

## Pastoral Relations Ponderings – Volume 20

Greetings from the Pastoral Relations desk! I hope this finds you healthy and well, managing to adapt to the constantly changing guidelines while still enjoying some semblance of regular worship and family life. I find it ironic that “Volume 20” comes at the end of 2020 – one of those years of reflection and change that I am happy to see draw to a close. As the longest night approaches, so, too does the light of the Christ-child. Holding those two events together in my heart brings me comfort and hope during this challenging time. Here are a few updates from the work of the Pastoral Relations Commission and the Committees – links embedded where appropriate:

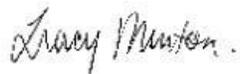
1. **[Appointment policy](#)** – the season of appointments and re-appointments may be months away but the *Pastoral Relations Commission* wanted to craft a policy to help communities of faith do some planning. The policy recommends maximum lengths for all of these forms of pastoral relationship (candidates, Designated Lay Ministers, retired supply, etc.) in the hopes of providing some clarity, consistency and stability.
2. **[Streams of ministry policy](#)** – there continues to be communities of faith preparing ministry profiles and imagining what their future ministry needs might be. The *Pastoral Relations Commission* believes that there is great value in focussing on the particular skills, gifts and experience that an individual might bring to ministry leadership as opposed to the stream of ministry they might occupy. Therefore, all position descriptions are required to be open to any accredited ministry personnel applicant.
3. **Retired ministry personnel sacraments** – in recognition of the unique challenges brought on by the pandemic, the *Pastoral Relations Commission* granted sacramental privileges to all designated lay ministers and diaconal ministers who have retired but are not in an appointment, provided they continue to remain accredited. This motion is valid until **June 30, 2021**. In the new year, the implementation of the Voluntary Associate Minister (VAM) [policy](#) will begin as required in The Manual and therefore a formal association with a community of faith will be required in order for sacramental privileges to remain current.
4. **Pulpit Supply List** – one of the benefits of the VAM policy implementation is ensuring that the pulpit supply list remains current. As we move into the new year with the hopes of compensating time being granted to ministry personnel (see Rambler for details), a reminder that the Regional Council office has a list of people who are authorized to provide pulpit supply throughout the Regional Council. This means their licence is current if they are a Licensed Lay Worship Leader or all of their credentials are current if they are ministry personnel. Contact Bev Diebert for access to this list: [bdiebert@united-church.ca](mailto:bdiebert@united-church.ca)
5. **COVID guidelines** – ministry personnel and pastoral charge supervisors continue to receive updates from me, as recommended by Tricia Gerhard (our representative to the faith leaders consulting with the provincial government). If you have questions about the current restrictions and guidelines for public worship, feel free to contact me.

6. **Annual meetings** – as the end of the year draws near, thoughts may be turning to annual meeting season. If it is possible for your community of faith to gather for an annual meeting in the spring either in person if numbers are under 30 or online, that continues to be the preference. However, if that is not feasible, provision has been made for governing bodies to make decisions on behalf of the community of faith. This would include approving budgets and electing new governing body members. The description of the policy may be found [here](#). The *Committee on Community of Faith Support* will still happily receive and read your annual report.

A reminder that the Pastoral Relations Commission generally meets on the first Thursday of each month; therefore, we require any paperwork to be submitted to Bev Diebert ([bdiebert@united-church.ca](mailto:bdiebert@united-church.ca)) the Friday before the meeting. For the next meeting of the PRC, acknowledging the gift of Christmas break, any paperwork needs to be received by **Monday, January 4** in order to be considered on January 7.

As you head into this season of light and hope, I invite you to re-imagine what it means to be a community of faith. It is clear that we will welcome the light differently this year, either with fewer numbers in our sanctuary or through our computer screens, relinquishing singing carols with gusto and smiles, passing the peace, or passing the candle-light to each other. I am filled with gratitude and awe of our ministry personnel working hard to transform cherished traditions within the current restrictions. As people of faith we are called to continue to spread the good news of the birth of the Holy and to share that Christ-light with others. We are simply asked to do that in a new way this year. As always, if you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. May you welcome the light with gusto, celebrating the birth of love incarnate, spreading warmth and hope to your family and friends. ☺

Blessings and peace,



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[Source](#)