

Ministry and Personnel Committees: **Policy, Procedures, Practices**



The United Church of Canada
L'Église Unie du Canada

Ministry and Personnel Committees: Policies, Procedures, Practices (March 2025)



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About This Resource

This resource expands on the policy found under section B.7.8.5 in *The Manual*. Please refer to the current edition. This resource contains

- policies and procedures that must be followed
- best practices that provide information, guidance, and advice on the recommended ways to live out mandatory policies and procedures, which you are encouraged, but not required, to follow

This resource replaces the July 2017 edition. A set of companion resources available on the United Church website (search for *Handbooks and Guidelines*) offer further guidance for specific work of the Ministry and Personnel Committee:

1. Annual Performance Reviews, has guidance on the work of annual performance reviews and on giving and receiving feedback;
2. Developing and Maintaining Healthy Teams, has guidance on forming and maintaining healthy ministry teams (among both ministry personnel and lay employees);
3. Beginnings and Endings, has guidance on the recruitment and selection of lay employees, the differences between employees and independent contractors, employment issues (covering both lay employees and ministry personnel) for community of faith transitions (such as disbanding or amalgamations), the ending of a staffing relationship with ministry personnel or lay employees (whether by retirement, resignation, death or termination), and exit interviews.

The Manual mandates that all congregations or pastoral charges have an M&P Committee or other body that fulfills the responsibilities of the M&P Committee. A community of faith that is not a congregation or pastoral charge is not required to have an M&P Committee. However, these guidelines will be helpful in supporting and supervising staff, whether they are ministry personnel or lay employees.

All United Church documents that are referenced can be found at united-church.ca.

Theological Grounding

The policies and procedures of The United Church of Canada exist to support the church in living out God's purpose in the world. The Ministry and Personnel (M&P) Committee policies and procedures aim to support lay leaders who are specifically called to share their gifts in communication, consultation, and supervision.

Many of the roles and responsibilities of the M&P Committee are grounded in scripture:

“And [Jesus] said to them, ‘Take care!’” (Luke 12:15)

In Luke's gospel, we Jesus speaks to a crowd and invites them to take care. These words of Jesus can easily be directed at the M&P Committee. The M&P Committee has a role of caring for ministry personnel and lay employees.

“So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.” (Galatians 6:10)

The apostle Paul invited the church in Galatia to be encouraging. The M&P Committee can also listen to the wisdom from Paul. In placing a priority on nurturing and maintaining healthy relationships, the committee can be focused on working for the good of all.

And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task.” (Acts 6:2–3)

Even in the early church, the disciples were involved in work similar to the M&P, the work of supervision, such as setting up a job description and overseeing the recruitment of the first seven deacons.

As an employer, The United Church of Canada seeks to embody the dynamics of God's emerging reign. We seek to be an integrated peace-making, justice-seeking community. We wish to provide a working environment where people can enjoy their work and realize the contributions they are making toward living out God's purpose in the world.

Policies and Procedures

The Ministry and Personnel Committee is the only mandatory committee of the governing body of a congregation or pastoral charge. It may be called the “Ministry and Personnel Committee” or a different name.

The policy about the Ministry and Personnel Committee may be found in the Community of Faith section of *The Manual* at B.7.8.5. Policies that address the responsibility of the M&P Committee in regard to pastoral relationships between multiple staff may be found in the Pastoral Relations section of *The Manual* at I.1.3.3. Further additional policies are listed below.

The following policies and procedures must be followed.

Policies from *The Manual*

1. 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. (*The Manual, 2024, B.7.8.5*)
2. Ministry personnel called or appointed to a pastoral charge...may not be members of...the Ministry and Personnel Committee. (*The Manual, 2024, B.7.8.4*)
3. The Ministry and Personnel Committee...is responsible for making decisions about compassionate leave. (*The Manual, 2024, I.2.3.3*)

“Ministry personnel” is a general term that refers to members of the order of ministry, designated lay ministers, candidates serving under appointment, diaconal supply, and ordained supply.

Additional Policies and Procedures

4. Lay employees of the community of faith may not be members of the M&P Committee.
5. When a ministry personnel is planning a sabbatical leave, the ministry personnel's sabbatical plan must be approved by the M&P Committee and reported to the governing body for information.
6. The M&P Committee, as a whole committee, shall not replace the search team in the event of a change in the pastoral relationship or a new position.
7. In a multi-point pastoral charge, at least one member of the M&P Committee should come from each congregation in the charge.

Lay employees include congregational designated ministers, office administrators and assistants, musicians and choir directors, custodial staff, and camp counsellors.

Practices

Structure of the Ministry and Personnel Committee

Accountability to governing body

- Regularly reports to the governing body
- Makes recommendations to the governing body
- M&P Committee chair or member present at every governing body meeting

Committee size

- Decided by the community of faith
- Ideally 3–7 people
- In a multi-point pastoral charge, all congregations represented. In a collaborative ministry situation, communities of faith need to be intentional to determine how the M&P Committee responsibilities will be met.

Building the committee

- Committee members identified through the nominations process
- Members are actively involved in the life of the community of faith
- No ministry personnel or their immediate family members from the same household; no lay employees or their immediate family members from the same household.

Term of office

- Elected at annual meeting
- Term set by governing body
- A balance of consistency and new energy is desirable

Training

- New members oriented with review of this resource
- Also informed of M&P resources on united-church.ca
- Workshops by regional council staff; online webinar through [ChurchX](#)

Meeting requirements

- Set by governing body
- Meet at least quarterly, more often if necessary
- All staff notified of meetings and invited to raise issues for discussion; this might include an invitation to be present for those items

Meeting content

- Regular consultation with staff
- Regular workflow—review of job descriptions and policies
- Review concerns

M&P records include

- Orientation documents
- Meeting records
- Personnel files
- All records must be stored in a secure location

Reporting to the Governing Body: Checklist for M&P Committee

The Ministry and Personnel Committee does not have decision-making authority on significant issues relating to the status, conditions of employment, or compensation of employees. The M&P Committee can, however, make recommendations to the governing body.

Regular reports to the governing body may include the following:

- meetings of the M&P Committee and any pressing issues that need to be brought to its attention
- response to specific work requested
- things that the M&P Committee appreciates about staff, including ministry personnel and lay employees
- goals and objectives of ministry personnel and lay employees
- continuing education plans and vacation schedules for ministry personnel and lay employees
- wider church commitments of ministry personnel
- annual review processes, and matters arising from the annual review
- areas of concern regarding the job performance of ministry personnel and lay employees
- recommended changes to ministry personnel and lay employee position descriptions
- recommendations on remuneration including salary and benefits; and terms of employment

A lay employee must not serve on the governing body. The governing body is the employer of a lay employee within a community of faith.

The situation of a lay employee serving as an elected member constitutes a conflict of interest in that the employee would serve a dual role, as both employee and employer.

Some communities of faith use their administrative staff as the minute secretary for meetings of the governing body. In these cases, the lay employee is not a voting member of the governing body. To avoid a real or perceived conflict of interest, to encourage freedom of conversation, and to respect the staff-employer relationship, it should be a regular practice that the administrative staff step out of the meeting when the M&P reports are received. During this time, another member of the governing body may take notes.

Checklist for Building the M&P Committee

When the nominations process in the community of faith is selecting and appointing members to the M&P Committee, some characteristics they might look for include:

- ☐ knowledge of United Church policies and practices
- ☐ good interpersonal and communication skills
- ☐ experience within the organization of the community of faith
- ☐ human resources or personnel training or experience
- ☐ conflict resolution skills
- ☐ variety of backgrounds and life experience, reflecting the diversity of the community of faith
- ☐ adherents can serve on the M&P Committee, but a member must serve as chair

To avoid conflicts of interest, maintain clear boundaries, and enhance role clarity, the following people are ineligible to serve on the M&P Committee:

- ☒ ministry personnel of the community of faith or members of their immediate family
- ☒ lay employees of the community of faith or members of their immediate family
- ☒ anyone in a conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest with any paid staff
- ☒ those serving on the Executive, Search Committee, or Transition Team
- ☒ chair of the governing body
- ☒ chairs of other standing committees of the governing body

- ☒ members who are in conflict in the community of faith, especially with staff

Checklist for M&P Committee Meetings

In planning a meeting, the M&P Committee should consider the following:

- ☐ identify matters of concern that need to be considered
- ☐ ensure that ministry personnel and lay employees are aware of upcoming meeting dates and agendas, and inquire whether there is anything they would like to add
- ☐ meet in comfortable, informal surroundings that ensure privacy and enhance open, honest communication
- ☐ include time for prayer
- ☐ communicate appropriate information or feedback to ministry personnel and lay employees during, or as soon as possible after, the meeting
- ☐ determine what information or recommendations need to be shared with the governing body or other groups or individuals
- ☐ maintain confidentiality
- ☐ identify possible conflict of interests among members of the committee.¹

Sample M&P Committee Meeting Schedule

Below is a sample meeting schedule. Depending on the requirements of annual assessments by your regional council, this schedule may be modified.

September

- Appreciative feedback on what the M&P Committee sees ministry personnel and lay employees doing well
- Declaration of conflict of interest is asked of each member and documented in the minutes (if there is a conflict, decide how the participation of the member will be limited or allow the member to recuse themselves).
- Review the community of faith profile, mission statement, established goals and objectives, and so on
- Clarify roles, expectations, and special assignments or commitments of ministry personnel and lay employees
- Assess working conditions; time expectations; and space, equipment, and administrative support available to support ministry personnel and lay employees
- Work with ministry personnel and lay employees to develop annual personal goals
- Do some team building with committee members, ministry personnel, and lay employees

¹ The United Church's Conflict of Interest Policy is available on the [Handbooks page](#) on the United Church website.

- Set M&P Committee meeting dates for the year

November

- Appreciative feedback on what the M&P Committee sees ministry personnel and lay employees doing well
- Declaration of conflict of interest is asked of each member and documented in the minutes (if there is a conflict, decide how the participation of the member will be limited or allow the member to recuse themselves).
- Prior to the community of faith's budget setting, consult the schedule of [Minimum Salary and Allowances for Ministry Personnel](#) and make next year's salary recommendations
- Review manse arrangements, if applicable
- Review responsibilities carried out by ministry personnel
- Review lines of communication and support systems available to the ministry personnel, lay employees, committees, boards, and volunteers

January

- Appreciative feedback on what the M&P Committee sees ministry personnel and lay employees doing well
- Declaration of conflict of interest is asked of each member and documented in the minutes (if there is a conflict, decide how the participation of the member will be limited or allow the member to recuse themselves).
- Plan and prepare annual reviews (to be held in February)
- Make plans for continuing education and professional development of ministry personnel and staff
- Confirm vacation plans (summer or other)
- Report on progress on the goals and objectives outlined in September

March

- Appreciative feedback on what the M&P Committee sees ministry personnel and lay employees doing well
- Declaration of conflict of interest is asked of each member and documented in the minutes (if there is a conflict, decide how the participation of the member will be limited or allow the member to recuse themselves).
- Process the results of the annual reviews:
 - personal assessment by ministry personnel and lay employees
 - feedback from the committees and others with whom each ministry personnel and lay employee relates
 - feedback from the community of faith

- expectations ministry personnel and lay employees have of one another
- recommendations to be made to the governing body
- identify goals for the coming year

June

- Appreciative feedback on what the M&P Committee sees ministry personnel and lay employees doing well
- Declaration of conflict of interest is asked of each member and documented in the minutes (if there is a conflict, decide how the participation of the member will be limited or allow the member to recuse themselves).
- Reflect on the personal goals and objectives for the past year with each ministry personnel and lay employee
- Identify issues to be referred to the September meeting of the M&P Committee
- Consult with the governing body regarding its plans for a goal-setting process in the fall

Sample Bulletin Notice about the M&P Committee

The Ministry and Personnel (M&P) Committee acts under the guidelines of *The Manual* of The United Church of Canada. We provide resources and support for the staff and the community of faith with respect to any issue affecting staff of our church, including ministry personnel and lay employees. The committee works to build positive and trusting relationships between staff and members and adherents of the community of faith.

If members of the community of faith have praise or concerns about staff, both ministry personnel and lay employees, these can be shared in signed correspondence with the committee. The issues will be considered confidentially by the M&P Committee, who will recommend action.

xxx United Church is blessed with staff who are committed to their work and we are thankful for this work in our community of faith.

Presently serving on the committee are...

Checklists for M&P Committee Records

A general file for the M&P Committee should be kept containing public documents such as these:

- ☐ handbooks and resources (including this one)
- ☐ the mission statement of the community of faith
- ☐ community of faith profile
- ☐ position descriptions
- ☐ updated copy of [The Manual](#) (or online access)

Records of the M&P Committee meetings should be kept that include the following:

- ☐ details of the date and time of the meetings
- ☐ who attended
- ☐ a summary of the committee's discussions, with enough detail to support actions or recommendations
- ☐ any actions taken or to be taken, and by whom
- ☐ recommendations to go to the governing body, including recommended changes to position descriptions
- ☐ recommendations about performance requiring response from ministry personnel and lay employees
- ☐ only record decisions, not conversation about the decisions

A separate, confidential file for each ministry personnel and lay employee should be kept in a secure place accessible only by the M&P Committee, and include:

- ☐ position descriptions
- ☐ contracts for lay employees
- ☐ call or appointment forms for ministry personnel
- ☐ remuneration records
- ☐ absence and vacation records
- ☐ records of continuing education
- ☐ copies of annual reviews and improvement plans
- ☐ reports and recommendations brought to the governing body
- ☐ properly presented concerns or conflicts, including the concern as presented, the goals set to deal with the concern, and whether those goals were met
- ☐ reference checks or correspondence that may breach someone else's confidentiality should be placed in a sealed envelope in a separate file

Personnel files should *not* contain the following:

- ☒ any record or document related to rumours, innuendoes, anonymous letters or complaints, or undocumented accusations
- ☒ in a situation involving two staff members, documentation is not placed in the file of the complainant

When the employment relationship or pastoral relationship ends, the M&P Committee must ensure that personnel files are kept. Please refer to provincial websites for specific time periods.

- ☐ When the employment of a lay employee is terminated, the M&P Committee must keep the personnel file for seven years.
- ☐ When ministry personnel end the pastoral relationship and leave the community of faith, the personnel file is also kept for seven years.
- ☐ If there are documents that you feel need to be included in the ongoing personnel file, contact your regional council minister.

Responsibilities of the Ministry and Personnel Committee

The Policy and Procedures section outlined the responsibilities of the M&P Committee. This section of M&P Committee practices offers collective wisdom on how the responsibilities can be met. The M&P Committee practices that follow highlight where provincial employment legislation must also be followed.

Policy: The M&P Committee is responsible for being available for consultation and support for matters involving the pastoral charge staff.

The M&P Committee consults with ministry personnel, lay employees, and the community of faith on matters concerning their welfare and interests, and oversees the relationships of the ministry personnel and lay employees with the members of the community of faith. The M&P Committee might extend expressions of appreciation, such as dinners or lunch invitations, motions of thanks at annual meetings, flowers for a special occasion, or a recommendation for a salary increase that exceeds the minimum. It should also ensure that ministry personnel are aware of sabbatical leaves, and that vacation time is taken each year.

The M&P Committee can be a consultative group for ministry personnel and lay employees, and meetings can be a place where staff can brainstorm, share ideas, or gather input. The M&P Committee can also be a sounding board for staff to consult with in their continuing leadership.

Often ministry personnel and lay employees will propose one member to act as their liaison to the M&P Committee. This person should see the role as one of liaison and communication, not advocacy. A best practice for liaison people is to rotate the assignments annually. For example, if one member is currently the liaison for the office administrator, next year that member could be the liaison for the ministry personnel.

The M&P Committee's role is to continually monitor and review the effectiveness of staff in relation to the community of faith's mission, to communicate to the governing body regarding working conditions, to make recommendations regarding salary and compensation to the governing body, and to foster the development of an effective ministry team.

Policy: The M&P Committee is responsible for maintaining close contact with the regional council Pastoral Relations Committee or equivalent.

The M&P Committee lives into its consultative and supportive role by being in contact with the Pastoral Relations Committee of the regional council or its equivalent. This contact also allows the M&P Committee to become familiar with resources available through the regional council and General Council to enhance the committee's effectiveness. The M&P Committee can also engage with the Pastoral Relations Committee or equivalent for a confidential consultation.

Contact your regional council staff for the contact information of the committee.

Policy: The M&P Committee is responsible for overseeing the relationship of the pastoral charge staff to each other and to people in the congregation.

The M&P Committee helps ministry personnel, lay employees, members of the community of faith, and adherents build and maintain healthy relationships. Working in a community of faith can be challenging, as members of the community of faith can have strong personal feelings of "ownership." Although this is generally a positive phenomenon, it can have negative implications when ministry personnel and lay employees come to feel they have many "bosses." Members of the community of faith may have much input to offer about the work of ministry personnel and lay employees; ministry personnel and lay employees, in turn, may feel accountable to many voices in the community of faith.

The M&P Committee helps to ensure a climate where constructive feedback can be offered and received in a positive way. Helpful guidelines for giving and receiving feedback are included in the resource [*Ministry and Personnel Committees: Annual Performance Reviews*](#). The M&P Committee ensures that when feedback is offered about work performance, it is done to allow for direct discussion, explanation, improvement, or change. Gossip, a reluctance to discuss issues in the appropriate place, or decisions made outside the decision-making structure of the community of faith can negatively affect working relationships.

It is important for the M&P Committee to ensure that everyone in the community of faith understands how issues can be raised. There must be a consistent, clear, and well-publicized process for appropriately raising concerns about the ministry personnel and lay employees. It is also the committee's responsibility to ensure that concerns are raised through proper channels and that the community of faith knows those channels. A sample of a notice about the work of the M&P Committee that could be included in a bulletin or in a newsletter is included above.

Another relationship that the M&P Committee can nurture is between itself and other committees of the church. The M&P Committee should be in open communication with other committees, especially those who relate closely with staff. The M&P Committee

should be clear with other committees on the lines of accountability. The M&P Committee has a supervisory role (explained further in the next section) and should know who is supervising each staff member.

For example, it may make sense for the Property Committee to supervise the custodian, but the M&P Committee needs to be aware of this accountability and be updated on any positive feedback or concerns of the supervising committee.

As the M&P Committee oversees relationships, there are times when its members may need support. Telus Health, the United Church's Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) provider, can assist volunteer people leaders from the M&P Committee. Confidential coaching is available on a range of sensitive issues, including the following:

- serious illness
- cross-cultural communication
- personal hygiene issues
- expression of suicidal thoughts
- difficult personalities
- inappropriate or atypical behaviour
- fragile or emotionally sensitive employees

You can have a confidential consultation with a professional on how to approach sensitive employee issues, explore options, brainstorm solutions, and work on action plans. The EFAP will work with you as a people leader to discuss available resources and the best way to support either an individual staff member or your team. If you are a volunteer, such as the chair of an M&P Committee, call EFAP to ask for a manager consultation. Phone 1-844-880-9142 and explain that you are a volunteer working in a church leadership capacity. TELUS Health has notes on the United Church file indicating that volunteers acting as people leaders are eligible for management consultation. If you run into problems accessing this support, please call the General Council Office at 1-800-268-3781 and speak with someone in our benefits group.

Confidentiality and Transparency

Confidentiality is vital to the work of the M&P Committee, keeping in mind that the committee is accountable to the governing body and is also in relationship with ministry personnel, lay employees, and the community of faith. To build relationships of trust with staff and with members of the faith community, three components are essential: privacy, confidentiality, and transparency.

- *Privacy* belongs to one individual only. Most people are aware of the importance of respecting the right to privacy, that is, of honouring an individual's control over how and with whom personal information can be shared. This right is protected by Canadian law in the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA).
- *Confidentiality* means ensuring that information gained in private discussion is not disclosed to others inappropriately or used out of context. To maintain trust and the

integrity of a process, it can be necessary to withhold some information. Confidentiality is a required condition for participants of certain groups, including the M&P Committee, to ensure that what is said in the group stays in the group. This enables people to speak freely about private or controversial issues without being held to account beyond the group and context where the words are spoken.

- *Transparency* means that methods and procedures are clear and open and can be questioned. It operates on the democratic principle that people have a right to know about the systems that affect their well-being. It means that people will know and have a say in how information is used, who sees it, and how it fits into the larger picture—for example, clarity in the process of offering feedback via the M&P Committee.

Secrecy, on the other hand, will impede trust. Secrecy is the opposite of transparency. It is the condition of withholding information for the purpose of control. It is a situation in which only a few initiates are privy to certain information and everyone else is excluded, whether or not the information could potentially affect them.

Standards for confidentiality should be agreed upon by the M&P Committee and ministry personnel and lay employees, and be shared with the governing body and the community of faith. It is important to be clear about what can and cannot be shared beyond the M&P Committee. Open dialogue is essential between the M&P Committee members and ministry personnel and lay employees.

During a denominational oversight review under J6 or J4 of the Manual, members of governing bodies and committees of communities of faith ought to candidly and thoroughly provide the details of situations their respective governing body or committee dealt with to the reviewer, including providing sufficient identifying information relating to the situation, without fear of reprisal or violating confidentiality.

While the M&P Committee has a duty to hold confidence, the M&P Committee also has a duty to report. The M&P Committee should not keep information confidential if it discovers that someone is a danger to themselves or to others, or if it is made aware of concerns relating to child abuse. The M&P Committee has a duty to report to the police if it discovers that someone has harmed a minor. The term confidential in relation to the Creating Safe and Respectful Environments policy and procedures means the holding of information and protecting it from unauthorized disclosure. There are some situations where the M&P Committee will need to be able to ask for help. Often this assistance is requested of the regional council staff, who will need to be informed of concerns or situations.

For transparency, the M&P Committee should develop and publicize a process for handling concerns, so that the community of faith knows how to raise concerns appropriately, with specific details that will allow reasonable action. The committee must be very clear that it will not consider undocumented allegations, anonymous complaints, or rumours. For example, when the feedback begins, “People are saying...,” this is an anonymous complaint. No one knows who is upset or what it is really about, and these complaints will not be considered by the M&P Committee.

At times information must be shared with the governing body. These include situations in which recommendations are made for action to be taken (e.g., disciplinary action), when there is potential that such action may need to be taken in the future, when there may be a risk to the community of faith, or other scenarios at the discretion of the M&P Committee and as requested by the governing body. Concerns for confidentiality and protection of personal privacy need to be balanced by concerns for accountability.

Before M&P Committee reports go to the governing body, the committee should consult with the ministry personnel and lay employees affected. There may be occasions when matters are reported by the M&P Committee without the ministry personnel's or lay employee's agreement on content. But this should happen only after the M&P Committee has tried to develop a consensus on the issue, and has given prior notice to the ministry personnel and lay employees involved.

Employment Relationships with Lay Employees

One of the relationships that the M&P Committee manages is the employment relationship with lay employees. There are different types of employment relationships, such as permanent employment, term employment, and honoraria. The details and differences between the types of employment relationships and fee for service contracts are further explained in [*Ministry and Personnel Committees: Beginnings and Endings*](#).

Multi-staff Team Relationships

In a multiple staff ministry model, there are many relationships for the M&P Committee to oversee. Multiple staff ministries are those in which two or more individuals are called or appointed to a community of faith. Issues of equity become important in multiple staff situations. It is not recommended that ministry personnel be subordinate or answerable to one another. It is essential that all team members are treated fairly, justly, and equitably and have the opportunity to share their gifts in tangible, visible ways that are recognized and appreciated.

Even in situations where there is only one ministry personnel employed by the community of faith, there could be other lay employees, who work with ministry personnel to form a staff team. As the M&P Committee oversees the relationships in the team and offers support to the staff team, it can be important for the committee to be aware of stages of team development, and be intentional about building and tending the staff team. More information about healthy development and maintenance of a ministry team can be found in Ministry and Personnel Committees: [*Developing and Maintaining Healthy Teams*](#).

Other Relationships with Ministry Personnel

Supervised Ministry Education is an intentional learning experience that enables a candidate for ministry to deepen their pastoral identity, to reflect theologically on the practice of ministry, to develop healthy practices for self-care, and to enhance ministry skills.

During Supervised Ministry Education: As the requirements of Supervised Ministry Education are being fulfilled, the M&P Committee may also need to oversee relationships. Sometimes a student will be in a pastoral appointment while at the same time fulfilling their Supervised Ministry Education requirements.

During these periods of training, clarity on roles and responsibilities of the M&P Committee and the Community of Faith Connection (CFC) or equivalent is essential. The M&P Committee is focused on the employment relationship and job performance, while the Community of Faith Connection is focused on the learning, formation, and educational relationships. More information on these roles can be found in [Candidacy Pathway: Supervised Ministry Education – Roles, Responsibilities and Reports \(2024\)](#).

The Community of Faith Connection is a representative group of lay people associated with the learning site, such as the pastoral charge, who are dedicated to the ministry and mission of the church. It supports the candidate for ministry as the candidate seeks to grow personally, intellectually, professionally, spiritually, and in social awareness.

If the M&P Committee is unsure of its role and responsibilities in relation to a student minister fulfilling their Supervised Ministry Education requirement while under appointment, it is a good idea to contact regional council staff for support.

During an Interim Ministry: With an intentional interim minister, the role of the M&P Committee is somewhat different than with a regularly called or appointed minister. The M&P Committee relates to the intentional interim minister for specific employment issues, including vacation and continuing education, and regarding interrelationships with other staff and volunteer leaders. In some interim situations, they may be called on to assist with managing conflict. However, the tasks and focus of the interim ministry are overseen and monitored by the Transition Team, and the intentional interim minister does not have the same accountability to the M&P Committee that ministry personnel normally would have.

The M&P Committee first needs to understand for themselves that the position description of the intentional interim minister is different from that of a regularly called or appointed

minister. They can then provide support by clarifying the differences for the community of faith.

With less direct responsibility for the minister, an interim period is a good time for the M&P Committee to evaluate and strengthen its own functioning. They might attend an M&P workshop, if available, and/or work with the intentional interim minister to better understand their responsibilities, develop their skills, examine current position descriptions, and learn how to prepare future ones. This preparation will make them more effective in developing and maintaining a healthy pastoral relationship in the future.

Conflict Resolution

From time to time, conflict will arise in relationships within a community of faith. Conflict is a normal part of the life of a community. The M&P Committee supports healthy responses to issues, concerns, and conflict situations arising between ministry personnel, lay employees, and the community of faith.

The M&P Committee has a role in encouraging conflict resolution or, if necessary, mediation.

When concerns are raised or conflicts identified, it's essential to have a process of hearing all sides fairly. The committee can serve that need by having a confidential discussion of the legitimacy of the concerns. Ministry personnel and lay employees should be reminded that they may bring a support person with them to a meeting at which a concern about a conflict is to be addressed. This support person could be a member of the regional council or a colleague in ministry but should not be a member of the community of faith.

In a situation of serious conflict, however, it is recommended that the M&P Committee consult early with your regional council staff. Regional council staff are aware of conflict resolution facilitators within their regional council. Section J.3 of *The Manual* outlines principles and procedures for the resolution of conflicts.

Marlene Wilson, in her book on church volunteer management (*How to Mobilize Church Volunteers*, Augsburg, 1983), discusses four levels of conflict within a community and describes helpful ways to manage it.

- The first level of conflict is informational. People do not have all the information, and an easy sharing of facts and conflicting viewpoints is often sufficient to achieve clarity.
- A second level of conflict happens when there is disagreement about how things are to be done. Problem solving and brainstorming together is a helpful method to encourage input on how the committee or group can proceed.
- A third level involves differences in why we do things the way we do. This level requires deeper conversation, attention, and possibly an outside facilitator to help resolve it.
- In the fourth level of conflict, the root of disagreement is over closely held ideas, beliefs, and values, which are in opposition. While challenging, the fourth level is a place where relationships can continue when common ground is discovered.

An outside facilitator would also be helpful to work through level four conflicts. Referring to these four levels of conflict could be helpful to an M&P Committee in order to realize which level a conflict may be, as well as determining possible action to manage the conflict.

Policy: The M&P Committee is responsible for regularly reviewing the working conditions, responsibilities, and compensation of all pastoral charge staff, and making any recommendations needed as a result of these reviews to the governing body.

In the employment relationship in a community of faith, the community of faith is the employer. It is the responsibility of the governing body, often delegated to the M&P Committee, to ensure that as the employer, the community of faith is in compliance with provincial labour legislation. This is especially true for the employment relationship with lay employees. In some jurisdictions, ministry personnel are exempt from employment standards legislation. Many employment issues regarding ministry personnel are covered in *The Manual*. Employment issues for lay employees may be addressed by provincial employment standards.

Compliance with Employment Regulations

The church is obliged to comply with a wide range of government regulations, including

- income tax as regulated by the Canada Revenue Agency
- Canada Pension Plan and Employment Insurance withholding, remittances, and record keeping
- health and safety and workers' compensation regulation and agencies
- human rights and employment equity regulation
- provincial health levies, and employment taxes
- employment standards including hours of work, statutory holidays, minimum wages, vacation pay, and notice of termination or layoff

M&P Committee members must acquaint themselves with these regulations and stay up to date in order to regularly report to the governing body.

Employment Regulations

Communities of faith, regardless of their size, must be responsible employers and ensure that they comply with all relevant legislation such as the Employment Standards Act, Human Rights Code, Occupational Health and Safety Act, and Income Tax Act. Due to variations in legislation from province to province, specifics for each province are not provided in these guidelines.

Workplace Health and Safety

The M&P Committee has a responsibility to ensure workplace health and safety. The United Church of Canada is committed to providing safe environments for work, worship, and study, free from harassment and violence. It will not tolerate any behaviour by any person, including but not limited to members, adherents, lay and order of ministry staff, elected members, or volunteers that constitutes harassment or is violent or threatens violence toward those who

are carrying out responsibilities for the church. Harassment and violence in the workplace are prohibited by federal and provincial law and the regulations of the church.

Complaints relating to workplace discriminations, harassment, violence or any form of abuse, such as sexual abuse, are subject to immediate action in accordance with the United Church's [*Creating Safe and Respectful Environments Policy*](#). For assistance concerning the specific process for complaints of sexual misconduct or child abuse, the regional council staff should be contacted immediately or e-mail complaintresponse@united-church.ca.

The United Church of Canada has a legal, moral, and spiritual duty to care for and protect participants in its church programs. This is a legal principle called "duty of care," and church groups have been, and will be, held legally responsible for ensuring reasonable measures are taken to ensure safety. The United Church is committed to providing a safe environment for worship, work, and study in all communities of faith, institutions, agencies, and organizations, or other bodies that operate under its name. The United Church seeks to ensure that all ministry personnel, lay employees, and volunteers who work with vulnerable individuals in United Church settings share this commitment. This commitment is demonstrated by ministry personnel, lay employees, and volunteers showing respect for personal boundaries, protecting others from harm and abuse, and enabling those in their care to learn and grow without fear of exploitation. Using the guidelines provided in [*Faithful Community: A Duty of Care Approach for Programs*](#), a risk assessment should be conducted to determine what screening measures are needed for each position.

Occupational health and safety legislation has been put in place by all provinces to provide a safe environment in which to work. It is the responsibility of the governing body, as the employer, to provide a safe environment for all your staff and to both initiate and respond to safety concerns.

The governing body may delegate to the M&P Committee any work related to compliance of provincial workplace occupational health and safety legislation. One part of compliance with health and safety legislation is ensuring that all staff have been educated and trained about the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS), to ensure that workers know the hazards of specific products in their workplace and the procedures and other measures to work safely with those hazardous products.

Worker's Compensation is a provincial government program that provides pay continuance for employees that are injured in the workplace. Certain types of employment automatically require coverage while others do not. For church employers, some provincial jurisdictions have separated requirements for ministry personnel from lay employees, but others have not. Because Worker's Compensation is complex, it will often require a factual analysis of the role/structure of the organization. Given the different roles within a community of faith, and variety of tasks that could be completed, it will be a nuanced analysis. Therefore, each community of faith is encouraged to determine whether worker's compensation coverage

should apply, as it is not necessarily straight forward. For clarification, check with regional council staff or independent legal counsel.

Compensation

Salary

As the employer, it is important to ensure that compensation practices are fair and just, and that employment standards minimum wage requirements are met. Sometimes communities of faith find it difficult to set the wages of lay employees. While the wages must meet provincial employment standards, a helpful practice is to inquire with surrounding churches or similar employers to determine what a fair and just wage is for the work of a lay employee.

The employer should decide whether an annual cost of living/economic increase and/or anniversary increase will be provided to its lay employees. It is recommended that anniversary increases be awarded annually on the date that the employee commenced work and be based on positive work reviews.

Ministry personnel are entitled to receive a number of financial and other benefits, specified in section I.2.1 of *The Manual*. These benefits are also described in some detail in the schedule of [*Minimum Salaries and Reimbursements for Ministry Personnel*](#), which is updated annually and posted on the United Church website.

The M&P Committee ensures that the financial compensation package promised to ministry personnel and lay employees is honoured throughout the pastoral or employment relationship. The committee regularly reviews these items—referring, in the case of ministry personnel to the completed record of call or appointment—and brings recommendations to the governing body.

Communities of faith must ensure that the salary paid to each of their ministry personnel does not fall below The United Church of Canada minimum standard (for the minister's increment category and the community of faith's cost of living group) or the initial agreement. If in doubt as to the correct increment category, the committee can consult the Theology and Ministry Leadership Unit at the General Council Office.

If the initial call or appointment provided for financial benefits above the minimum standards, the committee may be called upon to recommend interpretations or clarifications. If initial negotiations were for salary above minimum, it is not appropriate for that salary to be eroded over time.

Whenever there is a change in the compensation of ministry personnel and lay employees, the M&P Committee should ensure that these changes are communicated to the payroll administrator (often the treasurer) to ensure that the correct amounts are processed through ADP.

For example, a change could include ministry personnel moving up a category on the salary scale or a lay employee receiving a cost-of-living adjustment.

Travel

Where the work of a ministry unit requires ministry personnel to use a car, the community of faith must reimburse the ministry personnel for travel at least at the minimum per kilometre rate set annually by the Executive of the General Council.

The minimum rate per kilometre is provided in the annual schedule of Minimum Salary and Allowances for Ministry Personnel. Further details about the travel expense reimbursement and an example of a travel log can be found in the [Financial Handbook for Congregations](#).

The M&P Committee also monitors matters such as these:

- adequate administrative assistance should be provided to ministry personnel
- the adequacy of the manse (as applicable)
- basic phone service is also provided to ministry personnel

More detailed information about compensation, including allowances, can be found in the [Financial Handbook for Congregations](#).

Benefits

The United Church of Canada supports its employees by offering a reasonable amount of group life, health, and disability insurance and other mechanisms of support to all eligible employees of the church and their families.

The M&P Committee ensures that all staff participate in the Pension Plan and the Group Insurance Plan. Participation in the pension and benefit plans is mandatory and a condition of employment for all ministry personnel and lay employees (hired after December 31, 1988) working full-time or part-time who work an average of 14 or more hours per week in aggregate across all employments and have met the applicable waiting period are eligible to participate in the pension and benefit plans.

This means that if have a part-time staff member working less than 14 hours per week in your community of faith but working for another United Church employer for a total of more than 14 hours per week, then this staff member will be enrolled into the pension and benefit plans.

Members of the Group Insurance Plan are entitled to the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) and the Restorative Care Plan. More information about these plans or programs are available at [The United Church of Canada Benefits Centre](#).

Medical Leave

The medical leave policy of the United Church is described in *The Manual*, section I.2.2.1, as follows:

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.

All permanent full-time and permanent part-time lay employees working 14 or more hours per week and ministry personnel working 14 or more hours per week and who are not retired are eligible for up to 6 months of salary continuance, under the Restorative Care Plan (RCP), during a qualified short-term medical absence.

The Restorative Care Plan is for ministry personnel and lay employees who require a short-term medical leave from their jobs. It assists ministry personnel and lay employees during their illness and assists the community of faith with the financial responsibility of continuing salary and benefits for up to six months. Ministry personnel can access the Restorative Care Plan by contacting their regional council staff. Lay employees can access the Restorative Care Plan by contacting the disability team at the General Council Office. For details, see the [Restorative Care Plan Roadmap](#) in the Benefits Centre document library (uccbenefits.ca).

For lay employees, employment standards in a few provinces include provision for sick leave, but most do not. However, many churches offer the standard one day per month paid sick leave to full-time employees. Part-time entitlements would be pro-rated. It is suggested that unused sick days not be cumulative from year to year and that an absence from work for more than five working days requires a doctor's certificate.

The following procedural framework provides some guidance, but not policy, on how the M&P Committee can support lay employees and ministry personnel during a medical absence, whether that is an absence of greater than two weeks where the Restorative Care Plan (RCP) may take effect (if the staff person is eligible for RCP) or non-consecutive absences of less than two weeks in duration. The framework talks about sick days to differentiate from the medical leave outlined in *The Manual*, section I.2.2.1.

Procedures

1. A lay employee or ministry personnel shall advise their M&P committee when they know they will be absent from work due to sickness/illness indicating the possible length of time they expect to be absent.
2. Absence from work for 5 consecutive working days or longer requires a physician's note to support absence.
3. After the 5th consecutive day there needs to be a determination if a Medical Absence Report (with the physician's note) needs to be filed with the Disability staff at the General Council Office who will then submit it to the third-party adjudicator. A

Medical Absence Report form is available from disability@united-church.ca or your regional council staff.

If the absence exceeds two weeks:

4. Salary continuance for up to 6 months will be provided by the community of faith (and supported by RCP), if the absence exceeds two weeks, is medically supported, and is approved by the third-party adjudicator.
5. If the third-party adjudicator does not support a qualifying medical absence, the community of faith can decide whether the days taken as sick will be considered as vacation taken or as compassionate leave or as leave without pay which will be reflected on employees next pay date.

If the absence is less than two weeks:

6. After 6 non-consecutive medical absence days in a calendar year, the M&P committee will review the circumstances with the lay employee or ministry personnel to ascertain what other supports may be needed and how the individual can have more success in meeting position requirements.
 - a. In preparation for the conversation, the M&P committee can call the United Church's Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) provider. You can have a confidential consultation with a professional on how to approach sensitive employee issues, explore options, brainstorm solutions, and work on action plans. You can call EFAP (1-844-880-9142 -English or 1-800-361-5676 -French) and explain that you are a volunteer working in a church leadership capacity and ask for a manager consultation. Our EFAP provider has notes on the United Church file indicating that volunteers acting as people leaders are eligible for management consultation.
 - b. During these conversations the M&P committee needs to ensure they respect the privacy of the staff person. The M&P committee does not have the right to ask about the diagnosis or nature of an illness. Any medical information intentionally or inadvertently received is to be held in strict confidence and cannot be shared without the written agreement of the individual.

Other Leaves

Both ministry personnel and lay employees serving a community of faith may be entitled to take a leave of absence for a particular reason. The M&P Committee has a role in either granting or managing these leaves.

Further details about many of the leaves for ministry personnel can be found in section I.2.3 of *The Manual* or in [*Pastoral Relations: Supporting the Pastoral Relationship*](#).

The following leaves are available to ministry personnel and/or lay employees:

Statutory Holidays and Vacation

To give staff time for rest and recreation, and in keeping with legislation, the United Church provides time off with pay for statutory holidays and vacation.

Each provincial Employment Standards Act has qualifications for paid statutory holidays. Lay employees in every province are entitled to holidays as determined by provincial legislation. Full-time and part-time staff must meet conditions related to length of employment, the number of days worked before and after the holiday, and so on. In some jurisdictions, ministry personnel are exempt from employment standards legislation. For example, many communities of faith expect their ministry personnel to provide worship leadership on Good Friday, a public holiday. For ministry personnel, this kind of public holiday is a working day. A common practice, when ministry personnel are expected to work on public holidays, is for the M&P Committee to encourage them to take time off at another time. Employees who wish to take time off to celebrate other religious or ethnic holidays may use other leave provisions.

The M&P Committee must ensure that the minimum vacation is taken each year, according to provincial employment standards legislation.

While the employer may decide when employees take their vacation, it is generally a mutual agreement. It is the employer's obligation to ensure that vacations are scheduled and taken. Specifically, ministry personnel and lay employees consult with the M&P Committee to plan their annual vacation time, and the schedule is then reported to the governing body. The ministry personnel or lay employee does not announce when they are taking vacation, they request it. And unless there is a good reason not to grant the request, the employer agrees.

Employment standards legislation provides guidelines for lay employees' annual vacation with pay including minimum entitlements, length of employment required, minimum vacation taken at one time, and time limit by which earned vacation must be used.

According to section I.2.1.7 of *The Manual*, ministry personnel are given 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). This may be a single calendar month including five Sundays. For ministry personnel who don't take a single calendar month of vacation, their vacation is 23 working days, if they are working full-time. For those working full-time, there are five working days in a week. Ministers who are working part-time hours each week still receive at least one month's vacation (or 23 working days) at their usual part-time salary. For those working part-time, the M&P Committee works with the ministry personnel to determine what the working days are in a week. If only part of the pastoral year is worked, the vacation allotment is pro-rated. Vacation time is an entitlement and cannot be banked beyond the end of the pastoral year. Also, the banking of vacation time does not lead to rest and renewal for ministry personnel.

The M&P Committee should be very clear with ministry personnel and lay employees about what their vacation allowance is, how much they have taken (at least once a year), and what the process is for going on vacation. Also, vacation should be tracked. A reason to track vacation is so that if a lay employee leaves or is terminated, vacation pay is paid out to them. Also, if ministry personnel change pastoral relations, it is clear which community of faith is responsible for vacation pay.

For M&P Committees that need assistance in tracking the vacation of ministry personnel and lay employees and the study leave of ministry personnel, a worksheet is available in the Downloads section of the [Ministry and Personnel Committee Resources](#) webpage.

Sabbatical Leave

Sabbatical leave is available only to ministry personnel; it is described in *The Manual* section I.2.3.5:

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.

The responsibilities of the M&P Committee before and after the sabbatical leave, and more detailed information about the sabbatical leave policy, can be found in [Pastoral Relations: Supporting the Pastoral Relationship](#). Support may be available to your community of faith for visiting ministry personnel during the sabbatical leave. See the [Financial Assistance](#) webpage for more information and application forms.

Post-Pregnancy and Parental Leaves

Post-pregnancy and parental leave benefits are available to ministry personnel in a community of faith. Full details of the post-pregnancy and parental leaves policies for ministry personnel, including details about top-up payments, can be found in [Pastoral Relations: Supporting the Pastoral Relationship](#).

Sometimes ministry personnel and community of faith treasurers find the details about the top-up payments for these leaves confusing. A helpful online tool for calculating top-up payments is available at [Budgeting Tools for Treasurers](#).

For lay employees, employment standards legislation entitles permanent full- and part-time employees to an unpaid maternity leave. Eligibility is based on due date, not necessarily on the actual date of delivery. The leave is unpaid, but the employee may be entitled to Employment Insurance benefits. The employee must give notice of the date they intend to commence their leave (emergencies excepted) and can start the maternity leave any time before their baby is due (length of time varies by province). Most provinces allow this decision to be made by the employee, not the employer. An employee can plan to work right up until their due date, but no later. Maternity leave must be taken all at one time.

For lay employees, employment standards' parental leave provisions vary depending on the province. Parental leave is available to either parent, or it may be shared between the parents as they deem appropriate. The leave is unpaid, but Employment Insurance benefits are available to either spouse for a portion of that time.

While on leave, ministry personnel and lay employees must continue to receive credit for service. To maintain coverage in the pension and group benefits plans for this period, ministry personnel and lay employees must pay their share of the premiums and contributions to the Benefits Centre team at the General Council Office, unless they have elected to discontinue contributions. Legislation requires that the employer continue to pay the employer's share unless the employee advises in writing that they will not make the employee's payments.

For all staff taking these types of leave, a Record of Employment must be provided for their Employment Insurance application.

Bereavement Leave

Employers are encouraged to support their ministry personnel and lay employees during times of loss and provide bereavement leave to those who require it.

For ministry personnel, 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, such as a close friend or relative.

For lay employees, it is suggested that up to four days of bereavement leave with pay be provided to all employees upon the death of a member of their immediate family or significant person, upon the employee's advice to the employer.

The immediate family is usually considered to be the partner or spouse, child, stepchild, birth or adoptive parent, father-in-law, mother-in-law, sister, brother, grandparent, or stepparent. A significant person is usually a relative not included in the above, or a close friend. Depending on the circumstances, this leave may be extended or combined with other leaves if appropriate.

Compassionate Leave

Compassionate leave is a paid leave and provides for reasonable time away for exceptional or extreme emergency situations not covered under other leaves. The length depends on the circumstances. Compassionate leave may be given to extend bereavement leave.

Policy: The M&P Committee is responsible for making decisions about compassionate leave.

For ministry personnel, a compassionate leave is normally 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. 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.

For lay employees, the M&P Committee and the governing body may wish to establish a practice of granting compassionate leave (suggested to be up to five days per year and not cumulative) to employees who find themselves with a personal emergency. For very exceptional circumstances, the employer may decide to grant compassionate leave for longer periods (generally not to exceed 10 days). This is not an entitlement, and it should be granted on an as-needed basis for unusual, unexpected circumstances or situations that require urgent and immediate attention, and where the ministry personnel or the lay employee is the only person able to respond.

Extended Compassionate Leave

All employers have been legislated to ensure that employees are legally permitted compassionate or family medical leave time. Employees may be entitled to Employment Insurance benefits and should directly contact the relevant government department, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. The extended compassionate leave procedures are outlined on government websites.

Staff may be entitled to eight weeks of government employee benefits for compassionate or family medical leave where there is significant risk of death within 26 weeks of a family member (i.e., partner, spouse; a parent, step-parent, or foster parent of the employee; a child, stepchild, or foster child of the employee or the employee's spouse). Staff must give written notice that they will be taking extended compassionate care leave. If a staff member must begin leave before advising the appropriate supervisor, such as the M&P Committee, the staff member will advise the supervisor as soon as possible after beginning the leave. Staff returning from an approved leave will be reinstated to their former position or provided with comparable alternative work.

Court Duty

The United Church of Canada is committed to supporting the civic responsibilities of its ministry personnel and lay employees, and provides leave for jury and witness duty to those who are called to serve. If a ministry personnel or lay employee is called for court duty, the employer is legally obliged to release the staff member from work but is not legally obliged to pay them for that time. In practice, staff who miss work for court duty will receive full salary and benefits as usual. Absence for subpoenaed witness duty is treated the same as jury duty. Staff are expected to return to work as soon as court duty has been completed.

Leave of Absence

For ministry personnel, the community of faith may grant a leave of absence for another reason, if requested by the ministry personnel. This leave of absence may be paid or unpaid, as agreed by the community of faith and ministry personnel. The regional council must approve any leave of absence that will last more than three months.

An unpaid leave of absence allows ministry personnel or lay employees to take an extended period of time away from work with an assurance of returning to their position at a specific time. Leaves can be granted for a number of reasons, but the M&P Committee needs to be

thoughtful about granting these leaves by applying consistent criteria. Any request for a leave of absence needs to be negotiated with all parties involved.

If a leave is to be granted, it must be determined how the work of the ministry personnel or lay employee will be covered and the effect this may have on other staff.

Vacation and sick leave credits do not accrue during an unpaid leave of absence. Benefits and pension coverage during a leave of absence is as follows:

- An unpaid leave of absence of more than 30 calendar days should be considered a break in continuous service for the purpose of benefits entitlement. The ministry personnel or lay employee will keep benefits and service earned up to that date.
- In order to maintain provincial health care coverage, the employee will pay the full premium (employee and employer portions) directly to the payroll office. This applies only in provinces where health care premiums are paid by individuals.
- In order to maintain benefits coverage and membership in the pension plan, the ministry personnel or lay employee will pay the full premiums (employee and employer portions) directly to the [United Church Benefits Centre](#).

All benefits will be reinstated and the usual payroll deductions made upon the employee's return to work.

Continuing Education Leave

Policy: The M&P Committee is responsible for ensuring pastoral charge staff make use of opportunities for continuing education that they have been given.

For the continuing education of ministry personnel in communities of faith, study leave is a paid leave of absence for three weeks per year. Three full weeks (including Sundays) of continuing education each year are included in the terms of call or appointment for all ministry personnel. Ministry personnel should be encouraged to utilize the three weeks each year. The dates of study leave for ministry personnel are set in consultation with the M&P Committee.

A continuing education and learning resources allowance (of at least the minimum established by the General Council Office) is available to ministry personnel.

The [Standard for Continuing Education for Ministry Personnel](#), found in the Downloads section on the [Office of Vocation page](#), provides the M&P Committee with a tool of the types of continuing education their ministry personnel could choose to pursue. The standard is less a tool for evaluation and more a container for conversation about continuing education between ministry personnel and M&P Committee.

It is not up to the M&P Committee to evaluate or determine competency after a minister has completed a piece of continuing education. It is the responsibility of the ministry personnel to integrate their own learning and recognize their growth in the competency.

Using the framework within the continuing education standard, an M&P Committee could identify a competency they believe would benefit their minister and encourage them to focus some (but not necessarily all) of the continuing education in growing that competency in the next year. They could also identify how it matches with part of the Call (Deep Spirituality, Bold Discipleship, Daring Justice).

This standard is meant to inspire conversation between ministry personnel and their M&P Committee. M&P committees are invited to use this resource positively. The standard should focus the conversation about continuing education between ministry personnel and M&P committees and must not be used in an adversarial way. This tool should not be used by the M&P Committee to put pressure on their ministry personnel when the pastoral relationship is unhealthy.

If there is difficulty in the pastoral relationship and this framework is making the conflict between ministry personnel and the M&P Committee worse, regional council staff should be contacted for support.

The committee makes the necessary recommendations to the governing body, keeping in mind the interests and priorities of the community of faith as well as those of the individual. It is a best practice for the M&P Committee to regularly track study leave of the ministry personnel.

A helpful practice for continuing education is to focus each of the three weeks separately. One week can be focused on learning that the ministry personnel feels they personally need. One week can be focused on education for what the community of faith needs, and a final week on topics that will benefit both the ministry personnel and the community of faith. This model of dividing up the weeks shares responsibility for finding learning opportunities among all parties. There is no policy stating that this is how continuing education must be divided; this is only a guide.

The M&P Committee's responsibility is to make sure that ministry personnel make use of opportunities for the study leave and continuing education allowance that they have been given. The oversight of the continuing education of ministry personnel lies with the community of faith and its governing body. The Office of Vocation is responsible for establishing standards for continuing education and professional development of ministry personnel.

Position Description

Policy: The M&P Committee is responsible for revising position descriptions of pastoral charge staff as needed.

The M&P Committee is responsible for ensuring that all ministry personnel and lay employees (and, if possible, volunteers) have current and accurate position descriptions. These position descriptions should include

- the tasks and responsibilities of the position;
- the position's relationship to other jobs;

- the accountability of the position;
- the conditions under which the work is performed; and
- the skills, knowledge, ability, and other qualifications required.

Job titles should be descriptive of the position and, where possible, be consistent with other similar positions.

When there is a change in a pastoral relationship, position descriptions for ministry personnel are developed as part of the community of faith profile, in consultation with the M&P Committee and the governing body. Subsequently, the M&P Committee assumes responsibility for reviewing position descriptions regularly and making recommendations to the governing body when revisions are required. This may occur as part of an annual review.

When there is a change in a pastoral relationship in multiple staff ministries, The Manual requires that the division of responsibilities between the ministry personnel and the accountability of each ministry personnel be clarified by the governing body and the ministry personnel, approved by the regional council, and reviewed by the community of faith annually.

Initial position descriptions for lay employees may be developed, in consultation with the M&P Committee, by the committees that share in the staff member's oversight—for example, by the Property Committee for the custodian and by the Music Committee and the Worship Committee for the musician. Consultation with other staff members may also be appropriate.

Volunteer positions should also have written position descriptions. The governing body may delegate this work to the M&P Committee. The guidelines provided in Faithful Footsteps are helpful in conducting a risk assessment to determine the screening measures needed for each position.

As the ministry articulation of the community of faith changes, the position descriptions of ministry personnel and lay employees can be modified through consultations with the staff members. These modifications occur to align the work of paid staff more closely with the mission of the faith community. For ministry personnel, a major change to the position description would trigger the need for a conversation about the pastoral relationship with a regional council liaison. What constitutes a major change is a judgment made in consultation with the appropriate regional council committee or team.

[*Ministry and Personnel Committees: Beginnings and Endings*](#) contains a sample lay employee job description template.

Recruitment and Selection of Lay Employees

For recruitment and selection of ministry personnel, the whole M&P Committee will not be involved in the search process. However, the committee is involved in the recruitment and selection of lay employees. Guidelines for the steps of recruitment and selection of lay employees can be found in [*Ministry and Personnel Committees: Beginnings and Endings*](#).

Annual Performance Review

Policy: The M&P Committee is responsible for conducting annual performance reviews of the pastoral charge staff.

The annual performance review is a means by which ministry personnel, lay employees, and people of the community of faith support one another in their mutual responsibilities for ministry and ensure alignment with their mission. It is not intended to interfere with the relationship between ministry personnel and the governing body, or with the relationship between lay employees and the committees that oversee their work. Rather, it is an occasion for helpful feedback in a climate of openness and trust that leads to constructive results. It is one of the key elements of the supervisory role of the M&P Committee.

Further guidance for annual performance review is available in a supplementary resource, [Ministry and Personnel Committees: Annual Performance Reviews](#).

Disciplinary Action and Termination

Information on disciplinary actions and terminations can be found in [Ministry and Personnel Committees: Beginnings and Endings](#).

It is a privilege and a challenge to be a member of an M&P Committee.
Building good relationships in your community of faith can be exciting and rewarding work—hopefully you will also find some enjoyment in the process!

This handbook has been designed as a resource for your M&P Committee.
Further assistance is always available through your regional council.

As you engage with the roles and responsibilities of the M&P Committee,
may you feel blessed by the Creator, who supervised creation into being,
by the Christ, who taught us about being in a healthy relationship with God,
and by the Spirit, to whom we turn for support and consultation.

Amen.



united-church.ca/handbooks

Appendix

Sample Confidentiality Agreement

I, _____, agree to maintain and respect the confidentiality of all information including that which is personal and privileged, which comes to me as a result of carrying out my responsibilities as a member of the Ministry and Personnel Committee of _____.

I will not discuss the information that comes to me with anyone beyond the bounds of the committee.

I understand and agree that failure to maintain confidentiality will result in termination of my position on the committee.

I, _____, have read and understood the above information and agree to the terms.

Name

Signature

Date