

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 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*, 2023, 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 for the first time, 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 police records check.

Once these documents are received by the Committee on Lay Leadership Support, a temporary one-year license will be issued. After the completion of one year as a licensed lay worship leader, 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 (affirmation from the community of faith, sample worship service, sample sermon, and annual declaration), the Committee will make a recommendation to the Regional Council Executive regarding issuing a regular 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. A 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, with participation from a member of the Regional Council.

Ongoing Support and Guidance

Renewal

Licensed lay worship leaders require a conversation with the Committee on Lay Leadership Support in order for their license to be renewed; the license is normally valid for 3 years. The Committee on Lay Leadership Support, which has been authorised to make recommendations to the Regional Council Executive, will determine what reporting is required for the purposes of license renewal. This could include bulletins, sermons, a list of training completed or resources read, as well as the annual declaration regarding criminal charges/ criminal record and the annual worship service tracker (which communities of faith have been served and when). 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.

Committee on Lay Leadership Support, November 2023

The Committee on Lay Leadership Support will organize learning opportunities for licensed lay worship leaders from time-to-time. There are also online training opportunities that the Committee would commend for support and encouragement. It is hoped that ongoing learning would be supported by the community of faith where the licensed lay worship leader is a member – this could include financial assistance to attend courses or to purchase resources.

Frequency of service, accountability, and remuneration

Pulpit supply is meant to be an occasional option for communities of faith and is further articulated in the [Pulpit Supply Policy](#) of Living Skies Regional Council. The definition of occasional for licensed lay worship leaders in a calendar year is outlined as follows:

Number of services/ year in one community of faith	Accountability to Committee
12 or less (No more than 3 consecutive services with an exception for seasons of Lent/ Advent)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Triennial re-licensing conversation • Annual declaration of criminal record check • Annual worship service tracker form • Current mandatory trainings
13 to 25 (No more than 3 consecutive services with an exception for seasons of Lent/ Advent)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual conversation for support • Triennial re-licensing conversation • Annual declaration of criminal record check • Annual worship service tracker form • Current mandatory trainings
26 and above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active M&P Committee • Requires classification as a Congregational Designated Minister (linked to handbook) • Could remain on Pulpit Supply list as a current LLWL for other communities of faith. Current mandatory training, annual declaration, and triennial re-licensing conversation would be required.

Any licensed lay worship leader could access the Committee on Lay Leadership Support for issues related to worship leadership. This could include specific concerns or general support, as appropriate.

On average, a worship service requires a minimum of 8 hours to prepare. The community of faith is expected 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 annually and above. When leading multiple worship services for one community of faith, it is recommended that remuneration be offered above the minimum rate for one Sunday, but not necessarily the full rate for each worship service. This additional remuneration would include offering worship in a care home or other facility. If the service(s) is cancelled due to weather, it is expected that the fee would be offered for the work completed; travel and meal costs would not be included.

Annual worship service tracker form

It will be the responsibility of the licensed lay worship leader to track the number and location of worship services provided each calendar year. The annual worship service tracker form will be submitted to the Committee on Lay Leadership Support in January. Conversations for support will be scheduled accordingly.

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 who is called to conduct **funeral services** is encouraged to take appropriate additional training. However, the conduct of funerals within a community of faith (including a funeral home), should abide by the funeral policy of the community of faith, and 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. It is the responsibility of the community of faith to provide pastoral care in these circumstances.

Licensing does not include permission to preside at the sacraments; however, some licensed lay worship leaders are also sacraments elders in the community of faith where their membership rests. Should a licensed lay worship leader provide worship leadership in their home community of faith that includes the celebration of one of the sacraments as a Sacraments Elder, they would continue to be entitled to receive compensation consistent with the regular practice in that context.

Licensing does not 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.