

Pastoral Relations Transition FAQs

June 2018

If the 43rd General Council 2018 enacts remits 1, 3, and 7 in July and approves a proposal for changes to pastoral relations policy, our new pastoral relations system will come into effect on **January 1, 2019**.

Below are some answers to questions we've been receiving, particularly about Church Hub, the user-friendly interface of a new Office of Vocation database that will store all community of faith and ministry personnel profiles (previously referred to as "covenant hub").

Our New Pastoral Relations System

What do we do if our minister requests a change in pastoral relations?

In the new system, these are the stages a community of faith would move through if their ministry requests a change in pastoral relations:

1. The governing body of a community of faith makes a request to its regional council for a regional council liaison (a new volunteer position) to be assigned to them.
2. The community of faith completes its living faith story—the story of its ministry—with the guidance of the regional council liaison.
3. Geographic, demographic, financial, and other details about the community of faith are added to the living faith story. The whole package becomes the community profile, which is posted on Church Hub.
4. All ministry personnel have a profile on the Church Hub, and those seeking a new call or appointment can post their resumé, skills, and gifts, and request their Office of Vocation minister to post their profile as "available for call or appointment." Those profiles available for call or appointment can be seen only by communities of faith that are searching for a minister. Ministry personnel are able to see profiles of communities of faith that are searching for a minister.
5. The search group creates a shortlist of interviewees to interview. The regional council is responsible to ensure that the search group is trained in interview skills and ensures they're aware of human rights, racial justice, gender justice, disability justice, intercultural church, and other justice issues.
6. First interviews are held.
7. Second interviews are held.
8. The search group negotiates the terms of the call or appointment with the chosen ministry personnel.
9. The search group makes an offer to the ministry personnel and calls a community of faith meeting to vote on the new pastoral relationship; the regional council liaison attends this meeting. After the meeting, the community of faith sends a report on its decision to the regional council, and the regional council approves the new pastoral relationship.
10. All involved parties enter into the new covenant with a covenant worship service.

What Is Church Hub?

A major part of our new pastoral relations system will be an Office of Vocation database that will hold all personnel records.

- This database will include the Church Hub—a place where ministry personnel and candidates will be able to sign in and access their personal profile.
- Communities of faith will also be able to sign in and access their profile.
- The Indigenous Church will be self-determining whether or how they use this hub.
- Church Hub will also be where ministry personnel will search for a new call or appointment and communities of faith will search for a new minister.
- This new way of doing things will replace the Joint Needs Assessment process.

Church Hub FAQs

Will Office of Vocation database changes (e.g., e-mail, address) propagate to Pension and Benefits and all those other places that we currently have to send info?

Yes. What we are working toward is a checkbox on the ministry personnel profile that appears when you change your address, phone number, or e-mail that says something like “Do you give permission to share this address change with the Pension and Benefits database and ADP payroll provider?” With your checked and dated permission, your changes will be shared and changed in those other databases. If you do not give permission, when you get the confirmation e-mail about your address change in the OV database, you will also get a reminder that you did not agree to share your changes with the other databases. Directions and contact information to make those changes will be included.

Does the Church Hub / Office of Vocation conversation we are hearing include retired ministry personnel?

Yes. All ministry personnel records will be in the Office of Vocation database.

Continuing education is going to be included on the profile? Currently that is not listed anywhere outside the local ministry unit.

Yes, there will be a space on ministry personnel profiles to record continuing education.

Will all the info needed to access the Church Hub be sent to us, and will it be really user-friendly to those of us who are challenged by technology?

It is our intention to make the sign-in and profile sites as user-friendly as possible. Prior to asking ministry personnel to sign into their profiles pages on Church Hub, we will merge all of the data that we have from our current database to the new Office of Vocation database.

Beginning in November of 2018, ministry personnel will receive e-mails that invite them to set up a password for their Church Hub profile. The profile will already contain all of the information that we have in the minister’s record. You can sign in, have a look, and if necessary, make updates to your address, telephone, and e-mail. And yes, all of the information you will need will be sent to you.

Will ministry personnel and communities of faith seeking a match rank filters to narrow their search results?

The answer to this question has changed since we addressed it on the YouTube Live presentation. We originally intended to include profiles sections that both ministry

personnel and communities of faith would be required to rank so that profiles could be matched based on those rankings. The database that we are working with has a very functional search system for both keyword search and filter search that we have decided to try, with a timeline for evaluation built in, before spending the extra resources required on a custom search function.

Concerning confidentiality: by posting my skills and gifts inventory, will members of my community of faith know that I am seeking another call?

The short answer is no. But there is never a guarantee, the church is a small world! Only communities of faith that are in a search process will be able to see ministry personnel profiles. Ministers may not see one another's "in search of call or appointment" status.

Church Hub sounds quite efficient, yet as someone with a non-English name, I'm wondering if the community of faith would easily recognize my culture and make assumptions about/stereotype me.

The task group that harvested all of the ideas and best practices from the Conference pilot projects had a lengthy conversation about this very topic and other ways our diverse pool of ministry personnel may be consciously, semi-consciously, or unconsciously discriminated against in this new process. We proposed the idea of posting profiles anonymously, but that idea was met with the critique that true anonymity is rarely possible.

So, rather than anonymity, we propose to prepare a training resource for search committees that is founded on Christ's call to love one another; the church's commitment to live out that love through the [Intercultural Vision](#); the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People](#); [trans and gender justice](#); conversations about [disability and inclusion](#); and human rights. Search committees will also be trained on first- and second-round interviews, drafting questions, negotiating terms, and so on.

As a person searching, how do I let a community of faith know I am interested in their profile? Do I send an application package? Is all connection made through Church Hub?

Initial connection is made through Church Hub. It will be possible for ministers to e-mail churches, and vice versa, through Church Hub to express interest in a posted profile.

If I am looking for a position, will I be able to contact a community of faith?

Each posted community of faith profile will include a means by which to contact the community. There will be the equivalent of a "contact this community of faith" button on their profile.

Is Church Hub using an outside vendor, or is the United Church's IT department creating it?

Church Hub is being built by a third-party company called Protivity, in close collaboration with United Church staff from IT, Pastoral Relations, Philanthropy, and Web Services.

How does all this affect student/candidate appointments?

Supervised ministry education sites will be identified as such on Church Hub. Candidates who need a site will be able to list themselves as specifically needing one. It will be possible to use the search tools to filter for communities of faith that are learning sites.

Does that mean my current community of faith could see that I'm open for call? Many of us start the search long before letting our current community know we might be moving.

The ministry personnel profiles that are posted as “available for call or appointment” may be only be seen by communities of faith that have a posted profile and are in search of call. If you have not yet notified your community of faith that you are looking, they will not see your profile. Once you have notified them and they update their profile, they will see yours.

What about intentional interim appointments?

Intentional interim appointments will be identified as such, and may be searched for using the filter tools.

If I am looking for a position can I contact a church looking for someone on the Church Hub?

Yes. You can look through all of the community of faith postings on the Church Hub, or you can filter the postings based on the geographic region you would like to work in or the ministry focus you would like to be called to (e.g., worship or Christian education focus).

How are you ensuring that pastoral team colleagues cannot find out that a team member is open for call?

The only folks who can see ministry personnel profiles that are posted as available for call are communities of faith that also have profiles that are posted as available for call. Everyone can see community of faith profiles all the time.

What will happen to pastoral charges that are in the middle of a search process in fall 2018 when we are transitioning to the new system? Will they have to do a new Joint Needs Assessment Committee process or equivalent? Is there any point in introducing some of these ideas (the living faith story in particular) to ministry units starting JNACs this summer?

We cannot move into our new pastoral relations system before we know that the 43rd General Council has enacted the remits on which the system depends. Any church that has entered into a change of pastoral relations and has written a JNAC will be able to use that JNAC as their profile. Please remember that there is a simplified version of the JNAC in the *Pastoral Relations: Engaging and Supporting* resource, pages 12–13. There will be no need to do redundant work.

How Do I Keep Up to Date with All the Changes?

There are many related people, processes, and details to sort out to make Church Hub and the proposed new pastoral relations policy and process work as well as they possibly can for everyone. Volunteers and staff are working on these details and will communicate them when the decisions of the 43rd General Council are known. In the meantime, you might

- watch a recording of a one-hour online session on the [new pastoral relations system](#) that provides more detail
- attend another online session in late September on transitioning to the new pastoral relations system; sign up after September 1, 2018, at [United in Learning](#)

Still have questions about Church Hub, changes to pastoral relations, or remit implementation in general? Please contact remits@united-church.ca.