

When the Crisis Becomes Critical

Region direction for pastoral charges facing payroll challenges

This document focuses on the pastoral relationship with ministry personnel in The United Church of Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, many of the fundamental principles also apply to the employment of lay staff, in particular the guidance about financial strategies.

Please read the communications from Regional Executive Minister Faith March-MacCuish: <https://ucceast.ca/regional-council-15/rc15-emergency-response-covid-19/>

The engagement of ministry personnel in pastoral charges in The United Church of Canada is called a “Pastoral Relationship” and the processes involved are called “Pastoral Relations.” The Pastoral Relationship has multiple parties, including congregations, ministers, the wider Church through the Region, and God. Any discussion that considers a change in the terms of the Pastoral Relationship requires not only the agreement of the pastoral charge and the minister, but also requires the approval of the Region.

The Manual of The United Church of Canada provides the operational bylaws for the church as a whole. The Manual can be found online at www.united-church.ca. A variety of handbooks provide supplemental information in support of the Manual. The handbook for Pastoral Relations for Communities of Faith is found here: <https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/pastoral-relations-policy-community-of-faith-december-2019.pdf>. The policy and process for any kind of a Change in Pastoral Relations begins on page 9. A Change in Pastoral Relations includes the following:

- beginning a new pastoral relationship
- ending a pastoral relationship
- changing the work responsibilities within a position description
- changing the hours of work for a ministry position
- providing or ceasing to provide a manse
- lay-off, leave of absence, suspension of pay

The Region Pastoral Relations Committee is responsible to provide guidance and direction in Pastoral Relations and to act on behalf of the Region when decisions are required. Please see contact information for the Chair and associated Regional Minister at the end of this document.

In these extraordinary times, and considering the technical challenges in holding a legal decision-making meeting, the Pastoral Relations Committee offers the following instructions for any Pastoral Charge that is considering a reduction in pay, lay-off, leave or termination for their ministry personnel. In order for the Pastoral Relations Committee to be able to consider any such action and to be able to offer formal Approval, it must be demonstrated that the following steps were taken:

- 1. Contact the Region for guidance and direction.**
2. Develop a plan for continued ministry within the congregational membership and within the wider community. The plan should include strategies for continued worship, study, pastoral care, and service in the wider community.

3. Encourage every Church member and identifiable giver to continue giving, even if it needs to be at a reduced level. Various methods of giving are available. Please see <https://uceast.ca/58294-generosity-in-unprecedented-times-2/> for helpful strategies.
4. Review congregational and pastoral charge investments to clarify what is immediately available, internally restricted or externally restricted.
 - a. Review internal restrictions – can they be changed? What is required to make a change? Board meeting or congregational meeting?
 - b. Review external restrictions – can they be changed? What is required to make a change? If they are restricted by action of Presbytery/Region, then an application to the Region for a change will be necessary (Manse Fund, property sale revenues, etc.)
5. Review the various applicable Federal government COVID-19 initiatives, in particular the 75% payroll supplement and the \$40,000 loan. Make application through the necessary channels. <https://www.united-church.ca/community-faith/being-community/government-emergency-programs>
6. Contact Erik Mathiesen emathiesen@united-church.ca at the General Council Office to request deferral of Assessment payments from the pastoral charge to General Council.
7. Please read the communications from General Council, in particular this note from March 24, 2020: <https://www.united-church.ca/news/supporting-staff-through-pandemic>. Recognize that the pay of the ministry personnel is the first priority for spending for a pastoral charge. Utility bills, etc., are only to be paid AFTER the minister has been paid. Manual G.4.2.4.
8. Submit your financial statements to the Region Finance Committee for review and recommendations.
9. Investigate financial support and loan options with Region and General Council.

For more information, please contact your Regional Minister.

Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters	Region 15	First Dawn Eastern Edge
Regional Minister Kendall Harrision kharrison@united-church.ca 1-800-268-3781, ext. 6153	Regional Minister David Hewitt dhewitt@united-church.ca 1-800-268-3781, ext. 6154	Regional Minister Heather Sandford hsandford@united-church.ca 1-800-268-3781, ext. 6155
Pastoral Relations Chair Catherine Gaw chgaw@eastlink.ca	Pastoral Relations Chair Tom Woods tomwoods188@gmail.com	Pastoral Relations Chair Shane Foote shanefoote52@gmail.com
Executive Minister Faith March-MacCuish FMacCuish@united-church.ca 1-800-268-3781, ext. 6156	Executive Minister Faith March-MacCuish FMacCuish@united-church.ca 1-800-268-3781, ext. 6156	Executive Minister Faith March-MacCuish FMacCuish@united-church.ca 1-800-268-3781, ext. 6156
Finance Committee Kimberley Douglass douglassting@bellaliant.net	Finance Committee Allan Davis adavis@eastlink.ca	Finance Committee Danny Button danny_button@hotmail.com

Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Pastoral Relations Committee

Region 15 Pastoral Relations Committee

First Dawn Eastern Edge Pastoral Relations Committee

April 9, 2020