

## **Living Skies Regional Council Pastoral Relations Commission: Voluntary Associate Minister (VAM)**

This document outlines the policy regarding Voluntary Associate Ministers (VAMs) in Living Skies Regional Council.

### **PREAMBLE**

As per Section I.2.5.3 of *The Manual* (2021) any ministry personnel who are not called or appointed to a community of faith may only carry out the functions of ministry in the United Church 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
- b) they have been appointed to a community of faith to exercise the functions of ministry associated with it.

The "functions of ministry in the United Church" include, but are not limited to: pulpit supply, presiding at the sacraments, funerals, weddings, leading educational events on behalf of a community of faith (i.e. confirmation classes, study groups, etc.), pastoral care on behalf of a community of faith. Therefore, this section of the Manual applies to all ministry personnel within the boundaries of Living Skies Regional Council who are either retired or between calls or appointments and wish to engage in the "functions of ministry" within the bounds of Living Skies Regional Council.

### **DEFINITION**

A Voluntary Associate Minister (VAM) is an ordained, diaconal, or designated lay minister\* in The United Church of Canada who is retired or between calls or appointments, is in good standing within the denomination, and has a formal association with a community of faith.

A VAM can be in association with any community of faith, regardless of whether or not there is an appointed or called ministry personnel in place with the community of faith. A community of faith must request approval of the designation of a VAM by completing the VAM application form and forwarding it to the Pastoral Relations Commission for their approval.

A person can only have one VAM designation at any one time. A VAM can exercise the functions of ministry for any community of faith within the bounds of Living Skies Regional Council, and is not limited to only doing so for the community of faith with which they are in formal association.

A VAM from another regional council of the United Church of Canada is eligible to perform the functions of ministry within the bounds of Living Skies Regional Council.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

Voluntary Associate Minister membership is based on their stream of ministry. Voluntary Associate status shall be seen as equivalent to any appointment or call in terms of membership and discipline and therefore accountable to the Office of Vocation.

## **THE PROCESS**

Anyone eligible to be a VAM may apply through the appropriate Community of Faith by filling out the form found on the Living Skies Regional Council website. All parts of the form must be completed, including the signatures of the Pastoral Charge Secretary of the Board/Session (or equivalent) and the Voluntary Associate Minister.

The completed form will be sent to the Living Skies Regional Council Pastoral Relations Commission for consideration and approval.

Once the request has been approved, Living Skies Regional Council Pastoral Relations Minister will retain a copy and provide one to each of the community of faith Secretary of the Board/Session (or equivalent) and the Voluntary Associate Minister.

If the request is not approved, Living Skies Regional Council Pastoral Relations Minister will contact all parties.

By signing the Voluntary Associate Minister application form all parties are agreeing to the following:

1. Ministry functions performed come under the oversight and discipline of the Office of Vocation.
2. The Voluntary Associate Minister may carry out any of the functions of ministry for the community of faith they are in formal association with, including but not limited to weddings, funerals, pulpit supply, educational events, administering the sacraments.
3. The Voluntary Associate Minister may carry out any of the functions of ministry for any other community of faith in the Living Skies Regional Council that requests their services, including but not limited to weddings, funerals, pulpit supply, educational events, administering the sacraments.
4. The Voluntary Associate Minister is entitled to appropriate compensation for performing any of the functions of ministry.
5. There is no expectation of honoraria, stipend, or travel allowance from the community of faith with whom the named Voluntary Associate Minister is in formal association, over and beyond appropriate compensation for any of the functions of ministry that they perform for that community of faith.
6. The Voluntary Associate Minister will work cooperatively with the community of faith for whom they are carrying out the functions of ministry and with their called or

appointed ministry personnel, if applicable, and will provide a summary report on these activities at least annually to the governing body.

- 7. The approval of this application includes the granting of the license to administer the sacraments, if desired.
- 8. The approval of this application includes maintaining the applicant's name on the Regional Council's list of ministry personnel approved to perform marriages, if desired.
- 9. VAM status continues to be in effect until one of the following takes place:
  - (a) If a Voluntary Associate Minister enters into a call with a community of faith, their VAM status shall end.
  - (b) If a VAM enters into an appointment longer than six months, their VAM status will also end.
  - (c) If either the community of faith or the VAM chooses to end the formal association by giving 3 months notice in a written letter to the other party.
  - (d) The VAM is no longer in good standing in the United Church of Canada as determined by the Office of Vocation.
- 10. When VAM status ends both the community of faith and the VAM need to communicate this to the Pastoral Relations Commission through email or a written letter.

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\* Within the bounds of Living Skies Regional Council, lay people who retire while serving as Designated Lay Ministers are referred to as Retired Designated Lay Ministers for the purposes of this policy.