

Licensed Lay Worship Leaders 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, insight and skill as worship leaders in communities of faith. The following document outlines the policy and standards of practice for Licensed Lay Worship Leaders 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 gather for worship.

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 [Licensed Lay Worship Leaders](#), June 2019, The United Church of Canada.

Membership

The regional council may license a person as a licensed lay worship leader. (*The Manual*, 2021, s. I 1.11.5)

The following requirements apply:

- a) the person must be a member of a congregation in that regional council; and
- b) the license must be for a specified term, which may be renewed.

A licensed lay worship leader serves under the direction of the Regional Council's Executive through the Committee on Lay Leadership Support. If a licensed lay worship leader becomes a member of a community of faith in another regional council, that person must be recognized by that other regional council in order to continue serving as a licensed lay worship leader.

Preparation and Licensing

Educational Requirements

The lay member completes a preparatory course that extends over at least two years and includes the study of theology, church history, Hebrew and Christian scriptures, preaching, worship, and pastoral skills. The course of study must be approved by the Committee on Lay Leadership Support, in consultation with United Church of Canada guidelines and practice.

An individual may be exempt from a preparatory course at the discretion of the Committee on Lay Leadership Support. An individual's education would be evaluated using the handbook, [Licensed Lay Worship Leaders](#) or future editions.

The lay member must also complete all mandatory workshops (currently racial justice and boundaries training) and a police records check, according to policy set by the United Church of Canada, prior to initial licensing. These workshops may be completed concurrently with the preparatory course. For those seeking renewal of licenses, a 6-month grace period will be offered to complete the mandatory workshops. The Racial Justice training is only taken once, but the "Boundaries" training must be "refreshed" every 5 years. In addition, an annual declaration of no criminal charges or convictions is required following the initial police records check.

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;
- b) Written final evaluation by the facilitator of the preparatory course; and
- c) Verification of completion of mandatory workshops and level two police records check.

Once these documents are received by the Committee on Lay Leadership Support, an interview will be scheduled with the lay person. The Regional Council Executive, through the Committee on Lay Leadership Support, assesses the lay member's suitability and readiness for licensed lay worship leadership by examining their personal character, doctrinal beliefs, and educational competency. Based on the interview and accompanying documents, the Committee will make a recommendation to the Regional Council Executive regarding issuing a license.

The Regional Council Executive issues a licence to the lay member to function as a licensed lay worship leader within the jurisdiction of the regional council, under the direction of the regional council. A licensed lay worship leader may function in any of the communities of faith in Living Skies Regional Council as well as any of the organizations affiliated with it. Beginning with licenses issued July 1, 2019 and onward, the licence is normally valid for 3 years and may be renewed. The regional council recognizes the licensed lay worship leader 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 Licensed Lay Worship Leaders serving within Living Skies Regional Council.

Renewal

Licensed lay worship leaders require an interview in order for their license to be renewed; beginning July 1, 2019, the license is normally valid for 3 years. The Committee on Lay Leadership Support, which has been authorised to interview and make recommendations to the

Regional Council Executive, will determine what reporting is required for the purposes of license renewal. This could include bulletins, sermons and a service record (which communities of faith have been served and when), as well as the annual declaration regarding criminal charges/ criminal record. An affirmation from the community of faith where the Licensed Lay Worship Leader is a member indicating support for the ministry is also required for re-licensing.

Frequency of service and remuneration

The licensed lay worship leader may cover three consecutive Sundays a month, to a maximum of 15 services per year, in one community of faith. Alternatively, the licensed lay worship leader may lead services for one complete month in a six-month period in one Pastoral Charge. If asked to lead worship for more Sundays, the licensed lay worship leader is to seek the approval of the Pastoral Relations Minister before agreeing to do so. The Pastoral Relations Minister will report these exceptions to the Committee on Lay Leadership Support.

The community of faith is encouraged to remunerate licensed lay worship leaders in accordance with the Minimum Salaries & Reimbursements rate for Visiting Ministry Personnel, including travel, issued by General Council each year. Note: The Canada Revenue Agency requires that a T4A be completed for annual aggregate amounts over \$500 paid to an individual, which would be approximately three worship services and above.

Other considerations

A licensed lay worship leader may not provide **pastoral care** in a community of faith that is not their own, understanding that pastoral relationships may have been established prior to licensing. It is expected that the licensed lay worship leader will refer any requests or requirements for pastoral care (counseling, home visitation, hospital visitation) to the called or appointed ministry personnel, or the pastoral charge supervisor for follow-up.

A licensed lay worship leader with appropriate training may conduct a **funeral**. However, the conduct of funerals within a community of faith (including a funeral home), is to be arranged in consultation with the called or appointed ministry personnel or the pastoral charge supervisor of the community of faith. A licensed lay worship leader who conducts a funeral must ensure that the information is entered in the Burial Register of the community of faith.

Licensing does not include permission to preside at the sacraments or provide a license to perform marriages. A stole and a clergy collar are reserved for those who are ministry personnel, called or appointed to a community of faith.