocation. (2019)
- 10.4 Every member of the Order of Ministry called or appointed to a Pastoral Charge shall, subject to the rules and regulations of the United Church:
- 1) have the right to conduct services in the church, churches, or other places of worship in connection with the Pastoral Charge;
  - 2) have the right of occupancy of the manse in connection with the Pastoral Charge. (2019)
- 10.5 Every member of the order of ministry of a denomination with which the United Church has a mutual recognition agreement shall be eligible for appointment or call in the United Church. While under appointment or call, they are equivalent to members of the Order of Ministry of the United Church in respect to membership and responsibilities in the councils of the church. (2019)

### I. Candidacy Pathway

- 11.0 The Office of Vocation and the Church's three councils prepare individuals for ministry through the following phases: (2019)
- 11.1 Calling Forth. The Church engages a creative and invitational approach for calling forth individuals to serve as ministry personnel within our denomination. (2019)
- 11.2 Identify. The Church tests an individual's giftedness for ministry. (2019)
- 11.3 Accompany. The Church accompanies students and candidates by providing support and guidance. (2019)
- 11.4 Equip. Through a variety of learning opportunities, the Church equips individuals and candidates for ministry. (2019)
- 11.5 Assess. The Church assesses the promise, suitability, readiness, and effectiveness of students and candidates for ministry. (2019)
- 11.6. Authorize. The Church authorizes students and candidates as ready for ordination, commissioning or recognition. (2019)
- 11.7 Celebrate:
- 11.7.1 The Church celebrates the conclusion of each student's candidacy pathway. (2019)
  - 11.7.2 The Church celebrates the ordination, commissioning and recognition of all individuals who have accepted a call, appointment, or offer of employment as ministry personnel. (2019)

## II. Training for Ministry

- 12.1 The Office of Vocation shall have the duty of inquiry into the personal character, doctrinal beliefs, and general fitness for ministry of a Candidate for the Order of Ministry and Designated Lay Ministry. (2019)
- 12.2 It shall be left to the Denominational Council to determine, from time to time, the course of study leading to ordination, commissioning and recognition. (2019)
- 12.3 Provision shall be made, as far as possible, within the institutions of theological education for instruction in the courses of study in Theology as approved by the Denominational Council.

## III. Commissioning, Ordination, Recognition and Admission

- 13.1 The Office of Vocation shall make the final determination of the person's fitness and readiness for accreditation to ministry of Candidates for ordination, commissioning or recognition and of those seeking admission to the Order of Ministry of the United Church. (2019)
- 13.2 The Office of Vocation shall examine each Candidate on the Statement of Doctrine of the United Church and shall, before ordination, commissioning, recognition or admission, be satisfied that such Candidate is in essential agreement therewith, and as ministry personnel of the United Church accepts the statement as being in substance agreeable to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures.
- 13.3 The service to ordain, commission, or receive persons to the Order of Ministry shall be conducted by the Regional Council. Those presenting themselves shall, after hearing the following preamble, answer the questions which follow: (2019)

"Jesus Christ came into the world to be the servant of God and all people. As servant Lord, Jesus calls his Church to a ministry of worship, witness, and reconciliation. In baptism we were received as members of his Church and at confirmation we committed ourselves to its ministry. In order that this ministry of the whole Church may be fulfilled, God has given the ordained ministry of Word, Sacrament, and Pastoral Care, and the diaconal ministry of Education, Service, and Pastoral Care. It is the responsibility of the Church to seek, train, and set apart those whom God calls so to serve.

1. *(to each Candidate)* Do you believe in God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and do you commit yourself anew to God?
2. *(to each Candidate being ordained)* Do you believe that God is calling you to the ordained ministry of Word, Sacrament, and Pastoral Care, and do you accept this call?  
*(to each Candidate being commissioned)* Do you believe that God is calling you to the diaconal ministry of Education, Service, and Pastoral Care, and do you accept this call?
3. *(to each Candidate)* 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?"

## ADMINISTRATION

14.0 In sections 14.1 to 18.4 inclusive:

“court” means a court of The United Church of Canada or, where the context permits, a council of The United Church of Canada; and

“General Council” means the General Council of The United Church of Canada, or, where the context permits, the Denominational Council of The United Church of Canada. (2019)

### I. Missions

14.1 In the administration of the mission work of the United Church there shall be two departments: (a) Home, including all the mission work within the Dominion of Canada, Newfoundland, and the Bermudas; (b) Foreign, including the missions already established or that may be established in other countries.

14.2 For the oversight and administration of these two departments there shall be two Boards, to be known as the Board of Home Missions and the Board of Foreign Missions, to be elected in such a manner and endowed with such powers as the General Council may determine.

14.3 In recognition of the very valuable services rendered by the Women’s Societies, the union, constitution, and lines of work of these societies shall be determined by the joint action of their Boards, subject to the approval of the General Council.

14.4 There shall be placed under the administration of the Home Mission Board of the United Church the monies now administered under the caption of the Sustentation Fund and Church and Parsonage Aid Fund of the Methodist Church; the Home Mission and Augmentation Funds, French Evangelization Fund, and Church and Manse Fund (except that under the Foreign Mission Board) of the Presbyterian Church; the Home Mission Fund of the Congregational Churches; and such portion of the Mission Fund now raised by the Methodist Church and the Foreign Mission Board of the Presbyterian Church, as is now expended in Canada, Newfoundland, and the Bermudas.

14.5 There shall be placed under the administration of the Foreign Mission Board of the United Church the Foreign Mission Fund of the Congregational Churches and that portion of the Mission Fund of the Methodist Church and of the Foreign Mission Fund of the Presbyterian Church now expended in other lands.

14.6 There shall be placed under the administration of the Board of Evangelism and Social Service and the Board of Sunday Schools and Young People’s Societies of the United Church the funds now raised for the work of the Departments of Social Service and Evangelism and the Department of Sunday Schools and Young People’s Societies of the negotiating Churches.

14.7 Inasmuch as certain expenses in connection with the various courts of the Church will have to be met, the ways and means of raising these funds shall be left to the General Council.

### II. Publishing Interests

15.0 It shall be left to the General Council of the United Church to determine how far the publications now issued by the negotiating Churches shall be amalgamated.

### **III. Colleges**

- 16.1 All the educational institutions connected with the three negotiating Churches shall, as far as possible, sustain the same relation to the United Church as, under their charter, they sustained to the respective Churches before Union, until the General Council shall determine otherwise and necessary legislation shall give effect to changes made thereby.
- 16.2 The policy of the Church shall be the maintenance of a limited number of thoroughly equipped theological schools, due regard being paid to the needs of different parts of the country. In furtherance of this policy amalgamation shall be effected as soon as possible in localities where two or more theological schools are doing the same type of work.
- 16.3 In addition to the Governing Boards of the several theological institutions, the General Council shall have general oversight of the educational interests of the Church.
- 16.4 The budget of the General Council shall include such funds as are needed to supplement the revenues of the several educational institutions, to assist students in their preparation for the ministry of the church, and for such other purposes and under such regulations as the General Council may from time to time determine.
- 16.5 The several educational institutions shall be encouraged to obtain permanent endowments for their maintenance, may receive contributions for this and other purposes at any time, and, with the consent of the General Council, may proceed to appeal for such funds.

### **IV. Reorganization**

- 17.0 The General Council is empowered to effect from time to time a reorganization of the Boards and Committees of the Church, whether by way of amalgamation, rearrangement, or otherwise howsoever, and to amend the same from time to time; to place under the administration of the Boards, Committees, and Departments established by it the funds appropriate thereto; and to declare that sections 12.1, 12.2, 12.4, 12.5, and 12.6 of the Administration Section of the Basis of Union under the heading Missions and sections 14.3, 14.4, and 14.5 under the heading Colleges be repealed or amended as the case may be to conform with the constitution and powers of the new Boards and Departments so established; and that such repeal or amendment shall come into effect on the dates set by the General Council in such declaration, and thereupon the said paragraphs shall stand repealed or amended as set forth in such declaration.

### **V. The Pension Fund**

- 18.0 Whereas there exist, in some form, in all the negotiating Churches funds to aid aged and retired ministers, and widows and orphans of ministers, provision for similar purposes shall be made in the constitution of the United Church by such amalgamation or modification of existing methods as may be found practicable; and such provision shall embrace the following particulars.
- 18.1 The rights of present and prospective claimants on existing funds in any of the negotiating Churches shall be adequately protected. To this end:
- 18.1.1 the present capital investments of the various benevolent funds of the negotiating Churches, and the income now contributed to those funds by publishing interests shall be combined into a "common trust," if practicable. The rights of present claimants and of prospective claimants (the latter being computed as of the date of the Union) shall be a first charge on the revenue from this trust. If it be found that differences in the constitution and administration of the several funds are such as to necessitate separate trusts, instead of a common trust, this shall not be a bar to the carrying out of the general plan, because in that case their revenues shall be combined.

## The Basis of Union: Administration

18.1.2 the General Council of the United Church shall provide for:

- 1) the assessing of each Minister who is a member of any of the existing funds at the date of the Union and of all members of the Order of Ministry received into, ordained, or commissioned in the United Church after the Union, on the basis of stipend or age, or both stipend and age, as the General Council may determine; and
- 2) the collecting of contributions, which shall be obligatory upon all local churches, based upon an equitable allocation or assessment under the rules to be formulated by the General Council, the minimum of such allocation or assessment being the amount which, together with the revenue from said trust or trusts and the foregoing assessment upon members of the Order of Ministry, is requisite to make good the claims of claimants upon the Superannuation Fund to be instituted by the General Council.

18.2 Claimants on the proposed Fund shall include the following:

18.2.1 all Ministers who, at the time of the Union, are beneficiaries of existing funds;

18.2.2 all Ministers who, at the time of the Union, are regular contributors to existing funds on the scale provided by their respective denominations;

18.2.3 all Ministers' widows and orphans who are now, or may hereafter become, entitled to participate in the proposed Fund;

18.2.4 all Ministers, not members of or contributors to existing funds, who may signify their desire to become members of and contributors to the proposed Fund, on the basis of payments sanctioned by the General Council of the United Church. Provision shall be made whereby Ministers so applying may, by a certain scale of payments, be entitled to have their claim upon the proposed Fund date from the time of their reception into the ministry of any of the negotiating Churches instead of from the date of the Union;

18.2.5 all members of the Order of Ministry received into, ordained, or commissioned in the Church after the Union inasmuch as they shall be required at the time of their reception, ordination, or commissioning to become members of and contributors to the proposed Fund;

18.2.6 lay missionaries appointed by the Board of Overseas Missions and such persons employed by the General Council, the Divisions, or Departments, as the General Council may designate; and

18.2.7 Diaconal Ministers, i.e., those members of the Order of Ministry who have been commissioned or formerly designated or set apart as Deaconesses and Certified Churchmen.

18.3 The sources of revenue of the proposed Fund shall be the following:

18.3.1 contributions of Ministers who are members of said Fund at its inception, and those who afterward become members, on a scale to be adopted by the General Council of the Church;

18.3.2 offerings in all local churches based upon an equitable allocation to be made by the Board of Management of said Fund, under regulations sanctioned by the General Council;

18.3.3 legacies and donations given for the purpose;

18.3.4 such grants from the profits of the publishing interests of the Church as may from time to time be determined under regulations to be framed by the General Council; and

18.3.5 proceeds of any investments that may be made in the interests of the said Fund.

18.4 The General Council shall have power to use such part of the Pension Fund of the United Church as it may deem necessary for the purchase of annuities from the Dominion of Canada for such beneficiaries of the said Fund as the General Council may deem expedient.



# Bylaws

These bylaws work best when applied in a spirit of open conversation. All those who are involved in making a particular decision, or who will be affected by its outcome, are strongly encouraged to consult with each other. Depending on the situation, this may include members, adherents, ministry personnel, officers, staff, councils, committees, or other bodies.

*The For Your Information symbol is used for additional information that will help in understanding and using the bylaws.*



*The cross-reference symbol is used to direct readers to other sections of The Manual that may apply.*



*The book symbol is used to indicate resources outside of The Manual that contain additional policies, procedures, and information, and where to find them. Readers are reminded that the policies and procedures set by the General Council are binding whether included in these bylaws or not.*



## A. INTRODUCTION TO GOVERNANCE IN THE UNITED CHURCH

### A.1 Outline of Church Structure

#### A.1.1 Organization

The United Church is organized into three levels or councils and the Office of Vocation. The three councils are

- a) the community of faith;
- b) the regional council; and
- c) the General Council

*The United Church has a decision-making body legally described as the “denominational council,” which is the term used in the Basis of Union. The 43rd General Council 2018 decided that the denominational council would continue to be known by the name “General Council,” so that is the term used in these bylaws.*



This section, A. Introduction to Governance in the United Church, sets out basic requirements that apply to all three councils.

#### A.1.2 Clusters and Networks

Alongside the three-council structure, there are clusters and networks that, while not formal governance bodies, are central to living out the faith of the United Church.

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Clusters are local groups of communities of faith that provide community and support for communities of faith and their leaders, and focus on worship, mission, learning, collegiality, and strategic planning.

Networks link people working on specific issues (e.g., supportive housing, intercultural ministry, youth ministry) or for project work (e.g., event planning) that function through the whole church, depending on the issue.

### A.2 Decision-Making

The members of a council make decisions

- a) on the basis of an understanding of scripture and of the ethos of the United Church;
- b) in the light of Christian experience; and
- c) under the guidance of the Holy Spirit moving in the discussion during the meeting of such a body.

They decide themselves how they will vote in any matter. They are not bound by the opinions, directions, or previous decisions of the body that elected or appointed them.

*See Procedures for Holding Meetings and Decision-Making, included as an appendix, for information on the process for making decisions.*



### A.3 Responsibilities

The councils of the United Church work in relationship with each other in the spirit of the opening words of A New Creed: “We are not alone.”

They share responsibility for the life of the United Church.

Each of these bodies has been assigned certain actions that it has the duty to take, and other actions that it has the power to take if it chooses. Both kinds of actions are the responsibilities of that body.

### A.4 Meetings

Councils are responsible for deciding how to hold their meetings. They have the following options:

- a) in person;
- b) by telephone conference call;
- c) in any other way where participants can communicate with each other at the same time (for example, by instant messaging or webcam simulcast technology); or
- d) by e-mail, as long as the requirements for e-mail meetings in the Procedures for Holding a Meeting and Decision-Making are met.

*See Procedures for Holding a Meeting and Decision-Making, included as an appendix, section 3.4.2.*



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*People may meet together at the same time through technology. This allows for the Spirit to move in the way that happens when “two or more are gathered.” It often draws us in directions we did not expect.*



*There are specific requirements that must be followed for meetings of each of the councils. See the following sections on meetings in these bylaws: Community of Faith B.5 and B7.7, Regional Council C.4, General Council D.3, D.5.4, and D.6.4, and Congregational Life G.3.6.*

## A.5 Records

### A.5.1 Meaning of “Records”

A record is any kind of recorded information, including membership rolls, meeting minutes, baptismal and marriage registers, letters and other documents, plans, maps, drawings, graphic works, photographs, film, microfilm, sound recordings, videotapes, and any other kind of recorded information. It may be recorded in print form, on film, electronically, or in any other way.

### A.5.2 Value of Records

Church records have historical and legal value.

### A.5.3 Keeping Records

Councils are responsible for

- a) creating their own records;
- b) making sure the records are accurate and complete; and
- c) keeping the records safe, secure, and under their control until the records are transferred to the appropriate archives.

*There are procedures for creating, keeping, transferring, and depositing records. These procedures must be followed by councils. These resources are available from the [General Council Archives](#).*



### A.5.4 Ownership of Records

All church records belong to the United Church. They may not be taken or kept by any member, minister, or other person except where allowed in these bylaws or under the archives policy.

*The archives policy for the General Council Archives is available on request from the General Council Office.*



### A.5.5 Reviewing Records

The regional councils and the General Council are responsible for reviewing the records of the councils that they oversee. They must ensure that these councils are carrying out their responsibilities for records.

### **A.5.6 Archiving Records**

Communities of faith, regional councils, and the General Council are each responsible for placing their records and other documents in the appropriate archives when they are no longer regularly needed.

### **A.5.7 Removing Documents from Archives**

A document may only be removed from a United Church archives if

- a) its removal is required by a civil court order; or
- b) permission is given under the applicable archives policy.

## **A.6 Communication of Minutes and Decisions (2021)**

### **A.6.1 Application**

This section (A.6) applies to the General Council, regional councils, and communities of faith. If the community of faith has a governing body, it has the same responsibilities for its minutes as a council unless otherwise indicated.

### **A.6.2 Distribution of Minutes**

The council is responsible for promptly distributing minutes of meetings of the council, its executive, its sub-executive, and commissions to all members. Once the minutes of a meeting have been approved, or approved in draft form by its executive, or a summary of decisions made at the meeting has been prepared, they are posted on the council's website or as otherwise determined by the council as soon as possible. (2025)

### **A.6.3 Decisions**

Minutes must clearly indicate any decisions that have been made.

*Be careful about including sensitive information in the minutes or summary of decisions. See the [Privacy Issues: Recordkeeping and Archives](#) resource available from the General Council office. (2021)*



## **A.7 Membership of Councils**

### **A.7.1 Voting Members**

A council consists of members who are

- a) appointed, elected, or admitted to the council;
- b) automatic members of the council because of the offices they hold;
- c) in the case of a regional council, those assigned by the Board of Vocation to the regional council or those determined by the regional council to be members under C.1.2 b).

Such members have the right to vote at meetings of the council. (2021)

### **A.7.2 Corresponding Members**

A council may also have corresponding members. These are people who have been given one or more of the following privileges by the council:

- a) receiving notice of a meeting;
- b) attending a meeting;

## Bylaws A. Introduction to Governance in the United Church

- c) taking part in some or all of the council's discussion at a meeting; or
- d) receiving minutes of a meeting.

Corresponding members may not vote at meetings of the council.

### **A.7.3 Youth and Young Adult Participation**

Each council will make provisions to engage youth and young adults in its life and work.

## **A.8 Incorporated Ministries**

A council may incorporate a ministry. The council must follow the United Church's process for incorporation and meet the United Church's requirements for incorporated ministries for any ministry that

- a) carries on any activities related to United Church activities;
- b) uses the name of The United Church of Canada, in whole or in part;
- c) indicates to others that it is connected to the United Church in some way; or
- d) takes on financial responsibility or any other kind of responsibility that might also create responsibility for the United Church.

If the process is followed and all requirements met, the incorporation may be approved and then known as an "incorporated ministry."

*There is a policy for incorporated ministries. It deals with the incorporation process and with the ongoing relationship between the church and the corporation. See the Incorporated Ministries resource available from the [General Council Office](#).*



## **B. COMMUNITY OF FAITH**

### **B.1 General**

#### **B.1.1 Definition**

A community of faith is any community of people within the United Church that

- a) gathers to explore faith, worship, and serve; and
- b) is recognized as a community of faith within the United Church by the regional council through a covenantal relationship between the community of faith and the regional council.

There are many kinds of communities of people that may be recognized as communities of faith: pastoral charges, congregations, outreach ministries, chaplaincies, faith-based communal living, house churches, online communities, and others.

Communities of faith may be intended as time-limited, transitional, or ongoing.

#### **B.1.2 Transition: Congregations, Pastoral Charges, and Other Local Ministry Units Existing before January 1, 2019**

All congregations, pastoral charges, and other local ministry units that existed prior to January 1, 2019, automatically continue as recognized communities of faith as of that date.

*“Local ministry unit” is a term used prior to January 1, 2019, to describe the various forms of distinctive local ministry initiatives in the United Church including congregations, pastoral charges, missions, and outreach ministries.*



A congregation is a group of people that meets for public worship, and that has been formed as a congregation of the United Church. A pastoral charge is a unit of organization that consists of one or more congregations.

#### **B.1.3 Covenantal Relationship**

##### **B.1.3.1 Terms of Covenant**

A community of faith is recognized by the regional council through a covenantal relationship with the regional council. The community of faith and the regional council have the flexibility to negotiate and create a covenant that is responsive to the contextual reality of the community of faith and its unique needs and challenges. The terms of the covenant include

- a) the governance requirements for the community of faith in these bylaws;
- b) any applicable policies set by the General Council; and
- c) any other terms that the community of faith and the regional council may agree to include within denominational policies.

### **B.1.3.2 Changes to the Covenant**

The terms of the covenant may be changed from time to time within denominational policies with the agreement of the community of faith and the regional council.

### **B.1.3.3 Transition: Congregations, Pastoral Charges, and Other Local Ministry Units Existing before January 1, 2019**

The terms of the covenant between the regional council and a community of faith that existed as a congregation, pastoral charge, or other local ministry unit before January 1, 2019, are

- a) the governance requirements for the community of faith in these bylaws;
- b) any applicable policies set by the General Council; and
- c) any governance requirements already approved by the presbytery for that congregation, pastoral charge, or other local ministry unit.

*The presbytery was a body that had responsibility for the oversight of pastoral charges, congregations, and other local ministry units prior to January 1, 2019. It had responsibility for approving the governance structure of local ministry units within its bounds.*



### **B.1.4 Governance Requirements for Communities of Faith**

These bylaws contain requirements for the membership, responsibilities, meetings, and organization of communities of faith.

Sections B.1 and B.2 apply to all communities of faith including congregations and pastoral charges.

Sections B.3 to B.7 apply only to communities of faith that are congregations or pastoral charges.

Section B.8 applies only to other kinds of communities of faith and not to congregations or pastoral charges.

## **B.2 Governance Requirements for All Communities of Faith**

### **B.2.1 Responsibilities**

#### **B.2.1.1 Purpose**

The community of faith

- a) lives in covenant with the regional council with mutual responsibilities for the life and mission of the community of faith, and for fulfilling its responsibilities under the covenant;
- b) regularly self-assesses its ministry and files the self-assessment report with the regional council;
- c) joins the hearts, voices, and resources of the community to witness to the gospel and vision of Jesus for a compassionate and just society, both in Canada and around the world;
- d) engages in local, regional, national, and global initiatives and partnerships (community, ecumenical, and interfaith) for ministry, mission, and justice work;

## Bylaws B. Community of Faith

- e) ministers with children and youth and young adults;
- f) honours and lives into intercultural mission and ministry; and

*Honouring and living into intercultural mission and ministry is described in [Vision for Becoming an Intercultural Church](#), a resource available from the [General Council Office](#).*



- g) lives in covenant with Mother Earth and All My Relations in the Earth community.

### **B.2.1.2 Governance and Administration**

The community of faith is responsible for

- a) making decisions about the life of the community of faith, including worship, care, spiritual practice, and learning; local administration, finances, and governance; and local mission, justice, and evangelism;
- b) meeting at least annually;
- c) complying with denominational and regional council policies;
- d) buying, selling, leasing, and renovating community of faith property in co-operation with the regional council, within denominational guidelines; and
- e) remitting to the General Council the applicable assessed contribution for funding governance and support services of the regional council and General Council.

### **B.2.1.3 Spiritual Life**

The community of faith is responsible for

- a) setting policies for membership, within denominational guidelines, and receiving and celebrating new members in the community of faith;
- b) helping members on their journey as they explore and deepen their faith; and
- c) ensuring the proper administration of the sacraments.

### **B.2.1.4 Ministry and Other Leadership**

The community of faith is responsible for

- a) co-operation with the regional council, within denominational guidelines, in recruiting, choosing, calling, appointing, and covenanting with ministry personnel and other staff, and in ending calls and appointments/covenants with ministry personnel and other staff;
- b) encouraging members to consider ministry roles a responsibility shared through the whole community of faith; and
- c) calling forth individuals for ministry leadership.

### **B.2.1.5 Participation in Regional and Denominational Life**

The community of faith is responsible for

- a) helping to fund the cost of sending members to the meetings of the regional council; and
- b) receiving, dealing with, and forwarding proposals from members of the community of faith to regional councils.

**B.2.1.6 Election of Regional Council Representatives**

The community of faith is responsible for electing representatives of the community of faith to the regional council. Representatives must be members of the community of faith. The number of representatives depends on the size of the community of faith:

- a) one representative if the community of faith has 100 or fewer members;
- b) two representatives if the community of faith has 101 to 200 members;
- c) three representatives if the community of faith has 201 to 300 members; and
- d) four representatives if the community of faith has more than 300 members.

**B.2.1.7 Organization**

The community of faith is responsible for having a governance structure as a framework for the life and work of the community of faith. The governance structure must free people to live out their commitment to God and to each other.

**B.2.1.8 Limitation**

All authority and responsibility of the community of faith is subject to

- a) the policies set by the General Council on membership, governance, pastoral relations, property, and any other area within the authority of the General Council;
- b) the covenantal relationship between the community of faith and the regional council; and
- c) the authority of the regional council to assume control of the community of faith in extraordinary circumstances where the community of faith is unable to or refuses to meet its responsibilities or acts outside of denominational or regional council policies.

**B.2.1.9 Action by Regional Council**

The regional council is responsible for taking action if

- a) in the regional council's opinion, a community of faith is not functioning effectively;
- b) a community of faith fails to meet its responsibilities in a way that the regional council considers appropriate; or
- c) a community of faith asks the regional council to take action on its behalf.

The regional council must take the action that it considers necessary in the situation.

(2021)

**B.3 Membership and Other Participation in a Community of Faith That Is a Congregation**

*These requirements apply only to communities of faith that are congregations. For requirements that apply to other kinds of communities of faith, see section B.2 above and B.8 below.*



### **B.3.1 General**

The congregation consists of

- a) members;
- b) full members;
- c) adherents; and
- d) members of the order of ministry whose names have been added to the congregation's membership roll.

*The process for adding the name of a member of the order of ministry to the congregation's membership roll is set out in section B.3.5.2 below.*



### **B.3.2 Members**

The members of a congregation are

- a) children of full members; and
- b) children who have been baptized but have not yet become full members.

#### **B.3.2.1 Baptism of Children**

Children may be baptized

- a) with the advance approval of the governing body or a chaplain in the Canadian Armed Forces; and
- b) if one or both of their parents are full members in good standing.

The governing body may make exceptions to these requirements.

#### **B.3.2.2 Emergency Baptism**

In an emergency where there is no time to get advance approval of a baptism, the person who baptizes must inform the governing body at its next meeting, and ask the governing body to confirm the decision to baptize.

### **B.3.3 Full Members of the Congregation**

#### **B.3.3.1 Approval**

A person becomes a full member of the congregation with the approval of

- a) the governing body;
- b) the congregation, if the congregation decides to take on this responsibility; or
- c) a chaplain in the Canadian Armed Forces and two full members of the United Church, if the person is under the chaplain's pastoral care.

#### **B.3.3.2 Readiness**

In order to become a full member, a person must have enough knowledge about the Christian faith and the United Church to make their commitment with understanding.

#### **B.3.3.3 Process**

A person becomes a full member through one of the following ways:

- a) adult baptism and profession of faith;

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- b) confirmation, if the person was baptized as a child and has now reached the age of understanding;
- c) reaffirmation of Christian faith, if the person has already been baptized and made a profession of faith at an earlier time;
- d) through a certificate of transfer of membership in good standing from another congregation or church; or
- e) if the person cannot get a certificate of transfer of membership from another church, they may transfer their membership if the governing body is satisfied that they
  - i) have been baptized;
  - ii) became full members of their church after they made a profession of Christian faith;
  - iii) are of good Christian character; and
  - iv) have valid reasons for transferring to the United Church.

**Certificates of Transfer:** If a certificate of transfer of membership is presented (see paragraph (d) above) that is more than one year old, the governing body must check that the person is still in good standing with their congregation.

If the certificate is more than three years old, the governing body must be satisfied with the person's explanation for the time lapse.

### **B.3.4 Adherents**

#### **B.3.4.1 Meaning**

An adherent of a congregation is a person who contributes regularly to the life and work of the congregation but is not a member or full member.

#### **B.3.4.2 Application**

The governing body is responsible for deciding who is an adherent.

*Many people establish long-standing, committed relationships with congregations without formally becoming "full members" under section B.3.3.3 above. These people are often valued participants in the life of congregations as "adherents."*



### **B.3.5 Members of the Order of Ministry**

#### **B.3.5.1 Members Called or Appointed to the Pastoral Charge**

A member of the order of ministry who has been called or appointed to a pastoral charge is not a member of the congregation, and is not eligible to have their name added to the membership roll.

#### **B.3.5.2 Other Members of the Order of Ministry**

Any other member of the order of ministry may make a request to the governing body to have their name added to the membership roll of the congregation.

The governing body is responsible for making a decision on the request.

### **B.3.6 Membership Records**

#### **B.3.6.1 Keeping Records**

The governing body is responsible for

- a) keeping a record of all baptisms in the congregation;
- b) keeping the membership roll of the congregation;
- c) keeping the historic membership roll of the congregation; and
- d) recording, in its minutes, all decisions to admit people as full members.

#### **B.3.6.2 Revising the Roll**

The governing body is responsible for revising the membership roll at least annually by

- a) removing the names of members who have died;
- b) removing the names of members who have transferred to other congregations;
- c) removing the names of members who have resigned;
- d) removing the names of members who, in the governing body's opinion, have been absent for too long without a reasonable excuse;
- e) recording, in its minutes, all decisions to remove a name from the roll; and
- f) encouraging members who have moved away from the area to become members of congregations closer to their new homes.

#### **B.3.6.3 Restoring Names to the Roll**

A person whose name has been removed from the membership roll or who is under discipline may ask to become a full member in good standing again. The governing body is responsible for making a decision on the request.

#### **B.3.6.4 Historic Roll**

The governing body is responsible for keeping the historic roll, which includes the membership roll and the names of members removed under section B.3.6.2 above.

### **B.3.7 Who May Vote**

#### **B.3.7.1 Full Members May Vote**

All full members whose names are on the membership roll have the right to vote at all meetings of the congregation.

#### **B.3.7.2 When Adherents May Vote**

Adherents may vote at meetings of the congregation if the full members decide to allow adherents to vote. The decision may allow voting rights on all matters or only specified matters.

(2021)

## **B.4 Responsibilities of a Community of Faith That Is a Congregation**

### **B.4.1 General**

The congregation has all of the responsibilities of a community of faith set out in section B.2.1.

Some of these responsibilities are specifically assigned to the governing body of the congregation in these bylaws to fulfill on behalf of the congregation.

*See section B.7.4 below.*



The congregation may decide to assign other responsibilities to its governing body with the approval of the regional council.

#### **B.4.2 Multi-point Pastoral Charges**

If a pastoral charge has more than one congregation, the congregations and the regional council decide how the responsibilities and governance requirements for the community of faith are divided among the congregations and the pastoral charge as a whole.

### **B.5 Meetings of a Community of Faith That Is a Congregation or Pastoral Charge**

#### **B.5.1 Frequency**

The congregation or pastoral charge must meet annually. This meeting must be held as early as possible in the calendar year. The congregation or pastoral charge may also decide to meet more often than annually.

#### **B.5.2 Annual Meeting**

At the annual meeting, the congregation or pastoral charge is responsible for

- a) electing a chair and a secretary of the annual meeting;
- b) receiving the annual reports from the governing body, committees, and other groups in the congregation or pastoral charge;
- c) electing the governing body, regional council representatives, and members of the committees; and
- d) considering and making a decision on the draft annual budget.

*Note: The congregation may also appoint trustees for the congregation at the annual meeting if the congregation has set the trustees' term of office for one year. See Congregational Life G.3.3.*



#### **B.5.3 Calling Meetings**

##### **B.5.3.1 Who May Call a Meeting**

Meetings of the congregation or pastoral charge must be called by one of the following people:

- a) the chair of the annual meeting;
- b) a member of the order of ministry called or appointed to the pastoral charge;
- c) a designated lay minister recognized by the regional council and appointed to the pastoral charge; or
- d) the pastoral charge supervisor.

##### **B.5.3.2 When They May Call a Meeting**

Any of these people may call a meeting on their own initiative at any time.

**B.5.3.3 When They Must Call a Meeting**

A person listed in section B.5.3.1 must call a meeting when they have received a request

- a) from the governing body to hold a meeting for any purpose;
- b) from a trustee to hold a meeting to appoint or remove trustees;
- c) from seven full members of the congregation to hold a meeting to appoint or remove trustees;

*For congregational meetings about trustees, the meeting requirements are very precise. They come from The United Church of Canada Act. They could only be changed through federal legislation.*



- d) from all the full members of the congregation, if the congregation has fewer than 10 members, to hold a meeting for any purpose other than appointing or removing trustees;
- e) from 10 full members of the congregation, if the congregation has between 10 and 100 full members, to hold a meeting for any purpose other than appointing or removing trustees;
- f) from full members who represent at least 10 percent of the total number of full members of the congregation, if the congregation has more than 100 full members, to hold a meeting for any purpose other than appointing or removing trustees; or
- g) from the regional council to hold a meeting for any purpose.

**B.5.3.4 When the Meeting Must be Held**

The meeting must be held within 15 days of receiving the request.

There is an exception to this requirement for meetings called for pastoral relations matters as set out in section B.5.4.2 a (ii) and (iv) below. The regional council liaison officer is responsible for setting the date of a meeting to deal with pastoral relations matters.

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*See Pastoral Relations I.3.1.6.*



**B.5.3.5 Regional Council May Call a Meeting**

The regional council may also call a meeting of the congregation or pastoral charge at any time. If it calls a meeting, it must decide who will chair the meeting.

**B.5.4 Notice of Meeting**

**B.5.4.1 Who Gives Notice**

The person who calls the meeting is responsible for giving advance notice of the meeting.

If the regional council is calling the meeting, the advance notice must be given by a member of the regional council other than the ministry personnel called or appointed to the pastoral charge.

**B.5.4.2 How Notice Is Given**

There are different processes for giving notice, depending on the purpose of the meeting. All notices must indicate the purpose of the meeting.

a. **Community of faith events:** This section (B.5.4.2 a) applies if the purpose of the meeting is to

- i) consider approving a new community of faith profile

*For information on the community of faith profile, see Pastoral Relations I.1.3.*



- ii) consider approving changes to an existing pastoral relationship
- iii) consider approving a new pastoral relationship;
- iv) consider whether to request the ending of an existing pastoral relationship;
- v) consider amalgamating with one or more congregations;
- vi) consider disbanding the congregation; or
- vii) electing or removing members of the governing body.

*There are additional requirements that must be followed for giving notices of meetings for matters listed in paragraphs (i), (ii), (iii), or (iv) above. See Pastoral Relations I.1.5 and I.3.1.6.*



*See also the pastoral relations resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



Notice of the meeting must be read during public worship on two Sundays. After notice has been read on the second Sunday, the meeting may take place on the next day (Monday) or on any day after that.

b. **Decisions about trustees of the congregation:** This section (B.5.4.2 b) applies if the purpose of the meeting is to

- i) consider the resignation of a trustee;
- ii) consider making a decision that a person is no longer a trustee for any other reason; or
- iii) appoint new trustees.

Notice of the meeting must be read from the pulpit by the minister or other officiant during public worship on two Sundays. After notice has been read on the second Sunday, the meeting may take place the same day or on any day after that.

There may be cases where a trustee is personally responsible for a debt of the congregation. In those cases, if the purpose of the meeting is the one listed in paragraph (ii) above, all trustees must be given at least eight days' advance notice of the congregational meeting.

*There are further requirements for cases where a trustee is personally responsible for a debt of the congregation. See Congregational Life G.3.3.6 c. The requirements for giving advance notice to the trustees are set out in section Congregational Life G.3.6.2.*



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*For congregational meetings about trustees, the notice requirements are very precise. They come from The United Church of Canada Act. They could only be changed through federal legislation.*



- c. **Other meetings:** This section (B.5.4.2 c) applies if the purpose of the meeting is different from any of those covered in sections B.5.4.2 a or b, above.

Notice of the meeting must be read during public worship at least once before the meeting. After notice has been read, the meeting may take place the same day or on any day after that.

### **Congregations who regularly worship other than weekly**

- d. This applies to sections a. and c. in cases where a congregation regularly worships other than weekly, notice of a meeting may instead be provided to full members either by mail or electronically. The meeting may take place 14 calendar days after the notice has been sent.

(2024)

### **B.5.5 Minimum Number of Members Present**

- a) Minimum number: A meeting of the congregation or pastoral charge may take place only if a minimum number of full members is present, as follows:

- i) for congregations or pastoral charges with 100 or more full members, at least 20 full members must be present;
- ii) for congregations or pastoral charges with between 30 and 99 full members, at least 10 full members must be present; and
- iii) for congregations or pastoral charges with fewer than 30 full members, at least 1/3 of the full membership must be present.

- b) Who must be present: A meeting of the community of faith may take place only if one of the following people is present:

- i) a member of the order of ministry who has been called or appointed to the pastoral charge; or
- ii) a designated lay minister who has been recognized by the regional council and appointed to the pastoral charge; or
- iii) the pastoral charge supervisor; or
- iv) another person appointed by the regional council to attend the meeting

(2022)

### **B.5.6 Voting**

Voting must be by show of hands unless the congregation or pastoral charge decides on another way of voting. Proxy voting or voting by mail-in ballots is not permitted.

*Voters must be participants in the meeting where the voting takes place. They vote under the guidance of the Spirit moving in the discussion during the meeting. This allows the Spirit to move in the way that happens when "two or more are gathered." It often draws us in directions we did not expect. For this reason, proxy voting and voting by mail-in ballots are not permitted.*



*Meetings may be held by email or similar electronic means in certain circumstances. See Introduction to Governance A.4.d.*



## **B.6 Organization—Officers of a Community of Faith That Is a Congregation or Pastoral Charge**

### **B.6.1 Chair**

#### **B.6.1.1 Election**

The congregation or pastoral charge is responsible for electing a chair at its annual meeting. The chair

- a) must be a full member of the congregation; and
- b) holds office until the next annual meeting.

#### **B.6.1.2 Responsibilities**

The chair is responsible for

- a) chairing all meetings of the congregation or pastoral charge except for meetings called by the regional council;

*If the regional council calls a meeting of the congregation or pastoral charge, the regional council decides who will chair the meeting. It may be the chair of the annual meeting or some other person. See section B.5.3.5 above.*



- b) taking votes and announcing the results; and
- c) voting only if there is a tie.

### **B.6.2 Secretary**

The congregation or pastoral charge is responsible for electing a secretary at its annual meeting. The secretary

- a) is responsible for taking minutes at all meetings of the congregation or pastoral charge; and
- b) holds office until the next annual meeting.

## **B.7 Organization—Governing Body of a Community of Faith That Is a Congregation or Pastoral Charge**

### **B.7.1 Responsibilities of the Congregation or Pastoral Charge**

A congregation or pastoral charge is responsible for having a governing body. It must

- a) decide on a governance model for the congregation or pastoral charge; and

*When the congregation or pastoral charge has decided on its governance model, it must seek regional council approval. See section B.7.2 below.*



- b) elect the members of the governing body.

*Some people are automatically members of the governing body because of the position they hold in the congregation or pastoral charge. See section B.7.3.1 below. These people are not elected by the congregation or pastoral charge.*



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The governing body is accountable to the congregation or pastoral charge.

### **B.7.2 Requirements for the Governing Body**

#### **B.7.2.1 Governing Body Structure**

The governing body may be any structure that

- a) fulfills all of the responsibilities of a governing body in these bylaws;
- b) fulfills the membership and other requirements for a governing body in these bylaws;
- c) is approved by the congregation or pastoral charge; and
- d) is approved by the regional council.

*The governing body may take any shape the congregation or pastoral charge chooses, with the approval of the regional council. For example, a very small congregation may have the entire membership of the congregation serve as the governing body.*



*The following three structures are common:*

- a) *the Session/Stewards/Official Board model;*
- b) *a unified board model, called the Church Board; and*
- c) *a council structure, called the Church Council.*

*A congregation or pastoral charge that has one of these structures may continue with it. The regional council's approval is not required.*

*Some congregations and pastoral charges include elders in their governance structure. Elders are people elected by the congregation or pastoral charge for their wisdom, caring, spiritual discernment, and other gifts of the Spirit. They must be members of the congregation or pastoral charge unless the regional council has agreed to an exception. Elders may act as the governing body of the congregation or pastoral charge. They may also exercise leadership in other ways, with the agreement of the congregation or pastoral charge and the regional council.*



#### **B.7.2.2 Changes to Governing Body Structure**

The congregation or pastoral charge may make changes to the structure of its governing body as long as

- a) the new structure has been approved by the congregation or pastoral charge and meets the requirements of paragraphs (a) and (b) of section B.7.1 above;
- b) the congregation or pastoral charge informs the regional council of each change promptly; and
- c) the congregation or pastoral charge makes any adjustments to the new structure that the regional council may direct.

*The regional council may set a policy guideline to indicate the kinds of changes to a congregation's governance model that the regional council typically accepts.*



### **B.7.3 Membership of the Governing Body**

#### **B.7.3.1 General**

The governing body has the following members:

- a) the full members of the congregation elected by the congregation or pastoral charge;
- b) the members of the order of ministry who have been called or appointed to the pastoral charge;
- c) the designated lay ministers who have been recognized by the regional council and appointed to the pastoral charge;
- d) the pastoral charge supervisor, if there is no such member of the order of ministry or designated lay minister; and
- e) any other full members that the congregation or pastoral charge includes in the membership of its governing body. This may include full members who hold specific positions in the congregation or pastoral charge.

Exceptions: There are two exceptions to the requirements in paragraphs (a) and (e) above:

- i) Persons who are not full members may be elected in special circumstances with approval of the regional council; and
- ii) Persons who have familial relationships with employees, or ministry personnel who have been called or appointed to the pastoral charge, may be elected in special circumstances with prior approval of the regional council.

*The Conflict of Interest Policy shall be consulted for guidance on mitigating conflicts related to governing body membership. If a Regional Council denies someone membership to the governing body, it must provide written reasons for its decision, including why this actual or perceived conflict could not be mitigated.*

*Familial relationships refers to family members living in the same household.*



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#### **B.7.3.2 Term of Office**

The congregation or pastoral charge is responsible for setting the term of office for the elected members of the governing body.

#### **B.7.3.3 Admission to Office**

The congregation or pastoral charge may choose to admit the members elected to the governing body in a formal way.

#### **B.7.3.4 Resignation**

A member of a governing body may resign.

#### **B.7.3.5 Removal from Office**

A member of a governing body may be removed from office

- a) by the governing body through a discipline process;

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- b) by the governing body if the member has been absent from meetings for a year without adequate reason;
- c) by the congregation or pastoral charge; or
- d) by the regional council if the regional council decides it is in the best interests of the pastoral charge.

### **B.7.3.6 Vacancies**

The governing body is responsible for informing the pastoral charge when there are vacancies on the governing body. The governing body may fill the vacancy until the pastoral charge elects a replacement.

## **B.7.4 Responsibilities of the Governing Body**

The governing body follows the policies set by the pastoral charge or congregation in fulfilling these responsibilities.

### **B.7.4.1 Spiritual Matters**

The governing body oversees the spiritual interests of the congregation or pastoral charge, including

- a) admitting people as full members;
- b) removing people as full members;
- c) granting certificates of transfer of membership;
- d) the discipline of members;
- e) the administration of the sacraments;
- f) Christian education;
- g) public worship;
- h) the use of the church building;
- i) pastoral care and visiting; and
- j) outreach in evangelism and social action.

### **B.7.4.2 Financial Matters**

The governing body has general oversight of the finances of the congregation or pastoral charge, including

- a) fundraising;
- b) disbursement of funds; and
- c) the budget approved by the congregation or pastoral charge.

It may also authorize borrowing funds for the pastoral charge.

*The governing body's responsibilities and other requirements for finances are set out in Congregational Life G.4.*



### **B.7.4.3 Pastoral Relations Matters**

The governing body deals with pastoral relations matters as directed by the pastoral charge.

*“Pastoral relations” matters involve the ministry personnel, and the terms and conditions on which they serve the pastoral charge. These terms are set through a call or appointment.*



**B.7.4.4 Proposals**

The governing body receives, makes decisions on, and transmits proposals to the regional council.

**B.7.4.5 Recommending Members for Ministry Leadership**

The governing body recommends suitable members for consideration by the appropriate body as

- a) licensed lay worship leaders;
- b) sacraments elders; and
- c) candidates.

**B.7.4.6 Property Matters**

The governing body gives orders and directions to the trustees on property matters.

**B.7.4.7 Representing the Pastoral Charge to Regional Council**

The governing body represents the pastoral charge when the pastoral charge has authorized it to communicate with the regional council about

- a) the pastoral relationship; or
- b) the amalgamation, realignment, re-forming, or disbanding of the congregation or pastoral charge.

**B.7.4.8 Reporting**

The governing body reports to the pastoral charge at least annually on

- a) the life and work of the pastoral charge; and
- b) the pastoral charge’s financial situation, with details of all income, expenses, assets, and liabilities.

**B.7.4.9 Records**

The governing body keeps the following records:

- a) the membership roll of the congregation;
- b) the historic membership roll of the congregation;
- c) the record of children and adherents; and
- d) the register of baptisms, marriages, and burials.

*The term “adherent” is explained in section B.3.4.1 above. It means a person who contributes regularly to the life and work of the congregation but is not a member or full member.*



**B.7.4.10 Sharing Reports from the Wider Church**

The governing body shares reports it receives on action by the regional council and General Council with the pastoral charge.

**B.7.4.11 Completing Statistical Forms**

The governing body completes the annual pastoral charge statistical and information forms, and returns them to the General Council Office by the required date.

**B.7.4.12 General Responsibility**

The governing body has general responsibility for leadership in the care and oversight of the spiritual life and the interests of the congregation or pastoral charge.

**B.7.5 Organization of the Governing Body—Executive and Commissions**

**B.7.5.1 Executive**

A congregation or pastoral charge may establish an executive of the governing body. The executive must fulfill the responsibilities that the governing body assigns to it.

**B.7.5.2 Commissions**

- a) **Acting by commission:** The governing body or its executive may appoint one or more United Church members as a commission to
  - i) take on a specific responsibility; and
  - ii) make decisions on its behalf.
- b) **Decision is non-debatable:** The commission's decision is as effective as a decision of the governing body or executive that appointed it. The governing body or executive may not debate the commission's decision and come to a different decision.
- c) **Reporting:** The commission is responsible for reporting its decision to the body that appointed it. The decision must be included in the minutes of that body.

**B.7.6 Organization of the Governing Body—Officers**

**B.7.6.1 Chair**

- a) **Election:** The pastoral charge is responsible for electing a chair of the governing body.
- b) **Eligibility:** The following people are eligible for election:
  - i) full members of the congregation;
  - ii) a member of the order of ministry who has been called or appointed to the pastoral charge;
  - iii) a designated lay minister who has been recognized by the regional council and appointed to the pastoral charge; and
  - iv) the pastoral charge supervisor.
- c) **Responsibilities:** The chair is responsible for
  - i) presiding and keeping order at meetings of the governing body;
  - ii) taking votes and announcing the results;
  - iii) voting only if there is a tie; and
  - iv) holding office until the next annual meeting or for another term set by the pastoral charge.

### **B.7.6.2 Secretary**

- a) **Election:** The governing body is responsible for electing a secretary. This person must be a member of the governing body.
- b) **Responsibilities:** The secretary is responsible for
  - i) taking minutes at all meetings of the governing body;
  - ii) receiving and sending correspondence for the governing body;
  - iii) ensuring the minutes, the membership roll, registers, records, and all other documents of the governing body are kept safe; and
  - iv) sending the minutes, membership roll, and other records to the regional council annually for review, if required by the regional council.

### **B.7.6.3 Treasurers**

The governing body is responsible for electing

- a) a treasurer for the pastoral charge. This person must be a member of the governing body; and
- b) a treasurer for the Mission & Service fund and other funds for the mission of the wider church.

The same person may serve as treasurer of both.

*The treasurers' responsibilities and other requirements for finances are set out in more detail in Congregational Life G.4.*



## **B.7.7 Meetings of the Governing Body**

### **B.7.7.1 Frequency**

A governing body must meet at least once quarterly. It may decide to meet more often.

### **B.7.7.2 Calling Meetings**

- a) **Who may call a meeting:** Meetings of the governing body must be called by one of the following people:
  - i) the chair of the governing body;
  - ii) a member of the order of ministry called or appointed to the pastoral charge;
  - iii) a designated lay minister recognized by the regional council and appointed to the pastoral charge; or
  - iv) the pastoral charge supervisor.
- b) **When they may call a meeting:** Any of these people may call a meeting on their own initiative at any time.
- c) **When they must call a meeting:**
  - i) **Written request:** They must call a meeting when they have received a written request from at least five members of the governing body. The meeting must be held within 14 days of receiving the request.
  - ii) **When regional council orders a meeting:** They must call a meeting when required to do so by the regional council.

**B.7.7.3 Notice of Meeting of Governing Body**

- a) **Who gives notice:** The person who calls the meeting is responsible for giving advance notice of the meeting.
- b) **Information to be included with notice:** A notice of a meeting must indicate the purpose of the meeting.
- c) **How notice is given:** Notice of the meeting must be given in one of the following ways:
  - i) read during public worship;
  - ii) inserted in the printed order of worship of the congregation or pastoral charge; or
  - iii) given in person or in writing to the members of the governing body.

**B.7.7.4 Minimum Number of Members Present**

- a) **Minimum number:** A meeting of the governing body may take place only if at least 1/3 of its members are present.

The congregation or pastoral charge may also set a higher minimum number of members that must be present for the meeting of the governing body to take place.

Corresponding members are not counted for this purpose.

- b) **Who must be present:** A meeting of the governing body may take place only if one of the following people is present:
  - i) a member of the order of ministry who has been called or appointed to the pastoral charge;
  - ii) a designated lay minister who has been recognized by the regional council and appointed to the pastoral charge;
  - iii) the pastoral charge supervisor; or
  - iv) another person appointed by the regional council to attend the meeting.

**B.7.8 Committees of the Pastoral Charge**

**B.7.8.1 General**

The pastoral charge and its governing body may fulfill their responsibilities with the help of committees, task groups, steering groups, teams, commissions, and other bodies. In this section (B.7.8), the term “committees” includes all of these bodies.

Committees may either be

- a) committees that exist only for a particular time or to complete a particular task; or
- b) committees that exist on an ongoing basis without any time limit. These committees may be called “standing committees” or “permanent committees.”

The only mandatory committee is a Ministry and Personnel Committee, described in section B.7.8.5 below.

**B.7.8.2 Setting Up Committees**

The congregation or pastoral charge is responsible for deciding

- a) the number and size of committees;

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- b) qualifications for election to each committee; and
- c) the responsibilities assigned to each committee other than the Ministry and Personnel Committee.

*The responsibilities of the Ministry and Personnel Committee are listed in section B.7.8.5 below.*



### **B.7.8.3 Electing Committee Members**

The congregation or pastoral charge is responsible for electing the members of the committees. It may also choose the members in any other way that it decides.

### **B.7.8.4 Ministry Personnel on Committees**

All ministry personnel called or appointed to a pastoral charge are automatically members of all committees of the congregation or pastoral charge, with three exceptions. They may not be members of

- a) a Search Committee;
- b) the Ministry and Personnel Committee; and
- c) a Nominations Committee.

### **B.7.8.5 Ministry and Personnel Committee**

All congregations or pastoral charges must have a committee or other body, which may be called the Ministry and Personnel Committee or a different name, with the following responsibilities:

- a) being available for consultation and support for matters involving the pastoral charge staff;
- b) overseeing the relationship of the pastoral charge staff to each other and to people in the congregation;
- c) regularly reviewing the working conditions, responsibilities, and compensation of all pastoral charge staff;
- d) making any recommendations needed as a result of these reviews to the governing body;
- e) revising position descriptions of pastoral charge staff as needed;
- f) conducting annual performance reviews of the pastoral charge staff;
- g) ensuring pastoral charge staff make use of opportunities for continuing education that they have been given; and
- h) maintaining close contact with the regional council Pastoral Relations Committee or equivalent.

*This requirement can be met in a variety of ways in conversation with and prior approval of the regional council.*



(2024)

*There are resources to assist Ministry and Personnel Committees with their responsibilities. See the Ministry and Personnel Committees resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



#### **B.7.8.6 Responsibility for Other Areas of Work**

The areas of work for a pastoral charge include those named below. The congregation or pastoral charge must assign these areas of work to committees, or do the work in another way.

- a. **Christian education:** Meeting the faith formation and Christian education needs of the congregation or pastoral charge.
- b. **Manse:**
  - i) Maintaining the manse and equipment; and
  - ii) ensuring the manse is suitable accommodation for the ministry personnel.
- c. **Stewardship:**
  - i) Educating the congregation or pastoral charge on the mission of the United Church, both locally and in the wider church;
  - ii) educating the congregation or pastoral charge on the funds needed for this mission and how they will be used;
  - iii) encouraging commitment and participation from the congregation or pastoral charge in this mission; and
  - iv) reviewing regularly the balance of funds given for local purposes and funds given for the Mission & Service fund.
- d. **Nominations:** Recommending people who are eligible, suitable, and willing to serve in positions in the congregation or pastoral charge.

#### **B.7.9 Organizations in the Pastoral Charge**

##### **B.7.9.1 Accountability**

All organizations and groups in the congregation or pastoral charge are accountable to the governing body.

##### **B.7.9.2 Approval of New Organizations**

The governing body is responsible for approving new organizations and groups in the congregation or pastoral charge.

### **B.8 Governance Requirements for Communities of Faith Other Than Congregations and Pastoral Charges**

*These requirements apply only to communities of faith that are not congregations or pastoral charges. For requirements that apply to congregations and pastoral charges, see sections B.2 to B.7 above.*



#### **B.8.1 Members**

The members of communities of faith are those people admitted to membership by the community of faith based on

- (a) policies set by the community of faith consistent with denominational guidelines; and
- (b) any terms relating to membership set out in the covenant between the community of faith and regional council, consistent with denominational guidelines.

**B.8.2 Other Governance Matters**

**B.8.2.1 Setting Governance Requirements**

The community of faith and the regional council decide on all requirements for meetings, governance bodies, and organizational matters for the community of faith. All these requirements must be set out in the covenant between the community of faith and the regional council.

**B.8.2.2 Individualized Governance Requirements**

The governance requirements for each community of faith must be appropriate for the size, form, and mission of the community of faith.

## C. REGIONAL COUNCIL

### C.1 Membership

The regional council consists of members of the order of ministry, other ministry personnel, lay members of the United Church, and leaders of associate member ministries, all as set out in sections C.1.1 to C.1.3 below.

*“Ministry personnel” is a general term that refers to members of the order of ministry, designated lay ministers, candidates serving under appointment, admission ministers serving under appointment, diaconal supply, and ordained supply. For more information on these categories of ministry personnel, see Entering Ministry H.1.1 and H.1.2 and Pastoral Relations I.1.2.4.*



(2021)

There must be a balance between the members in the membership categories in section C.1.1 and C.1.2 below where possible.

#### C.1.1 Members of the Order of Ministry and Other Ministry Personnel

The following ministry personnel are members of the regional council:

- a) members of the order of ministry within the bounds served by the regional council; and
- b) other ministry personnel in a covenantal relationship with a community of faith within the bounds of the regional council.

#### C.1.2 Lay Members

*Communities of faith that are congregations or pastoral charges continue to elect representatives to the regional council in the same way they elected representatives to the presbytery prior to January 1, 2019. They may also change the way in which they elect representatives within denominational policies, with the agreement of the regional council, and by including it in the covenant between the community of faith and regional council.*



The lay members of the regional council are members of the United Church who are not ministry personnel and who are

- a) elected by communities of faith on the following basis:
  - i) one representative from each community of faith with 100 or fewer members;
  - ii) two representatives from each community of faith with 101 to 200 members;
  - iii) three representatives from each community of faith with 201 to 300 members;
  - iv) four representatives from each community of faith with more than 300 members; and

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- b) additional lay members as determined by the regional council if necessary to respect a balance of ministry personnel and lay members who are not ministry personnel in the membership of the regional council. (2021)

*The regional council determines for itself the best way to respect this balance which may include adding lay members to ensure diversity or particular experience and competencies within the regional council.*



### C.1.3 Leaders of Associate Member Ministries

The regional council includes people in formal ministry leadership in those communities of faith of other denominations

- a) that have been granted associate membership in the United Church based on policies set by the Executive of the General Council; and  
b) that are located within the bounds of the regional council.

*A community of faith of another denomination may be granted associate membership in the United Church based on policies set by the Executive of the General Council.*



### C.1.4 Executive Minister

The Executive Minister, if a member of the order of ministry, is automatically a member of the regional councils they serve because they are “within the bounds served by the regional council” for each of those regional councils by virtue of their office. (2021)

*As a matter of practice, Executive Ministers do not vote at meetings of the regional council or its executive. Their membership is for technical purposes to allow them to bring business before the regional council and its executive.*



### C.1.5 Corresponding Members

The regional council may include corresponding members as determined by the regional council. (2021)

### C.1.6 Regional Council Roll

The Board of Vocation is responsible for

- a) assigning each ministry personnel to a regional council for membership purposes;  
b) informing each regional council of the ministry personnel who are members of that regional council; and  
c) informing each regional council of any changes in its ministry personnel membership.

The regional council is responsible for keeping a roll of all its members and corresponding members. (2021)

## C.2 Responsibilities

### C.2.1 Covenancing

The regional council is responsible for

- a) recognizing a new community of faith by entering into a covenantal relationship with it;
- b) living in a covenantal relationship with each community of faith, with mutual responsibilities for the life and mission of the community of faith, and fulfilling its responsibilities under the covenant;
- c) approving changes to the covenantal relationship with the community of faith from time to time, including structural changes, amalgamations, realignments, and disbanding of communities of faith; and

*The regional council's responsibilities in the life cycle of a community of faith that is a congregation or pastoral charge are set out in more detail in Congregational Life G.1.*



- d) living in a covenantal relationship with ministry personnel.

### C.2.2 Services for Communities of Faith

The regional council is responsible for

- a) providing support, advice, and services to communities of faith in human resources matters;
- b) providing support, advice, and services to communities of faith in dealing with congregational property;
- c) managing regional archives;
- d) providing ongoing leadership training for ministry personnel and lay people; and
- e) providing funding partnerships with United Church educational and leadership training centres and camps as determined by the regional council.

### C.2.3 Service, Support, and Oversight of Communities of Faith

The regional council is responsible for

- a) reviewing the self-assessments of communities of faith in light of the covenant between the community of faith and the regional council;
- b) supporting emerging new ministries;
- c) supporting communities of faith in their life and work;
- d) promoting articulation of mission and ministry;
- e) ensuring compliance with the policies and polity of the United Church and reviewing any relevant records;

*The "polity" of the United Church means the form of organization and government of the United Church as it is set out in these bylaws.*



- f) hearing appeals from communities of faith and their governing bodies; and

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- g) assuming control of a community of faith in extraordinary circumstances where the community of faith is unable to or refuses to meet its responsibilities or acts outside of denominational policies.

### C.2.4 Purpose

The regional council is responsible for encouraging and engaging in

- a) joining our collective hearts, voices, and resources to witness to the gospel and vision of Jesus for a compassionate and just society, both in Canada and around the world;
- b) local, regional, national, and global initiatives and partnerships (community, ecumenical, and interfaith) for ministry, mission, and justice work;
- c) ministry with children, youth, and young adults;
- d) honouring and living into intercultural mission and ministry; and

*Honouring and living into intercultural mission and ministry is described in Vision for Becoming an Intercultural Church, a resource available from the [General Council Office](#).*



- e) living in covenant with Mother Earth and All My Relations in the Earth community.

### C.2.5 Policy and Finance

The regional council is responsible for

- a) administering policy set by the General Council, and setting appropriate regional policy;
- b) participating in determining priorities for mission and ministry work through the Mission & Service fund; and
- c) setting and managing its annual budget, including revenue from the denominational assessment, and setting any additional regional assessment for any additional services the regional council wishes to undertake.

### C.2.6 Property

The regional council is responsible for

- a) co-operating with the community of faith in buying, selling, leasing, and renovating community of faith property, and distributing any proceeds within denominational policies and guidelines, including
  - i) making decisions on requests from communities of faith to buy, sell, mortgage, exchange, renovate, lease, or otherwise deal with community of faith property;

*The regional council makes decisions relating to the property of amalgamating congregations. See Congregational Life G.1.4.5.*



- ii) making decisions on the meaning of the terms “other major assets” and “major renovations” for that regional council;

*The terms “other major assets” and “major renovations” are explained in Congregational Life G.2.1.2 and G.2.1.3.*



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- iii) communicating the meanings of those terms to each community of faith within the bounds served by the regional council; and

*There are three exceptions to the regional council's responsibility for making decisions about the property of communities of faith that are congregations. They are set out in Congregational Life G.2.2.2, G.2.2.3, and G.2.2.4.*



- b) making decisions on the property of communities of faith remaining after the communities of faith cease to exist; and
- c) buying, selling, leasing, and renovating regional property, and distributing any proceeds within denominational guidelines.

### **C.2.7 Preparation for Ministry**

The regional council is responsible for

- a) celebrating the approval of applicants for candidacy;
- b) ordaining and commissioning members of the order of ministry;
- c) recognizing designated lay ministers;
- d) licensing licensed lay worship leaders; and
- e) celebrating admissions and readmissions.

### **C.2.8 Pastoral Relations**

The regional council is responsible for co-operating with communities of faith in

- a) recruiting, choosing, calling, appointing, and covenanting with ministry personnel and communities of faith;
- b) ending calls, appointments, and covenants with ministry personnel and other staff; and
- c) appointing a regional council liaison officer to assist a community of faith in pastoral relations matters at designated times.

*For more information on the regional council liaison officer, see Pastoral Relations I.1.5.*



### **C.2.9 Licence to Administer the Sacraments**

The regional council is responsible for granting a licence to administer the sacraments to diaconal ministers, designated lay ministers, people who retired while serving as designated lay ministers, and sacrament elders, as set out in Pastoral Relations I.2.4.

### **C.2.10 Celebrating Retirements**

The regional council is responsible for celebrating the retirements of ministry personnel.

### **C.2.11 Ministry Personnel**

The regional council is responsible for

- a) encouraging and supporting ministry personnel toward health, joy, and excellence in ministry practice; and

- b) assisting with informal conflict resolution processes.

### C.2.12 Participation in Denominational Life

The regional council is responsible for

- a) electing members to serve on General Council based on the following:
  - i) **Number:** it elects five members plus an additional number allocated to it based on the proportion of communities of faith within the bounds of that regional council to the total number of communities of faith in the United Church;
  - ii) **Lay/ministry personnel balance:** a minimum of 1/3 of the members elected must be ministry personnel on the roll of the regional council and a minimum of 1/3 of the members elected must be lay members of communities of faith within the bounds of the regional council who are not ministry personnel;
  - iii) **Diversity:** attention is given to diversity of gender and age, racial and cultural identities, and sexual expressions, as provided in policies set by the General Council;
  - iv) **Timing:** the election takes place, where possible, at least one year before the next regular in-person meeting of the General Council;
  - v) **Eligibility of ministry personnel:** the ministry personnel who are elected must be members of the regional council that elected them both at the time of the election and at the time that the General Council holds its next regular in-person meeting;
  - vi) **Eligibility of lay members:** the lay members who are elected must be members of a community of faith within the bounds of the regional council both at the time of the election and at the time that the General Council holds its next regular in-person meeting;
  - vii) **Method of election:** the regional council is responsible for deciding how to elect its representatives to the General Council; and
  - viii) **Alternates:** it must also elect a number of alternate representatives;

*The General Council holds an in-person meeting every third year.  
See General Council D.3.1.*



- b) naming a leading Elder or presiding officer of the regional council to serve as a member of the General Council;

*The regional council has the flexibility to determine its own officers, except that there must be a leading Elder or presiding officer to fill this role.*



- c) receiving, dealing with, and forwarding proposals from members of the community of faith to the General Council; and
- d) promoting and fostering direct dialogue between communities of faith and the General Council.

### C.2.13 Incorporated Ministries

The regional council is responsible for

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- a) deciding whether to approve applications to incorporate ministries that will carry on activities in the region;
- b) serving, supporting, and providing oversight of the incorporated ministries that carry on activities in the region; and
- c) serving, supporting, and providing oversight, if assigned by the General Council, of incorporated ministries that carry on activities in more than one region.

### C.2.14 Regionally Recognized Ministries

A regionally recognized ministry is a ministry that offers expression of ministry through education, service, pastoral care, word or sacrament in communities and contexts not designated as communities of faith.

The Regional Council is responsible for

- a) assessing and recognizing other ministries; and
- b) determining how to support the Ministry Personnel serving in such recognized ministries.

*An assessment tool has been offered by General Council to regional councils to help in their work in evaluating whether or not a ministry could be recognized by the regional council.*



(2025)

### C.2.15 Limitations

All responsibility of the regional council is subject to

- a) policies set by the General Council on membership, governance, pastoral relations, candidacy, ministry personnel, property, and any other area within the authority of the General Council; and
- b) the authority of the General Council to assume control of the regional council in extraordinary circumstances where the regional council is unable to or refuses to meet its responsibilities or acts outside of denominational or regional council policies.

## C.3 Organization

### C.3.1 Executive

#### C.3.1.1 Appointment

The regional council is responsible for appointing an executive to do the continuing work of the regional council when the regional council is not meeting.

#### C.3.1.2 Membership

The executive must consist, to the extent possible, of a balance of ministry personnel and lay members who are not ministry personnel.

#### C.3.1.3 Responsibilities

The executive has all of the responsibilities of the regional council, unless the regional council has decided otherwise.

#### C.3.1.4 Reporting

The executive must report its actions to the regional council for information and for inclusion in the minutes of the regional council.

**C.3.2 Fulfillment of Responsibilities**

- a) The regional council may fulfill its responsibilities with the help of officers, committees, task groups, steering groups, teams, and other bodies, as determined by the regional council. The regional council must designate a member to fill the role of the leading Elder or presiding officer under section D.1.1 d).
- b) The regional council does not have the authority to delegate to its staff decision-making with respect to its responsibilities under C.2 unless there is policy articulating the criteria for the decision.

(2024)

**C.3.3 Commission**

**C.3.3.1 Acting by Commission**

The regional council or its executive may appoint one or more United Church members as a commission

- a) to take on a specific responsibility for the regional council or its executive; and
- b) to make decisions on behalf of the regional council or its executive.

**C.3.3.2 Decision Is Non-debatable**

A commission's decision is as effective as a decision of the regional council or executive that appointed it. The regional council or its executive may not debate a commission's decision and come to a different decision.

*The same right of appeal is available for a commission's decision as for a decision made by the regional council or its executive. See Oversight, Conflict Resolution, and Discipline J.10.2 and J.10.3.*



**C.3.3.3 Reporting**

The commission is responsible for reporting its decisions to the body that appointed it. The decisions must be included in the minutes of that body.

**C.3.4 Staffing**

The regional council has staff to assist it in meeting its responsibilities based on the following:

- a) staffing numbers are based on assessments, grants from the United Church Mission & Service fund, and any other regional income;
- b) staffing is based on priorities and needs as determined by the regional council;
- c) each regional council has a secretary as the senior staff and administrative officer of the regional council
  - i) who reports to the General Secretary of the General Council and relates to the regional council executive;

*The General Secretary of the General Council is the senior staff and administrative officer of the General Council, its Executive and Sub-Executive. See General Council D.4.2.*



- ii) who may serve more than one regional council; and

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- iii) whose responsibilities include the hiring and managing of other regional council staff;
- d) regional councils with more resources are free to retain more staff; and
- e) sharing of all resources across the church is encouraged.

### **C.4 Meetings**

#### **C.4.1 Annual Meeting Requirement**

The regional council must meet at least annually.

The annual meeting may be a meeting of the entire regional council or the executive of the regional council, as determined by the regional council.

#### **C.4.2 Meetings: General**

The regional council must decide

- a) whether and, if so, how often it will meet regularly between annual meetings as the entire regional council or the executive;
- b) the time and place for the annual and other regular meetings, and the procedure for calling annual and other regular meetings; and
- c) how it will hold special meetings for urgent business between regular meetings.

#### **C.4.3 Minimum Number of Members at Meetings**

The regional council may meet only if a minimum number of members is present. For meetings of either the regional council or its executive,

- a) if there are fewer than 60 members, at least 1/3 of them must be present;
- b) if there are 60 or more members, at least 20 members must be present; and
- c) there must be at least one ministry personnel and one lay member who is not ministry personnel present.

Corresponding members are not counted for this purpose.

## **C-NIO NATIONAL INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATION**

### **C-NIO.1 General**

The National Indigenous Organization is a body equivalent to, and having the same responsibilities as, a regional council within the United Church, on the following basis: (2021)

#### **C-NIO.1.1 Name**

This body is known as the National Indigenous Organization or such other name as it may choose for itself. (2021)

#### **C-NIO.1.2 Members of the National Indigenous Organization**

The members of the National Indigenous Organization, for equivalency purposes with regional councils, are the participants of the National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering. (2021)

#### **C-NIO.1.3 Executive**

The participants of the National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering choose the members of a smaller body that, for equivalency purposes with regional councils, serves as the executive of the National Indigenous Organization. (2021)

#### **C-NIO.1.4 Relationship with General Council**

The National Indigenous Organization functions within the United Church with a balance of independence from and relationship to the General Council. The National Indigenous Organization has a structural connection to or other way of maintaining a relationship with the Executive of the General Council, as determined by the National Indigenous Organization and approved by the Executive of the General Council. (2021)

#### **C-NIO.1.5 Relationship with Regional Councils**

The National Indigenous Organization, and any of its communities of faith or other local groups, may covenant with the appropriate geographic regional council for that regional council to fulfill any named responsibilities on behalf of the National Indigenous Organization. (2021)

## D. GENERAL COUNCIL

### D.1 Membership

#### D.1.1 Members of the General Council

The General Council consists of the following 260 members. They must all be ministry personnel or lay members of the United Church:

- a) the Moderator;
- b) the immediate past Moderator;
- c) the General Secretary of the General Council;
- d) the leading Elder or presiding officer of each regional council;
- e) 204 members elected by the regional councils on the following basis:
  - **Number:** each regional council elects five members *plus* an additional number allocated to it based on the proportion of communities of faith within the bounds of that regional council to the total number of communities of faith in the United Church;
  - **Lay/ministry personnel balance:** a minimum of 1/3 of the members elected must be ministry personnel on the roll of the regional council, and a minimum of 1/3 of the members elected must be lay members of communities of faith within the bounds of the regional council other than ministry personnel;
  - **Diversity:** attention is given to diversity of gender and age, racial and cultural identities, and sexual expressions, as provided in policies set by the General Council; and
  - **Timing:** the election takes place, where possible, at least one year before the next regular in-person meeting of the General Council;
- f) 15 members chosen by the National Indigenous Organization who are in addition to any Indigenous members elected under paragraph D.1.1 e) above;
- g) the members of the Executive of the General Council who will be continuing to serve on the executive following the first General Council meeting of the triennium; and
- h) a number of members to be elected by the Executive of the General Council, on the recommendation of the regional councils, for the purpose of ensuring diversity in the General Council after the members listed in paragraph D.1.1 e) above have been determined to bring the total number of members to 260.

(2023)

#### D.1.2 Term of Office of General Council Members

The members of the General Council elected or chosen under paragraphs D.1.1 e), f), and h) above will each serve for a term of approximately three years, starting at the beginning of the regular in-person meeting of the General Council for which they were elected or chosen and ending at the beginning of the next regular in-person meeting of the General Council.

*The General Council holds annual regular meetings that take place in person every third year and electronically during the other years.*



**D.1.3 Vacancies**

If a member of the General Council elected or chosen under paragraphs D.1.1 e), f), or h) above resigns or cannot complete their term for any other reason, the electing or choosing body may elect or choose another member to complete the term of the vacating member.

**D.2 Responsibilities**

**D.2.1 General**

The General Council is the decision-making body for the United Church as both a denomination and a legal corporation. In general terms, the General Council has the responsibility to set policy and take action for the United Church on

- a) doctrine;
- b) worship;
- c) membership;
- d) governance;
- e) property;
- f) pastoral relations; and
- g) the entrance to paid accountable ministry.

*The policies set by the General Council are binding whether included in these bylaws or not.*



It is also responsible for making decisions on denomination-shaping issues relating to public witness.

**D.2.2 Limitations**

There are four limitations on the General Council's responsibility to set policy.

**D.2.2.1 Changes to the Basis of Union**

The General Council may change the Basis of Union only if the change is approved through a remit.

**D.2.2.2 Terms of Admission to Full Membership**

The General Council may not set any requirements for admission to full membership other than those laid down in the New Testament.

**D.2.2.3 Freedom of Worship**

The General Council may not interfere with the freedom of worship that the negotiating churches had at the time of church union.

*The term "negotiating churches" means The Presbyterian Church in Canada, The Methodist Church, the Congregational Churches of Canada, and the Local Union Church congregations.*



**D.2.2.4 Congregational Property**

The General Council may not make policy on how certain kinds of congregational property may be held, used, or administered except with the approval of the

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congregation or regional council. This limitation is set out in Sections G.2.2.2 to G.2.2.4.

### D.2.3 Purpose

The General Council is responsible for the following:

- a) joining our collective hearts, voices, and resources to witness to the gospel and vision of Jesus for a compassionate and just society, both in Canada and around the world;
- b) engaging denominational-level ministry and mission, enabling the church to do ministry in both of Canada's official languages, and being a resource to regional councils and communities of faith;

(2023)

*La Table des ministères en français supports The United Church of Canada in fulfilling its commitment to do ministry in the French language. To find out more about La Table and its covenants with regional councils, see [egliseunie.ca](http://egliseunie.ca).*



(2023)

- c) encouraging local and regional mission and ministry, partnerships, and ecumenical and interfaith relations;
- d) engaging in national and global partnerships and ecumenical and interfaith relations;
- e) honouring and living into intercultural mission and ministry;

*Honouring and living into intercultural mission and ministry is described in a Vision for Becoming an Intercultural Church, a resource available from the [General Council Office](#).*



- f) living in covenant with Mother Earth and All My Relations in the Earth community; and
- g) ensuring the United Church is equipped to fulfill its purpose.

### D.2.4 Finance and Administration

The General Council is responsible for

- a) setting a three-year budget framework for the church; and
- b) determining the assessment formula for communities of faith and assessing them to meet the requirements of the budget.

### D.2.5 Oversight of Regional Councils

#### D.2.5.1 General

The General Council is responsible for the oversight of the regional councils.

This responsibility includes

- a) deciding on the number of regional councils and their boundaries;
- b) supporting regional councils; and
- c) promoting parity of service across the regions.

#### D.2.5.2 Action by General Council

The General Council is responsible for

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- a) assuming control of a regional council in extraordinary circumstances where the regional council is unable to or refuses to meet its responsibilities or acts outside of denominational policies; and
- b) taking action if a regional council asks the General Council to take action on its behalf.

The General Council must take the action that it considers necessary in the situation.

### D.2.6 Proposals

The General Council is responsible for dealing with proposals that it receives from regional councils and from the executive, committees, and members of the General Council.

### D.2.7 Authorizing Remits

The General Council authorizes remits. This responsibility cannot be fulfilled by the Executive or Sub-Executive of the General Council.

(2023)

### D.2.8 Appeals

The General Council is responsible for hearing

- a) appeals of decisions of the Board of Vocation;
- b) appeals of decisions from formal hearings held by a community of faith or regional council; and

*The term “formal hearing” is defined in Oversight, Conflict Resolution, and Discipline J.9.1.*



(2021)

- c) any other kind of appeal from a regional council.

It fulfills this responsibility through its Judicial Committee.

*There are rules on the kinds of decisions that may be appealed. See Oversight, Conflict Resolution, and Discipline J.10 for more information on appeals and the Judicial Committee.*



### D.2.9 Theological Schools Related to the United Church

The General Council is responsible for

- a) fulfilling the responsibilities of the United Church in its relationship with the theological schools related to the United Church; and
- b) giving and revoking the power of a theological school related to the United Church to issue a testamur.

### D.2.10 Incorporated Ministries

The General Council has the following responsibilities regarding applications for incorporation and incorporated ministries:

- a) deciding whether to give administrative approval for the incorporation of ministries that will carry on activities in one region;

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*The General Council makes the decision whether to give administrative approval through the General Secretary, General Council.*



- b) deciding whether to approve applications for the incorporation of ministries that will carry on activities in more than one region; and
- c) exercising oversight of incorporated ministries that carry on activities in more than one region, or assigning that oversight to a regional council.

### **D.2.11 Human Resources Policies**

The General Council is responsible for setting human resources policies for General Council and regional council staff.

### **D.2.12 Archives**

The General Council is responsible for:

- a) maintaining the denominational archives; and
- b) setting policy for both General Council and regional council archives and recordkeeping.

(2021)

### **D.2.13 Executive of the General Council**

The General Council is responsible for having an executive and deciding on the executive's responsibilities and powers. It must refer all unfinished business from its meetings to its executive.

## **D.3 Meetings**

*There are procedures for meetings of the General Council. They are available from the General Council Office prior to each meeting of the General Council.*



### **D.3.1 Regular Meetings**

The General Council must meet in person every third year. Members of the General Council must have the option of full participation through electronic or equivalent means for the in-person meeting.

The General Council must also meet annually through electronic or equivalent means to fulfill corporate legal requirements and for other business as determined by the Executive of the General Council.

### **D.3.2 Special Meetings of the General Council**

If it decides the circumstances are exceptional, the Executive of the General Council may call a special meeting of the General Council between regular meetings.

### **D.3.3 Constituting the Meeting**

The meeting of the General Council must be formally opened, or constituted, with

- a) public worship;
- b) communion; and
- c) a formal declaration by the Moderator.

#### **D.3.4 Minimum Number of Members Present**

The General Council may meet only if at least 1/5 of the commissioners are present.

### **D.4 Organization**

#### **D.4.1 Moderator**

##### **D.4.1.1 Election**

The General Council is responsible for electing a Moderator. The Moderator must be a member of the United Church but is not required to be a commissioner of the General Council that elects them.

*There is a process for nominating and electing a Moderator. It is available from the Office of the Moderator and General Secretary of the General Council Office prior to each regular in-person meeting of the General Council.*



##### **D.4.1.2 Term**

The Moderator serves for a term of approximately three years. This term period begins when the Moderator is installed at an in-person regular meeting of the General Council and ends when the next Moderator is installed at the next in-person regular meeting of the General Council.

##### **D.4.1.3 Responsibilities**

The Moderator is the senior elected officer and spiritual leader of the United Church. Their responsibilities include:

###### **Spiritual leadership:**

- a. Inspire and encourage the church in its faith and mission;
- b. Quicken the hearts of people with a sense of God as revealed in Christ; and
- c. Be an instrument of unity and strength for the whole denomination.

###### **Presiding:**

- d. Chair meetings, including those of the General Council, its Executive, and Sub-Executive.

###### **Pastoral presence:**

- e. Engage communities of faith across the church by listening, guiding and encouraging.

###### **Public voice:**

- f. Serve as the primary spokesperson and representative of the church;
- g. Communicate the Call and Vision set by the General Council in ways that connect with the whole denomination; and
- h. Call the church to prophetic action in response to current issues.

###### **Collaborative ministry with the General Secretary:**

- i. Advance the Call and Vision set by the General Council of deep spirituality, bold discipleship, and daring justice;

## Bylaws D. General Council

- j. Discern and articulate what is happening in the church;
- k. Advance right relations with the Indigenous Church;
- l. Maintain strong connections with national, global, and ecumenical partners;
- m. Ensure a consistent and thoughtful voice on prophetic or controversial matters; and
- n. Clarify and communicate the United Church's role as a distinctive Christian expression. (2025)

### **D.4.1.4 Right to Administer Communion**

A Moderator who is a diaconal minister or layperson may administer communion at regular meetings of the General Council, its executive, and its sub-executive.

### **D.4.1.5 Deputy Moderator**

If the Moderator dies, resigns, or cannot serve for an extended period for any other reason, the Executive of the General Council is responsible for appointing a deputy Moderator to assume the Moderator's responsibilities for the period required.

### **D.4.1.6 Review of Role**

The Executive of the General Council is responsible for reviewing the following at least once every 10 years:

- a) the United Church's needs in a Moderator;
- b) the Moderator's responsibilities; and
- c) the opportunity a Moderator has to pursue themes and initiatives.

The executive must make recommendations to the General Council based on these reviews.

## **D.4.2 General Secretary**

### **D.4.2.1 Appointment**

The Executive of the General Council is responsible for appointing a General Secretary of the General Council.

The General Secretary must be a member of the United Church.

### **D.4.2.2 Term**

The General Secretary of the General Council continues in office until the Executive of the General Council appoints a successor.

### **D.4.2.3 Responsibilities**

The General Secretary is the senior staff and administrative officer of the United Church and is responsible for ensuring that the church's Call and Vision are advanced. The responsibilities include:

### **Vision and Strategy**

- a. Hold the longest horizon of vision for the church;
- b. Lead the implementation of the strategic plan to accomplish the Call and Vision; and

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- c. Ensure General Council staff and executive ministers/officers are aligned with the strategic direction.

### **Leadership and Management**

- d. Lead the executive staff team of the General Council and regional councils;
- e. Support and oversee collaborative work across the church;
- f. Make operational and procedural decisions to ensure effective and efficient functioning of the General Council Office;
- g. Be responsible for the organization of the General Council Office;
- h. Appoint executive ministers/officers and establish human resources policies for General Council and regional council staff;
- i. Oversee preparation of and have accountability for the annual budget; and
- j. Hold the corporate seal and maintain official records.

### **Governance and Oversight**

- k. Support, facilitate, and oversee collaborative work among and between regional councils and General Council Executive;
- l. Prepare for meetings of the General Council, its Executive, and Sub-Executive;
- m. Prepare agendas, reports, and accurate minutes, preserving the historic memory of the church;
- n. Facilitate the work of General Council committees and commissions;
- o. Implement decisions of the General Council and its Executive;
- p. Make formal rulings and interpret The Manual;
- q. Oversee the drafting and publication of The Manual;
- r. Facilitate the election process for the Moderator and ensure the Moderator is briefed and supported; and
- s. Assist the General Council Executive in carrying out its responsibilities.

### **Spokesperson and Public Voice**

- t. Ensure the prophetic voice of the denomination is in alignment with the Call and Vision and is credible and faithful; and
- u. Represent the church with national, global, and ecumenical partners in line with the Call and Vision.

### **Collaborative Ministry with the Moderator**

- v. Advance the Call and Vision set by the General Council of deep spirituality, bold discipleship, and daring justice;
- w. Discern and articulate what is happening in the church;
- x. Advance right relations with the Indigenous Church;
- y. Maintain strong connections with national, global, and ecumenical partners;
- z. Ensure a consistent and thoughtful voice on prophetic or controversial matters; and

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- aa. Clarify and communicate the United Church's role as a distinctive Christian expression. (2025)

### **D.4.2.4 Acting General Secretary**

If the General Secretary dies, resigns, is removed, or cannot serve for any other reason for an extended period of time, the Executive of the General Council is responsible for appointing an acting General Secretary for the period required.

### **D.4.3 Executive Ministers/Officers**

The General Secretary sets the number, from time to time, and is responsible for appointing General Council executive ministers/officers.

The General Council executive ministers/officers are responsible for:

- a. Specific portfolios as assigned by the General Secretary;
- b. Acting for the General Secretary when required by the General Secretary on a short-term basis; and
- c. Performing other duties as assigned by the General Secretary. (2025)

### **D.4.4 Documents Signed by The United Church of Canada**

The General Council is responsible for ensuring there is a corporate seal for The United Church of Canada. The following requirements apply to documents signed by The United Church of Canada under corporate seal:

- a) the document must be signed by two people;
- b) one of those people must be the Moderator, the General Secretary of the General Council, a General Council officer, or the executive officer, finance;
- c) that person must arrange for the corporate seal to be imprinted; and
- d) the other person must be the Moderator, the General Secretary of the General Council, a General Council officer, the executive officer, finance, or one of up to six people that the Executive of the General Council has appointed to sign documents.

### **D.4.5 Commissions of the General Council**

#### **D.4.5.1 Acting by Commission**

The General Council may appoint one or more United Church members as a commission

- a) to take on a specific responsibility for the General Council; and
- b) to make decisions on behalf of the General Council.

#### **D.4.5.2 Decision Is Non-debatable**

A commission's decision is as effective as a decision of the General Council that appointed it. It is not debatable and there is no right of appeal from it.

#### **D.4.5.3 Reporting**

A commission is responsible for reporting its decisions to the General Council. The decisions must be included in the minutes of the General Council.

## D.4.6 Committees and Other Bodies of the General Council

### D.4.6.1 General

The General Council may fulfill its responsibilities with the help of committees, task groups, steering groups, teams, and other bodies as determined by the General Council.

*There is a policy for recruiting and appointing the membership of committees. See the Governance Handbook available from the [General Council Office](#).*



### D.4.6.2 Mandatory Committee Responsibilities

The General Council must have committees to fulfill the responsibilities set out in this section (D.4.6.2) or provide for this work to be done in some other way.

*There is a policy for the membership, detailed responsibilities, and procedures for each of these committees or other bodies. See the Governance Handbook available from the [General Council Office](#).*



- a. **Audit Committee:** The Audit Committee is responsible for
  - i) overseeing the United Church's financial reporting, control, and audit functions; and
  - ii) overseeing the United Church's pension plan audit function on behalf of the pension board.
- b. **Judicial Committee:** The Judicial Committee is responsible for dealing with all appeals to the General Council of
  - i) decisions of formal hearings held by a community of faith or regional council;

*The term "formal hearing" is defined in Oversight, Conflict Resolution, and Discipline J.9.1.*



- ii) other decisions of regional councils;
- iii) decisions of the Executive of the General Council
- iv) decisions of the Board of Vocation; and
- v) rulings of the General Secretary of the General Council.

*There are rules on the kinds of decisions that may be appealed. See Oversight, Conflict Resolution and Discipline J.10 for more information on appeals and the Judicial Committee.*



- c. **Manual Committee:** The Manual Committee is responsible for assisting the General Secretary with
  - i) preparing *The Manual*; and
  - ii) conducting remits.

d. **Nominations Committee:** The Nominations Committee is responsible for:

i) Recommending people for election

The Committee prepares a slate of individuals for election to the General Council Executive, Board of Vocation, and other bodies designated as “elected”. These elections are restricted, not competitive, in that the General Council votes yes/no on the slate. If the slate is not approved, the Nominations Committee presents a new one. Nominations from the floor are not permitted.

ii) Recommending people for appointment

The Nominations Committee recommends individuals for appointment to church bodies such as committees, boards, and task groups. The authorizing body has the authority to accept or reject these recommendations.

People for both election and appointment must be equipped to serve and reflect the church’s commitments to diversity, inclusion, intercultural ministry, and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, as directed by the General Council in 2018.

(2025)

e. **Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee:** The Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee is responsible for helping the church in expressing

i) its longing for God;

ii) its theological identity; and

iii) its commitment to whole world ecumenism.

(2021)

## D.5 Executive of the General Council

### D.5.1 General

The Executive of the General Council is the decision-making body for the United Church between meetings of the General Council, living into covenantal relationship and mutually accountable with the General Council, regional councils, and communities of faith.

### D.5.2 Membership of the Executive of the General Council

#### D.5.2.1 Membership

The Executive of the General Council consists of the following 18 members:

a) the Moderator;

b) the immediate past Moderator;

c) the General Secretary of the General Council; and

d) 15 members of the United Church elected by the General Council.

At least 50 per cent of the members of the Executive of the General Council must be members of the United Church Pension Plan.

*This is a legal requirement for the United Church Pension Plan.*



**D.5.2.2 Term**

The 15 elected members of the Executive of the General Council will each serve for a term of approximately six years, as follows:

- a) beginning when they are elected at a regular in-person meeting of the General Council;
- b) ending when new members are elected to replace them at the second regular in-person meeting of the General Council after the one at which they were elected; and
- c) with the terms staggered so that every three years, approximately half of the elected members will have completed their terms.

**D.5.2.3 Vacancies**

The Executive of the General Council may fill any vacancies in its membership pending the next regular meeting of the General Council. A member elected to fill a vacancy on the Executive of the General Council will serve for the balance of the term of the vacating member.

**D.5.3 Responsibilities of the Executive of the General Council**

**D.5.3.1 General**

The Executive of the General Council has the following responsibilities and powers.

- a) **Unfinished business:** dealing with all unfinished business and other matters referred to it by the General Council;
- b) **Routine and emergency:** dealing with all routine and emergency work of the General Council between meetings of the General Council;
- c) **Committees:** establishing standing and other committees; and
- d) **Additional authority:** exercising additional authority of the General Council as set out in sections D.5.3.2 to D.5.3.8 below, subject to any limitations set by the General Council.
- e) **Pension Plan and Group Insurance:** acting as the legal administrator of the pension plan including appointing the pension board and amending the group insurance plans contract. (2021)

**D.5.3.2 General Council**

The Executive of the General Council has the following responsibilities:

- a) Ensuring there is a General Council Office to carry out the ongoing work of the General Council;
- b) Setting denominational policies alongside the General Council; (2025)
- c) initiating or passing on any proposals to the General Council for action by the General Council that the executive considers necessary or advisable;

*There is a policy for the form and content of proposals to the General Council. It is available from the General Council Office prior to each regular meeting of the General Council.*



- d) making recommendations to the General Council;

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- e) consulting with the church and then referring to the General Council any denomination-shaping or faith-shaping issue that arises for the executive;
- f) reporting its actions to the General Council;
- g) ensuring that the decisions and recommendations of the General Council are carried out, or explaining why they were not carried out;
- h) communicating its decisions to all members of the General Council and all councils;
- i) calling special meetings of the General Council;
- j) overseeing remits; and

*The Executive of the General Council oversees remits authorized by the General Council. The executive may not authorize a remit itself. See Initiating Action and Change F.2 for more information.*



- k) approving changes to *The Manual* to
  - i) implement General Council decisions; or
  - ii) improve the wording or organization of *The Manual* where it is redundant, ambiguous, or unclear.

### **D.5.3.3 Committees**

The Executive of the General Council is responsible for

- a) appointing an Accountability Committee for both the Moderator and the General Secretary, composed of at least two members of the Executive, two members named by the Indigenous church and two members at large named by the Executive through the nominations process. and
- b) receiving and reviewing reports at least annually from the committees established by the General Council or its Executive.

(2025)

### **D.5.3.4 Theological Schools Related to the United Church**

The Executive of the General Council has the following responsibilities for theological schools related to the United Church:

- a) making decisions on proposed incorporations, charter amendments, or dissolutions of schools;
- b) making decisions on setting up or discontinuing academic chairs in the schools, and making or terminating academic chair appointments;
- c) consulting with governing boards of schools about the appointment of principals;
- d) appointing principals and faculty members;
- e) making appointments to the governing boards of schools; and
- f) appointing an advisory committee on educational matters to help it meet these responsibilities for the schools.

It must follow the school's charter and any agreement between the United Church and the school in fulfilling these responsibilities.

### **D.5.3.5 Financial and Property Matters**

The Executive of the General Council is responsible for

## Bylaws D. General Council

- a) making a decision on the annual budget of the United Church;
- b) supervising the unified plan of finance, the Mission & Service fund, and all other funds for the mission of the United Church;

*There is a policy for the unified plan of finance and a procedure for funding the work of the United Church through the Mission & Service fund. See the Unified Plan of Finance: Mission & Service Fund resource available from the [General Council Office](#).*



- c) approving loans and overdrafts on the United Church's bank accounts;
- d) making a decision on any proposal to seek funds from the communities of faith of more than one regional council for any purpose other than the Mission & Service fund; and
- e) approving sales and mortgages of United Church property that is administered by the General Council Office. The Executive of the General Council may set policy for the General Secretary to give these approvals.

(2021)

### **D.5.3.6 Associate Member Agreements**

The Executive of the General Council is responsible for setting policies for

- a) associate member agreements between the United Church and a congregation or other ministry in Canada that is part of another denomination outside of Canada; and
- b) recognition of people serving in formal ministry leadership in congregations or other ministries of other denominations under associate membership agreements with the United Church.

(2021)

### **D.5.4 Meetings of the Executive of the General Council**

The Executive of the General Council may meet only if at least 1/3 of its members or more are present.

Corresponding members are not counted for this purpose.

### **D.5.5 Organization of the Executive of the General Council**

#### **D.5.5.1 Committees and Other Bodies of the Executive of the General Council**

The Executive of the General Council may fulfill its responsibilities with the help of committees, task groups, steering groups, teams, and other bodies as determined by the executive.

*There is a policy for recruiting and appointing the membership of committees of the Executive of the General Council. See the Governance Handbook available from the [General Council Office](#).*



#### **D.5.5.2 Commissions**

The Executive of the General Council may appoint one or more United Church members as a commission

- a) to take on a specific responsibility for the Executive of the General Council; and
- b) to make decisions on behalf of the Executive of the General Council.

## Bylaws D. General Council

A commission's decision is as effective as the decision of the Executive of the General Council that appointed it. It is not debatable.

*The same right of appeal is available for a commission's decision as for a decision made by the Executive of the General Council itself. See Oversight, Conflict Resolution, and Discipline J.10.*



A commission is responsible for reporting its decisions to the Executive of the General Council. The decisions must be included in the minutes of the executive.

### **D.6 Sub-Executive of the General Council**

#### **D.6.1 Requirement**

The Executive of the General Council is responsible for having a sub-executive to do the continuing work of the executive between regular meetings.

#### **D.6.2 Membership**

The Sub-Executive of the General Council consists of

- a) the Moderator;
- b) the General Secretary of the General Council; and
- c) three members of the Executive of the General Council, as elected by the executive.

#### **D.6.3 Responsibilities**

The sub-executive has the following responsibilities:

- a) making decisions on financial or administrative matter on behalf of the Executive of the General Council where the matter involves assets or expense of less than two million dollars, subject to the authority of the Executive of the General Council to decide the matter itself; and
- b) such other responsibilities as may be assigned to it by the General Council or its executive.

#### **D.6.4 Meetings**

##### **D.6.4.1 Meeting and Alternative Decision-Making**

The sub-executive may make decisions under paragraph D.6.3 a) above at meetings or by signing written resolutions as an alternative to holding meetings, as long as the resolutions are signed by all members of the sub-executive.

##### **D.6.4.2 Reporting**

The sub-executive is responsible for reporting its actions to the Executive of the General Council for information and for inclusion in the minutes of the executive.

##### **D.6.4.3 Quorum**

The sub-executive may meet only if at least 1/3 of its members are present. Corresponding members are not counted for this purpose.

## E. OFFICE OF VOCATION

The Office of Vocation is part of the structure of the United Church. The Board of Vocation is an elected body that oversees the Office of Vocation, honouring and living into intercultural mission and ministry.

*Honouring and living into intercultural mission and ministry is described in [Vision for Becoming an Intercultural Church](#), a resource available from the [General Council Office](#).*



### E.1 Membership of Board of Vocation

The Board of Vocation consists of the following 15 members. They must all be members of the United Church:

- a) 14 members elected by the General Council or by the Executive of the General Council upon referral by the General Council; and
- b) one member elected by the National Indigenous Organization.

The General Council or its executive names one of the above members as the chair of the Board of Vocation.

### E.2 Responsibilities

#### E.2.1 Overview

The Office of Vocation has the responsibilities assigned to it by the General Council and approved and enacted through the remit process. These responsibilities are set out in sections E.2.2 to E.2.9 below.

Within the Office of Vocation, the Board of Vocation is the elected body that sets standards and exercises the decision-making authority of these responsibilities.

The Office of Vocation implements the standards set and decisions made by the Board of Vocation and fulfills the administrative responsibilities set out in sections E.2.2 to E.2.9 below.

The staff of the Office of Vocation serve as a resource to the Board of Vocation and its commissions, committees, and other bodies.

*The regional council (not the Office of Vocation) is responsible for all pastoral relations matters. See [I. Pastoral Relations](#).*



#### E.2.2 Standards for Training, Accreditation and Continuing Education

The Office of Vocation is responsible for establishing standards in the following areas, within policies set by the General Council or its executive:

- a) training and accreditation of ministry personnel;
- b) admission of ministers from other denominations;
- c) readmission of people to the order of ministry;
- d) continuing education, formation, and professional development of ministry personnel; and
- e) oversight and discipline of ministry personnel.

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*The Board of Vocation establishes the “Standard for Continuing Education for Ministry Personnel.” This standard is designed to assist ministry personnel in developing their own continuing education plans and to develop proposals for continuing education with their Ministry and Personnel Committees. For further details, contact the Office of Vocation.*



(2024)

### **E.2.3 Fitness and Readiness**

The Office of Vocation is responsible for determining a person’s fitness and readiness for accreditation to paid accountable ministry within the standards set under section E.2.1 above.

*This responsibility is fulfilled by the Candidacy Boards.  
See section E.3.3 below.*



*For more information on entering paid accountable ministry in the United Church, see H. Entering Ministry.*



### **E.2.4 Maintaining Registry of Ministry Personnel**

The Office of Vocation is responsible for

- a) maintaining a registry of accredited ministry personnel;
- b) assigning each ministry personnel to a regional council for membership purposes;
- c) informing each regional council of the ministry personnel who are members of that regional council; and
- d) informing each regional council of any changes in its ministry personnel membership.

### **E.2.5 Oversight and Discipline of Ministry Personnel**

The Office of Vocation is responsible for

- a) the oversight and discipline of ministry personnel;
- b) handling formal complaints made with respect to a person who is ministry personnel; and
- c) conducting reviews, formal hearings, and appeals,

all within standards set by the Office Vocation and policies set by the General Council or its executive.

*These responsibilities are set out in more detail in  
J. Oversight, Conflict Resolution and Discipline.*



### **E.2.6 Support to Regional Councils**

The Office of Vocation is responsible for providing support to regional councils and responding to their requests for assistance in any area within the responsibility of the Board of Vocation.

### E.2.7 Conflict Resolution Facilitators

The Office of Vocation is responsible for maintaining a list of trained conflict resolution facilitators.

*The role of the conflict resolution facilitator is explained in the Dispute Resolution resource available from the [General Council Office](#).*



### E.2.8 Interim Ministers and Ministry of Supervision

The Office of Vocation is responsible for maintaining a list of recognized interim ministers, and those trained for the ministry of supervision.

*For more information on interim ministers and the ministry of supervision, see the interim ministry resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



### E.2.9 Discontinued Service Lists

The Office of Vocation is responsible for administering and maintaining the following lists:

- a) the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary);
- b) the Discontinued Service List (Voluntary); and
- c) the Discontinued Lay Ministry Appointment List.

(2021)

*For more information on the discontinued service lists, see Pastoral Relations I.3.3.*



### E.2.10 Limitations

All responsibility of the Office of Vocation is subject to policies set by the General Council on any area within the authority of the General Council.

## E.3 Organization—Board of Vocation

*For more details on the structure of the Board of Vocation, its committees and commissions, and their respective mandates, see the resource available from the [General Council Office](#).*



### E.3.1 Officers, Committees, and Other Bodies

The Board of Vocation may fulfill its responsibilities with the help of officers, committees, task groups, steering groups, teams, and other bodies, as determined by the Board of Vocation.

### E.3.2 Commissions

The Board of Vocation may appoint one or more United Church members as a commission

- a) to take on a specific responsibility for the Board of Vocation; and
- b) to make decisions on behalf of the Board of Vocation.

## Bylaws E. Office of Vocation

The commission's decision is as effective as a decision of the Board of Vocation. The Board of Vocation may not debate the commission's decision and come to a different decision.

### **E.3.3 Candidacy Boards**

#### **E.3.3.1 General**

The Board of Vocation has standing commissions called "Candidacy Boards."

One of the Candidacy Boards serves the Indigenous United Church. The other Candidacy Boards serve different geographic areas of the United Church as determined by the Board of Vocation.

#### **E.3.3.2 Appointment**

The Board of Vocation appoints the members of the Candidacy Boards, ensuring the appropriate balance of intercultural, ordained, diaconal, designated lay ministry, and lay members.

The members of the Candidacy Board serving the Indigenous United Church are named by the National Indigenous Organization for appointment by the Board of Vocation.

#### **E.3.3.3 Task**

The Candidacy Boards have responsibility for

- a) approving an individual for candidacy for ministry in the United Church;
- b) terminating candidacy if necessary;
- c) determining an individual's readiness for accreditation for ordination, for commissioning, and for recognition as a designated lay minister; and
- d) overseeing the Candidacy Pathway process.

*These responsibilities are set out in more detail in H. Candidacy Pathway, where the terms used in this section are also explained.*



## **E.4 Meetings**

### **E.4.1 Meeting Requirements**

The Board of Vocation must decide how often it will meet, the time and place for meetings, and the procedure for calling meetings. It may also set requirements for meetings of its committees, commissions, and other bodies, or assign that responsibility to those bodies themselves.

### **E.4.2 Minimum Number of Members at Meetings**

The Board of Vocation and any commission established by it may meet only if at least 1/3 of its members are present.

## F. INITIATING ACTION AND CHANGE

The councils of the United Church work in relationship with each other in different ways on governance matters. Two of those ways are through

- a) proposals; and
- b) remits.

*The three councils of the United Church work in relationship with each other in the spirit of the opening words of A New Creed: “We are not alone.” A community of faith and its governing body work in relationship with the regional council, and the regional council with the General Council.*



*All council membership ultimately begins with the community of faith, as the members of the community of faith governing body and the lay members of the regional council are chosen from the community of faith.*

### F.1 Proposals

#### F.1.1 Introduction

A “proposal” is a formal request for a council to take action. It is one way that a United Church member may raise an issue that is important to them and ask for the church to take action on it.

In this section (F.1), the council that is being asked to take action is called the “council of action.”

#### F.1.2 Starting a Proposal

##### F.1.2.1 Proposals by Member(s) of a Community of Faith

In general, a proposal may be started by any one member of a community of faith, the governing body, a committee, or other church body of a community of faith. If the proposal asks for the following kinds of action, it must be started by the governing body or 10 members of a community of faith:

- a) action concerning the pastoral relationship; or
- b) action by the regional council to review the community of faith.

##### F.1.2.2 Proposals by Others

A proposal may also be started by

- a) a member of the regional council or General Council;
- b) a committee or other church body of the regional council or General Council; or
- c) the regional council.

#### F.1.3 Process for a Proposal

The process for dealing with a proposal is set out below.

Members and councils are responsible for completing the parts of the process assigned to them.

**F.1.3.1 Proposal by Member(s) of a Community of Faith**

*In some cases, the full community of faith fulfills the responsibilities of a community of faith governing body under the covenant with the regional council, including the responsibility for proposals in this section (F.1.3).*



Member(s) of community of faith    The member(s) give the proposal to the governing body of their community of faith.



Community of faith →    When the governing body receives the proposal:

*If the governing body is the council of action, it makes a decision on the proposal (see section F.1.4 below).*

If the regional council is the council of action:

- a) The governing body decides if it agrees with the proposal.
- b) *If it agrees*, the governing body must pass the proposal on to the regional council.
- c) *If it does not agree*, the governing body decides whether or not to pass the proposal on to the regional council.

*If the governing body does not agree with a proposal, it normally passes it on to the regional council only if there is a compelling reason.*



- d) The governing body may include its own recommendations when passing a proposal on to the regional council.

If the General Council is the council of action:

- a) The governing body passes the proposal on to the regional council.
- b) The governing body may include its own recommendations when passing a proposal on to the regional council.



Regional council →    When the regional council receives the proposal:

*If the regional council is the council of action, it makes a decision on the proposal. If the General Council is the council of action:*

- a) The regional council decides if it agrees with the proposal.
- b) *If it agrees*, the regional council passes the proposal on to the General Council.
- c) *If it does not agree*, the regional council decides whether or not to pass the proposal on to the General Council.

*If the regional council does not agree with a proposal, it normally passes it on to the General Council only if there is a compelling reason.*



- d) The regional council may include its own recommendations when passing a proposal on to the General Council.



General Council → When the General Council receives the proposal, it makes a decision on it (see section F.1.4 below).

**F.1.3.2 Process for a Proposal by a Council**

When a council makes a proposal, the first step is for the council to pass the proposal on to the next council.

Then, the same steps as in section F.1.3.1 above are followed, starting with the next council (regional council or General Council).

**F.1.3.3 Process for a Proposal by a Member of a Council**

When a member of a council makes a proposal, the first step is for the member to pass the proposal on to that council.

Then, the same steps as in section F.1.3.1 above are followed, starting with that council (governing body, regional council, or General Council).

**F.1.3.4 Process for a Proposal by a Committee of a Council**

When a committee of a council makes a proposal, the first step is for the committee to pass the proposal on to that council.

Then, the same steps as in section F.1.3.1 above are followed, starting with that council (governing body, regional council or General Council).

**F.1.4 Response by Council of Action**

The council of action is responsible for making a decision on the proposal. It has the following options:

- a) taking the action requested in the proposal;
- b) taking the action requested in the proposal with some changes;
- c) taking different action on the same subject matter as the proposal;
- d) referring the proposal;
- e) receiving the proposal but taking no further action; or
- f) taking some other action that the council of action decides is appropriate.

*The chart on the next two pages is a summary of the process for proposals. Please refer to section F.1 above for the full requirements.*



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Process for Proposals: Summary



| Proposal description   | First step  | Action by community of faith governing body   | Action by regional council  | Action by General Council   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| Proposal started by member(s) or committee of community of faith, requesting action by community of faith governing body | The member(s) or committee gives the proposal to the community of faith governing body. | The community of faith governing body makes a decision on the proposal. (The decisions available to the council of action are listed in section F.1.4 above.)   | N/A   | N/A   |
| Proposal started by member(s) or committee of community of faith, requesting action by regional council                  | The member(s) or committee gives the proposal to the community of faith governing body. | The community of faith governing body decides whether it agrees with the proposal. <i>If it agrees</i> , it must pass the proposal on to the regional council. <i>If the community of faith governing body does not agree with the proposal</i> , it decides whether or not to pass it on to the regional council. The governing body may include its own recommendations if it passes the proposal on. | The regional council makes a decision on the proposal. (The decisions available to the council of action are listed in section F.1.4 above.)  | N/A   |
| Proposal started by member(s) or committee of congregation, requesting action by General Council                         | The member(s) or committee gives the proposal to the community of faith governing body. | The community of faith governing body passes the proposal on to the regional council. The governing body may include its own recommendations.   | The regional council decides whether it agrees with the proposal. <i>If it agrees</i> , it must pass on the proposal to the General Council. <i>If the regional council does not agree with the proposal</i> , it decides whether or not to pass it on to the General Council. The regional council may include its own recommendations if it passes the proposal on. | The General Council makes a decision on the proposal. (The decisions available to the council of action are listed in section F.1.4 above.) |

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| Proposal description   | First step   | Action by community of faith governing body                                       | Action by regional council  | Action by General Council   |
|--|--|---|---|---|
| Proposal started by community of faith governing body, requesting action by regional council         | (See Action by community of faith governing body. →)                   | The community of faith governing body gives the proposal to the regional council. | The regional council makes a decision on the proposal. (The decisions available to the council of action are listed in section F.1.4 above.)  | N/A   |
| Proposal started by community of faith governing body, requesting action by General Council          | (See Action by community of faith governing body. →)                   | The community of faith governing body gives the proposal to the regional council. | The regional council decides whether it agrees with the proposal. <i>If it agrees</i> , it must pass on the proposal to the General Council. <i>If the regional council does not agree with the proposal</i> , it decides whether or not to pass it on to the General Council. The regional council may include its own recommendations if it passes the proposal on. | The General Council makes a decision on the proposal. (The decisions available to the council of action are listed in section F.1.4 above.) |
| Proposal started by member(s) or committee of regional council, requesting action by General Council | The member(s) or committee gives the proposal to the regional council. | N/A   | The regional council decides whether it agrees with the proposal. <i>If it agrees</i> , it must pass on the proposal to the General Council. <i>If the regional council does not agree with the proposal</i> , it decides whether or not to pass it on to the General Council. The regional council may include its own recommendations if it passes the proposal on. | The General Council makes a decision on the proposal. (The decisions available to the council of action are listed in section F.1.4 above.) |
| Proposal started by regional council, requesting action by General Council                           | (See Action by regional council. →)                                    | N/A   | The regional council gives the proposal to the General Council.   | The General Council makes a decision on the proposal. (The decisions available to the council of action are listed in section F.1.4 above.) |

## F.2 Remits

The General Council may change the Basis of Union only if the change is approved through a remit. A “remit” is a vote by regional councils or by regional councils and communities of faith that are pastoral charges to change the Basis of Union.

*The Presbyterian Church in Canada, The Methodist Church, the Congregational Churches of Canada, and the Local Union Church congregations united in 1925 to form The United Church of Canada. Their agreement was set out in a document called the Basis of Union. This document was part of the federal and provincial legislation that created the United Church. It contains a statement of faith and an outline of the structure and basic policies of the United Church.*



*Under The United Church of Canada Act, the federal legislation that created the United Church, pastoral charges are the only communities of faith that vote on remits.*



### F.2.1 Categories of Remits

There are three categories of remits.

#### F.2.1.1 Category 1 Remits

Category 1 remits are for wording or editorial changes to the Basis of Union, including

- a) replacing existing words or phrases with updated terms;
- b) reorganizing text;
- c) giving corresponding membership in a council to a specific office or position; or
- d) changing the gender language used for human beings in the Articles of Faith in the Basis of Union.

#### F.2.1.2 Category 2 Remits

Category 2 remits are for changes to the Basis of Union that are significant but not denomination-shaping, including

- a) changing the composition of the councils with minimal impact;
- b) reflecting general practice within the United Church;
- c) changing a process or procedure; or
- d) establishing or changing requirements for specific policies or processes.

#### F.2.1.3 Category 3 Remits

Category 3 remits are for substantive changes to the Basis of Union that affect denominational identity, including

- a) altering the nature of the councils;
- b) significantly changing the structures of the church;
- c) redefining the church’s understanding of ministry;
- d) affecting the articles of faith, except for gender language applied to human beings;

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- e) changing the baptismal formula or vows made upon commissioning or ordination;
- f) moving a section from the Basis of Union to the bylaws; or
- g) changing the church's understanding of membership.

### F.2.2 Process for All Categories of Remits

If the General Council adopts a resolution to change the Basis of Union, it is responsible for carrying out the following process for a remit. This process applies to all categories of remits.

#### F.2.2.1 Authorizing

The General Council must authorize the remit. This responsibility may not be fulfilled by the Executive or Sub-Executive of the General Council.

#### F.2.2.2 Assigning the Category

The General Council must decide if the remit is in category 1, 2, or 3. If the General Council does not decide on a category, the remit will be considered a category 3.

#### F.2.2.3 Preparing the Remit

The General Secretary of the General Council must

- a) prepare the remit and all necessary documents;
- b) determine the deadline for regional councils—and for category 3 remits, communities of faith that are pastoral charges—to vote on the remit and reply to the General Secretary; and
- c) send the remit and all necessary documents to regional councils—and for category 3 remits, to pastoral charges.

#### F.2.2.4 Considering the Remit

Regional councils—and for category 3 remits, communities of faith that are pastoral charges—must consider the remit at a regular meeting or a special meeting called for that purpose. Only the governing body of the community of faith considers and votes on the remit.

Governing bodies of communities of faith may invite members to share perspectives as part of the discernment process.



(2025)

#### F.2.2.5 Replying to the Remit

Regional councils—and for category 3 remits, communities of faith that are pastoral charges—must reply that they are either in favour or not in favour of the remit. They may not include conditions or comments with their reply.

#### F.2.2.6 Reporting Results of the Remit

The General Secretary must report the voting results to the Executive of the General Council and to the General Council.

(2022)

#### F.2.2.7 Enacting the Remit

If a remit has been approved by the required majority of all regional councils—and for category 3 remits, communities of faith that are pastoral charges—the General Council must decide whether or not to enact it. Except for category 1 remits, this

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responsibility cannot be fulfilled by the Executive or Sub-Executive of the General Council.

If a remit has not been approved, the General Council shall not enact it. (2023)

### **F.2.2.8 Repeating the Remit**

If a remit has not been approved, a future General Council may authorize the same remit again.

### **F.2.3 Additional Process for a Category 1 Remit**

The General Council is also responsible for the following additional steps that apply to a category 1 remit.

#### **F.2.3.1 Effective Date of Change**

The General Council may pass a resolution naming the date that the remit will come into effect if it enacted, failing which it comes into effect when it is enacted under section F.2.3.3. (2022)

#### **F.2.3.2 Sending Remit Out Immediately**

The remit must be sent to regional councils immediately after the meeting of the General Council.

The deadline for regional councils to reply must leave at least 90 days for study and information sharing. (2022)

#### **F.2.3.3 Enacting the Remit**

If a remit has been approved by a majority of all the regional councils, the Executive of the General Council must decide whether or not to enact it .

If a remit has not been approved, the Executive of the General Council may not enact it. (2022)

#### **F.2.3.4 Updating *The Manual***

If the remit has been enacted, the change will be included in the next edition of *The Manual*. (2022)

### **F.2.4 Additional Process for a Category 2 Remit**

The General Council is also responsible for the following additional steps that apply to a category 2 remit.

#### **F.2.4.1 Review by Executive of the General Council**

The Executive of the General Council must review a category 2 remit before it is sent to regional councils.

#### **F.2.4.2 Information and Study Materials**

A category 2 remit must be sent to regional councils along with information and study materials.

#### **F.2.4.3 Members of the General Council**

The Executive of the General Council is responsible for ensuring that a copy of the remit and accompanying materials are sent to members of the General Council.

**F.2.4.4 Deadline**

The deadline for regional councils to reply must leave at least 90 days for study and information sharing. (2022)

**F.2.4.5 Approval**

A category 2 remit requires the approval of a majority of all the regional councils.

**F.2.5 Additional Process for a Category 3 Remit**

The General Council is also responsible for the following additional steps that apply to a category 3 remit.

**F.2.5.1 Additional Procedures for Pastoral Charges**

The General Council must decide on any additional conditions and procedures that apply to communities of faith that are pastoral charges for the category 3 remit.

**F.2.5.2 Review by Executive of the General Council**

The Executive of the General Council must review a category 3 remit before it is sent to regional councils and communities of faith that are pastoral charges.

**F.2.5.3 Information and Study Materials**

A category 3 remit must be sent to regional councils and communities of faith that are pastoral charges along with information and study materials.

**F.2.5.4 Members of the General Council**

The Executive of the General Council is responsible for ensuring that a copy of the remit and accompanying materials are sent to members of the General Council.

**F.2.5.5 Deadline**

The deadline for regional councils and communities of faith that are pastoral charges to reply must leave at least six months for study and information sharing. (2022)

**F.2.5.6 Approval**

A category 3 remit requires the approval of a majority of all the regional councils and a majority of all the communities of faith that are pastoral charges.

## G. CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

*The congregation is the most common type of community of faith in the United Church. The requirements set out here for congregational life may be customized for other communities of faith and included as part of the covenantal relationship between the community of faith and the regional council. For more information, see Community of Faith B.1.3 and B.8.2.*



### G.1 Life Cycle of a Congregation

#### G.1.1 Beginning

There are three different ways for a United Church congregation to come into existence.

##### G.1.1.1 Congregation from Before Church Union

The congregation may have existed before church union and come into the United Church as part of church union.

*Methodist, Congregationalist, many Presbyterian, and Local Union Church congregations became United Church congregations as part of church union in 1925. Many congregations of the Evangelical United Brethren Church came into the United Church as part of church union in 1968.*



##### G.1.1.2 Congregation from Another Denomination

A congregation from another denomination may enter the United Church.

It must first make a request to the regional council to be recognized as a community of faith in the United Church through a covenantal relationship with the regional council. The regional council may approve the request if it is satisfied that the congregation

- a) is free to enter the United Church;
- b) approves the principles and polity of the United Church;
- c) has no irregularities in the way that it functions; and
- d) has provided a roll of its membership.

##### G.1.1.3 New Congregations

New congregations may be created. The regional council is responsible for forming a new congregation by recognizing it as a community of faith through a covenantal relationship between the congregation and the regional council.

Other communities of faith may be affected when a new congregation is formed. The regional council must consult with those who will be affected before deciding to recognize a new congregation as a community of faith.

#### G.1.2 Lifetime

##### G.1.2.1 Living Out Commitment

The people of the community of faith live out their commitment to God and to each other by celebrating God's presence, living with respect in Creation, loving

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and serving others, seeking justice and resisting evil, and proclaiming Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope.

A community of faith carries out its ministry under the oversight of the regional council, which supports the community of faith in its life and work.

*The membership, responsibilities, organization, and meeting requirements for all communities of faith including congregations are set out in these bylaws in B. Communities of Faith.*



### **G.1.2.2 Regular Self-Assessments**

Congregations and other communities of faith are responsible for doing self-assessments of their ministry regularly. They must reflect on their understanding of their identity and their community context.

They may consider

- a) their accomplishments;
- b) the present opportunities and challenges; and
- c) the resources required for meeting those opportunities and challenges.

They must file a report of the self-assessment with the regional council.

The regional council participates as a partner in this review, offering resources and support from the wider church.

*There are guidelines for self-assessments. Please see the resource available from the [General Council Office](#).*



### **G.1.2.3 Results of Self-Assessment**

The self-assessment may have one or more of the following results:

- a) the congregation or other community of faith continuing with its current ministry;
- b) the congregation or other community of faith approving a revised or new ministry plan;
- c) the congregation or other community of faith deciding to significantly change the focus of ministry or to conclude a ministry; and
- d) a change to the covenant between the congregation or other community of faith and the regional council, which must be approved by both of them.

### **G.1.3 Changes during the Congregation's Lifetime**

A congregation may experience one or more of the following changes during its lifetime:

- a) amalgamating with one or more other communities of faith;
- b) becoming a single-point pastoral charge, part of a multi-point pastoral charge, or part of a different multi-point pastoral charge;
- c) relocating; and
- d) concluding its ministry.

All of these changes require the approval of the regional council and a change to the covenant between the congregation and the regional council.

#### **G.1.4 Amalgamation of Congregations**

Congregations considering amalgamation must jointly develop a proposal for amalgamation, including a ministry plan for the amalgamated congregation and the resources required. The process for an amalgamation is set out below. The congregation and regional council are each responsible for the steps assigned to them.

*Please consult your regional council for resources for ministry plan format.*



(2022)

##### **G.1.4.1 Decision by Congregations**

Each congregation meets separately to make a decision on a proposal to amalgamate, including the proposed amalgamation, the ministry plan, and the resources required.

(2022)

##### **G.1.4.2 Regional Council Consultation**

The regional council holds separate meetings with each congregation to hear their opinions on the proposed amalgamation.

##### **G.1.4.3 Regional Council Decision**

The regional council makes a decision on whether to approve the amalgamation as a change in the covenantal relationship between the regional council and each of the congregations.

##### **G.1.4.4 New Covenant**

The regional council and the amalgamated congregation enter into a new covenantal relationship.

##### **G.1.4.5 Property**

The regional council consults with the congregations on the property needs of the new amalgamated congregation as set out in the ministry plan. A congregation may ask its governing body to represent it in this consultation.

(2022)

a) **Surplus property of amalgamating congregations:** The regional council may decide that some of the congregations' property will not be needed for the ministry plan of the new amalgamated congregation. Any property that will not be needed is called "surplus property."

(2022)

b) **Use of surplus property:** The regional council is responsible for all surplus property after the amalgamation and decides how to use the surplus property for the benefit of the United Church.

c) **Change in property ownership:** Before an amalgamation, the trustees of a congregation hold all property for that congregation. After an amalgamation, the trustees

- i) hold the surplus property for the United Church, to be used as the regional council decides; and
- ii) hold all other property for the new amalgamated congregation.

This change is automatic when the amalgamation takes place.

**G.1.4.6 Amalgamations Involving More Than One Regional Council**

If the amalgamation involves congregations that are within the bounds of more than one regional council, the regional councils involved must

- a) each approve the amalgamation as a change in the covenantal relationship between that regional council and the applicable congregation;
- b) agree on any conditions to be included; and
- c) get the approval of the General Council. The General Council may make adjustments to the boundaries of the regional councils involved as a result of the amalgamation.

**G.1.4.7 Congregation Continues to Exist**

A congregation's life does not end when it amalgamates with another congregation. Rather, the congregation continues to exist in ministry as the new amalgamated congregation.

**G.1.4.8 Gifts and Bequests**

This section (G.1.4.8) applies to gifts made to a congregation that has amalgamated, whether the gifts are made before or after the amalgamation. "Gifts" include bequests made in a person's will.

The gift automatically goes to the new amalgamated congregation, even if the gift document refers to the congregation by its former (pre-amalgamation) name.

*There are resources about amalgamations to assist congregations and regional councils. See the Congregational Board of Trustees Handbook available from the [General Council Office](#).*



**G.1.5 Ending**

A congregation ceases to exist when the regional council makes a decision to disband it as a recognized community of faith.

The process for disbanding is set out below. The congregation and regional council are each responsible for the steps assigned to them.

**G.1.5.1 Decision by Congregation**

The congregation decides to end its ministry as a community of faith. It asks the regional council to make a decision to disband it as a recognized community of faith.

**G.1.5.2 Decision by Regional Council**

The regional council makes a decision on whether to approve the disbanding of the congregation as a recognized community of faith.

In extraordinary circumstances, the regional council may also decide to disband the congregation as a recognized community of faith on its own initiative, without a decision by the congregation.

**G.1.5.3 Effective Date**

When the regional council makes a decision to approve the disbanding of the congregation as a recognized community of faith, it may specify a future date that

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the disbanding will come into effect. If not, the disbanding comes into effect on the date that the regional council makes the decision.

*The regional council makes the decision to disband the congregation as a recognized community of faith when it passes a motion approving the disbanding.*



The disbanding of the community of faith ends the covenantal relationship between the congregation and the regional council.

### **G.1.5.4 Property**

*Section G.1.5.4 applies before the disbanding comes into effect. It applies if the regional council has not yet made the decision to approve the disbanding or if the regional council has made the decision and specified a future effective date for the disbanding of the congregation.*



The congregation makes a proposal to the regional council for dealing with the congregation's property, which must be used for the mission of the congregation or the wider United Church. The regional council makes a decision on the proposal. Both must follow the requirements for dealing with congregational property.

*The regional council may decide to approve the congregation's proposal as presented, it may approve the proposal with changes, or it may decide to deal with the congregation's property in some other way than as set out in the proposal.*



*The requirements for dealing with congregational property are set out in section G.2 below.*



### **G.1.5.5 Transfer of Members**

The congregation helps its members to transfer to other congregations as they choose.

*The faith life of the people in the congregation continues after the disbanding through other congregations or communities of faith or in other ways.*



### **G.1.5.6 Records**

The congregation gives its records to the appropriate archives.

### **G.1.5.7 Remaining Property**

*Section G.1.5.7 applies after the disbanding comes into effect. See section G.1.5.3 above.*



If there is any remaining congregational property after the disbanding is effective, the regional council is responsible for this remaining property. It is up to the regional council to decide how to use that property for the benefit of the United Church.

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The General Council may not change the regional council's responsibility for remaining property without the regional council's approval.

*There are resources about disbanding to assist congregations and regional councils. See the Congregational Board of Trustees Handbook available from the [General Council Office](#).*



## G.2 Property

### G.2.1 Congregational Property—Meaning of Terms

The following are the meanings of terms used in this section (G.2).

#### G.2.1.1 “Congregational Property”

The term “congregational property” means any kind of property that a congregation might own. It includes

- a) land;
- b) buildings;
- c) any other land rights;
- d) money;
- e) investments;
- f) furniture; and
- g) equipment.

#### G.2.1.2 “Other Major Assets”

*There are two processes for sales and other transactions involving congregational property. One process applies to land, buildings, other land rights, and “other major assets.” The other process applies to all other congregational property. It is important to understand the meaning of “other major assets” so that the correct process is followed.*



Each regional council is responsible for deciding which congregational property is considered “other major assets” for that regional council.

The regional council must consider all congregational property that is not land, buildings, or other land rights. This includes the kinds of property listed in paragraphs d) to g) of section G.2.1.1 above. The regional council may decide that some or all of this congregational property is “other major assets.”

The regional council is responsible for informing the pastoral charges in the regional council about the meaning of “other major assets” in that regional council.

*The regional council may decide to define “other major assets” in any way that seems reasonable to it. For example, a regional council may set an amount and decide that all property worth more than that amount is considered “other major assets.”*



#### G.2.1.3 “Major Renovations”

Each regional council is responsible for

- a) deciding on the meaning of “major renovations” for that regional council; and

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- b) informing the pastoral charges within the bounds of the regional council of the meaning of “major renovations.”

*The regional council may decide to define “major renovations” in any way that seems reasonable to it. For example, a regional council may base the definition on the cost of the renovations so that all renovations costing more than some particular amount are considered “major renovations.”*



### G.2.2 Rules for Property Ownership

#### G.2.2.1 General Rule

All congregational property is held by the congregation’s trustees. This includes land, buildings, funds and investments, and any other kind of property.

The trustees hold the congregational property for the congregation as part of the United Church. They must comply with the United Church’s requirements for trustees and congregational property.

*There is a resource for congregations that sets out the United Church requirements for trustees and congregational property in more detail. It also contains information on best practices for trustees. See the [Congregational Board of Trustees Handbook](#) available from the [General Council Office](#).*



*Resources for congregational property may also be available from the regional council offices.*



There are three exceptions to this general rule.

#### G.2.2.2 Exception: Former Presbyterian and Congregationalist Congregations

This exception applies to congregations that existed before church union in 1925 if they were

- a) Presbyterian congregations in Alberta or Saskatchewan; or
- b) Congregationalist congregations anywhere in Canada.

It applies to property that was owned by those congregations before church union if they still own it.

The United Church’s requirements for congregational property do not automatically apply to that property. The requirements apply only if the congregation decides that they will.

*The congregation makes a decision by passing a motion at a congregational meeting.*



#### G.2.2.3 Exception: Property of Congregations Entering the United Church after Church Union

This exception applies where an existing congregation enters the United Church any time after church union in 1925.

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The United Church's requirements for congregational property do not automatically apply to the property of that congregation. The requirements apply only if the congregation decides that they will.

*The congregation makes a decision by passing a motion at a congregational meeting.*



### **G.2.2.4 Exception: Property for Special Use**

This exception applies where a trust that was set up for a congregation before church union still exists.

The property in the trust may be held, used, and administered in the same way as it was before church union.

The requirements in these bylaws do not apply to the property in the trust.

The General Council may not make policy that affects how this property may be held, used, or administered.

### **G.2.3 Congregational Property Transactions**

#### **G.2.3.1 Types of Transactions**

This section (G.2.3) applies to all transactions involving congregational property. These transactions include

- a) sales;
- b) purchases;
- c) mortgages;
- d) any other borrowing secured by congregational property;
- e) leases;
- f) major renovations;
- g) demolition; and
- h) construction of a new building.

#### **G.2.3.2 Requirements for Transactions—Land, Buildings, Other Land Rights, and “Other Major Assets”**

This section applies to transactions involving land, buildings, other land rights, or “other major assets.”

The process for a transaction is set out in paragraphs a.–g. below.

The trustees, the governing body of the congregation or pastoral charge, and the regional council are each responsible for completing the steps of the process assigned to them.

The congregation's governing body or regional council may have additional steps in the process to be followed under their organizational structures.

- a) **Governing body decision:** The governing body decides to enter into a congregational property transaction.
- b) **Consultation with regional council:** The governing body consults with the regional council on how the congregation or pastoral charge will use any

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proceeds it receives in the transaction. The governing body must ensure that the transaction costs and any trustee debt are paid out of the proceeds.

- c) **Governing body directs trustees:** The governing body directs the trustees to proceed with the transaction and seek regional council approval.
- d) **Trustee decision:** The trustees hold a special meeting. They follow the direction of the governing body and decide to proceed with the transaction and seek regional council approval.
- e) **Request for regional council approval:** The trustees ask the regional council to approve the transaction. They give the regional council all the information and documentation about the transaction that the regional council requires to make a decision. This includes full details of
  - i) the terms of the transaction;
  - ii) the proposed source of any funds the congregation or pastoral charge requires for the transaction; and
  - iii) the proposed use of the proceeds that the congregation or pastoral charge will receive in the transaction.

*See Regional Council C.2.6 for more information on the regional council's responsibility for congregational property.*



- f) **Consultation for new buildings:** If the transaction is to construct a new church building or manse, other communities of faith may be affected. The regional council must consult with them and consider their opinions before making a decision on the transaction.
- g) **Regional council decision:** The regional council makes a decision whether to approve:
  - i) the transaction;
  - ii) the use of any proceeds received by the congregation or pastoral charge in the transaction.

### **G.2.3.3 Requirements for Transactions—Congregational Property That Is Not Land, Buildings, Other Land Rights, or “Other Major Assets”**

This section applies to transactions involving congregational property other than land, buildings, other land rights, and “other major assets.”

The process for a transaction is set out below:

- a) the governing body is responsible for making a decision to enter a congregational property transaction;
- b) the governing body is responsible for directing the trustees to proceed with the transaction;
- c) the trustees are responsible for following the direction of the governing body and proceeding with the transaction; and
- d) regional council approval is not required.

There may be additional steps to follow under the organizational structure of the congregation's governing body.

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*The rules above in section G.2.3.3 do not apply to the investment decisions of trustees with respect to their investment of publicly traded securities.*



### G.3 Trustees

*This section (G.3) is based on the Model Trust Deed. That document was part of The United Church of Canada Act and may only be changed through legislation. Section G.3 is intended to be a faithful interpretation of the Model Trust Deed. If there is any discrepancy between this section and the Model Trust Deed, the Model Trust Deed prevails. It is attached as an [Appendix](#) to The Manual.*



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*There is a resource for congregations that sets out the United Church requirements for trustees and congregational property in more detail. It also contains information on best practices for trustees. See the [Congregational Board of Trustees Handbook](#) available from the [General Council Office](#).*



#### G.3.1 General

The congregation is responsible for having a board of trustees for the congregation.

#### G.3.2 Multi-point Pastoral Charges

A pastoral charge with two or more congregations may, in addition to the board of trustees for each congregation, have a board of trustees for the pastoral charge.

The same requirements apply to both types of boards of trustees, with one change. For a pastoral charge board of trustees, the pastoral charge fulfills the responsibilities given to the congregation below.

#### G.3.3 Membership

##### G.3.3.1 Appointing Trustees

The congregation is responsible for appointing the trustees at a congregational meeting.

*There are specific notice requirements for a congregational meeting to appoint trustees. See [Community of Faith B.5.4.2 b](#).*



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##### G.3.3.2 Eligibility

A majority of the trustees must be members of the United Church.

*Under secular law, a person must be of the legal age of majority in their province in order to serve as a trustee.*



##### G.3.3.3 Automatic Trustee Membership

One of the following people is automatically a trustee because of their position:

- a) the member (or one of the members) of the order of ministry who has been called or appointed to the pastoral charge;

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- b) the designated lay minister who has been recognized by the regional council and appointed to the pastoral charge; or
- c) the pastoral charge supervisor.

### G.3.3.4 Number

The congregation is responsible for deciding on the number of its trustees. There must be a minimum of three and a maximum of 15, including the one person who is automatically a trustee.

- a. **Vacancies:** The trustees may continue to act even if there are vacancies, as long as there are at least three trustees.
- b. **More than 15 trustees:** If there are more than 15 trustees, the trustees may continue to act. But no vacancies may be filled until the number of trustees is reduced below 15.
- c. **Fewer than three trustees:** This section (G.3.3.4 c) applies if there are only one or two trustees remaining for any reason.
  - iii) The chair or secretary or one of the equivalent officers of the regional council automatically becomes a trustee and continues to serve along with the remaining trustees until the full number of trustees has been appointed.
  - iv) The regional council may give notice to the congregation requiring it to appoint the full number of trustees.
  - v) The person presiding at public worship reads the notice to the congregation on two consecutive Sundays.
  - vi) The congregation has four weeks after the second Sunday to appoint new trustees. If the congregation does not appoint them, the regional council may.
  - vii) The new trustees take office when the regional council gives notice of their appointment to the congregation during public worship.

### G.3.3.5 Term

The congregation is responsible for setting a trustee's term of office.

### G.3.3.6 Ceasing to Be a Trustee

The congregation may decide that a person is no longer a trustee even if their term of office has not ended.

- a. **How the congregation makes the decision:** The decision is made at a congregational meeting and requires 2/3 of the members present to vote in favour of it.

*There are specific notice requirements for a congregational meeting to consider accepting a trustee's resignation or remove a trustee. See Community of Faith B.5.3.3 b, B.5.3.3 c and B.5.4.2 b*



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- b. **Reasons for the congregation's decision:** The congregation may decide that a person is no longer a trustee when the person resigns, moves away, leaves the United Church, or does not attend trustee meetings for at least a year, or for any other reason that the congregation considers appropriate.

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- c. **Trustee's personal responsibility:** There may be cases where a trustee is personally responsible for the debt of a congregation.

In this situation, the congregation may only decide that the person is no longer a trustee if there are arrangements in place to protect the person from this personal responsibility.

*In a situation involving a trustee's personal responsibility, the trustees must be given notice of the congregational meeting as set out in Community of Faith B.5.4.2 b*



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### G.3.4 Responsibilities

#### G.3.4.1 Holding Congregational Property

The trustees are responsible for holding all congregational property for the congregation as part of the United Church. There are three exceptions to this general rule. They are set out in sections G.2.2.2, G.2.2.3, and G.2.2.4 above.

The trustees must give the same care and attention to congregational property as a reasonable person would give to their own property.

#### G.3.4.2 Compliance with Decisions and Other Requirements

The trustees must comply with

- a) all decisions about congregational property that are made by the governing body and the regional council; and
- b) all other United Church requirements for trustees and congregational property.

*There is a resource available for trustees. It sets out the United Church requirements for trustees and congregational property in more detail, and contains information on best practices for trustees. See the [Congregational Board of Trustees Handbook](#) available from the [General Council Office](#).*



#### G.3.4.3 Books and Records

The trustees are responsible for

- a) keeping records of all funds that are received and disbursed by them;
- b) keeping records of all their meetings, which clearly indicate any decisions made at those meetings; and
- c) making those records available upon request to any of the following:
  - i) a representative named by the governing body;
  - ii) the member of the order of ministry who has been called or appointed to the pastoral charge;
  - iii) the designated lay minister who has been recognized by the regional council and appointed to the pastoral charge; or
  - iv) the pastoral charge supervisor.

#### G.3.4.4 Trustees Not Liable

A trustee is not personally responsible for any loss or damage to any congregational property.

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There is an exception. A trustee is liable for loss or damage if

- a) it was caused by the trustee's own action;
- b) the trustee's action was intentional or negligent; and
- c) the trustee was not meeting the requirements of the United Church or of secular law for trustees.

The word "action" here includes an "omission," where a trustee does not take a particular action, either intentionally or unintentionally.

### **G.3.5 Organization**

Any of the following may decide to be the chair of the board of trustees:

- a) the member of the order of ministry who has been called or appointed to the pastoral charge;
- b) the designated lay minister who has been recognized by the regional council and appointed to the pastoral charge; or
- c) the pastoral charge supervisor.

If the person decides not to be the chair, they may appoint another trustee as deputy chair. If the chair and the deputy chair are both unavailable for a meeting, the trustees at the meeting may elect a chair.

### **G.3.6 Meetings**

#### **G.3.6.1 Calling Meetings**

All meetings of the trustees must be called by one of the following:

- a) a member of the order of ministry called or appointed to the pastoral charge;
- b) a designated lay minister recognized by the regional council and appointed to the pastoral charge;
- c) the pastoral charge supervisor; or
- d) two or more of the trustees.

#### **G.3.6.2 Notice of Meeting**

The person calling the meeting is responsible for giving advance notice of the meeting.

For regular trustee meetings, notice may be given by announcement at a public worship service.

For special trustee meetings, the notice must

- a) be in writing;
- b) specify the date, time, place, and purpose of the meeting; and
- c) be mailed or delivered to each trustee at their home or work address. If a trustee does not receive notice of the meeting because the person calling the meeting did not know the trustee's current home or work address, any decisions made at the meeting will still be valid.

#### **G.3.6.3 Advance Notice**

The advance notice for meetings must be at least

- a) one day before the meeting for regular trustee meetings; and

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- b) seven days before the meeting if the meeting's purpose is to consider a sale, mortgage, building alterations, or other congregational property transaction or any legal action involving the trustees.

### **G.3.6.4 Minimum Number of Trustees Present**

A meeting of the trustees may take place only if a minimum number of trustees is present, as follows:

- a) For boards of trustees with 10 or more members, at least five members must be present.
- b) For boards of trustees with nine or fewer members, a majority of the trustees must be present.

### **G.3.6.5 Voting**

The trustees make all decisions by the majority vote of the trustees present at a meeting. The chair votes only if there is a tie in the voting.

## **G.4 Finance**

### **G.4.1 Annual Budget**

#### **G.4.1.1 Responsibility for Budget**

The congregation or pastoral charge is responsible for having an annual budget.

#### **G.4.1.2 Preparation of Draft Budget**

The governing body is responsible for preparing a draft budget for the congregation or pastoral charge for the coming year. The draft budget must include a full statement for the coming year of estimates of the following:

- a) receipts and expenses;
- b) assets and liabilities;
- c) current receipts and current expenses; and
- d) capital expenses.

The governing body presents the draft budget to the congregation or pastoral charge at the congregation or pastoral charge's annual meeting.

#### **G.4.1.3 Action by Congregation or Pastoral Charge**

The congregation or pastoral charge must consider the draft budget and make a decision

- a) to approve the budget without any changes;
- b) to make changes to the budget and approve the budget with those changes;
- c) to refer the budget to the governing body to make changes for the congregation or pastoral charge to consider at another meeting; or
- d) to take other action that would help the congregation or pastoral charge to approve an annual budget.

#### **G.4.1.4 Changes to Approved Budget**

The governing body may make changes to the approved budget if it believes the changes are not major. The approval of the congregation or pastoral charge is not required.

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If the governing body believes the proposed changes are major, the approval of the congregation or pastoral charge is required. The governing body must present the proposed changes to the congregation or pastoral charge for consideration at a congregational meeting. The notice of the meeting must indicate the purpose of the meeting.

### **G.4.2 Governing Body's Ongoing Responsibilities**

#### **G.4.2.1 Treasurers**

The governing body is responsible for electing

- a) a treasurer for the congregation or pastoral charge. This person must be a member of the governing body; and
- b) a treasurer for the Mission & Service fund and other funds for the mission of the wider church.

The same person may serve as treasurer of both.

#### **G.4.2.2 General Oversight**

The governing body is responsible for

- a) overseeing fundraising for the ministry of the congregation or pastoral charge and of the wider United Church;
- b) ensuring that funds received for the ministry of the congregation or pastoral charge are disbursed as set out in the approved budget;

*There is an order of priority that must be followed when funds are being disbursed. See section G.4.2.4 below.*



- c) presenting independently reviewed financial statements to the congregation or pastoral charge at the annual meeting for
  - i) the receipts and expenses of the congregation or pastoral charge;
  - ii) the receipts and expenses of the trustees of the congregation or pastoral charge; and
  - iii) the receipts and payments of money given to the Mission & Service fund; and
- d) overseeing the financial situation of the congregation or pastoral charge between its annual meetings.

*The term "independent review" is explained in section G.4.4 below.*



#### **G.4.2.3 Loans and Investments**

The governing body is responsible for

- a) deciding whether the congregation or pastoral charge needs to borrow money at any time;
- b) deciding on the terms of any loan;
- c) directing the trustees to enter into any loan transaction;
- d) deciding on the investment of funds belonging to the congregation or pastoral charge; and

- e) directing the trustees on the investment of any of these funds.

*Loans and investments may require the regional council's approval. The requirements are set out in sections G.2.3.2 and G.2.3.3 above.*



#### **G.4.2.4 Disbursement of Funds—Order of Priority**

The governing body is responsible for ensuring all funds received for the ministry of the congregation or pastoral charge are disbursed in the following order of priority:

- a) the remuneration of the ministry personnel serving the pastoral charge;
- b) the assessments payable to the United Church pension fund and the group insurance plan;
- c) the salaries of other staff of the congregation or pastoral charge;
- d) the assessment for the costs of governance and support services for the denomination; and
- e) other capital and current expenses of the congregation or pastoral charge.

#### **G.4.3 Treasurers' Responsibilities**

*There is a resource available for treasurers. It sets out the United Church requirements for treasurers and congregational finances in more detail, and contains information on best practices for treasurers. See the [Financial Handbook for Congregations](#) available from the [General Council Office](#).*



##### **G.4.3.1 Treasurer of Congregation or Pastoral Charge**

The treasurer of the congregation or pastoral charge has the following responsibilities:

- a) receiving all funds for the ministry of the congregation or pastoral charge from offerings and other sources;
- b) disbursing these funds under the direction of the governing body;
- c) keeping records of all receipts and disbursements; and
- d) reporting on the funds as required by the governing body or committee responsible.

##### **G.4.3.2 Treasurer for Mission & Service Fund**

The treasurer for the Mission & Service fund is responsible for

- a) receiving all funds given for the Mission & Service fund and other funds for mission of the wider United Church;
- b) keeping a record of the funds given by each donor in an account separate from the other funds of the congregation or pastoral charge;
- c) sending the funds to the appropriate General Council working unit monthly; and
- d) reporting on the funds as required by the governing body or committee responsible.

#### **G.4.4 Independent Reviews**

##### **G.4.4.1 Meaning of an “Independent Review”**

An independent review is an examination of financial records following the procedures set out in section G.4.4.4 below.

##### **G.4.4.2 Purpose**

The purpose of an independent review is to

- a) determine the accuracy of financial statements;
- b) determine whether financial transactions have been recorded properly; and
- c) identify potential weaknesses in the accounting systems.

##### **G.4.4.3 Who May Perform the Independent Review**

The person performing the independent review must be

- a) a public accountant; or
- b) a person familiar with bookkeeping who understands the purpose of an independent examination of financial records.

*It is not necessary for the person performing the independent review to be a member or adherent of the congregation.*



##### **G.4.4.4 Procedures for an Independent Review**

The person independently reviewing a report or financial statement is responsible for

- a) ensuring that at least two unrelated people are responsible for signing all cheques and transaction documents;
- b) examining the records of meetings of the governing body;
- c) examining the books that record cash receipts, cash disbursements, payroll, and general ledger transactions for accuracy;
- d) ensuring that all transactions were authorized properly;
- e) reviewing bank reconciliations for the year;
- f) ensuring that all funds given for the Mission & Service fund have been sent to the appropriate General Council working unit monthly;
- g) reviewing the procedures used for keeping records to ensure that the chance of error or fraud is minimized;
- h) ensuring that cash receipts match the charitable donation receipts that have been issued; and
- i) ensuring that the annual information return was completed and submitted to governmental authorities within six months after the end of the previous financial year.

#### **G.4.5 Stewardship—Engaging the Congregation**

The congregation or pastoral charge is responsible for ensuring that it has a structure or process in place to do the following work:

- a) educating the congregation or pastoral charge on the mission of the United Church, both locally and in the wider church;

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- b) educating the congregation or pastoral charge on the funds needed for this mission and how they will be used;
- c) encouraging commitment and participation from the congregation or pastoral charge in this mission; and
- d) reviewing regularly the balance of funds given for local purposes and funds given for the Mission & Service fund or other wider church purposes.

## H. ENTERING MINISTRY

### H.1 Forms of Paid Accountable Ministry in the United Church

All ministers, members, and adherents in the United Church are engaged in ministry.

The term “paid accountable ministry” refers to the work of a minister who

- a) is a member of the order of ministry or a designated lay minister;
- b) is accountable to the Office of Vocation; and
- c) receives remuneration from a community of faith, regional council, General Council, Office of Vocation, or other ministry recognized by a regional council.

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#### H.1.1 Order of Ministry

A member of the United Church may be called to serve as a member of the order of ministry. The “order of ministry” in the United Church refers to diaconal ministers and ordained ministers.

##### H.1.1.1 Diaconal Ministry

A “diaconal minister” is commissioned to the diaconal ministry of education, service, and pastoral care.

##### H.1.1.2 Ordained Ministry

An “ordained minister” is ordained to the ministry of word, sacrament, and pastoral care.

#### H.1.2 Designated Lay Ministry

A layperson may serve in paid accountable ministry as a “designated lay minister.”

## H.2 Candidacy Pathway

### H.2.1 Preparation for Ministry Leadership

The Candidacy Pathway process set out in these bylaws applies to preparation for ministry leadership in diaconal, ordained, and designated lay ministry.

*This period of preparation is called “candidacy.”*



### H.2.2 Seven Phases

For people whom God calls to and endows for the order of ministry and designated lay ministry, offering leadership in Christ’s diverse ministries contributing to God’s mission in creation, the church will engage a seven-phase Candidacy Pathway based on the principles set out in section H.3 and the required markers set out in section H.4 below.

### H.2.3 Individual Journey

Individuals will journey in similar but sometimes different ways toward ordination, commissioning, or recognition. The Candidacy Board will determine the process on a case-by-case basis with each individual, ensuring that the principles and requirements of the seven phases and the required markers are applied in each case.

*The Candidacy Board is a commission of the Board of Vocation.  
See Office of Vocation E.3.3.*



## H.3 Principles of the Seven Phases

### H.3.1 Underlying Basis

The basis underlying the Candidacy Pathway is the integration of the seven phases to guide the process that prepares individuals for ministry leadership. The seven phases are intentionally not sequential.

### H.3.2 Call Forth

1. The United Church affirms that God's call is heard within a variety of communities of faith and ministry settings and is directed to and heard by people of all ages, gender identities, sexual orientations, and cultural backgrounds. God calls people to diverse ministries in the church and in the world.
2. Ongoing discernment of God's call and one's faithful response to that call is vital to discipleship and to calling forth individuals for ministry leadership.
3. It is the responsibility of the whole church to engage a creative and invitational approach to calling forth leaders by encouraging people to open themselves to God's call and by naming and nurturing gifts for ministry leadership.

### H.3.3 Identify

1. Discernment is an intentional practice of attending to the Spirit's leading. Identifying God's hope for our lives involves a habit of ongoing discernment, which is woven throughout the various requirements of the Candidacy Pathway.
2. People who are active in communities of faith who experience God's call to ministry leadership may apply for identification as to promise and suitability for candidacy.
3. The church identifies the gifts, skills, and competencies that are required in ministry personnel for effectively leading the church today.

*"Ministry personnel" is a general term that refers to members of the order of ministry, designated lay ministers, candidates serving under appointment, admission ministers serving under appointment, diaconal supply, and ordained supply.*



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*See Pastoral Relations I.1.2 for more information on candidates serving under appointment, admission ministers serving under appointment, diaconal supply, and ordained supply.*



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4. The various requirements of the Candidacy Pathway include identifying an individual's giftedness and competence for ministry.
5. The Candidacy Board discerns and identifies promise and suitability for candidacy using a variety of tools.

### H.3.4 Accompany

1. Accompaniment is intended to encourage and nurture individuals who have been called forth for ministry leadership.
2. Candidates are responsible for demonstrating that they have the capacity to receive support for ministry leadership and are open to the wisdom of others.

*A "candidate" is a person who has been approved for candidacy by the Candidacy Board.*



3. The church accompanies applicants and candidates by providing support and guidance in a variety of ways that are woven throughout the Candidacy Pathway journey.

*An "applicant" is a person who has applied to the Office of Vocation to begin the process of preparing for ministry leadership in diaconal, ordained, or designated lay ministry but who has not yet been approved as a candidate.*



4. Candidacy Boards foster a supportive relationship with applicants and candidates throughout their journey to commissioning, ordination, or recognition. As much as possible, applicants and candidates meet with the same Candidacy Board for the duration of the process.

### H.3.5 Equip

1. Applicants and candidates are equipped to live out God's call to ministry leadership through ongoing formation, spiritual growth, and development.
2. There are two components to the education and other preparation for ministry:
  - a) Credentialing: acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for effective ministry leadership, and beginning the development of the "habits" or "arts" of ministry and that lead to credentialing; and
  - b) Competency: the development, through substantial experience in the field, of the "habits" or "arts" of ministry that leads to the deepening of competency for effective ministry leadership.
3. The United Church needs ministers who are trained for ministry in the United Church and who have knowledge and an appreciation of the United Church's polity, ethos, traditions, and theology.
4. The United Church relies on the theological schools related to the United Church to provide the training, knowledge, and appreciation required for ministry in the United Church.

*For more information on the requirements related to this phase, see section H.5 below.*



### H.3.6 Assess

1. The Candidacy Board assesses the promise, suitability, and readiness of applicants and candidates for designated lay, diaconal, and ordained ministry by following the required markers of the Candidacy Pathway.
2. The Learning Outcomes for Ministry Leadership and Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice form the basis for assessing promise, suitability, and readiness for ministry leadership.

*The Learning Outcomes for Ministry Leadership and Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice are each available from the [General Council Office](#).*



3. A collaborative working relationship is to be intentionally nurtured between Candidacy Boards and United Church theological schools in order to best support, equip, and assess those who are preparing for ministry leadership within the United Church.

### H.3.7 Authorize

The Candidacy Board authorizes candidates as ready for

- a) ministry leadership, including for
  - i) candidate supply appointments; and
  - ii) Supervised Ministry Education appointments ; and
- b) commissioning, ordination, or recognition.

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### H.3.8 Celebrate

1. The gift of leaders to strengthen the church's participation in God's mission is to be celebrated throughout the Candidacy Pathway process.
2. The Spirit's leading, individual growth, and the blessing of a new generation of ministry leadership is to be celebrated at all stages of the Candidacy Pathway.
3. The church celebrates the commissioning, ordination, or recognition of individuals who have accepted a call, appointment, or offer of employment as diaconal, ordained, or designated lay ministers.

## H.4 Markers to the Pathway

*There are additional markers and policies and procedures for all phases of the Candidacy Pathway process. See the resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



### H.4.1 Identification of Call

An individual who perceives that God is calling them to the vocation of ministry dedicates themselves to discerning the call personally and within the church.

### H.4.2 Application

When a person has discerned and identified that God is calling them to a particular stream of ministry, they submit an application to the Office of Vocation.

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The Office of Vocation, in consultation with the applicant, assigns the applicant to a Candidacy Board.

### H.4.3 Assessment by Candidacy Board

The applicant meets with the Candidacy Board for the assessment of the applicant's promise and suitability for candidacy.

### H.4.4 Additional Requirements for Candidacy

There are additional requirements for the applicant to be approved as a candidate. The applicant must

- a) have been actively involved in the United Church for the last 24 months;
- b) be a member of the United Church;
- c) have completed mandatory trainings; and

*For information on the training that is mandatory, see the Candidacy Pathway resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



- d) agree to become a member of the United Church pension plan and group insurance plan upon eligibility for enrolment.

*The Candidacy Board decides whether these requirements have been met based on confirmation provided by the applicant.*



### H.4.5 Approval and Celebration of Candidacy

The Candidacy Board makes a decision whether to approve the applicant's candidacy.

If approved, the appropriate regional council celebrates the applicant as a candidate.

### H.4.6 Ongoing Journey with the Candidacy Board

The Candidacy Board accompanies and assesses the candidate by receiving reports and conducting interviews throughout the candidacy process.

The applicant or candidate is responsible for demonstrating growth in relation to suitability and readiness for ministry leadership to the Candidacy Board throughout the candidacy process.

### H.4.7 Readiness for Commissioning, Ordination or Recognition

The Candidacy Board determines readiness for commissioning, ordination, or recognition.

As part of this determination, the Candidacy Board must satisfy itself that

- a) the candidate is in essential agreement with the statement of doctrine of the United Church;
- b) the candidate, as a member of the order of ministry or as a designated lay minister, will accept the statement of doctrine as being in substance agreeable to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures; and
- c) the candidate will comply with the polity of the United Church.

#### H.4.8 Celebration

The Office of Vocation determines the regional council that will celebrate the commissioning, ordination, or recognition of the candidate.

The regional council commissions, ordains, or recognizes at a celebration of ministries service based on

- a) receipt of the confirmation of readiness of the candidate from the Office of Vocation; and
- b) confirmation that a covenantal relationship is in place with a community of faith or offer of employment to a paid accountable/recognized ministry, as determined by the regional council.

*A candidate may pursue postgraduate studies following commissioning or ordination as an alternative to serving in a covenantal relationship. For the applicable policies and procedures, see the Candidacy Pathway resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



*See section H.6 below for information on the service of ordination, commissioning, recognition, and reception.*



### H.5 Formation for Ministry

#### H.5.1 Credentialing

*For more information on the requirements for credentialing, see the Candidacy Pathway resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



##### H.5.1.1 Credentialing through Program of Study

The General Council has set the program of study for candidates for designated lay ministry, diaconal ministry, and ordained ministry. It includes different options for a candidate's education.

A candidate is responsible for following and completing the program of study approved from time to time by the General Council or its executive.

*For the details of the program of study for candidates, see the Candidacy Pathway resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



##### H.5.1.2 Completion of Program of Study

A theological school related to the United Church provides a certificate or other form of assurance to confirm that a candidate has satisfactorily completed the program of study required for candidates. For diaconal ministry and ordained ministry, this is called the "testamur."

The theological school is responsible for reporting to the Candidacy Board on whether the candidate

- a) has completed the program of study required for candidates; and
- b) is recommended by the school for commissioning, ordination, or recognition to ministry in the United Church.

## H.5.2 Developing Competency

*For more information on the requirements for developing competencies, see the Candidacy Pathway resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



### H.5.2.1 Ordained Ministry and Designated Lay Ministry

Each candidate for ordained and designated lay ministry must satisfactorily complete a Supervised Ministry Education program that involves learning goals based on the Learning Outcomes for Ministry Leadership, reflection on the practice of ministry, and regular supervision and evaluation.

The Candidacy Board determines a candidate's readiness for Supervised Ministry Education.

The Candidacy Board determines completion of Supervised Ministry Education by assessing a candidate's competence for ministry leadership based on the Learning Outcomes for Ministry Leadership.

*The Learning Outcomes for Ministry Leadership are available from the [General Council Office](#).*



### H.5.2.2 Diaconal Ministry

Each candidate for diaconal ministry must satisfactorily complete field placements through their program of study.

The Candidacy Board reviews the evaluations from the field placements to assess a diaconal ministry candidate's competence for ministry leadership based on the Learning Outcomes for Ministry Leadership.

## H.6 Admission from Other Denominations

### H.6.1 Policy

The United Church recognizes that diaconal or ordained people who are admitted from other recognized global Christian traditions make a valuable contribution to the United Church's wide variety of ministries and missions.

(2022)

The United Church is committed to inclusiveness in its evolving mission in the Canadian context, including the full and equal participation in ministry of all persons, regardless of their race, gender, or sexual orientation. It is also committed to becoming a racially and culturally diverse intercultural denomination that meets the needs of all of its faith communities.

*The term "admission" means the action by which a regional council admits a member of the order of ministry of another denomination to the order of ministry of the United Church.*



### H.6.2 Readiness and Suitability for Admission

A minister from another denomination may be admitted to the order of ministry of the United Church if

- a) they have an understanding of the ethos, polity, and history of the United Church that they have acquired through education and/or orientation;
- b) they are in essential agreement with the doctrine of the United Church as stated in the Basis of Union; and
- c) they agree to comply with the polity of the United Church.

### H.6.3 Decisions

The Office of Vocation is responsible for

- a) deciding whether a minister from another denomination may enter the admission process;
- b) determining the minister's readiness for admission to the order of ministry of the United Church;
- c) authorizing the minister as ready for admission; and
- d) determining the regional council that celebrates the admission, and communicating this decision to the regional council.

### H.6.4 Celebration

The regional council admits the minister to the order of ministry of the United Church and receives the minister at a celebration of ministries service based on

- a) receipt of the confirmation of readiness of the minister for admission from the Office of Vocation;
- b) confirmation that a covenantal relationship is in place with a community of faith or offer of employment to a paid accountable/recognized ministry, as determined by the regional council.

*There are policies and procedures for the admission of ministers from other denominations. See the resource available from the [General Council Office](#).*



## H.7 Ordination, Commissioning, and Reception

### H.7.1 Service of Ordination, Commissioning, and Reception

The Basis of Union, 13.3, reads as follows:

The service to ordain, commission, or receive persons to the Order of Ministry shall be conducted by the regional council. Those presenting themselves shall, after hearing the following preamble, answer the questions which follow:

“Jesus Christ came into the world to be the servant of God and all people. As servant Lord, Jesus calls his Church to a ministry of worship, witness, and reconciliation. In baptism we were received as members of his Church and at confirmation we committed ourselves to its ministry. In order that this ministry of the whole Church may be fulfilled, God has given the ordained ministry of Word, Sacrament, and Pastoral Care, and the diaconal ministry of

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Education, Service, and Pastoral Care. It is the responsibility of the Church to seek, train, and set apart those whom God calls so to serve.

1. *(to each Candidate)* Do you believe in God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and do you commit yourself anew to God?
2. *(to each Candidate being ordained)* Do you believe that God is calling you to the ordained ministry of Word, Sacrament, and Pastoral Care, and do you accept this call?  
*(to each Candidate being commissioned)* Do you believe that God is calling you to the diaconal ministry of Education, Service, and Pastoral Care, and do you accept this call?
3. *(to each Candidate)* 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?"

*The regional council may adapt the above questions for the recognition of candidates for designated lay ministry. For example: "Do you believe that God has called you to accountable ministry as a Designated Lay Minister and do you accept this call?" For more information, contact the Office of Vocation.*



## H.8 Readmission to the Order of Ministry

### H.8.1 Policy

A person whose name has been placed on the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary) or the Discontinued Service List (Voluntary) may apply to the Office of Vocation for readmission to the order of ministry.

### H.8.2 Requirements for Readmission

A person applying for readmission must reaffirm

- a) that they will comply with the polity of the United Church; and
- b) that they are in essential agreement with the statement of doctrine of the United Church.

### H.8.3 Decision

The Board of Vocation is responsible for deciding whether to readmit a person to the order of ministry.

### H.8.4 Subsequent Application If Readmission Is Not Approved

If the Office of Vocation does not approve the application for readmission, the applicant may not apply again for at least three years from the date of the Board of Vocation decision.

*There are policies and procedures for the readmission of ministers. They are available from the [General Council Office](#).*



## H.9 Ministry Partners

*“Ministry partner” is a minister of another denomination with which the United Church has a mutual recognition agreement.*



*“Mutual recognition agreement” is an agreement between the United Church and another denomination under which each denomination agrees to accept the credentials of the members of the order of ministry of the other denomination.*

### H.9.1 Eligibility for Call or Appointment

A ministry partner may be eligible for call or appointment in the United Church based on the terms set out in the applicable mutual recognition agreement.

### H.9.2 Authorization for Call or Appointment

The Office of Vocation is responsible for deciding whether to authorize a ministry partner as eligible for call or appointment.

The ministry partner must obtain this authorization before seeking a call or appointment.

### H.9.3 Equivalency of Membership and Responsibilities

A ministry partner, while under call or appointment, is equivalent to an ordered minister of the United Church with respect to membership and responsibilities in all councils of the church.

# I. PASTORAL RELATIONS

*This section has been organized under three general themes:*



1. *Connecting—policy that relates to establishing a pastoral relationship*
2. *Supporting—policy that relates to an ongoing pastoral relationship*
3. *Disengaging—policy that relates to the ending of a pastoral relationship or of a ministry personnel’s service in paid accountable ministry*

## I.1 Connecting

*“Ministry personnel” is a general term that refers to members of the order of ministry, designated lay ministers, candidates serving under appointment, admission ministers serving under appointment, diaconal supply, and ordained supply.*



*A “covenant” is between God, the ministry personnel, the community of faith or other ministry, and the wider United Church as represented by the regional council. The covenant may include other parties that are integral to living out the gospel in community as God calls us.*

*An “other ministry” may be the General Council, a regional council, or a ministry that is not accountable to the United Church.*

(2021)

*A covenant with a community of faith is established by call or appointment. It creates a pastoral relationship and is governed by the policies set out here in I. Pastoral Relations.*



*A covenant with another ministry is governed by the human resources policies of the other ministry.*

### I.1.1 Pastoral Relationship Policy

A pastoral relationship may be initiated by call or appointment.

There is no time limit on the pastoral relationship initiated by call.

A pastoral relationship initiated by appointment continues until the end of the appointment period specified by the regional council. It may be renewed or extended by the regional council.

### I.1.2 Eligibility for Call or Appointment

#### I.1.2.1 Community of Faith

A pastoral charge or other community of faith that has completed and filed a profile may issue a call or appointment.

In the case of a ministry shared among more than one community of faith, such decision is made by the participant communities of faith in the shared ministry,

(2023)

## Bylaws I. Pastoral Relations

acting for this purpose as a single community of faith, under the procedure approved by the applicable regional council.

*Under this section, each voting member of the participant communities of faith will have one vote toward the decision.*



*The requirements for completing and filing a community of faith profile are set out in the pastoral relations resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



### I.1.2.2 Members of the Order of Ministry

A member of the order of ministry who has completed and filed a ministry personnel profile may accept a call or appointment.

*The requirements for completing and filing a ministry personnel profile are set out in the pastoral relations resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



*See also section I.1.6 below.*



*A ministry partner may also be eligible for call or appointment in the United Church. See [Entering Ministry H.9](#).*



There is one exception: A retired member of the order of ministry is not eligible to accept a call unless the Office of Vocation returns them to active standing.

### I.1.2.3 Designated Lay Minister

A designated lay minister who has completed and filed a ministry personnel profile may accept an appointment.

*The requirements for completing and filing a ministry personnel profile are set out in the pastoral relations resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



*See also section I.1.6 below.*



### I.1.2.4 Admission Minister, Diaconal Supply and Ordained Supply

#### a) Definition:

1. An “admission minister” is a diaconal minister (or equivalent) of another denomination or an ordained minister of another denomination who is in the process of admission to the order of ministry of the United Church. (2021)
2. A “diaconal supply” is a diaconal minister (or equivalent) of another denomination whose credentials have been approved by the United Church and who is not in the process of admission to the order of ministry of the United Church. (2025)
3. An “ordained supply” is an ordained minister of another denomination whose credentials have been approved the United Church and who is not in the process of admission to the order of ministry of the United Church. (2025)

## Bylaws I. Pastoral Relations

- b) **Eligibility:** To be eligible for appointment as an admission minister, the minister must first complete certain steps in the process of admission to the order of ministry of the United Church. (2021)

*For policies and procedures for the admission of ministers from other denominations, see the resource available from the [General Council Office](#).*



*See also Entering Ministry H.8.*



- c) **Ethnocultural or linguistic specific congregation:** The regional council may appoint a diaconal supply or ordained supply to a community of faith that has been designated as an ethnocultural or linguistic specific community of faith by the appropriate General Council working unit. That minister does not have to be in the admission process. (2021)

*There are additional policies and procedures for appointing and reappointing an admission minister, diaconal supply or ordained supply. See the resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



(2021)

- d) A diaconal or ordained minister from another denomination, whose credentials have been approved by the United Church, may serve in an appointment to a United Church community of faith for a period of time not to exceed two years without prior approval of the Regional Council, without being required to enter the admission process. (2025)

### I.1.2.5 Staff Appointments

- a) **Who may appoint:** A member of the order of ministry may be appointed to a staff position by a regional council, the General Council, or a ministry that is not accountable to the United Church.
- b) **Consultation:** If the appointing body is a regional council or the General Council, it must consult with the Office of Vocation before making the appointment. A member of the order of ministry must consult with the Office of Vocation before accepting an appointment to a staff position by a ministry that is not accountable to the United Church.

There are additional policies and procedures that pertain to ministry personnel in the staff system. Please see Human Resources Policy Portal and the Pastoral Relations: Ministry Personnel Handbook.



(2025)

### I.1.2.6 Ecumenical Shared Ministries

A member of the order of ministry may be appointed to an ecumenical shared ministry following the same policies and procedures as for appointment to a community of faith of the United Church.

## I.1.3 Ministry Positions

### I.1.3.1 Creation of New Position

A community of faith may create a full- or part-time ministry position accountable to the regional council. It must first prepare and file an updated community of faith profile with the regional council.

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*There are policies and procedures for the preparation and content of the community of faith profile. See the pastoral relations resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



*See also section I.1.6.*



The position must be approved by the regional council.

### **I.1.3.2 Regional Council's Responsibilities for New Position**

The regional council is responsible for

- a) ensuring the community of faith has filed an updated community of faith profile with it;
- b) ensuring the position description is adequate, and meets the United Church's standards for a minimum number of hours, salary, allowances, and benefits; and
- c) setting the minimum qualifications required to fill the position.

*The regional council may also designate the position as accountable to the governing body of the community of faith rather than to the regional council. See section I.1.11.2 below.*



### **I.1.3.3 Multiple Staff**

The following requirements apply to a community of faith with two or more ministry personnel. The division of responsibilities between the ministry personnel and the accountability of each ministry personnel must be

- a) clarified by the community of faith governing body and the ministry personnel;
- b) approved by the regional council; and
- c) reviewed by the community of faith at least annually.

## **I.1.4 Profiles**

### **I.1.4.1 Community of Faith Profile**

The community of faith is responsible for preparing and regularly updating a community of faith profile and filing the profile with the regional council.

The regional council is responsible for reviewing the community of faith profile and ensuring that it meets the requirements of the applicable policies and procedures.

*There are policies and procedures for the preparation and content of the community of faith profile. See the pastoral relations resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



### **I.1.4.2 Specific Requirements**

The community of faith must prepare and file an updated community of faith profile before

- a) requesting that the regional council approve a new ministry position for the community of faith;
- b) searching to fill the position;

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- c) initiating a change to the terms of the call or appointment without the agreement of the ministry personnel; or
- d) initiating the ending of the pastoral relationship.

### **I.1.4.3 Ministry Personnel Profile**

Each ministry personnel is responsible for preparing a ministry personnel profile and filing the profile with the appropriate working unit of the General Council whenever they are in search of a new pastoral relationship.

*There are policies and procedures for the preparation and content of the community of faith profile. See the pastoral relations resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



*These profiles are used with a denominational search tool for matching communities of faith and ministry personnel who are seeking a new pastoral relationship.*



### **I.1.5 Appointment of Regional Council Liaison Officer**

*For more information on the appointment and role of the regional council liaison officer, see the pastoral relations resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



#### **I.1.5.1 Notice by Community of Faith**

The community of faith is responsible for giving notice to the regional council whenever it is considering

- a) the creation of a new ministry position;
- b) the filling of a ministry position;
- c) initiating a change to the terms of a call or appointment; or
- d) initiating the ending of the pastoral relationship.

#### **I.1.5.2 Notice by Ministry Personnel**

The ministry personnel is responsible for giving notice to the regional council whenever they are considering

- a) initiating a change to the terms of a call or appointment; or
- b) initiating the ending of the pastoral relationship.

#### **I.1.5.3 Appointment**

Upon receipt of notice under section I.1.5.1 or I.1.5.2 above, the regional council appoints a liaison officer for the community of faith to serve as a representative of the regional council and a resource for pastoral relations processes.

After the notice has been given, no further action may be taken by the community of faith under section I.1.5.1 or ministry personnel under section 1.5.2 before the appointment of the liaison officer.

## I.1.6 Search and Selection

### I.1.6.1 Search Process

A search process must be used when the community of faith seeks to call a member of the order of ministry or appoint a designated lay minister to fill a position that has been approved by the regional council.

### I.1.6.2 Search Committee

The search is conducted by a Search Committee appointed by the governing body of the community of faith.

*Depending on the size and context of community of faith, the governing body or entire community of faith may fulfill the role of the search committee.*



*There are additional policies and procedures for searches. See the pastoral relations resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



### I.1.6.3 Process

The Search Committee conducts the search using the denominational search tool for matching communities of faith with ministry personnel. The committee's work is confidential.

### I.1.6.4 Recommendation for Call or Appointment

This section (I.1.6.4) applies when a community of faith is calling a member of the order of ministry or appointing a designated lay minister to fill a ministry position that has been approved by the regional council.

The Search Committee is responsible for recommending a member of the order of ministry for the call or designated lay minister for the appointment to the community of faith.

It may recommend only one ministry personnel for each position at any one time.

## I.1.7 Approval of New Pastoral Relationship

### I.1.7.1 Community of Faith Approval

The community of faith is responsible for making a decision on the Search Committee's recommendation to call a member of the order of ministry or request that the regional council appoint a designated lay minister to the community of faith.

In the case of a ministry shared among more than one community of faith, such decision is made by the participant communities of faith in the shared ministry, acting for this purpose as a single community of faith, under the procedure approved by the applicable regional council. (2023)

*Under this section, each voting member of the participant communities of faith will have one vote toward the decision.* (2023)

*This decision is made by the community of faith, not by its governing body.*



**I.1.7.2 Regional Council Approval**

The regional council is responsible for deciding whether

- a) to approve a call offered by a community of faith; or
- b) to appoint a designated lay minister to the community of faith.

**I.1.7.3. Term and Renewal of Appointments**

For the appointment of a ministry personnel to a community of faith, the regional council

- a) must specify the term of the appointment; and
- b) may also renew the appointment on the request of the community of faith.

**I.1.8 Supply Appointments**

**I.1.8.1 Circumstances**

The regional council is responsible for appointing a ministry personnel to a community of faith to meet supply needs

- a) until a ministry position can be filled; or
- b) during the temporary absence of a minister called or appointed to the community of faith.

*The regional council appoints a ministry personnel under paragraph b) above where the minister will be absent for a period of months on a leave under section I.2.3.*



**I.1.8.2 Term and Renewal of Appointments**

For a supply appointment of ministry personnel to a community of faith, the regional council

- a) must specify the term of the appointment; and
- b) may also renew the appointment on the request of the governing body of the community of faith.

**I.1.9 Covenanting**

For each new pastoral relationship among a ministry personnel, the regional council, and a community of faith that is initiated by call or by an appointment lasting at least six months, the regional council is responsible for providing an act of covenant.

The act of covenant may include other parties that are integral to living out the gospel in community in response to God's calls, as named by the regional council, ministry personnel, and community of faith. The act of covenant must include any other ministry personnel and staff in the community of faith.

### I.1.10 Intentional Interim Ministry

*In the life and work of the pastoral charge, the time between ministers often provides a critical opportunity for reassessment and growth. For most pastoral charges, this time of transition can be both exciting and challenging. For some, it may be a time of distress or conflict. The pastoral charge may need the leadership of ministry personnel with special skills to help it deal with the past, continue in the present, and prepare for effective ministry in the future.*



#### I.1.10.1 Meaning

The purpose of “interim ministry” is to work toward specific goals decided on by the community of faith and regional council. An interim ministry is a time-limited ministry in a community of faith.

An “intentional interim minister” is a member of the order of ministry or designated lay minister who has been designated by the Office of Vocation to serve in interim ministry.

#### I.1.10.2 Designation as Intentional Interim Minister

The Office of Vocation may designate a member of the order of ministry or a designated lay minister as an intentional interim minister.

The Office of Vocation must be satisfied that the person

- a) has suitable skills and disposition for interim ministry; and
- b) has, or is taking, appropriate training and education for interim ministry.

The designation is valid for the duration of the initial appointment of the intentional interim minister.

*There are procedures for the designation of intentional interim ministers. See the interim ministry resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



#### I.1.10.3 Terms of Interim Ministry

The regional council may approve a community of faith for interim ministry on the community of faith’s request, or in any case where the regional council decides that interim ministry is appropriate.

The regional council and community of faith must decide on

- a) the needs and goals for the interim ministry;
- b) the terms of the appointment; and
- c) the processes for accountability of the interim ministry during the appointment.

#### I.1.10.4 Transition Team

The search for an intentional interim minister is conducted by a transition team. This team consists of

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- a) one or two representatives of the regional council, elected by the regional council; and
- b) four to six representatives of the community of faith, elected by the community of faith or its governing body. They must all be full members of the United Church and members of the community of faith.

### **I.1.10.5 Appointment**

The process for appointing an intentional interim minister to the pastoral charge is set out below. The transition team, community of faith governing body, and regional council are each responsible for completing the steps of the process assigned to them.

- a. **Recruitment:** The transition team recruits an intentional interim minister and recommends their appointment to the community of faith governing body.
- b. **Recommendation:** The community of faith governing body recommends an intentional interim minister for the interim ministry to the regional council.
- c. **Decision:** The regional council makes a decision whether to appoint the intentional interim minister to the community of faith.

### **I.1.10.6 Evaluation after Initial Appointment**

The Office of Vocation must evaluate the effectiveness of the intentional interim minister after the initial interim ministry appointment. The transition team submits evaluations of both the interim ministry and the intentional interim minister. If the Office of Vocation is satisfied that the person is effective as an intentional interim minister, the designation is continued. It is valid for as long as the intentional interim minister is in an interim ministry appointment and for five years thereafter. The Office of Vocation may remove the designation.

*There are additional procedures for interim ministry and the appointment and evaluation of an intentional interim minister. See the interim ministry resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



### **I.1.10.7 Serving Community of Faith after Interim Ministry**

The intentional interim minister may not serve the community of faith in any call or appointment immediately after their appointment as intentional interim minister ends.

## **I.1.11 Lay Ministry**

### **I.1.11.1 Categories of Lay Ministry**

This section deals with three of the ways in which a layperson may serve in ministry in the United Church:

- a) They may be employed as a “congregational designated minister” to fulfill a specific ministry function in a pastoral charge. See sections I.1.11.2 to I.1.11.4 below.
- b) They may be licensed to lead worship as a “licensed lay worship leader.” See section I.1.11.5 below.
- c) They may serve in paid accountable ministry through an appointment as a “designated lay minister.” See H. Entering Ministry for policies and procedures on becoming a designated lay minister and sections I.1.1 to I.1.9 above for policies and procedures for appointing a designated lay minister.

### **I.1.11.2 Ministry Positions Accountable to Governing Body**

This section applies when

- a) the pastoral charge or other community of faith is considering employing a person to fill a full- or part-time ministry position; and
- b) the pastoral charge or other community of faith believes the position should be accountable to the governing body rather than to the regional council.

The community of faith must give the position description to the regional council. The regional council is responsible for deciding whether to designate the position as accountable to the governing body.

### **I.1.11.3 Filling Positions Accountable to Governing Body**

A position that is accountable to the governing body may be filled by a congregational designated minister under section I.1.11.4 below.

The governing body is responsible for deciding on a search process to fill the position.

### **I.1.11.4 Employment of Congregational Designated Minister**

A community of faith may appoint a person as a congregational designated minister if the regional council has designated the ministry position as one that is accountable to the governing body of the community of faith. The following requirements apply:

- a) the person must be a baptized Christian, and if that person is the primary individual leading worship, the person must be a full member of the United Church;
- b) the person must agree to comply with the polity of the United Church;
- c) the appointment must be for a specified term, which may be renewed; and
- d) either there must also be a member of the order of ministry or a designated lay minister called or appointed to the community of faith, or the regional council must ensure there is adequate and appropriate support and oversight of the ministry.

(2022)

A congregational designated minister is accountable to the governing body except in matters of discipline. In matters of discipline, they are accountable to the regional council.

*There are additional policies and procedures for congregational designated ministers and their employment and accountability. See the [Congregational Designated Ministers resource available from the General Council Office](#).*



### **I.1.11.5 Licensed Lay Worship Leaders**

The regional council may license a person as a licensed lay worship leader. The following requirements apply:

- a) the person must be a member of a congregation in that regional council; and
- b) the licence must be for a specified term, which may be renewed.

A licensed lay worship leader serves under the direction of the regional council.

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If a licensed lay worship leader becomes a member of a community of faith in another regional council, the person must be recognized by that other regional council in order to continue serving as a licensed lay worship leader.

*There are additional policies and procedures for the education, qualifications, licensing, and recognition of licensed lay worship leaders. See the [Licensed Lay Worship Leaders resource](#) available from the [General Council Office](#).*



## I.2. Supporting

### I.2.1 Remuneration and Reimbursements for Ministry Personnel

#### I.2.1.1 Policy

The community of faith is responsible for

- a) paying adequate remuneration to all ministry personnel called or appointed to it that is fair, just and equitable; and
- b) reviewing the remuneration annually.

(2025)

The community of faith is also responsible for ensuring salary is paid at least monthly through the pastoral charge payroll service.

(2021)

*There is a policy for the community of faith payroll service. See the [Financial Handbook](#) available from the [General Council Office](#).*



#### I.2.1.2 Amount of Remuneration

The amount of the remuneration must be based on

- a) the service required from the ministry personnel;
- b) the circumstances of the community of faith; and
- c) the cost of living in the area.

It must also meet the minimum requirements set by the General Council for that year.

#### I.2.1.3 Manse and Base Salary, or Comprehensive Salary

The community of faith must provide the ministry personnel with either

- a) a manse and base salary; or
- b) a comprehensive salary.

*See the [minimum salary and reimbursements document for ministry personnel \(revised annually\)](#) available from the [General Council Office](#).*



(2021)

#### I.2.1.4 Part-Time Positions

A ministry personnel in a part time position must be paid a corresponding percentage of the full-time salary and benefits:

- a) if a comprehensive salary is provided, the salary is pro-rated based on their hours of service compared to a full-time position; and

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- b) if a manse and base salary is provided, the base salary is pro-rated, and the ministry personnel receives full-time occupancy of the manse.

The percentage is based on a 40 hour work week.

*There are policies for utility costs, furnishings, and other matters related to the manse. See the Financial Handbook, available from the [General Council Office](#).*



Regional Councils shall exercise oversight with a view to providing full-time equivalent employment opportunities for ministry personnel wherever possible. This oversight is intended to reduce the need for ministry personnel to assemble multiple part-time positions to achieve full-time employment. Part-time ministry may, however, be appropriate in certain circumstances for both the community of faith and the ministry personnel.



(2025)

### **I.2.1.5 Travel Allowance**

If the ministry personnel must use a vehicle or public transit to fulfill the responsibilities of the call or appointment, the community of faith is responsible for making a contribution to their travel costs. If the ministry personnel uses a vehicle, the amount contributed must meet the minimum rate per kilometre set by the General Council for that year.

*For the minimum rate per kilometre, see the minimum salary and reimbursements document for ministry personnel (revised annually) available from the General Council Office.*



(2021)

### **I.2.1.6 Telephone**

The community of faith is responsible for providing the minister with a telephone.

### **I.2.1.7 Vacation**

The community of faith is responsible for giving the ministry personnel at least one month's vacation each pastoral year. A "pastoral year" is the period from July 1 of one calendar year to June 30 of the next calendar year.

*For vacation purposes, a "month" may be a single calendar month including five Sundays, or 23 working days.*



A ministry personnel may move from one pastoral relationship to another at any time during the pastoral year. The two communities of faith involved have the following responsibilities for vacation pay:

- a) if the ministry personnel moves between July 1 and August 31, the new community of faith is responsible for the vacation pay for the entire pastoral year starting July 1; and
- b) if the ministry personnel moves between September 1 and June 30, the two communities of faith are each responsible for a portion of the vacation pay for that pastoral year. Their portions are based on the length of time the ministry personnel served in each pastoral relationship during that pastoral year.

**I.2.1.8 Administrative Assistance**

The pastoral charge is responsible for providing the ministry personnel with adequate administrative assistance.

**I.2.1.9 Moving Expenses**

The community of faith is responsible for paying the moving expenses of the ministry personnel called or appointed to it. This includes travelling expenses and expenses connected with moving the ministry personnel's possessions. It also includes the moving expenses of the ministry personnel's immediate family.

*There are policies and procedures for the payment of moving expenses. See the pastoral relations resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



*For candidates beginning a Supervised Ministry Education appointment, there may be assistance available for moving expenses from the appropriate General Council working unit.*



(2021)

**I.2.1.10 Reimbursement of Moving Expenses**

a. **Relationship established by call:** If the regional council approves a request from a member of the order of ministry to end a pastoral relationship established by call within the first three years,

- i) the member is responsible for reimbursing the community of faith for a portion of the moving costs paid at the start of the pastoral relationship.

This portion is based on the actual length of the pastoral relationship and the United Church's expectation that a pastoral relationship established by call will last at least three years; and

*Here are some examples of how this portion is calculated. If the actual pastoral relationship lasts two years, the member is responsible for reimbursement of 1/3 of the moving costs. If the actual pastoral relationship lasts one year, the member is responsible for reimbursement of 2/3 of the moving costs. If the actual pastoral relationship lasts six months, the member is responsible for reimbursing 5/6 of the moving costs.*



- ii) the regional council must ensure that the member of the order of ministry fulfills this responsibility. The regional council may waive this requirement in exceptional cases.

b. **Relationship established by appointment:** If the regional council approves a request from a ministry personnel to end a pastoral relationship established by appointment before the end of its term, the regional council may require the ministry personnel to repay a portion of the moving expenses paid at the start of the pastoral relationship.

## **I.2.2 Disability**

### **I.2.2.1 Policy**

The United Church is responsible for providing disability care and benefits for ministry personnel and lay employees who become unable to carry out the duties and responsibilities of their position because of illness or injury.

### **I.2.2.2 Who Is Covered by This Policy**

Disability insurance benefits are available to those who

- a) are serving in paid accountable positions;
- b) are members of the group insurance plan;
- c) are not receiving a United Church pension; and
- d) have a disability that prevents them from working, as confirmed following the applicable United Church process.

### **I.2.2.3 Short-term and Long-term Benefits**

The United Church provides disability benefit plans applicable to two distinct situations:

- a) short-term disability (for absences of up to six months); and
- b) long-term disability (for absences beyond an initial six-month period).

The disability programs will focus on treatment and restoration.

*There are additional policies and procedures that apply to these disability benefit plans. See the resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



*Discrimination on the basis of a disability is prohibited under secular law. The pastoral charge and regional council must comply with secular law requirements in any action they take concerning the pastoral relationship when a ministry personnel has a disability. The pastoral charge and regional council should consult first with the appropriate General Council staff.*

## **I.2.3 Leaves**

Ministry personnel serving in a paid accountable ministry position may be entitled to take a leave of absence for a particular reason.

The following leaves are available to ministry personnel.

*There are additional policies and procedures that apply to each of the leaves set out in section I.2.3. See the pastoral relations resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



### **I.2.3.1 Post-Pregnancy, Parental, and Partner Leaves**

Post-pregnancy leave is a leave of absence available to a person after they have given birth to a child.

Parental leave is a leave of absence available to a parent while caring for a newborn or newly adopted child. Parental leave benefits are available either after the date of the

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child's birth or the date of the child's placement in the home.

The period of post-pregnancy or parental leave will be subject to the maximums set out by applicable employment law.

Partner leave is a paid leave of absence of five days available to ministry personnel when their spouse or partner has given birth to a child or the ministry personnel and their spouse or partner have adopted a child.

(2024)

*Ministry personnel may be entitled to benefits under government insurance plans.*

  
(2024)

### **I.2.3.2 Bereavement Leave**

Bereavement leave is a paid leave of absence for four days plus travel time. It is available on the death of a member of a ministry personnel's immediate family or of another significant person in the ministry personnel's life.

*A "significant person" is a person such as a close friend or relative of the ministry personnel.*



### **I.2.3.3 Compassionate Leave**

Compassionate leave is a paid leave of absence. The length depends on the circumstances.

*Normally, a compassionate leave is for a maximum of 14 days. It may be extended to one month or longer where the life partner or child of the ministry personnel has died.*



Compassionate leave may be given to extend bereavement leave.

Alternatively, it may be available in situations where the ministry personnel is the only person appropriate to respond to the circumstances, or when the ministry personnel is unable to carry out pastoral responsibilities because of the circumstances.

The Ministry and Personnel Committee of the community of faith is responsible for making decisions about compassionate leave.

### **I.2.3.4 Study Leave**

Study leave is a paid leave of absence for three weeks per year. It is available to ministry personnel in communities of faith.

The community of faith and the ministry personnel are responsible for sharing the cost of the ministry personnel's continuing education. Every call or appointment must include funding for the ministry personnel for study leave. The amount of the funding must meet the minimum amount set by the General Council from time to time.

The community of faith is responsible for overseeing the continuing education of ministry personnel called or appointed to the community of faith.

### I.2.3.5 Sabbatical Leave

Sabbatical leave is a paid leave of absence for at least three months. It is available to ministry personnel called or appointed to a community of faith. These ministry personnel are eligible for a sabbatical each time they have completed five years of continuous service in the same pastoral relationship.

Every call or appointment must include provision for sabbatical leave.

*For more information on sabbatical leaves, see the pastoral relations resources available from the General Council Office.*



*Normally, a pastoral relationship may not be ended at the initiative of the ministry personnel or pastoral charge within 12 months of the ministry personnel's return from a sabbatical.*



Sabbatical leave is also available to intentional interim ministers.

*See the interim ministry resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



### I.2.3.6 Other Leaves of Absence

If requested by the ministry personnel, the community of faith may grant a leave of absence for another reason. This leave of absence may be paid or unpaid, as agreed by the community of faith and the ministry personnel. The regional council must approve any leave of absence that will last more than three months.

## I.2.4 Licences to Administer Sacraments

### I.2.4.1 Policy

The regional council may grant a licence to administer the sacraments to

- a) a designated lay minister, candidate serving under appointment, admission minister serving under appointment, diaconal supply, ordained supply, or retired diaconal minister;

*Members of the order of ministry who have been ordained to the ministry of word, sacrament, and pastoral care do not require a licence to administer the sacraments.*



*An "ordained supply" is an ordained minister of another denomination who is not in the process of admission to the order of ministry of the United Church.* (2022)

- b) lay people who were serving as a designated lay minister at the time of their retirement and who had been recognized by the regional council as a designated lay minister; and
- c) members of communities of faith without a called or appointed member of the order of ministry or designated lay minister. A member holding a licence to administer the sacraments is called a "sacraments elder."

(2021)

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*There are policies for the qualifications, assessment, and education of lay people to be sacraments elders. See the Sacraments Elders resource available from the [General Council Office](#).*



### **I.2.4.2 Diaconal Ministers**

The regional council must grant a diaconal minister a licence to administer the sacraments when the diaconal minister is serving in a call or appointment, or are employed in another ministry position. The licence will be for the duration of the call, appointment, or other ministry position.

### **I.2.4.3 Process**

The regional council is responsible for making a decision on whether to grant a person a licence under section I.2.4.1 above. The community of faith may initiate the process by making a request to the regional council that a licence be granted.

### **I.2.4.4 Terms of Licence**

Licences to administer the sacraments have different terms, depending on the status of the person who holds the licence:

- a) A designated lay minister who has been recognized by the regional council may administer the sacraments within the bounds of the regional council where they are a member for the duration of the appointment.
- b) A candidate or diaconal supply who has been appointed to a community of faith may administer the sacraments in that community of faith for the duration of the appointment.
- c) A member who was serving as a designated lay minister at the time of their retirement and who had been recognized by the regional council as a designated lay minister may administer the sacraments within the bounds of the regional council granting the licence. They must act in co-operation with the governing body of the community of faith where they are administering the sacraments.
- d) A sacraments elder may administer the sacraments in their community of faith for a 12-month term that may be renewed. The licence automatically ends if a member of the order of ministry or designated lay minister is called or appointed to the community of faith.

## **I.2.5 Resource and Support to the Pastoral Relationship**

### **I.2.5.1 Consultation on Pastoral Relations Matters**

*Each regional council either has a committee or other body responsible for assisting the regional council with pastoral relations matters or provides for this work to be done in some other way.*



Members of communities of faith and ministry personnel may consult the appropriate regional council body for advice about the pastoral relationship.

This is a confidential consultation. The regional council body may not tell anyone that a consultation has taken place, or reveal any of the matters discussed in the consultation. The only exceptions are

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- a) if the person consulting the regional council body gives permission to share this information; or
- b) if the regional council body has reasonable concern that the health or safety of any person is at risk. In that case, the regional council body must report the matter to the regional council and, if the health or safety of the ministry personnel is at risk, to the Office of Vocation also.

*Under secular law, there are mandatory requirements for reporting suspected child abuse and, in some provinces, suspected abuse of other vulnerable individuals. These requirements override the confidentiality of any consultation under section I.2.5.1.*



### I.2.5.2 Pastoral Charge Supervisor

- a. **Appointment:** If a community of faith that is a pastoral charge has no called or appointed member of the order of ministry or designated lay minister who has been recognized by the regional council, the regional council is responsible for appointing a member of the regional council to the pastoral charge as a pastoral charge supervisor.

The regional council may also appoint a pastoral charge supervisor in any other situation where the regional council decides it is appropriate.

- b. **Responsibilities:** The pastoral charge supervisor is responsible for
  - i) supporting any ministry personnel serving the pastoral charge;
  - ii) general supervision of the work of the pastoral charge;
  - iii) ensuring that a chair is elected for the pastoral charge governing body, the trustees, and meetings of the congregation and pastoral charge;
  - iv) ensuring that the sacraments are administered and new members are received following the requirements of these bylaws;
  - v) if there are ministry personnel serving the pastoral charge, delegating responsibility for the functions of ministry in the pastoral charge to the ministry personnel as appropriate; and
  - vi) reporting to the regional council on the state of the pastoral charge.

### I.2.5.3 Functions of Ministry—Outside Pastoral Relationship

At any time that ministry personnel are not called or appointed to a community of faith, they may carry out the functions of ministry in the United Church only if

- a) they have a formal association with a community of faith, are acting on behalf of that community of faith, and have the approval of the community of faith's governing body; or

*An example of a "formal association" with a pastoral charge would be where the minister has been designated as a "voluntary associate minister" or "honorary associate minister" by the community of faith or its governing body.*



- b) they have been appointed to a paid accountable ministry and/or other ministry recognized by a regional council.

(2023)

#### I.2.5.4 Request—Previous Pastoral Charge

If a ministry personnel is asked by a member or adherent (or their families) of a community of faith where they had previously served to preside at a baptism, communion service, wedding, or funeral, the ministry personnel

- a) must refer the request to the ministry personnel currently serving under call or appointment to that community of faith; and
- b) may preside only with the approval of the community of faith’s governing body.

(2021)

### I.3 Disengaging

#### I.3.1 Changes in Pastoral Relations

##### I.3.1.1 Meaning of “Change in Pastoral Relations”

A “change in pastoral relations” means

- a) a change in the terms of a call or appointment that is an ongoing pastoral relationship; or
- b) the ending of a pastoral relationship.

Either kind of change requires the approval of the regional council.

##### I.3.1.2 Who May Initiate a Change in Pastoral Relations

A change in pastoral relations may be initiated by

- a) the ministry personnel;
- b) the community of faith; or
- c) the regional council.

##### I.3.1.3 Change Initiated by Ministry Personnel to the Terms of Call or Appointment

*See section I.1.5 above for the requirements on appointing a regional council liaison officer in this situation.*



- a) **Request:** A ministry personnel initiates a change to the terms of the call or appointment in pastoral relations by sending a written request for the change to the governing body of the community of faith and the regional council.

*There are additional policies and procedures that apply when a ministry personnel initiates a change to the terms of the call or appointment. See the pastoral relations resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



- b) **Approval:** The ministry personnel, community of faith, and regional council must each decide whether to approve any new terms of the call or appointment.

*There is a policy for giving and receiving requests and other written documents. See Oversight, Conflict Resolution, and Discipline J.11. This policy sets out how and when a person or council “receives” a written document.*



(2021)

**I.3.1.4 Change Initiated by Ministry Personnel to End the Pastoral Relationship**

*See section I.1.5 above for the requirements on appointing a regional council liaison officer in this situation.*



- a) **Request:** A ministry personnel initiates the ending of the pastoral relationship by sending a request for the change in pastoral relations to the governing body of the community of faith and the regional council.

The request must indicate a proposed date for the change to take effect.

*There are additional policies and procedures that apply when a ministry personnel initiates a change to the terms of the call or appointment. See the pastoral relations resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



- b) **Approval:** The regional council is responsible for making a decision on the request for the ending of the pastoral relationship. If the regional council approves the request, it must also make a decision on the proposed date for the change to take effect. If the proposed date is less than 90 days after the community of faith received the request, the community of faith must also approve the date.

**I.3.1.5 Change Initiated by Community of Faith to the Terms of Call or Appointment**

*See section I.1.5 for the requirements on appointing a regional council liaison officer in this situation.*



- a) **Request:** The community of faith initiates a change to the terms of the call or appointment in pastoral relations by sending a written request for the change through its governing body to the ministry personnel and the regional council.

The request must indicate the proposed changes to the terms of the call or appointment and a proposed date for the changes to take effect.

*There are additional policies and procedures that apply when a community of faith initiates a change to the terms of the call or appointment. See the pastoral relations resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



- b) **Approval:** The ministry personnel, community of faith, and regional council must each decide whether to approve any new terms of the call or appointment.
- c) **Changes not approved by ministry personnel:** If the ministry personnel does not approve any of the new terms, the changes to the call or appointment may only be made by following the same process as for the ending of the pastoral relationship as in section I.3.1.6 below.

**I.3.1.6 Change Initiated by Community of Faith to End the Pastoral Relationship**

*See section I.1.5 above for the requirements on appointing a regional council liaison officer in this situation.*



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*There are additional policies and procedures that apply when a community of faith initiates a change to end the call or appointment. See the pastoral relations resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



a) **Community profile:** The community of faith must prepare and file an updated community of faith profile with the regional council before initiating a change of pastoral relations by ending the pastoral relationship.

b) **Decision to request:** A community of faith initiates a change in pastoral relations by deciding at a meeting of the community of faith to request a change.

The decision must indicate the proposed date for the change to take effect.

c) **Requirements for community of faith meeting:** The requirements for advance notice must be followed for this meeting of the community of faith. They are set out in Community of Faith B.5.4.2 a.

The governing body of the community of faith must ensure that the regional council receives notice of the request for a meeting of the community of faith.

The regional council liaison officer is responsible for setting a date for the meeting that ensures compliance with the requirements set out in section I.3.1.6 d and e below. The governing body of the community of faith must ensure that the ministry personnel receives notice of the meeting of the community of faith.

The regional council liaison attends the meeting of the community of faith to consider the request for a change in the pastoral relationship.

d) **Ministry personnel entitled to be heard:** At the meeting of the community of faith, the ministry personnel called or appointed to the community of faith must be given an opportunity to respond to the proposed change.

The ministry personnel is entitled to this opportunity before the community of faith votes to request a change in pastoral relations.

e) **People requesting the meeting:** At the meeting of the community of faith, at least one of the people requesting the meeting must be given an opportunity to speak about the proposed change.

f) **Ministry personnel entitled to advance notice of change:** For all changes of pastoral relations under this section (I.3.1.4), the ministry personnel is entitled to

- i) 90 days' advance notice of the change in pastoral relations; or
- ii) 90 days' remuneration in the same amounts as payable before the change.

The ministry personnel may be given a combination of some advance notice and some remuneration, as long as the total meets the 90-day requirement.

The regional council is responsible for giving the notice under section I.3.1.6 below. The community of faith is responsible for paying the remuneration.

(2024)

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- g) **Notice of community of faith decision:** The community of faith must give notice of its decision to request a change in pastoral relations after the meeting to
  - i) each ministry personnel called or appointed to the community of faith;
  - ii) all employees of the community of faith; and
  - iii) the regional council.
- h) **Regional council's decision:** The regional council is responsible for
  - i) ensuring that all requirements in these bylaws have been met for requesting a change in pastoral relations;
  - ii) reviewing any relevant disability, oversight, or discipline concerns;
  - iii) making a decision on the request and on the proposed date for the change to take effect; and
  - iv) giving notice to the Office of Vocation of the change in pastoral relations if the regional council has approved the request.

### **I.3.1.7 Change Initiated by Regional Council**

The regional council is responsible for ending the pastoral relationship without a request by the ministry personnel or the community of faith only when notified by the Office of Vocation that the name of the ministry personnel has been placed on the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary) or Discontinued Lay Ministry Appointment List.

### **I.3.1.8 Regional Council's Responsibility to Give Notice**

If the regional council decides to make or approve any change in pastoral relations, the regional council must give notice of the decision and the date it will take effect to

- a) the community of faith;
- b) each ministry personnel called or appointed to the community of faith; and
- c) the Office of Vocation.

## **I.3.2 Retirement**

### **I.3.2.1 Oversight and Discipline**

The regional council is responsible for caring pastorally for retired members of the order of ministry who are members of the regional council. Retired members of the order of ministry remain under the discipline of the Office of Vocation.

### **I.3.2.2 Appointment or Call**

Retired members of the order of ministry are eligible for appointment to a community of faith.

They are not eligible to accept a call unless they first are returned to active standing.

*See section I.1.2.2 above for more information.*



### **I.3.2.3 Pension**

Ministry personnel must enroll in and contribute to the United Church's pension plan for as long as they are required to do so under the terms of the plan.

They are entitled to receive pension benefits based on the terms of the United Church's pension plan.

### I.3.3 Discontinued Service Lists

#### I.3.3.1 Responsibility for Administering and Maintaining Lists

The Office of Vocation administers and maintains the following lists:

- 1) Discontinued Lay Ministry Appointment List;
- 2) Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary); and
- 3) Discontinued Service List (Voluntary).

It places a name on the applicable list when

- a) the Board of Vocation has made a decision to place a Designated Lay Minister's name on the Discontinued Lay Ministry Appointment List;

*Designated lay ministers were formerly known as lay pastoral ministers, lay pastoral ministers-in-training, and in some cases, staff associates. The Discontinued Lay Ministry Appointment List also includes the names of lay members who served in those former categories and whose names were placed on the list by action of the presbytery, which was the body that had responsibility for this action prior to January 1, 2019.*



*A Designated Lay Minister is entitled to a formal hearing before their name is placed on the Discontinued Lay Ministry Appointment List. The formal hearing is held by the Board of Vocation. See Oversight, Conflict Resolution, and Discipline J.9 for more information about the formal hearing process.*



- b) the Board of Vocation has made a decision to place the name of a member of the order of ministry on the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary) or the Discontinued Service List (Voluntary); or
- c) it receives notice from the regional council that the regional council has placed the name of a layperson serving as a congregational designated minister on the Discontinued Lay Ministry Appointment List.

(2021)

#### I.3.3.2 Discontinued Lay Ministry Appointment List

- a) **Placing name on list:** The regional council may decide to place the name of a layperson serving as a congregational designated minister on the Discontinued Lay Ministry Appointment List.

It may make this decision as an act of discipline. It must inform the Office of Vocation of its decision.

- b) **Removing name from list:** Any layperson whose name is on the Discontinued Lay Ministry Appointment List may apply to the Office of Vocation to have their name removed from the list.

The Office of Vocation is responsible for

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- i) making a decision on the application of a layperson who was serving as a designated lay minister at the time their name was placed on the Discontinued Lay Ministry Appointment List; and
- ii) notifying the appropriate regional council of the request if the layperson was serving as congregational designated minister at the time their name was placed on the Designated Lay Ministry Appointment List.

The regional council is responsible for

- i) making a decision on the application if the layperson was serving as congregational designated minister at the time their name was placed on the Designated Lay Ministry Appointment List; and
- ii) notifying the Office of Vocation of the regional council's decision.

*There is a process for an application to remove a layperson's name from the Discontinued Lay Ministry Appointment List. Contact the Office of Vocation.*



If the Office of Vocation or regional council, as applicable, decides not to approve the application, the member may apply again after three years from the date of that decision.

### **I.3.3.3 Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary)**

The Board of Vocation may decide to place the name of a member of the order of ministry on the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary).

*A member of the order of ministry is entitled to a formal hearing before their name is placed on the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary). The formal hearing is held by the Board of Vocation. See Oversight, Conflict Resolution, and Discipline J.9 for more information about the formal hearing process.*



(2021)

### **I.3.3.4 Discontinued Service List (Voluntary)**

The Board of Vocation may place the name of a member of the order of ministry on the Discontinued Service List (Voluntary) at the member's own request.

(2021)

### **I.3.3.5 Consequence of Name Being Placed on the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary) or (Voluntary)**

Those whose names have been placed on the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary) or the Discontinued Service List (Voluntary) are not recognized as ministry personnel of the United Church. Their names are removed from the rolls of the regional council and of the Office of Vocation.

They may not perform the functions of ministry in the United Church, with one exception: the Office of Vocation may decide to allow a person whose name is on the Discontinued Service List (Voluntary) to perform one or more specific functions of ministry.

They are not eligible for appointment to a community of faith, with one exception: the Office of Vocation may require a person to serve in an appointment as part of the readmission process.

(2021)

### **I.3.4 Death of Ministry Personnel**

#### **I.3.4.1 Financial Support**

In the event of the death of a ministry personnel, who is an active and contributing member of the Pension Plan of the United Church of Canada, their designated beneficiaries are entitled to receive benefits.

For more information about these benefits, please go to [uccbenefits.ca](http://uccbenefits.ca).

If the beneficiary, spouse and/or dependent children require immediate financial assistance, bridge funding may be provided on compassionate grounds.

Contact the Regional Council Pastoral Relations Minister for information.



(2025)

#### **I.3.4.2 Use of Manse—Six-Month Period**

If the spouse or dependent children of a ministry personnel were living in the manse at the time of death, they are entitled to continue to live in the manse or be provided with alternative accommodation for another six months.

The six-month period starts following the end of the month in which the death took place.

The month in which the death took place is not counted.

(2025)

#### **I.3.4.3 Alternative Accommodation**

The community of faith and regional council must consult with the ministry personnel's spouse or dependent children (through the children's legal guardian) about their special circumstances or needs related to alternative accommodation.

The community of faith is normally responsible for the reasonable moving costs of the ministry personnel's spouse or dependent children to the alternative accommodation.

## **J. OVERSIGHT, CONFLICT RESOLUTION, AND DISCIPLINE**

### **J.1 Regional Council Oversight of Communities of Faith**

The regional council has responsibility for the oversight of pastoral charges and other communities of faith. As part of this responsibility, the regional council works with communities of faith in the following ways.

#### **J.1.1 Self-Assessments by Communities of Faith**

The regional council receives a regular self-assessment from communities of faith and periodically reviews these self-assessments in light of the covenant between the community of faith and the regional council.

*A community of faith is recognized by the regional council through a covenantal relationship. See section B.1.3 for more information on the terms of a covenant.*



#### **J.1.2 Ministry Personnel Remuneration**

The regional council works with the community of faith to ensure that the community of faith pays its ministry personnel at least the minimum salary and travel allowance required by the General Council. If the regional council cannot arrange for the community of faith to pay at least the minimum salary and travel allowance, it applies for a mission support grant for the community of faith.

#### **J.1.3 Lay Employees—Pension and Group Insurance**

The regional council works with the community of faith to ensure that the lay employees of communities of faith are enrolled in the United Church's pension and group insurance plans if they were hired after December 21, 1988, and meet hours-of-work criteria.

#### **J.1.4 Completing Statistical Forms**

The regional council works with the community of faith to ensure that the community of faith completes the annual statistical and information forms and submits them to the appropriate General Council working unit by the required date.

### **J.2 Office of Vocation Oversight of Ministry Personnel**

The Office of Vocation has responsibility for the oversight of ministry personnel as set out here (in J. Oversight, Conflict Resolution, and Discipline) and under E. Office of Vocation. As part of this responsibility, the Office of Vocation works with ministry personnel in the following ways.

#### **J.2.1 Compliance**

Ministry personnel are responsible for recognizing the authority of the denomination and fulfilling all of their obligations to it as required by the Office of Vocation.

*Ministry personnel are responsible for completing mandatory training and filings with the Office of Vocation. For example, see the police records check policy at section J.2.2 below.*



### J.2.2 Police Records Checks

The United Church has processes to determine ongoing suitability for ministry. One process requires individuals who are, or are seeking to be, in ministry positions to obtain a police records check and to certify that there are no criminal charges against them.

Ministry personnel, applicants, and candidates are responsible for providing this documentation to the Office of Vocation at various times in their life in ministry. The Office of Vocation is responsible for ensuring that this responsibility is properly fulfilled.

*An “applicant” is a person who has applied to the Office of Vocation to begin the process of preparing for ministry leadership in diaconal, ordained, or designated lay ministry but who has not yet been approved as a candidate. See Entering Ministry H.4.2.*



(2021)

There are additional policies and procedures that apply to police records checks. They include details about the types of police records checks required, the form of certification to be provided by ministry personnel, applicants, and candidates, and the times this documentation is required.

*The policies and procedures for police records checks are available from the [General Council Office](#).*



### J.2.3 Letters of Good Standing

The Office of Vocation is responsible for issuing letters of good standing for ministry personnel. Any ministry personnel who is in good standing may request a letter of good standing.

A letter of good standing confirms that

- a) there are no outstanding Office of Vocation orders for that ministry personnel; and

*The Office of Vocation may make orders for ministry personnel under the Office of Vocation’s responsibility for the oversight and discipline of ministry personnel. See J.6., J.7.3, J.7.5, and J.9.6 below.*



- b) the ministry personnel’s name is not on the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary), the Discontinued Service List (Voluntary), or the Discontinued Lay Ministry Appointment List.

### J.3 Principles of Conflict Resolution

Whenever there is a conflict between people in the body of Christ, there is pain and anxiety on all sides. Conflicts may arise because of strongly held and differing ideas, violations of rights, and our own human imperfections. When conflicts go unresolved, the body suffers wounds. The longer the body suffers, the deeper the wounds go. Conflicts also take time, energy, and other resources away from our work.

Some conflicts may be preventable. There are processes in the church to address the possibility of conflict in a proactive way.

*See section J.1 above and I. Pastoral Relations 2.5 for some policies and processes that may help to prevent conflict.*



Where conflict does arise, the church is called to resolve it and to deal pastorally with the pain that it causes. This requires compassionate love, forgiveness, wholeness, and humility. It also requires that justice be done, and be seen to be done. There can be no shalom without justice.

Conflicts must be resolved as quickly and as fairly as possible. If a conflict arises, the people involved must try to resolve it themselves wherever possible.

The church has informal processes that people involved in a conflict may use to try to resolve the conflict themselves. They may call on others who are experienced in these processes to help them with resolving the conflict.

*The church has people trained as conflict resolution facilitators who can assist with the resolution of conflicts. For more information, contact the Office of Vocation, which maintains the list of conflict resolution facilitators.*



Early reconciliation of conflict is not always possible. The church has formal processes in which people outside of the conflict decide the outcome for those who are in it.

Everyone involved in a formal process must remember that, individually and collectively, they are all accountable to and under the overall authority of Jesus Christ.

*There are Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice for Ministry Personnel available from the [General Council Office](#). The standards may be used as a resource in any informal or formal process that involves ministry personnel.*



## **J.4 Regional Council Action—Communities of Faith**

The regional council is responsible for the oversight of communities of faith. It must take seriously any concerns that come to its attention about the state of a community of faith within the bounds of the regional council.

These concerns may be raised by

- a) the regional council itself, including any member or committee of the regional council;
- b) the ministry personnel called or appointed to the community of faith;
- c) the pastoral charge supervisor;
- d) the governing body of the community of faith; or
- e) a proposal signed by 10 full members of the community of faith that the community of faith's governing body has passed on to the regional council.

The regional council must decide on the appropriate action to take in response to the concerns.

*See the [Community of Faith Reviews](#) resource available from the [General Council Office](#). It contains information to help regional councils decide on the appropriate action, including guidelines for conducting a review of the state of the community of faith.*



## **J.5 Accountability**

### **J.5.1 Bodies of Accountability**

Ministry personnel are accountable to the Office of Vocation.

Congregational designated ministers are accountable to the governing body of the community of faith they serve in all matters except for discipline. In matters of discipline, they are accountable to the regional council.

All other members and adherents are accountable to the governing body of their community of faith.

### **J.5.2 Policies and Processes for Accountability**

There are different policies and processes for accountability depending on whether the concerns raised are about a person who is

- a) ministry personnel; or
- b) a layperson who is not ministry personnel.

For ministry personnel, see section J.6. For lay members who are not ministry personnel, and adherents, see section J.8.

## J.6 Office of Vocation Action—Ministry Personnel

*The Office of Vocation uses the Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice for Ministry Personnel as a resource in its oversight and discipline of ministry personnel. The standards are available from the [General Council Office](#).*



*The Office of Vocation is responsible for the oversight and discipline of ministry personnel. The Office of Vocation fulfills the responsibilities set out for it in this section (J.6) through the Board of Vocation and its committees, commissions, and other bodies. For additional policies and procedures that apply to the oversight and discipline of ministry personnel, see the Office of Vocation resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



*The regional council is responsible for the discipline of congregational designated ministers. The policies and procedures set out in this section (J.6) and in the Office of Vocation resources for ministry personnel available from the [General Council Office](#) may be adapted by the regional council for use with congregational designated ministers.*



### J.6.1 Concerns about Ministry Personnel

The Office of Vocation is responsible for the oversight of ministry personnel. It must take seriously any concerns that come to its attention about any ministry personnel and respond in a way that it considers appropriate to the circumstances, within policies set by the General Council or its executive for the Office of Vocation. For formal complaints under the United Church's Sexual Misconduct Policy, the process under that policy must be followed.

*There are policies and procedures to be followed whenever concerns about ministry personnel come to the attention of the Office of Vocation. See the resource available from the [General Council Office](#).*



*The General Council has approved the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy and Procedures to deal with formal complaints of sexual abuse, including complaints made against ministry personnel. This policy and procedures are referred to as the "Sexual Misconduct Policy" in these bylaws. They are available from the [General Council Office](#).*



*More information on the Sexual Misconduct Policy is also found in section J.12.1 below.*



(2021)

### J.6.2 Informal Processes

The Office of Vocation provides guidance and informal dispute resolution services in response to concerns that come to its attention with respect to ministry personnel, honouring the principles of conflict resolution set out in section J.3.

*For more information, see the resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



*The Office of Vocation maintains a list of trained conflict resolution facilitators who may assist the Office of Vocation in dispute resolution services.*



### J.6.3 Ministry Personnel Review

The Office of Vocation may order a review of the ministry personnel if it determines that to be the appropriate response in the circumstances to the concerns raised.

*There are additional policies and procedures for ministry personnel reviews. See the resource available from the [General Council Office](#).*



The review will be postponed if the ministry personnel is on maternity or parental leave.

*There is no mandatory process for a review. The Office of Vocation must, however, conduct the review in a way that meets the requirements for procedural fairness to the ministry personnel under secular law.*



### J.6.4 Decisions Resulting from a Ministry Personnel Review

*The “appropriate body within the Office of Vocation” means one of the elected committees, commissions, or other bodies of the Board of Vocation. It is not a staff function. See the Office of Vocation resources available from the [General Council Office](#). See also Office of Vocation E.3.*



The appropriate body within the Office of Vocation must make one of the following decisions in response to the review:

- a) the ministry personnel has fulfilled the functions of ministry in an effective way;
- b) the ministry personnel has not fulfilled the functions of ministry in an effective way; or
- c) there are reasonable and probable grounds for believing that the ministry personnel has acted in a way that is a proper ground of discipline. This decision will be considered a formal complaint.

*See sections J.6.6 and J.9.6 below for additional policies on this kind of formal complaint.*



### J.6.5 Disposition of a Review—Ineffectiveness

#### J.6.5.1 Actions

This section (J.6.5) applies if the appropriate body within the Office of Vocation has decided that the ministry personnel has not fulfilled the functions of ministry in an effective way. That body may

- a) require the ministry personnel to take a directed program to address the ineffectiveness and improve their pastoral skills; or

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- b) initiate a formal hearing into the ministry personnel's fitness for ministry by requesting that the Board of Vocation hold a formal hearing to determine whether or not to place the name of the ministry personnel on the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary) or Discontinued Lay Ministry Appointment List, as applicable.

(2021)

### **J.6.5.2 Suspension**

The appropriate body with the Office of Vocation may also suspend the ministry personnel from functioning as ministry personnel while the ministry personnel is taking a directed program under paragraph a) in section J.6.5.1 above.

### **J.6.5.3 No New Call or Appointment**

The regional council may not approve the call or appointment of the ministry personnel to another community of faith until the minister has completed a directed program under paragraph J.6.5.1 a) above and has received a satisfactory evaluation.

### **J.6.5.4 Evaluation When Directed Program Completed**

This section (J.6.5.4) applies when the ministry personnel has completed the directed program.

The appropriate body of the Office of Vocation must decide whether the ministry personnel has completed the action to the satisfaction of the Office of Vocation and is ready to return to paid accountable ministry.

If the appropriate body of the Office of Vocation decides that the ministry personnel is not ready to return to paid accountable ministry, it must

- a) recommend to the Board of Vocation that the person's name be placed on the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary), if the person is a member of the order of ministry; or
- b) recommend to the Board of Vocation that the person's name be placed on the Discontinued Lay Ministry Appointment List, if the person is a designated lay minister.

*The ministry personnel is entitled to a formal hearing before their name is placed on the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary) or Discontinued Lay Ministry Appointment List. The formal hearing is held by the Board of Vocation. See J.9 below for more information about the formal hearing process.*



### **J.6.5.5 Failure to Take Required Action**

If the ministry personnel does not take the directed program as required by the Office of Vocation, the appropriate body within the Office of Vocation may

- a) recommend to the Board of Vocation that the person's name be placed on the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary), if the person is a member of the order of ministry; or

*The ministry personnel is entitled to a formal hearing before their name is placed on the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary) or Discontinued Lay Ministry Appointment List. The formal hearing is held*



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*by the Board of Vocation. See J. 9 below for more information about the formal hearing process.*

- b) recommend to the Board of Vocation that the person's name be placed on the Discontinued Lay Ministry Appointment List, if the person is a designated lay minister.

### **J.6.6 Disposition of a Review—Discipline**

#### **J.6.6.1 Action**

This section (J.6.6) applies if the appropriate body within the Office of Vocation has decided there are reasonable and probable grounds for a formal complaint against the ministry personnel under paragraph J.6.4 c) above. That body makes a request to the Board of Vocation that it hold a formal hearing into the complaint.

#### **J.6.6.2 Suspension**

The appropriate body within the Office of Vocation may also suspend the ministry personnel from functioning as ministry personnel until final disposition by the Board of Vocation.

#### **J.6.6.3 No New Call or Appointment**

The regional council may not approve a new call or appointment for the ministry personnel until final disposition by the Board of Vocation.

### **J.6.7 Financial Support**

This section (J.6.7) applies where the appropriate body within the Office of Vocation has:

- a) suspended a ministry personnel; or
- b) required ministry personnel, who is not actively serving in a community of faith and who is otherwise without remuneration from the United Church, to engage in a directed program for the improvement of their pastoral skills.

The appropriate body within the Office of Vocation may provide Personnel Emergency Funding in an amount not less than the minimum salary set by the General Council, for a period of time and subject to terms as set by the appropriate body.

(2023)

## **J.7 Ministry Personnel—Criminal Charges**

### **J.7.1 Application**

This section (J.7) applies to ministry personnel.

It also applies to congregational designated ministers, with the policies set out in this section to be adapted as necessary.

### **J.7.2 Responsibility to Inform**

A ministry personnel who is charged with a criminal offence must inform the regional council and the Office of Vocation immediately.

### J.7.3 Decision by Regional Council and Office of Vocation

*The regional council is responsible for oversight of the community of faith and is one of the parties to the pastoral relationship. The Office of Vocation is responsible for the oversight and discipline of ministry personnel. For these reasons, each body designates a representative to participate in the decisions that must be made under this section J.7.3 when a minister is charged with a criminal offence.*



On receiving notice under section J.7.2 above, a representative of the regional council, as designated by the regional council, and a representative of the Office of Vocation, as designated by the Office of Vocation, must

- a) consult with the governing body of the community of faith served by the ministry personnel, and any other bodies that they consider appropriate;
- b) consult with the ministry personnel who has been charged;
- c) decide whether to suspend the person from functioning as ministry personnel until the final disposition of the criminal charges;

*If the decision is to suspend the person, the person must be placed on administrative leave from the pastoral relationship until the final disposition of the criminal charges.*



*There is "final disposition" of the criminal charges when all of the secular court process for the criminal charges has been completed. That includes any appeals or, where there is no appeal, the expiry of the time period for starting an appeal.*



- d) if the decision is not to suspend the person under (c), then decide whether or not it is appropriate to place the person on administrative leave from the pastoral relationship until the final disposition of the criminal charges; and
- e) communicate their decisions to the ministry personnel, the governing body of the community of faith, the regional council, the Office of Vocation, and other bodies that they consider appropriate.

*A ministry personnel is entitled to remuneration under the terms of the pastoral relationship while on administrative leave. The regional council is responsible for assisting the community of faith in arranging for supply needs to be met while the ministry personnel is on administrative leave.*



(2024)

### J.7.4 Ministry Personnel's Responsibility to Comply with Decision

If the representatives named in section J.7.3 above decide to suspend the person from functioning as ministry personnel under J.7.3 c) or to place the person on administrative leave under J.7.3 d), the person must comply with the decision immediately.

### J.7.5 Further Action

The appropriate body within the Office of Vocation is responsible for taking one of the following actions, either before or promptly after the final disposition of the criminal charges:

- a) initiating a formal hearing to consider whether to place the person’s name on the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary) or Discontinued Lay Ministry Appointment List;
- b) making a decision to require the ministry personnel to undertake remedial action it considers appropriate; or

*For more information about remedial actions for ministry personnel review, contact the Office of Vocation.*



- c) making a decision that the person may resume functioning as ministry personnel if they have been placed on administrative leave or suspended under section J.7.3 above.

The appropriate body within the Office of Vocation is also responsible for making a decision whether to suspend the person from functioning as ministry personnel until final disposition by the Office of Vocation under paragraph a) or b) above.

The Office of Vocation must inform the regional council promptly of the action it is taking.

## J.8 Conflict Resolution and Discipline—Lay People

### J.8.1 Application

This section (J.8) applies to lay members and adherents of the United Church other than ministry personnel.

*For conflict resolution, oversight, and discipline processes that apply to ministry personnel, see sections J.6 above and J.9 below.*



It also applies to congregational designated ministers, with one difference. When the person involved is a congregational designated minister, all references to the “governing body of the community of faith” in this section (J.8) should be read as “the regional council.”

### J.8.2 Dispute Resolution Process

There is a process for the resolution of conflicts. It includes the assistance of a conflict resolution facilitator appointed by the governing body of the community of faith.

*See the Dispute Resolution resource available from the [General Council Office](#).*



#### J.8.2.1 When the Dispute Resolution Process Is Mandatory

The dispute resolution process must be followed if the governing body of the community of faith receives a formal complaint under section J.8.3 below. There is

one exception. For formal complaints under the United Church’s Sexual Misconduct Policy, the process under that policy must be followed.

*The General Council has approved the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy and Procedures to deal with formal complaints of sexual abuse including complaints made against lay members and adherents (the “Sexual Misconduct Policy”). It is available from the [General Council Office](#).*



*More information on the Sexual Misconduct Policy is also found in section J.12.1 below.*



(2021)

### **J.8.2.2 When the Dispute Resolution Process Is Optional**

The dispute resolution process may be followed in any case where the governing body of the community of faith decides it is appropriate.

### **J.8.3 Formal Complaints**

*The Sexual Misconduct Policy must be followed for formal complaints of sexual misconduct as set out in that policy, available from the [General Council Office](#).*



A formal complaint is a written document that meets the requirements set out in this section (J.8).

When a formal complaint is made against a person who is a lay member or adherent other than ministry personnel, it starts a dispute resolution process that must be followed.

*See the Dispute Resolution resource available from the [General Council Office](#).*



### **J.8.4 Who May Make a Formal Complaint**

A formal complaint may be made by

- a) a member;
- b) an adherent;
- c) an employee of the United Church, its councils, or its communities of faith;
- d) any ministry personnel; or
- e) a council.

*There are additional people who may make a formal complaint under the Sexual Misconduct Policy. See section J.12.1 below.*



(2021)

The person or council making the formal complaint is called the “complainant.”

### **J.8.5 Basis for a Formal Complaint**

The complainant must have personal knowledge (if the complainant is a person) or reasonable and probable grounds for believing (if the complainant is a council) that

- a) a member;
- b) an adherent; or
- c) a congregational designated minister

has acted in a way that is a proper ground of discipline.

This may involve an action taken by the member or adherent, or congregational designated minister, or an action that the complainant believes the person should have taken but did not take.

The person named in the complaint is called the “respondent.”

### **J.8.6 Where the Formal Complaint Is Made**

The formal complaint is made to the governing body of the community of faith.

There are two exceptions:

- a) if the complainant is the governing body of the community of faith, the formal complaint is made to the regional council that has oversight of the community of faith; and
- b) if the complainant is the regional council, the formal complaint is made to the General Council.

*There is a dispute resolution process that must be followed when a formal complaint is made under section J.8. See the resource available from the [General Council Office](#).*



*A formal complaint against a congregational designated minister is made to the regional council. See section J.8.1 above.*



## **J.9 Formal Hearing**

### **J.9.1 Rules of Procedure**

A formal hearing is a process like a trial in a civil court. It is used to resolve a formal complaint or an issue in a formal way. There are rules of procedure that must be followed in all formal hearings.

*The rules of procedure for formal hearings are set out in the Formal Hearings resource available from the [General Council Office](#). There are additional policies and procedures for formal hearings held by the Board of Vocation in the Office of Vocation resources.*



### **J.9.2 Who May Hold a Formal Hearing**

A formal hearing is held when ordered by any of the following bodies:

- a) the Board of Vocation for any matter within the responsibility of the Office of Vocation;

*The Board of Vocation is the body that has oversight of and formal decision-making responsibility for the Office of Vocation. See E. Office of Vocation.*



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- b) the governing body of a community of faith or the regional council, for any matter within its responsibility; or
- c) the Judicial Committee of the General Council for any matter within the General Council's responsibility.

### J.9.3 Appointment of Formal Hearing Committee

If a council holds a formal hearing, it is responsible for appointing three to five United Church members to serve as the Formal Hearing Committee. The council must name the chair and secretary of the committee.

If the council holding the formal hearing is the General Council, the Executive of the Judicial Committee of the General Council has this responsibility.

If the Board of Vocation orders the formal hearing, there are additional policies and procedures that must be followed for the formal hearing.

*For more information on formal hearings ordered by the Board of Vocation, see the Office of Vocation resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



### J.9.4 Decisions and Recommendations

The Formal Hearing Committee is responsible for making decisions and recommendations that are

- a) within its terms of reference;
- b) within the authority of the council that appointed it, if appointed by a council; and
- c) within the authority of the Board of Vocation, if appointed by the Board of Vocation.

### J.9.5 Decision on Formal Complaint—Congregational Designated Ministers, Adherents, and Lay Members Other Than Ministry Personnel

This section (J.9.5) applies to all types of formal complaints, including a complaint under the Sexual Misconduct Policy. It applies where the respondent is a congregational designated minister, adherent, or lay member other than a ministry personnel.

In a formal hearing of a formal complaint, the Formal Hearing Committee is responsible for deciding whether the formal complaint has been proven.

If a formal complaint has been proven, the Formal Hearing Committee must decide on the appropriate action to be taken in response.

The action must include one or more of the actions described below:

- a) **Restitution:** The respondent may be required to pay financial compensation or to make some other form of restitution;
- b) **Admonition:** The respondent may be admonished. This is a private reprimand;
- c) **Rebuke:** The respondent may be rebuked. This is a more severe reprimand and may be done in public;
- d) **Suspension:** The respondent may be suspended from one or more offices that they hold for a period named by the Formal Hearing Committee;

- e) **Deposition:** The respondent may be permanently removed from the offices that they hold;
- f) **Discontinued Lay Ministry Appointment List:** The name of a congregational designated minister may be placed on the Discontinued Lay Ministry Appointment List; or
- g) **Expulsion:** The respondent may have their membership in the United Church removed.

#### J.9.6 Decisions on Formal Complaint—Ministry Personnel

This section (J.9.6) applies to a formal hearing held by a Formal Hearing Committee of the Board of Vocation for a formal complaint under the Sexual Misconduct Policy where the respondent is a ministry personnel or under section J.6.5 as the result of a review of a ministry personnel.

(2021)

The Formal Hearing Committee is responsible for deciding whether the formal complaint has been proven.

If a formal complaint has been proven, the Formal Hearing Committee must decide on the appropriate action to be taken in response. The action must include one or more of the actions described below:

- a) **Remedial work:** The respondent may be required to undertake remedial work under the oversight of the appropriate body within the Office of Vocation;
- b) **Restitution:** The respondent may be required to pay financial compensation or to make some other form of restitution;
- c) **Admonition:** The respondent may be admonished. This is a private reprimand;
- d) **Rebuke:** The respondent may be rebuked. This is a more severe reprimand and may be done in public;
- e) **Suspension:** The respondent may be suspended from functioning as ministry personnel and from the offices that they hold for a period named by the Formal Hearing Committee;
- f) **Deposition:** The respondent may be permanently removed from the offices that they hold;
- g) **Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary):** The name of a respondent who is a member of the order of ministry may be placed on the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary);
- h) **Discontinued Lay Ministry Appointment List:** The name of a respondent who is a designated lay minister may be placed on the Discontinued Lay Ministry Appointment List; or
- i) **Expulsion:** The respondent may have their membership in the United Church removed.

#### J.9.7 Implementation of Decisions

The decision of the Formal Hearing Committee comes into effect on the date specified by the committee. If no date is specified by the Formal Hearing Committee, the decision comes into effect when the committee gives a copy of the decision to

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- a) the Board of Vocation or the council holding the formal hearing; and
- b) the parties to the formal hearing.

*The Board of Vocation is responsible for the oversight and discipline of ministry personnel, including holding formal hearings where the respondent is a member of the order of ministry or lay member who is ministry personnel.*



*There are additional policies and procedures that must be followed for formal hearings held by the Board of Vocation. For more information, see the Office of Vocation resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



### **J.9.8 Appointing Body's Response to Decision**

The decision of a Formal Hearing Committee is the decision of the body that appointed the Formal Hearing Committee. The appointing body may not debate the decision or change it in any way.

### **J.9.9 Appointing Body's Responsibility for Decision**

The body that appointed the Formal Hearing Committee is responsible for

- a) making a decision on any recommendations made to that body by the Formal Hearing Committee; and
- b) deciding whether to share the decision with others beyond the parties and the appointing body, either in whole or in part.

## **J.10 Appeals**

*There is a policy for giving notices and other documents in the appeal process. This policy must be followed. See section J.11 below.*



### **J.10.1 Rules of Procedure**

There are rules of procedure that must be followed in all appeals.

*The rules of procedure for appeals are set out in the Appeals resource available from the [General Council Office](#). There are additional rules of appeal for appeals to the Board of Vocation. For more information, see the Office of Vocation resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



### **J.10.2 What May Be Appealed**

In general, the following may be appealed:

- a) decisions by a council or commission;
- b) decisions by a committee of the Board of Vocation;
- c) decisions by the Board of Vocation; and
- d) rulings of the General Secretary of the General Council.

There are some exceptions, set out in section J.10.3 below.

### J.10.3 Exceptions: Decisions That May Not Be Appealed

The following decisions may not be appealed:

- a) a decision by a council setting policy in any area for which it has responsibility;

*A council may make a decision that sets policy or names the council's position on a particular matter. The council is acting in its legislative capacity, and the decision may not be appealed.*



- b) a decision by the Board of Vocation setting standards in any area for which it has responsibility;
- c) initiation of a call or appointment;
- d) a decision to designate, not to designate, to renew the designation of, or not to renew the designation of a person as an interim minister;
- e) implementation of a decision that is being appealed;
- f) a decision by an Appeal Committee on whether to hold an appeal hearing under section J.10.9.1 below;
- g) acceptance or rejection of a medical certificate;
- h) a decision by a community of faith to request a change in the pastoral relationship;
- i) a decision by a regional council on whether to approve a request from a ministry personnel for a change in the pastoral relationship;
- j) a decision by a council or the Board of Vocation on whether to hold a formal hearing;
- k) a decision by a council to make a formal complaint;
- l) a decision by a regional council to initiate a review under section J.4 above;
- m) a decision by the appropriate committee or other body of the Board of Vocation to initiate a review under section J. 6 above
- n) elections; and
- o) in general terms, all decisions that are interim steps rather than final steps in a process.

*A decision to make a recommendation or a request may not be appealed. It is an interim step in a process.*



### J.10.4 Who May Appeal

An appeal may be made by a person or council that is directly affected by the decision or ruling. The Appeal Committee will decide who is directly affected. In an appeal to the Judicial Committee of the General Council, its executive is responsible for making this decision.

*The term "Appeal Committee" is explained in section J.10.9.1 below. It means the committee of three to five United Church members appointed to deal with the appeal.*



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A decision of a Formal Hearing Committee may be appealed only by a party to the formal hearing. In a formal hearing held to deal with a formal complaint, the parties to the formal hearing are the complainant and the respondent.

A decision of the regional council about community of faith property may be appealed by any five members of the community of faith.

The person or council that is appealing is called the “appellant.”

### J.10.5 Where an Appeal Is Made

The “appellate body” is the Board of Vocation or the council to which the appeal is made.

A decision of a council is appealed to the next council that has oversight of it.

*A decision of the community of faith or its governing body is appealed to the regional council. A decision of the regional council is appealed to the Judicial Committee of the General Council.*



A decision of a committee of the Board of Vocation is appealed to the Board of Vocation.

(2021)

*There are additional policies and procedures for appeals to the Board of Vocation. See the Office of Vocation resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



In the following cases the appeal is made to the Judicial Committee of the General Council:

- a) a decision of the regional council;
- b) a decision of the Board of Vocation or a Candidacy Board;
- c) a decision of a Formal Hearing Committee;
- d) a decision of the Executive of the General Council; and
- e) a ruling of the General Secretary of the General Council.

(2021)

### J.10.6 Grounds for Appeal

An appeal may be made only on one or more of the following grounds:

- a) the council, Board of Vocation committee, or Board of Vocation that made the decision failed to consider the matter as completely as practicable;
- b) the decision was not in accordance with the rules of natural justice;
- c) the decision was not reasonable based on the evidence;
- d) the decision was not in accordance with the polity of the United Church; or
- e) there is evidence available that could not have been produced earlier and that may be relevant.

### J.10.7 Starting the Appeal

#### J.10.7.1 Communication Date

There are time limits in the appeal process that must be followed. The first step is to determine the “communication date.” This is the date that the appellant is considered to have formal notice of the decision.

For appeals of decisions of the Board of Vocation, one of its committees or a Candidacy Board, the communication date is the day the appellant receives the decision as set out in section J.11.4 below.

(2021)

*The appellant may have learned of the decision at an earlier time in some other way. Those other ways are not relevant in determining the communication date.*



For all other appeals, the communication date is the earlier of

- a) the day the appellant receives the decision as set out in section J.11.4 below; and
- b) 15 days after the council distributes to its members the draft minutes of the meeting at which the decision was made or, for communities of faith, 15 days after the governing body distributes to the community of faith the summary of decisions made.

(2021)

*Councils are required to distribute minutes of their meetings. See Introduction to Governance A.6.*



(2021)

If the minute of the decision is changed when the council approves the minutes, the communication date is the earlier of

- a) the day the appellant receives the changed decision as set out in section J.11.4 below; and
- b) 15 days after the council distributes the changed minutes of the decision or for communities of faith, 15 days after the governing body distributes to the community of faith the changed summary of decisions made.

(2021)

#### J.10.7.2 Notice

The appellant must send a notice indicating that they are appealing the decision or ruling. The following requirements apply:

- a) the notice must be sent to the secretary of the appellate body;
- b) the appellant must send the notice within 30 days of the communication date; and
- c) the notice must be sent in one of the ways set out in section J.11.4 below.

*There are requirements for the secretary of the appellate body and the parties to send additional documents in the appeal process, including deadlines. These requirements are set out in the Appeals resource available from the [General Council Office](#).*



*There are additional policies and procedures for appeals to the Board of Vocation. See the Office of Vocation resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



### **J.10.8 Implementation of Decision During an Appeal Process**

A decision is automatically implemented even if it is being appealed.

There is one exception. The council, Board of Vocation, or committee of the Board of Vocation that made the decision may decide not to implement the decision until the conclusion of the appeal process. It may make this decision on its own initiative or at the request of the appellant.

*The process for an appellant to ask for a decision not to be implemented is set out in the Appeals resource available from the [General Council Office](#).*



*There are additional policies and procedures for appeals to the Board of Vocation. See the Office of Vocation resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



### **J.10.9 Appeal Process**

*This section contains some of the steps in the process for an appeal. The full process is set out in the Appeals resource available from the [General Council Office](#).*



*There are additional policies and procedures for appeals to the Board of Vocation. See the Office of Vocation resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



#### **J.10.9.1 Deciding Whether to Hear the Appeal**

The appellate body appoints three to five United Church members to serve as the Appeal Committee to deal with the appeal.

The Appeal Committee is responsible for deciding whether or not to hear the appeal.

If the Appeal Committee decides to hear the appeal, it holds an appeal hearing.

If the Appeal Committee decides not to hold an appeal hearing, that is the end of the appeal process. There is no further right of appeal.

#### **J.10.9.2 Appeal Hearing**

The Appeal Committee holds an appeal hearing following the rules of procedure.

*The rules of procedure for appeal hearings are set out in the Appeals resource available from the [General Council Office](#).*



*There are additional policies and procedures for appeals to the Board of Vocation. See the Office of Vocation resources available from the [General Council Office](#).*



After the appeal hearing, the Appeal Committee may decide to

- a) allow the appeal, with or without conditions;
- b) dismiss the appeal, with or without conditions; or
- c) order a formal hearing of the matter to be held by the appellate body, or by the council or Board of Vocation that made the original decision.

#### **J.10.9.3 Decisions of Appeal Committees**

This section applies to appeals if the appellate body is the regional council or the Board of Vocation.

The decision of an Appeal Committee made under section J.10.9.2 above is the decision of the regional council or Board of Vocation that appointed it. The regional council or Board of Vocation, as the case may be, may not debate the decision or change it in any way.

#### **J.10.9.4 Decisions of the Judicial Committee**

- a. **Final until General Council:** All decisions of the Judicial Committee of the General Council made under section J.10.9.2 above are final and binding on all parties until the next regular meeting of the General Council.
- b. **Report to General Council:** The General Secretary of the General Council is responsible for reporting all decisions made by the Judicial Committee since the previous regular meeting of the General Council.
- c. **Review of decision by General Council:** The General Council may review but not rehear any decision of the Judicial Committee that has been reported to it and
  - i) affirm the decision; or
  - ii) refer the decision to the Judicial Committee for further hearing.
- d. **Grounds for review:** A review may be made on one or more of the following grounds:
  - i) the Judicial Committee failed to consider the matter as completely as practicable;
  - ii) the decision was not in accordance with the rules of natural justice;
  - iii) the decision was not reasonable based on the evidence;
  - iv) the decision was not in accordance with the polity of the United Church; and
  - v) there is evidence available that could not have been produced earlier and that may be relevant.
- e. **Final decision:** The decision of the Judicial Committee is considered to be the final decision of the General Council if
  - i) it has been reported to the General Council and not reviewed; or
  - ii) it has been reported to the General Council, reviewed, and affirmed.

## J.11 Documents—Giving and Receiving

### J.11.1 Application

This section (J.11) applies to the notices and other documents that are given and received as part of the formal hearing and appeal processes.

### J.11.2 Documents in Writing

All documents must be in writing.

### J.11.3 Address for Giving Documents

The address of a person for the purpose of giving documents under section J.11.4 is

- a) the address, email address or fax number that the person has given to the sender in writing; or
- b) the address for the person as shown in the records of the community of faith, regional council or the Office of Vocation, as applicable, if no address for giving documents has been given.

(2021)

### J.11.4 How to Give Documents

There are five ways to give documents. One of these ways must be used:

- a) **Personally:** The document may be given to the person personally. It is considered received by them on the date it is given;
- b) **Fax:** The document may be given to the person by sending it by fax. The document is considered received by them on the day it is sent;
- c) **Assured delivery:** The document may be given to the person by sending it by assured delivery (registered mail). It is considered received by them on the 10th day after it is sent;
- d) **Courier delivery:** The document may be given to the person by sending it by courier. It is considered received by them when that person has signed to acknowledge receipt of the document or on the date for which other proof of delivery is provided; or
- e) **E-mail:** The document may be given to the person by sending it by e-mail. The document is considered received by them on the day it is sent.

(2021)

### J.11.5 Calculating Notice Period

If the notice period for giving or receiving a document is seven days or less, the following days are not counted: Saturdays, Sundays, statutory holidays, and the time between December 25 and January 1.

## J.12 Policies

### J.12.1 Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy and Procedures

The United Church will not tolerate, and will seek to eradicate, any behaviour by its members, lay and order of ministry, adherents, or employees that constitutes sexual misconduct, sexual abuse, or child abuse.

The United Church is committed to providing a safe environment for worship, work, and study in all pastoral charges, congregations, institutions, agencies, organizations, or other bodies that operate under its name. Complaints of sexual

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misconduct, sexual abuse, or child abuse will be taken seriously and will be dealt with in a spirit of compassion and justice.

(2021)

The General Council has approved the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy and Procedures to deal with formal complaints of sexual misconduct and abuse. These policies and procedures are referred to as the “Sexual Misconduct Policy” in these bylaws. They must be followed.

*The Sexual Misconduct Policy is available from the  
[General Council Office](#).*



The United Church seeks to protect from abuse all people who use the pastoral or professional services of the United Church, whether or not they are members or adherents. Any person who has used the professional or pastoral services of ministry personnel or employees of the United Church for purposes of pastoral care, counselling, marriage workshops, daycare, and so on, has the right not to be abused in any way. They are entitled to make a formal complaint under the Sexual Misconduct Policy.

### **J.12.2 Additional Policies**

The General Council from time to time approves policies that apply to ministry personnel, members, adherents, councils, and others. These policies may be found on the website [united-church.ca](http://united-church.ca).

# Definitions

The following terms have particular meanings given to them in these bylaws. Please consult the section indicated for these definitions.

|  |                                       |        |
|--|---------------------------------------|--------|
| adherent                                       | B.3.4                                 |        |
| admission                                      | H.6.1                                 |        |
| admission minister                             | I.1.2.4                               | (2021) |
| Appeal Committee                               | J.10.9.1                              |        |
| appeal hearing                                 | J.10.9.2                              |        |
| appellant                                      | J.10.4                                |        |
| appellate body                                 | J.10.5                                |        |
| applicant                                      | H.3.4; J.2.2                          |        |
| appropriate body within the Office of Vocation | J.6.4                                 |        |
| associate member ministries                    | C.1.3                                 |        |
| Board of Vocation                              | E.; E.2.1                             |        |
| candidacy                                      | H.2.1                                 |        |
| candidate                                      | H.3.4                                 |        |
| change in pastoral relations                   | I.3.1.1                               |        |
| commission                                     | B.7.5.2; C.3.3; D.4.5; D.5.5.2; E.3.2 |        |
| community of faith                             | B.1.1                                 |        |
| competency                                     | H.3.5                                 |        |
| complainant                                    | J.8.4                                 |        |
| congregation                                   | B.3.1                                 |        |
| congregational designated minister             | E.2.9; I.1.11.4                       |        |
| congregational property                        | G.2.1.1                               |        |
| corresponding member                           | A.7.2                                 |        |
| covenant                                       |                                       |        |
| [community of faith and regional council]      | B.1.3                                 |        |
| covenant [pastoral relations]                  | I.1.1                                 |        |
| credentialing                                  | H.3.5                                 |        |
| denominational council                         | A.1.1                                 |        |
| designated lay minister                        | H.1.2                                 |        |
| diaconal minister                              | H.1.1.1                               |        |
| diaconal supply                                | I.1.2.4                               |        |
| disbanding                                     | G.1.5                                 |        |
| formal complaint                               | J.8.3                                 |        |
| formal hearing                                 | J.9.1                                 |        |
| Formal Hearing Committee                       | J.9.3                                 |        |
| full member [of the congregation]              | B.3.3                                 |        |

## Definitions

|                              |                   |
|------------------------------|-------------------|
| General Council              | A.1.1             |
| General Secretary            | D.4.2             |
| governing body               | B.7.2             |
| incorporated ministry        | A.8               |
| independent review           | G.4.4.1           |
| intentional interim minister | I.1.10.1          |
| interim ministry             | I.1.10.1          |
| licensed lay worship leader  | I.1.11.5          |
| major renovations            | G.2.1.3           |
| ministry partner             | H.9               |
| ministry personnel           | C.1; H.3.3; I.1.1 |
| Moderator                    | D.4.1             |
| mutual recognition agreement | H.9               |
| negotiating churches         | D.2.2.3           |
| Office of Vocation           | E.; E.2.1         |
| ordained minister            | H.1.1.2           |
| ordained supply              | I.1.2.4           |
| order of ministry            | H.1.1             |
| other major assets           | G.2.1.2           |
| paid accountable ministry    | H.1               |
| pastoral charge supervisor   | I.2.5.2           |
| pastoral year                | I.2.1.7           |
| permanent committee          | B.7.8.1           |
| polity                       | C.2.3             |
| proposal                     | F.1.1             |
| records                      | A.5.1             |
| remit                        | F.2               |
| respondent                   | J.8.5             |
| responsibility               | A.3               |
| sacraments elder             | I.2.4.1           |
| Sexual Abuse Policy          | J.12.1            |
| standing committee           | B.7.8.1           |
| surplus property             | G.1.4.5           |
| testamur                     | H.5.1.2           |
| voting member                | A.7.1             |

# Appendix

## Procedures for Holding a Meeting and Decision-Making

### 1. A Whole People's Covenant

*The 41st General Council 2012 used A Whole People's Covenant to help define the way in which the members of the General Council sought to work together. It has been adapted here for use as a resource by all councils and church bodies.*



Each of us comes as a pilgrim to this gathering of siblings in Christ. Each of us comes with our own cultural values, assumptions, and world views. Each one of us, and the cultures we represent, are God's living letters of faith, hope, love, and beauty. Therefore, we embrace the following Christian virtues that honour God and promote right relationship between us as we gather together and learn from one another:

We promise to relate to one another with

- respect;
- humility;
- patience;
- open-mindedness;
- courage; and
- the spirit of grace and forgiveness we have received in Christ Jesus.

We acknowledge the land that we stand upon by

- remembering that Indigenous peoples have walked these paths;
- understanding that we are one part of God's creation; and
- honouring future generations by preserving this land as they find their own paths.

In our Christian love for one another we will

- invite the Spirit into both our worship and business;
- attend to others with our whole selves: our physical senses, intuition, imagination, and intellect;
- speak for ourselves in the spirit of truth and gentleness, avoiding unhelpful generalizations and racial stereotypes;
- not interrupt when others are speaking;
- be mindful of language that is not inclusive;
- affirm the deep wisdom of silence and pause, as necessary, to ponder what others have said;
- seek to understand rather than win arguments and assume best intentions;
- hold our beliefs and opinions lightly; and
- hold one another in prayer.

Today this pilgrimage will lead us to becoming a whole people. With God's help, I will leave behind what I must to make this journey. Thanks be to God.

## 2. Holy Manners

*The Very Reverend Marion Pardy introduced Holy Manners as a resource for the 38th General Council 2003. Holy Manners has been used as resource for the conduct of meetings by subsequent General Councils and their executives. It has been adapted here for use as a resource by all councils and church bodies.*



We will

- keep God at the centre of everything we do;
- each speak for ourselves;
- speak for a purpose;
- separate people from problems;
- allow for full and equitable participation;
- attend to others carefully without interruption;
- welcome the conflict of ideas;
- take a future orientation;
- demonstrate appreciation;
- honour the decisions of the body;
- commit to holding one another to account when we do not keep our holy manners;
- keep the discussion at the table;
- be mindful of our body language;
- check in about good use of time;
- allow the quiet people to speak, with an invitation to speak; and
- sincerely say what we really feel.

## 3. Meeting Procedures

### 3.1 The Chair

The chair keeps a meeting of the council on track and may make rulings on procedure and the conduct of the meeting.

All members must be able to participate fully and comfortably.

Every voting member makes decisions on the basis of their own understanding of scripture and of the ethos of the United Church, in the light of Christian experience, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit at work in the meeting of the council.

Any member of the council may bring to the attention of the chair any concerns about how a motion is being dealt with.

When an agenda has been adopted that specifies the time for particular items, such time shall be strictly adhered to, unless the council decides otherwise by a 2/3 majority of those voting.

## Appendix: Procedures for Holding a Meeting and Decision-Making

The chair does not participate in the discussion or vote except in the case of a tie. If the chair wants to express an opinion, then they move aside from the role and ask another member to chair until the matter is disposed of.

### **3.2 How to Conduct a Meeting**

#### **3.2.1 Process**

A council may set its own process for conducting business. If the council has not set its own process, it follows the parliamentary rules accepted in Canada (Bourinot's Rules).

#### **3.2.2 Motions**

A council may only pass motions for which it has the authority and which do not contradict the decision of a higher council.

A motion contradicting a motion already passed at the same meeting is out of order, unless it is a motion to reconsider.

#### **3.2.3 Challenging Rulings**

A voting member may challenge a ruling of the chair at the time the ruling is made. The chair restates the ruling and may give reasons. The secretary then calls the vote without any discussion on whether the chair's ruling is sustained.

### **3.3 How to Amend a Motion**

When a motion has been made and is open for discussion, any motion to amend must be dealt with before dealing with the original motion.

When all motions to amend have been dealt with, the council may deal with the final form of the original motion.

Any voting member, except the mover and seconder of the original motion, may make a motion to amend the original motion.

A motion to amend fails if there is no seconder.

A motion to amend may not change the intention of the original motion.

A separate vote must be taken for each motion to amend.

### **3.4 How to Vote**

#### **3.4.1 General**

A vote may be taken in a manner determined by the council.

Voting regarding membership in the order of ministry is by ballot, unless unanimously agreed otherwise.

The chair must cast the deciding vote if a tie occurs.

Voting may not be by proxy or mail-in ballot.

Voting may be done by telephone or electronic means if all voters can communicate with one another at the same time. There is one exception for decisions by e-mail in section 3.4.2 below.

### **3.4.2 Decisions by E-mail**

At the discretion of the chair, decisions may be made between meetings by e-mail voting in circumstances the chair considers to be urgent and exceptional. A congregation may not make a decision by e-mail to appoint, remove, or accept the resignation of trustees.

E-mail voting may be conducted only if every member of the voting body has already provided the voting body with an e-mail address.

The chair or secretary circulates a proposed decision and initiates a vote by e-mail on it. The email must contain

- a) the proposed decision and sufficient background to inform the other members of the voting body; and
- b) a specified time for replying to the e-mail, allowing for at least 48 hours from the time that the e-mail is circulated.

The e-mail must be circulated to all members of the voting body, with all members' e-mail addresses visible.

Members may ask questions of clarification and offer comments by e-mail, ensuring they are visible to all members.

Members must vote by e-mail by replying to the initiator of the e-mail.

Members must vote in the affirmative or negative without any conditions or may ask that their abstentions be noted.

A member may object to making this decision by e-mail, and if any two members so object, a meeting must be held in one of the ways set out in the bylaws.

If the number of votes cast is less than the minimum number of members required to be present for a meeting, the decision is not approved and deferred to a future meeting.

Following the deadline, the initiator of the email must inform all members of the voting body of the voting results by e-mail.

The secretary must include the decision and the outcome of the vote in the minutes of the next regular meeting of the voting body.

(2024)

### **3.5 Motions That Interrupt the Meeting**

At any time during a meeting, any voting member may make a motion to

- a) close discussion without a vote on the motion;
- b) fix the time to adjourn;
- c) adjourn;
- d) take an immediate vote (2/3 vote required);
- e) limit or extend limits of discussion (2/3 vote required);
- f) postpone discussion and decision on the motion to a definite time;
- g) refer the motion to another body or commission;
- h) amend/change the motion; or
- i) postpone discussion and decision on the motion indefinitely (without a specified time).

An original motion may be interrupted by any of the above motions.

## Appendix: Procedures for Holding a Meeting and Decision-Making

While these motions are being dealt with, they may only be interrupted by a motion above it in the list.

### **3.6 How to Reconsider a Motion**

A motion to reconsider a motion already passed may be made if no motion is under consideration. A motion to reconsider has the same priority as the motion to be reconsidered.

Only a voting member who voted “yes” for the original motion may move the motion to reconsider. This motion must be seconded by a voting member.

A motion to reconsider in an ongoing meeting must be approved by 2/3 of the voting members present.

The revised motion may be reconsidered if a motion is changed on reconsideration and passed.

A motion on which action has been taken may not be reconsidered.

### **3.7 Additional Procedures**

In any point not covered in *The Manual*, the parliamentary rules accepted in Canada (Bourinot’s Rules) will be followed.

# Appendix

## Model Trust Deed

### Model Trust Deed

(enacted by Statutes of Canada 1924 chapter 100  
Schedule B and amended by Statutes of Canada 2019  
chapter 31 by provincial enactments as applicable)

And it is hereby declared that the said Trustees and their successors or the Trustee or Trustees for the time being acting in the trusts herein shall hold the said lands upon the following trusts:

#### COLUMN TWO

1. For the use and benefit of the said church, charge, circuit, preaching station or community of faith, as the case may be (hereinafter called the community of faith), as a part of The United Church of Canada, as well for the site of a church, chapel, meeting house, school, manse, parsonage or minister's dwelling or other place for religious, charitable, educational, community of faith or social purposes, glebe or burial ground, as the said community of faith may direct, as for the support and maintenance of public worship, and the propagation of Christian knowledge, according to the doctrine, discipline, by-laws, rules and regulations of The United Church of Canada.
2. And upon further trust, out of all monies received by them for that purpose, to build, erect, add to, alter, repair, enlarge or rebuild any of the buildings aforesaid from time to time as they may deem expedient, and where they deem it necessary, to take down and remove any of said buildings for any of the purposes aforesaid.
3. And upon further trust, that they shall and will obey, perform and fulfill and suffer to be obeyed, performed and fulfilled with respect to the said lands, and to any building or buildings at any time thereon, or to any burial ground, the lawful orders and directions respectively of the Official Board of the said congregation, the Regional Council within whose bounds and under whose ecclesiastical jurisdiction the said congregation shall from time to time be, and of the Denominational Council of The United Church of Canada.
4. And upon further trust, to permit, in conformity with the doctrines, discipline, by-laws, rules and regulations of The United Church of Canada and not otherwise, the following:
  - (a) The use of the said church, chapel or meeting house, as a place of religious worship by a congregation of The United Church of Canada and for meetings or services of religious or spiritual character or such benevolent or congregational purposes as may be approved by the Session of such congregation, and the conduct of public worship and the various services and ordinances of religious worship therein by the minister of the said congregation or, with the

#### COLUMN ONE

1. Upon trust to use the trust property for purposes directed by community of faith and maintenance of public worship.
2. To erect and repair buildings.
3. To obey all lawful orders and directions.
4. To permit use of the trust property for church, manse and Sunday School purposes.

## Appendix: Model Trust Deed

approval of the Session or of the said minister, by any other minister of The United Church of Canada or by any minister of any other religious denomination;

- (b) The performance of burial services in any burial ground or cemetery belonging to or under the control of the congregation;
  - (c) The use of the manse, parsonage or minister's dwelling or dwellings with the appurtenances thereof by the minister or ministers of the congregation free from payment of any rent;
  - (d) The use of any church, chapel, meeting house, school or other building for the purposes of a Sunday School at such hours and times as will not interfere with public worship; and
  - (e) The use of any buildings erected upon the said lands, other than a church, chapel or meeting house, for such purposes as may from time to time be approved by the Session of the congregation.
5. And upon further trust, to let any pews and seats at a reasonable rent, if so authorized by the Official Board of the congregation, with power to delegate any such letting to any person or persons whom they may appoint for that purpose; to let any buildings, not required for purposes of worship, at a reasonable rent; and if there shall be a burial ground or cemetery, to sell or let vaults, tombs or burial plots at a reasonable price or rent; and to account for and pay all monies incurred in the execution of these trusts, to the Treasurer of the congregation, or should there be no Treasurer, then to the Committee of Stewards of the congregation, or such person as shall be designated by the said Committee for the purpose of receiving the same. In case the Trustees are of opinion that any manse, parsonage or minister's dwelling is not required for the use of the minister or ministers of the congregation, or is not desirable for the use of such minister or ministers, they may, with the consent in writing of said minister or ministers, let the same and use and apply the rent derived therefrom towards paying the board and lodging of such minister or ministers or the rent for a more suitable and convenient residence for such minister or ministers.
5. To let and sell pews and burial plots and to let manses.
6. The Trustees or a majority of them may, but only with the consent in writing of the Regional Council within the bounds of which the lands are situated (such consent to be under the hand of the Presiding Officer or Secretary or Clerk thereof), sell the said lands or any part thereof either by public sale or private contract, either for cash or upon credit, upon such terms as to price and for such price and upon such terms as to payment or otherwise as they may deem expedient; mortgage, hypothecate or exchange the said lands or any part thereof; let any church, chapel or meeting-house upon the same for such rent and upon such terms as they may deem expedient; and make all such conveyances, mortgages, leases and assurances as may be required to complete any such sale, mortgage, hypothecation, exchange or lease. The said Trustees after first paying or otherwise providing for all indebtedness of the Trustees shall apply the monies arising from such sale, mortgage, hypothecation, lease or exchange for the purposes of such congregation as the Official Board thereof shall direct, but should such congregation cease to exist as an organized body, such proceeds,
6. The trustees shall have powers to sell, mortgage, exchange, or lease the trust property with the consent of the Regional Council.

## Appendix: Model Trust Deed

less any expense incurred in the execution of these trusts, shall be paid to The United Church of Canada to be applied for such purposes for the benefit of The United Church of Canada as the Regional Council within the bounds of which the said lands are situate may determine under the by-laws, rules and regulations of the Denominational Council. Every application by Trustees for the consent of a Regional Council as aforesaid shall be in writing and shall state the purpose for which the monies arising from such intended sale, mortgage, hypothecation, lease or exchange will be applied. Any decision of a Regional Council with regard to the sale, mortgage, hypothecation, lease or exchange of the said lands or any part thereof shall be subject to appeal to the Denominational Council at the instance of not fewer than any five members of the congregation affected thereby.

In every case where the consent of such Regional Council or Denominational Council has been obtained as aforesaid it shall not be incumbent upon the purchaser, mortgagee or lessee of the said lands or of any part thereof to enquire into the necessity, expediency or propriety of any such sale, mortgage, hypothecation, lease or exchange, or to see to the application of the monies paid to the Trustees. A certificate of the Secretary or Clerk of any Regional Council or Denominational Council that any such consent has been given shall be sufficient and conclusive evidence of such consent.

7. The said Trustees shall keep a proper book or books of accounts showing all monies received and disbursed by them, and a book or books of minutes showing correctly all minutes of their meetings and of resolutions passed and proceedings taken there-at, and such book or books shall at all reasonable times be open for inspection by the minister in charge of the congregation and by the Chairman of the Committee of Stewards, and any person or persons named by them or either of them, and the said minister or the said Chairman and any person named by them or either of them as aforesaid shall have the right to make such copies or abstracts of or extracts from the said accounts or minutes, as he or they may desire, and upon request from the Committee of Stewards the Trustees shall submit all books of accounts and minutes, and all vouchers, receipts, papers and documents relating to the said accounts, for audit by the Committee of Stewards, or such person or persons as the said Committee may appoint for the purpose.
  8. Every meeting of Trustees for considering the making of any alteration of or addition to any building on the said lands, or any part thereof, or for considering the sale, mortgage, hypothecation, lease or exchange of the said lands, or any part thereof, except the letting or sale of pews, seats, vaults, tombs or burial plots, or for considering any litigation or legal proceedings in connection with the trust estate, shall be deemed a special meeting, and each member shall be entitled to seven days' notice in writing thereof, specifying the time, place and purpose of such meeting. Such notice shall be either personally delivered to all Trustees, or mailed to or delivered to him or her at his or her usual place of abode or business. Ordinary meetings may be called at any time by giving at least one day's notice in writing to each Trustee in the manner aforesaid, or by public announcement at a service for public worship at least one
7. The trustees shall keep proper accounts and minutes.
  8. The trustees shall have seven days' notice of all special meetings and one day's notice of other meetings.

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day prior to such meeting. Meetings may be called by the minister in charge of the congregation, or by at least two of the Trustees. Notwithstanding anything herein contained no meeting or any business transacted thereat shall be invalid by reason of any lack or defect of service of notice arising from inability to ascertain the usual place of abode or business of any Trustee. All questions shall be determined by the majority vote of the Trustees present at a meeting, and the Chairman shall have a casting vote in the event of a tie. The minister of such congregation shall have the right to preside as Chairman at all meetings of the Trustees and may appoint a deputy to act as the Chairman, and in the absence of the minister and of any such deputy the Trustees present may elect a Chairman from among themselves.

9. The number of said Trustees shall not be fewer than three or more than fifteen, provided that where the number of existing Trustees is more than fifteen all such Trustees shall remain in office but that no vacancy in the office of Trustee shall be filled until the number of Trustees is reduced below fifteen, in which case the number shall not again exceed fifteen. In case any of the said Trustees or any Trustee appointed under this provision shall, during his or her term of office, die, resign or, having been, cease to be a member of The United Church of Canada in full communion, or remove to such a distance, or fail to attend meetings for such period not less than one year, as shall in the opinion of his or her co-trustees expressed by a two-thirds vote of said co-trustees, render it inexpedient for him or her to remain a Trustee, or in case the said congregation shall think it proper to remove a Trustee from his or her office as Trustee, it shall be lawful for the said congregation, at any meeting called by notice from the pulpit during public worship on each of the two next preceding Sundays on which public worship is held, to declare by the votes of two-thirds of the members then present that such Trustee has ceased to be a Trustee of the said congregation, and such person shall thereupon cease to be a Trustee, and at the same meeting it shall be lawful for the said congregation by a like vote to appoint a successor to such Trustee provided, however, that no Trustee who is personally liable for payment of any indebtedness in respect of the property of a congregation shall be removed without his consent unless indemnified to his satisfaction in respect of any such liability and unless at least eight days' notice in writing of such meeting shall have been mailed to each of the Trustees at his or her last known address, which notice shall state the business to be transacted at such meeting. If no successor shall be appointed at such meeting, a meeting may be called in like manner for the purpose of filling such vacancy, and at such meeting a new Trustee or new Trustees (as the case may require) shall be appointed by the votes of the majority of the members then present. The notice calling a meeting for the purpose of declaring or filling a vacancy or vacancies in the office of Trustee shall be read from the pulpit by the minister or person officiating as minister, at the request of any Trustee, or of any seven members of the congregation, and every such meeting may be adjourned from time to time by the vote of the majority of the members present. During any vacancy in the office of Trustee, the remaining Trustees, not being fewer than three in number, shall have all the powers of the full Board. A majority of the Trustees shall form a quorum save when the number of Trustees exceeds nine, in

9. The number of trustees shall not be fewer than three or more than fifteen, and vacancies shall be filled by election by the congregation, or in default of such election, by the Regional Council, and the property of a congregation which ceases to exist shall be subject to the trusts determined by Regional Council.

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which case five shall form a quorum. The majority of the Trustees shall be members of The United Church of Canada.

A minute of every such appointment of a Trustee shall be entered in a book to be kept for the purpose, and signed by the person presiding at the meeting, and such minute so signed shall be sufficient evidence of the fact that the person or persons therein named was or were appointed and elected at such meeting, but any omission or neglect to make or sign such minute shall not invalidate such appointment or election.

And it is hereby further declared that in case there shall be at any time fewer than three Trustees, the Presiding Officer or Clerk of the Regional Council within whose bounds and under whose jurisdiction the said congregation shall be, shall, with the remaining Trustee or Trustees, be the Trustees under these presents until the full Board is duly appointed, and at any time thereafter the Regional Council may cause notice to be given from the pulpit on two consecutive Sundays requiring the said congregation to proceed with the appointment of new Trustees. And if the said congregation shall not in the meantime have appointed new Trustees in the manner hereinbefore provided, it shall be lawful for the said Regional Council at any time after four weeks from the last giving of such notice, by resolution duly entered in the minutes of the Regional Council, to appoint new Trustees. Such appointment shall be communicated to the congregation by notice from the pulpit as soon as conveniently may be thereafter, and from the time of such communication the Trustee or Trustees so appointed shall be a Trustee or Trustees hereunder.

And it is further declared that if at any time there shall cease to be an organized congregation entitled to the use, benefit and enjoyment of the said lands, it shall be lawful at any time or times for the said Regional Council to fill any vacancy in the number of Trustees, and the said lands shall thenceforth be held subject to such trusts and for such purposes for the benefit of The United Church of Canada as the Regional Council within the bounds of which the said lands are situate may determine under the by-laws, rules and regulations of the Denominational Council.

10. A Trustee shall not be responsible for the failure of any investment or security made or taken by the Trustees or for anything done in connection with the trust estate except for his own acts and to account for any monies coming into his own hands and shall not be liable for injury done by others to the said trust premises, or to any part thereof.

10. Trustees shall not be liable for involuntary loss.

11. In congregations existing previous to the Union which have not adopted the plan of organization prescribed for Pastoral Charges as provided by the Basis of Union, the words "Official Board" and "Committee of Stewards" and "Session" in this schedule shall mean such Board or Committee or other body respectively discharging similar functions in such congregations, as to which in case of doubt the opinion of the Regional Council to which such congregation belongs shall be final and conclusive.

(2022)

