



CANADIAN SHIELD  
REGIONAL COUNCIL  
The United Church of Canada



## Memo re: Formal Association for Ministry Personnel Not in Call or Appointment

To: Retired Ministry Personnel and Ministry Personnel not in active call or appointment

From: The Canadian Shield Pastoral Relations Commission

Greetings from the Pastoral Relations Commission of the Canadian Shield Regional Council.

The Pastoral Relations Commission is responsible for policies related to the practice of formal association as set forth in The Manual 2021 (noted below). In some former structures, the conferences called this practice “voluntary associate ministers” but the commission has chosen to use the language of The Manual and to refer to “**formal association**”.

Many of you may already have a community of faith to which you are connected as a voluntary associate minister and this is in keeping with that former practice.

However, some of you may not have taken the step to associate with a community of faith and this is encouragement to do so, if you wish to continue the functions of ministry such as having a license to perform marriages.

Some of you will wonder why there is such a requirement when you have faithfully served the church for many years. **Formal association** provides a mechanism for accountability and oversight by the church of those not currently in a ministry relationship with a community of faith when they exercise ministry in the community. It provides a way weddings and funeral are recorded as having been conducted on behalf of the church through access to church registers.

You will notice that the request to be in **formal association** includes the assurance by the requesting ministry personnel that they are in compliance with the standards of the church. Those standards include:

- a) Racial Justice Training – at the moment a one-time training requirement;*
- b) Boundaries Training (Sexual Harassment and Prevention Policy) and a refresher every 5 years;*
- c) Current Annual Criminal Charges Declaration (Police Records Check).*

We know that a few of our retired ministers, retired before the church adopted policies

regarding these requirements. Some of you have done the trainings in retirement and complete the annual criminal charges declaration as required. Some of you have not done so and feel strongly that the request to do so is burdensome. In consideration of circumstances, as a temporary measure, it was agreed last spring that those who retired prior to the requirements (2009) could have their marriage license continued by the Regional Council if conversation was held with the Pastoral Relations Minister. However, there is still the need for any marriages performed to be recorded in a community of faith register and so, you are encouraged to have a **formal association** with a community of faith.

The Pastoral Relations Commission wants to affirm that we appreciate the wisdom and contributions of our retired ministry personnel. We want to work with you to honour the standards of the United Church while also recognizing that there are challenges in bringing everyone under the umbrella of compliance. Your questions and comments are welcomed, until June please direct them to the Pastoral Relations Minister, Rev. Rob Smith at: [rsmith@united-church.ca](mailto:rsmith@united-church.ca)

## **From the Policies and Procedures Handbook of the Pastoral Relations Commission...**

### **1.8 Ministry Personnel Formal Association Requirement when retired or between appointment/call**

- a) Formal Association for retired ministry personnel or ministry personnel between appointment/call who wish to maintain functions of ministry with a community of faith.

#### ***Manual 2021***

##### ***1.2.5.3 Functions of Ministry—Outside Pastoral Relationship***

At any time that ministry personnel are not called or appointed to a community of faith, they may carry out the functions of ministry in the United Church only if:

- a) they have a formal association with a community of faith, are acting on behalf of that community of faith, and have the approval of the community of faith's governing body; or

*An example of a "formal association" with a pastoral charge would be where the minister has been designated as a "voluntary associate minister" or "honorary associate minister" by the community of faith or its governing body.*

- b) they have been appointed to a community of faith to exercise the functions of ministry associated with it.

Retired ministry personnel or ministry personnel between appointment/call must maintain a formal association with a community of faith in order to meet the criteria for retaining their provincial government license to perform marriages. For those who retired from serving as Designated Lay Ministers and retired Diaconal Ministers, formal association is required to retain the privilege to be licensed to perform the sacraments.

## **THE PROCESS**

The retired ministry personnel or ministry personnel between appointment/call is responsible for requesting that a community of faith enter into formal association with them by letter to the governing body of the community of faith. The letter should indicate that the ministry personnel is compliant with all United Church requirements regarding mandatory trainings and police records check policy. It should also set forth that the formal association includes accountability to the community of faith by the ministry personnel for marriages performed, including permission to enter performed marriages into the community of faith's marriage register. Diaconal ministers who will be requesting licensing for the sacraments from the Regional Council into retirement should also request support from the community of faith to do so.

The community of faith considers the request and approves by motion. The community of faith then writes a letter including the motion to the ministry personnel, Regional Council office and forwarded to the Pastoral Relations Commission for consideration and approval. Once the request has been approved, Canadian Shield Regional Council will retain a copy and provide one to the community of faith Secretary or Board/Session (or equivalent), the called or appointed Ministry Personnel of the community of faith and the ministry personnel making the request.

The ministry personnel requesting a formal association with the community of faith, the community of faith and the Regional Council understand the formal association to undertake the following:

1. The ministry personnel undertaking the formal association will maintain compliance with the requirements of the Office of Vocation regarding good standing and mandatory trainings;
2. The community of faith will support and ask for accountability from the ministry personnel with whom the formal association is made;
3. The ministry personnel undertaking the formal association will not undertake functions of ministry without the permission of the serving ministry personnel and the community of faith;
4. The ministry personnel undertaking the formal association is to request permission each time to use the registers of the community of faith to enter weddings, funerals;
5. The Regional Council will maintain the ministry personnel in formal association with the community of faith as being supported to hold an Ontario License to perform marriages.
6. The community of faith and ministry personnel requesting the formal association relationship may choose to negotiate mutually-agreed-to volunteer activity in the community of faith.