

Sacraments Elders Policy Living Skies Regional Council The United Church of Canada

Introduction and Purpose

Living Skies Regional Council is grateful to God for the willingness of lay people who come forward to offer their faith and leadership administering the sacraments in their community of faith. The following document outlines the policy and standards of practice for Sacraments Elders who serve in Living Skies. It is the hope of the region that these standards of practice will encourage, honour and inform the members of the Laity as they share their gifts and express their faith while meeting the vital need of a community of faith to celebrate the sacraments.

The following standards of practice are divided into three sections: Membership, Preparation and Licensing, and Ongoing Support and Guidance. A key resource for the preparation of these standards of practice is *Sacraments Elders*, October 2016, The United Church of Canada (www.united-church.ca).

Membership

The regional council may license a person as a sacraments elder. (The Manual, 2019, s. I.2.4.1.c)

The following requirements apply:

- a) The person must be a member of a community of faith in Living Skies Regional Council;
- b) The person must be willing to become a member of the governing body of the community of faith once licensed;
- c) The license must be for a maximum 12-month term, which may be renewed; and
- d) A license is granted only to lay members of a community of faith without called or appointed ministry personnel.

A sacraments elder serves under the direction of the Regional Council's Executive through the Committee on Lay Leadership Support. In addition, the pastoral charge supervisor has responsibility for ensuring that the sacraments are administered according to the theology and practice of The United Church of Canada. The license automatically ends with the call or appointment of ministry personnel to the community of faith.

Preparation and Licensing

Educational Requirements

The lay member may meet the requirements for licensing in one of two ways:

- a) Complete a course offered periodically within Living Skies Regional Council; or
- b) Find a mentor with whom to review and discuss the material in the handbook.

A suitable mentor for the completion of the course material is one who has studied sacramental theology and is able to help the lay member reflect theologically on the readings and discussion questions. This reflection should take three to five meetings. If the lay member is unable to find a suitable mentor, assistance may be provided by the Pastoral Relations Minister.

Beginning July 1, 2019, the lay member must also complete the Boundaries training offered by the United Church of Canada, prior to initial licensing. This training may be completed concurrently with the preparatory course and must be “refreshed” every 5 years.

Licensing

In order to be licensed, the lay person is required to provide the following:

- a) Written recommendation by the governing body of their community of faith; and
- b) Written recommendation by the mentor or the facilitator of the preparatory course.

Once these documents are received by the Committee on Lay Leadership Support, an interview will be scheduled with the lay person. The Committee on Lay Leadership Support assesses the lay member’s formation and accountability. Based on the interview and accompanying documents, the Committee will make a recommendation to the Pastoral Relations Minister who is authorized by the Regional Council Executive to make approvals.

The Regional Council Executive issues a licence to the lay member to function as a sacraments elder within their community of faith (including multiple points), under the direction of the region. The sacraments elder may offer sacraments in other places of worship (e.g. homes or institutions) with an affiliation to the community of faith. The licence is valid for a maximum of 1 year (until June 30) and may be renewed at the request of the governing body of the community of faith. The region recognizes the sacraments elder at a service of worship within the community of faith, with participation from a member of the Regional Council.

Ongoing Support and Guidance

There is conversation underway about ongoing support and training for Sacraments Elders serving within Living Skies Regional Council.

Renewal

It is the role of the governing body of the community of faith to determine when and how the sacraments are administered. The governing body of the community of faith may request the renewal of the license for a lay person provided there is no called or appointed ministry personnel in place. The form for renewal may be found at [include reference]. While requests may be received by the Pastoral Relations Minister throughout the year, all licenses will end on June 30th of each year for ease of administration.

Other Considerations

The role of sacraments elder is voluntary – there is no remuneration expected. In addition, sacraments elders are not expected to lead the whole worship service, although they may participate in other parts if they wish.