

## Pastoral Relations Ponderings – Volume 21

Greetings from the Pastoral Relations desk! I hope this finds you healthy and well, returning to the comfort found in routine amidst the challenges of the pandemic. Here are a few updates from the work of the Pastoral Relations Commission and the Committees. Policy links are embedded where appropriate and volunteer opportunities are listed throughout:

1. **[Appointment policy](#)** – as mentioned last month, the *Pastoral Relations Commission* crafted a policy to help communities of faith in the re-appointment phase. The policy recommends maximum lengths for all forms of appointments (candidates, Designated Lay Ministers, retired supply, etc.) in the hopes of providing clarity, efficiency, consistency and stability.
2. **Voluntary Associate Minister (VAM) [policy](#)** – 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**. Retired ministers who wish to continue to perform the functions of ministry will be contacted in the next few months to begin the process of establishing a formal association with a community of faith, as required by *The Manual*, and outlined in this policy.
3. **Liaisons and Pastoral Charge Supervisors** – this is the season where communities of faith begin to look at their ministry needs, and ministry personnel think about new pastoral relationships. Any time either of these important processes occur, volunteers from the Regional Council are required to accompany communities of faith on the journey. If you are interested in becoming further involved in the work of the Regional Council through the Pastoral Relations lens, please contact me and I would be happy to talk opportunities with you.
4. **Sabbaticals** – just a reminder that ministry personnel are entitled to a sabbatical every 5 years they are in the same community of faith. The procedure for sabbaticals is in the [Pastoral Relations: Supporting the Pastoral Relationship](#) handbook. A [video](#) has also been prepared to help explain the policy and procedure.
5. **Lenten Retreats details** – as mentioned in the Rambler, two Zoom retreats are being offered, one for Licensed Lay Worship Leaders (Feb 4) and one for Ministry Personnel (Feb 11). Here are further details on the content from the facilitator, Marg Janick-Grayston. This retreat offers a time of reflection on the journey from Lent right through to Easter. We will begin by connecting with the roller coaster ride of emotions that may be experienced as the story from Jesus baptism through to Palm Sunday unfolds. During this segment we will be invited to create a personal map of emotions, and consider how the emotions we name might be linked to what we are presently experiencing in life. We will then draw upon the writings of Bishop Michael Curry in his book “Love is the Way” as we continue our journey through Holy week. During this portion of the retreat we will reflect on how to keep our hearts and actions loving as we face challenges and deferred dreams in life. Finally, we will explore how Easter set in motion renewed inspiration and energy to keep working towards God’s dream for the world. We will

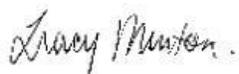
draw the retreat to a close with a reflection on what dreams for the greater good we personally want to hold tight to, and forming a collective prayer to keep our faith-inspired dreams alive.

6. **Committee on Ministry Personnel Support** – the focus for this spring will be on support to retired ministry personnel, both in the implementation of the Voluntary Associate Minister policy (mentioned above) and in connecting folks for pastoral care and support. Volunteers would be welcome to help with contacting folks.
7. **Committee on Lay Leadership Support** – in the absence of the ability to gather folks together in person for learning and support, the focus for this spring will be on opportunities created online for Licensed Lay Worship Leaders. This will include the retreat mentioned above.
8. **Committee on Community of Faith Support** – as noted in the Rambler, requirements for annual meetings and the preparation of annual reports have shifted for 2021. The focus this spring will be support in covenant-writing and reviewing reports. Volunteers to contact communities of faith for follow-up would be welcome.

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, any paperwork needs to be received by **Friday, January 29** in order to be considered on February 4.

The season of Epiphany coincides with the gradual return of the light. While it is only a minimal difference day-to-day, there is considerable hope in the certainty of lengthening days and winter beauty. May you take some time to embrace the moments of Holy light entering into your day.

Blessings and peace,



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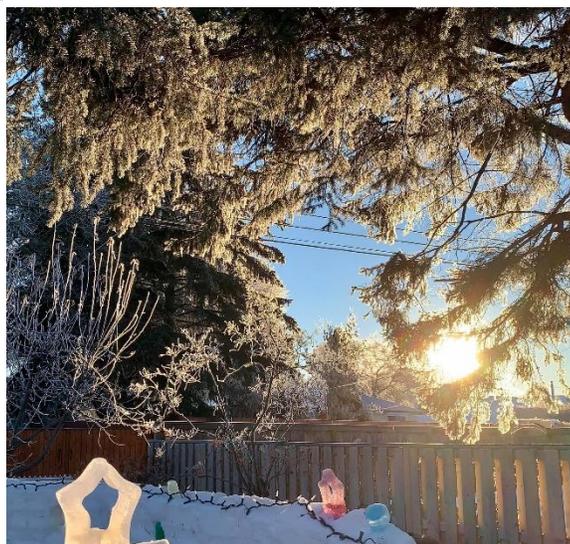


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