

Pastoral Relations: Policy for a Community of Faith

April 2020



Pastoral Relations
Relations pastorales

The United Church of Canada
L'Église Unie du Canada

Pastoral Relations: Policy for a Community of Faith (April 2020)



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About This Resource

This resource expands on the policy found under I. Pastoral Relations in *The Manual*. It is specifically for communities of faith that are starting, changing, or ending a pastoral relationship. This resource contains policy and procedures that must be followed.

This is one in a series to guide the church in the area of pastoral relations. Other resources in this series are as follows (available on the [Handbooks](#) page of The United Church of Canada website):

- *Pastoral Relations: Ministry Personnel*
- *Pastoral Relations: Guidelines for a Community of Faith Profile*
- *Pastoral Relations: Guidelines for Search and Selection*
- *Pastoral Relations: Supporting the Pastoral Relationship*
- *Pastoral Relations: Regional Council Liaisons*

These additional resources expand on how the mandatory policies and procedures can be met and focus on the relational aspect of the pastoral relations process. After all, pastoral relations is about relationships between ministers and communities of people living out their faith.

Pastoral Relations: Guidelines for a Community of Faith Profile and *Pastoral Relations: Guidelines for Search and Selection* are companions to this resource. They provide guidance, suggestions, recommendations, and tools for a community of faith in the pastoral relations process, including preparing a community of faith profile, using ChurchHub, interviewing and selecting new ministry personnel, and completing a call or appointment.

As of January 2019, these new pastoral relations resources, available on the [Handbooks](#) page of The United Church of Canada website, replace *Pastoral Relations: Engaging and Supporting* (March 2015).

For assistance in your pastoral relations journey, including whom to contact in your regional council, please visit the [Pastoral Relations](#) page of The United Church of Canada website.

What Is Pastoral Relations Policy?

Ordered ministers and designated lay ministers while in paid accountable ministry positions are office holders within The United Church of Canada. While there may be elements similar to employment, the essential nature of the relationship is a covenant.

—Statement on Ministry in The United Church of Canada (2012)

The special status of ministry personnel requires the church to write policy that governs the paid accountable ministry relationship between ministry personnel and communities of faith. The policy that governs this relationship is pastoral relations policy.

Pastoral relations policy governs search, selection, calls, and appointments between ministry personnel and communities of faith within The United Church of Canada. Pastoral relations policy is set by the General Council and implemented cooperatively by communities of faith and regional councils.

Theological Grounding

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

—A Song of Faith: A Statement of Faith of The United Church of Canada (2006)

A community of faith, like any community, changes.
When a minister comes into a community of faith
a covenant is made; a promise to walk together as God's people,
deepening our commitment to Jesus Christ
and growing closer to God.
God's covenant with us never changes,
but our covenants with one another do change.

—Adapted from the *Book of Worship*, United Church of Christ © 1986, United Church of Christ
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permission.

Manual Policy: What Has Changed

The 43rd General Council 2018 made the following changes to pastoral relations policy:

1. The definition of covenant is expanded beyond three parties.

A covenant is now defined as follows (*The Manual, 2019*, section I.1):

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.

A covenant with a community of faith is established by call or appointment. It creates a pastoral relationship and is governed by [pastoral relations policies].

A covenant with another ministry is governed by the human resource policies of the other ministry.

2. The needs assessment process is replaced with the use of profiles of ministry personnel and profiles of communities of faith.

Each community of faith within The United Church of Canada is responsible for preparing a community of faith profile. A community of faith that has completed and filed a profile with the regional council may issue a call or appointment.

Each ministry personnel is responsible for preparing and filing a ministry personnel profile. A member of the order of ministry with a profile may accept a call or appointment. A designated lay minister with a profile may accept an appointment.

3. The governing body of the community of faith is responsible for some pastoral relations actions and decisions that were previously the responsibility of a congregation.

Specifically, the governing body of the community of faith is responsible for the following:

- *decisions about supply appointments*

The governing body of the community of faith is responsible for requesting regional council approval for supply appointments.

Supply appointments are defined in *The Manual* at section I.1.8.

- *preparing the community of faith profile (replaces needs assessment)*

It is the responsibility of the governing body of the community of faith to ensure the community of faith's profile is completed and a community of faith meeting is called to recommend the profile. The governing body is responsible for ensuring that the profile is filed to meet pastoral relations requirements. The regional council is responsible for approving the community of faith profile.

- *notifying the regional council of any proposed change in covenant, and to request a liaison*

If a meeting of the community of faith is called to consider a change in pastoral relations, either to end the pastoral relationship or to make a change to terms of the pastoral relationship, the governing body is responsible for notifying the regional council and requesting a liaison from the regional council.

- 4. The presbytery representative role is replaced with a regional council liaison as the regional council representative to communities of faith for pastoral relations/covenant processes.**

A regional council liaison is meant to offer supportive and consistent accompaniment to the community of faith throughout a change in pastoral relations.

The regional council is responsible for

- training regional council liaisons
 - ensuring that the community of faith profile meets the purpose of the community profile and contains the required elements and optional elements, where applicable and as outlined in these policies
 - training the search team before interviews start
 - determining where support will be offered by a regional council liaison and where support will be offered by regional council staff
- 5. ChurchHub (ChurchHub.ca) is established and regularized as the required process for ministry personnel and communities of faith to search for calls and appointments. The United Church of Canada will support the Indigenous Church in being self-determining in whether or how they use ChurchHub.**

Additional Policies for Communities of Faith: Changing a Pastoral Relationship

This section is **required procedural policy** for communities of faith that are experiencing a change in pastoral relations. The related policy can be found in *The Manual*, I. Pastoral Relations, sections I.1. Connecting and I.3. Disengaging.

There are four stages of changing a pastoral relationship:

1. Request a change to the pastoral relationship.
2. Update and file a community of faith profile.
3. Search and selection.
4. Covenant through worship.

Request a Change to the Pastoral Relationship

A change to the pastoral relationship may be requested by the ministry personnel, the community of faith, or the regional council.

A change to the pastoral relationship may be a request to change the terms of the call or appointment or a request to end the pastoral relationship.

Regional Council Support

The regional council is responsible for support through the pastoral relations process.

All regional councils have trained members, called regional council liaisons, who are called to this work on the part of the regional council. The regional councils also have paid accountable staff—regional council ministers—who support the pastoral relations process and pastoral relationships. It is the regional council's responsibility to decide what support a community of faith and ministry personnel need, and to send that support. Ministry personnel are also supported by the Office of Vocation when making a change in pastoral relations.

A community of faith will, at minimum, touch base with the liaison at the following times in their process:

- for any discussion about the pastoral relationship
- any time support is needed to explore a living faith story, whether or not the community of faith is experiencing a change in pastoral relations
- when a change in pastoral relations has been requested
- when the community of faith begins writing their profile
- when the community of faith is ready to post their profile
- when a search team is appointed
- when the governing body requests a meeting of the community of faith to hear the recommendation of the search team
- at the covenanting service

Change to the Terms of the Call or Appointment

Is a community of faith profile always needed?

No, a request to change the terms of a call or appointment may be made without a community of faith profile if the ministry personnel, community of faith, and regional council are in mutual agreement with the change.

The ministry personnel, community of faith, or regional council may request an updated position description as part of negotiating new terms of call or appointment.

When is a community of faith profile needed?

A community of faith profile is needed when a community of faith is requesting a new ministry personnel position, requesting the end of a pastoral relationship, or requesting a change in terms of a call or appointment without the agreement of the ministry personnel.

A search team may not begin a search without a complete profile.

Ministry Personnel Requests a Change in Pastoral Relationship

How does a ministry personnel request a *change* to their current call or appointment?

If a ministry personnel requests a change to the terms of the call or appointment, the ministry personnel is responsible for

- writing a letter to the governing body of the community of faith and the regional council, notifying both councils of the request for a change in terms
- negotiating the new terms of call or appointment with the community of faith and the regional council

Negotiating New Terms of Call or Appointment

In a pastoral charge, this negotiation takes place between the ministry personnel, a representative from the community of faith Ministry and Personnel Committee, a member of the governing body, and the regional council liaison.

In a community of faith that is not a pastoral charge, the negotiation takes place between the ministry personnel, a representative from the community of faith, and the regional council liaison. If there is a Ministry and Personnel Committee or a Human Resources Committee, a representative from that committee should be present as well.

- The governing body is responsible for calling a meeting of the community of faith to decide whether to approve the change to the terms of call or appointment.
- The community of faith is responsible for deciding whether to approve the change to the terms of call or appointment.
- The regional council is responsible for deciding whether to approve the change to the terms of call or appointment.

How does a ministry personnel request an *end* to their call or appointment?

If a ministry personnel requests an end to a call or appointment, the ministry personnel is responsible for writing a letter notifying the following parties of the request to end the pastoral relationship, including a proposed date for the change to take effect:

- to the community of faith, addressed to the chair of the governing body
- to the regional council, addressed to the secretary of the regional council
- to the Office of Vocation, addressed to the Office of Vocation, General Council Office (officeofvocation@united-church.ca)

The ministry personnel must give at least 90 days' notice of the change in pastoral relationship.

The regional council is responsible for approving the request for a change in pastoral relationship. The regional council 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.

Community of Faith Requests a Change in Pastoral Relationship**How does a community of faith request a *change* to the current call or appointment?**

If the community of faith requests a change to the terms of the current call or appointment, the community of faith is responsible for

- writing a letter to the ministry personnel and the regional council, notifying both of the request for a change in terms
- negotiating the new terms of call or appointment with the ministry personnel, the governing body, and the regional council

How does a community of faith request an *end* to the pastoral relationship?

If the community of faith requests an end to the pastoral relationship, the governing body of the community of faith is responsible for

- ensuring that the request for the meeting to consider the pastoral relationship meets the requirements of *The Manual*, section B.5.3
- writing a letter to the ministry personnel notifying them of the request for the meeting, the meeting date, and the ministry personnel's right to respond to the request to end the pastoral relationship at the meeting
- writing a letter to the regional council notifying them of the request for the meeting, and requesting a regional council liaison
- reading notice of the meeting during Sunday worship according to *The Manual*, section B.5.4.2a

The regional council is responsible for

- setting a date for the requested meeting and informing the person calling the meeting of the date
- sending a representative—a regional council liaison or regional council staff—to attend the meeting of the community of faith to consider the request for a change in pastoral relations
- deciding on the request for a change in pastoral relationship and notifying the Office of Vocation about any decision

The governing body of the community of faith is responsible for informing the ministry personnel of the upcoming meeting. The ministry personnel must be given the opportunity to be present and respond at the meeting (see *The Manual*, section I.3.1.5).

If the community of faith approves the request for change in pastoral relationship, the regional council is responsible for deciding on the request for change (and its terms) and for notifying the Office of Vocation (see *The Manual*, section I.3.1.6 h).

The community of faith is responsible for giving the ministry personnel 90 days' notice or paying salary in lieu of 90 days' notice.

The representative from the regional council may attend in person, by telephone conference, or by video conference.

Regional Council Ends the Pastoral Relationship

How does the regional council end a current call or appointment?

If the Board of Vocation has made a decision to place the minister's name on the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary) or the Discontinued Lay Ministry Appointment List, it informs the regional council that the minister is no longer eligible to serve in a call or appointment so that the regional council can end the pastoral relationship. The regional council is responsible for notifying the ministry personnel and the community of faith of the ending of the pastoral relationship.

Update and File a Community of Faith Profile

Community of Faith Contact Page on ChurchHub

Each community of faith in The United Church of Canada will have an online community of faith page at ChurchHub.ca that they are responsible for maintaining.

The General Council Office populates all community of faith profiles with basic information, similar to what is now included online on the [church locator](#) of The United Church of Canada website. Basic information includes the following:

- name
- address
- phone number
- e-mail address

The community of faith can update their basic information at any time. It is their responsibility to determine who has access to the profile and who will manage it.

Other information is available and updated by the General Council Office to a community of faith's ChurchHub page, including the following:

- regional council
- annual financials and demographics (the blue statistics forms)
- the regional self-assessment form

What Is ChurchHub?

- A major part of our new pastoral relations system is the Office of Vocation database that holds all personnel records.
- This database includes ChurchHub—a place where ministry personnel and candidates can sign in and access their personal profile via a unique e-mail address.
- Communities of faith are also able to sign in and access their profile via a unique e-mail address.
- ChurchHub is where ministry personnel search for a new call or appointment, and communities of faith search for a new minister.
- ChurchHub is secure. The only people who can see ministry personnel profiles that are posted as available for call or appointment are communities of faith that also have profiles that are posted as available for call or appointment. Everyone with ChurchHub access can see the beginning paragraph of the position summary for all available positions. The database connected to ChurchHub is housed in Canada.
- It can be found at ChurchHub.ca.
- The Indigenous Church will self-determine whether or how they use ChurchHub.
- More information about ChurchHub, including links to educational videos, can be found on the [ChurchHub webpage](#).
- If you have not received your invitation to ChurchHub, please e-mail ministry@united-church.ca.
- Google Chrome is the optimal browser for the best ChurchHub experience. This is especially true if you are using an iPad, iPhone, or MacBook.
- ChurchHub is compatible with mobile phones and tablets. However, the Submit a New Position form works better on a tablet or computer due to the number and length of some elements. All other functions should work on most smartphones.

Supply Appointment (see *The Manual*, section I.1.8)

Once a pastoral relationship has ended, you may want to have a supply minister appointed to offer leadership until your community of faith's profile is written and the associated position is filled. The governing body is empowered to request that the regional council approve a supply appointment.

The regional council needs to appoint a liaison to accompany the community of faith in the process. For this work, the governing body can ask the Ministry and Personnel Committee to prepare a position description. The liaison can provide feedback on the position description.

The governing body can also assign a group of individuals to be the interview team to interview applicants and recommend one applicant to the governing body. The interview team can use some of the interview questions found in *Pastoral Relations: Guidelines for Search and Selection*, but they must be mindful of human rights in their work. The team negotiates the terms of the short-term appointment with the chosen candidate, including salary, allowances, and start date.

The governing body approves the recommendation to appoint the successful applicant and forwards the request for appointment to the regional council for approval. When completing the Record of Call or Appointment, the governing body chooses “short-term supply” as the appointment type. If the appointment is for at least six months, the regional liaison coordinates a covenanting service.

Community of Faith Profile

A community of faith can update its profile at any time, even when it is not experiencing a change in pastoral relations. The regional council uses this profile as part of their oversight of the community of faith and as part of a self-assessment. Completing a profile can help to articulate your community’s beliefs, ministry needs, and financial realities.

The governing body is responsible for requesting a regional council liaison or support from the regional council for the process of completing the community of faith profile. The regional council liaison works with the governing body to ensure that the profile has all of the required elements and meets the purpose before it is filed.

The governing body is responsible for preparing the profile, including the living faith story. The purpose of the community of faith profile is to

- articulate the community of faith’s witness to the gospel
- articulate the ministry needs of the community of faith
- summarize the community of faith’s resources and community context

The purpose of the community of faith profile can be achieved by completing and compiling the elements of the profile. When a community of faith is not searching for a new pastoral relationship, the profile must include the following:

- living faith story
- financial statement
- demographics
- manse report, if applicable
- real property
- learning site requirements, if applicable

To prepare your community of faith profile, specifically when you are using it as part of your search for new ministry personnel, please follow the guidance offered in *Guidelines for a Community of Faith Profile* (available on the [Handbooks](#) page).

When a community of faith is experiencing a change in pastoral relations, its profile needs to be updated. A community of faith profile that is ready to post for search and selection must include the following additional elements:

- financial viability review
- position description(s)

At the point of posting the profile to ChurchHub, additional information needs to be added to assist ministers in searching for the profile, as follows:

- ministry role
- hours: full-time or part-time
- start date
- manse
- Supervised Ministry Education site
- solo or team ministry
- urban, suburban, or rural
- ethnocultural or linguistic-specific community of faith (provided by the General Council Office)
- Indigenous community of faith (provided by the General Council Office)
- Affirming community of faith (provided by the General Council Office)
- interim ministry, if applicable
- short-term supply, if applicable

This work can be divided up in any way that suits the community of faith. The governing body may prepare the profile or appoint a team to prepare it, or the whole community of faith may participate in preparing the profile.

The regional council is responsible for

- ensuring that the community of faith profile meets the purpose of the profile and contains the required elements and optional elements, where applicable and as outlined in these policies
- providing a regional council liaison to support the community of faith's process
- determining where support will be offered by a regional council liaison and where support will be offered by regional council staff

A living faith story and the other elements of a community of faith profile may point to any number of outcomes, such as a lay-led congregation, amalgamation or disbanding of the pastoral charge, or some new innovative ministry. A profile may recommend a new pastoral relationship or a change in terms of a call or appointment. The community of faith may discern

that it is called to be a Supervised Ministry Education site for candidates for ministry, or that it would like to be a partner with a community outreach project.

A number of resources are available from the General Council and regional council offices that may be used to tell a church's living faith story, including in the Resources section of *Pastoral Relations: Guidelines for a Community of Faith Profile* (available on the [Handbooks](#) page).

Search and Selection

A search process may begin once a community of faith profile and additional elements (position description and financial viability review) have been completed and filed on ChurchHub and approved by the regional council.

The governing body is responsible for naming a search team. This may be the same group of people who put together the profile, including the living faith story, or it may be a different group. Depending on the church size and context, the governing body may be able to take on this role, or it may be done by the whole congregation.

The regional council is responsible for training the search team. The search team begins holding interviews only once its members have been trained by the regional council.

Ministry personnel profiles are also posted to ChurchHub. Only communities of faith that are in a search process can see profiles of ministry personnel who are in search of call or appointment.

Confidentiality in the Search Process

The reason that only churches that are in a search process can see ministry personnel profiles is to maintain a level of confidentiality. Members of search teams must agree to keep the search process confidential. Privacy, confidentiality, and transparency are essential for building trust. Secrecy, on the other hand, impedes trust.

Privacy belongs to one individual only. Most people are aware of the importance of respecting the right to privacy—that is, 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 may be necessary to withhold some information. Confidentiality is a required condition for participants of certain groups 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 know and have a say in how information is used, who sees it, and how it fits into the larger picture. Transparency supports the principle of keeping a community of faith well informed about pastoral relations work.

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. When people suspect, rightly or wrongly, that a few “insiders” are making decisions for others, mistrust can take hold.

The search team is responsible for

- using ChurchHub to search for ministry personnel profiles that complement the community of faith profile, in whole or in part
- creating a short list of ministry personnel to interview, and inviting the ministers to an interview
- completing first-round interviews and shortlisting for second-round interviews
- holding reference checks for the ministry personnel who is moving to second-round interviews
- holding second-round interviews
- discerning through conversation and prayer a decision about a successful applicant
- contacting the successful applicant and beginning negotiations
- communicating to the ministry personnel who were not successful after the date for the community of faith meeting has been set
- extending a call or appointment to the successful applicant
- making a recommendation, including negotiated terms for the call or appointment, to the community of faith

The successful applicant is given the opportunity to confirm the invitation.

The governing body is responsible for requesting a meeting of the community of faith to consider the recommendation of the search team.

The regional council is responsible for

- attending the meeting via a representative, usually the liaison who has accompanied the community of faith during their search process. The regional council representative may attend in person, by telephone, or electronically.
- deciding whether to approve the call or appointment.

Covenant through Worship

At the beginning of a new call or appointment, a covenanting or installation service is held to celebrate the new pastoral relationship.

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.

Best Practices for Covenanting Service

With the ministry personnel, coordinate with your liaison or another representative of the regional council about the best time to hold the covenanting service.

A sample liturgy for recognizing the covenant that provides the foundation for the new pastoral relationship is found on the [Milestones and Transitions](#) worship page of the United Church website. There are also supplementary resources on the website to help worship leaders plan the whole covenanting service.

Ministry personnel and lay members of the regional council and neighbouring communities of faith are invited to celebrate with the people of the community of faith and their new minister. A regional council liaison is also there.

The expectations of attendance for covenanting services are flexible and must take into consideration the community of faith's context. The regional council is encouraged to include a time to celebrate all new covenants from the past year at the annual meeting.

A Prayer to Ground You during the Pastoral Relations Process

Holy One, Holy Three,
who has entered into a covenant with all of your people,
you call your disciples to follow in your way.
In times when we are not sure of the path,
give us courage.
In times when we need to discern
help us to listen to your still small voice.
In times when we are doubtful,
reassure us of your promise to never forsake us.

As we journey with you,
help us to be filled with your hope.
Amen.