

**ENDING WELL**  
**Congregational Disbanding Process for Communities of Faith**  
**Fundy St Lawrence Dawning Waters - Pastoral Relations and Property Committees**

*I thank my God for every remembrance of you,  
always in every one of my prayers for all of you,  
praying with joy for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.  
(Philippians 1: 3-5)*

Throughout the years you have been faithful partners in continuing the ministry of your community of faith and/or pastoral charge. As a Region we recognize the heartfelt and difficult conversations that have led to the decision to disband, close or amalgamate.

The following document is a way to guide you through “ending well”. While at first the steps might appear daunting please know that the Pastoral Relations Committee, the Property Committee, and the Regional Minister are here to assist you. As you move through this process may gratitude for all that has been and all yet to be, fill your hearts and minds.

### **Steps to Undertake**

(Please note: The closure process involves three steps: 1) engagement with the FSLDW Pastoral Relations Committee exploring solutions and if necessary, permission to close 2) after the approval to close is received, engagement with the FSLDW Property Committee regarding the disposition of property assets 3) re-engagement with Pastoral Relations to complete the final steps to permanently close.)

### **Step 1**

- 1) Your local governing body (council/board) have decided that the only alternative is to close, however there are several steps to take before a congregational vote:

The needs of any incumbent ministry personnel must be considered before any other steps are taken regarding the closure or merger of any congregations or charges.

- a. Contact FSLDW Pastoral Relations to seek Guidance.
- b. Contact the Regional Minister to discuss other options for viability, joining another congregation in a multipoint charge, cooperative ministry with another United Church in the area, or a shared ministry with another denomination in the community and any other alternatives? Attach copy of the correspondence to support outcome.
- c. Consult with the Community of Faith. Attach a copy of the minutes to support outcome.
- d. Consult with the other points on the Pastoral Charge (if applicable) to inform them that you are considering making this decision. Attach copy of the correspondence to support outcome.

## 2) To make the decision: (See United Church Manual G.1.5)

- ☐ a. You must call a congregational meeting with the appropriate notice making sure the called, appointed, or designated Ministry Personnel, the Pastoral Charge Supervisor or a representative appointed by the Regional Council is informed of the meeting and can attend. 15 days' notice is required with the reason for the meeting being stated. At the meeting adopt a resolution to disband the congregation and dispose of its assets.
- b. Write a letter to the FSLDW Pastoral Relations Committee, requesting approval to disband. The letter should include the minutes of the congregational meeting; your correspondence/minutes from parts 1.b, 1.d, 1.e; suggested date for disbanding and a date for closing worship service.

### 3) Decision by Regional Council

- a) The regional council decide on whether to approve the disbanding of the congregation as a recognized community of faith.
- b) In extraordinary circumstances, the regional council may also decide to disband the congregation as a recognized community of faith on its own initiative, without a decision by the congregation
- c) When the regional council decide to approve the disbanding of the congregation as a recognized community of faith, it may specify a future date that the disbanding will come into effect. If not, the disbanding comes into effect on the date that the regional council makes the decision
- d) The regional council makes the decision to disband the congregation as a recognized community of faith when it passes a motion approving the disbanding.
- e) Where a congregation has ceased to exist, approval of Region is needed, for the proposed disposition of assets. The disbanding of the community of faith ends the covenantal relationship between the congregation and the regional council and any incumbent ministry personnel.
- f) The Community will receive a letter from the Pastoral Relations Committee with their decision. (The Pastoral Relations Committee will copy the Property Team on this communication to alert them to the decision)

### Step 2

#### **AT THIS POINT THE FSLDW PROPERTY COMMITTEE RESPONDS**

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#### **NOW THAT A CLOSURE DECISION HAS BEEN REACHED**

- 1) Please review the FSLDW Property Handbook and the Trustee Handbook (Both handbooks are available on the regional website and are the current versions)

- 2) The Trustees prepare a list of the assets of the Community of Faith, and a suggested plan for disposal of all assets. This list should include all congregational property such as: Land, buildings, cemeteries, any other land rights, money, bank accounts, investments, furniture, and all equipment and submit to FSLDW Property Committee for review and approval.

*The regional council may decide to approve the congregation's proposal as presented, it may approve the proposal with changes, or it may decide to deal with the congregation's property in some other way than as set out in the proposal. The Property Committee has existing guidelines on the sharing of revenue following asset disposition that they normally follow. The Property Committee will share this information before any final decisions are made.*

- 3) The Trustees act on the disposal of assets **once permission has been granted** by the Property Committee.

The Pastoral Relations Committee and Regional Minister can assist in the process with Steps 4, 5 and 6.

- 4) The Community of Faith will need to help congregants decide on their membership.

The congregation needs to address its membership roll/Historic Roll. Disbanding congregation should make every effort to ascertain the wishes of its members including those who are non-resident. Great care should be taken to be pastoral. This is particularly true in the case of persons for whom it is difficult or impossible to decide about membership- for example, persons in care homes. In such instances, the disbanding congregation should include other family members or Powers of Attorney in decisions about future pastoral care.

Certificates of Membership are available from the bookstore, though an actual certificate is not required. A letter from the Official Board/Council and/or the Minister may be prepared with the relevant data instead of using the form.

Members may be transferred to other congregations of their choice.

Members may decide to transfer en masse to another congregation.

If the member requests, he/she may be sent a Certificate of Membership, to present (within a reasonable period) to another congregation.

If more than twelve (12) months have elapsed since the issue of the certificate, it may not be deemed current.

All those on the membership roll who did not respond to your invitation to be transferred or who can no longer be located should be removed from the roll by an action of session (or its equivalent) and noted in the historic roll. The geographic area encompassing the congregation that is closing remains part of the ministry of the Pastoral Charge unless or until the Region makes changes to the Pastoral Boundaries; so, pastoral care for that area is still part of the ministry of the continuing Pastoral Charge.

All transfers or any other actions on membership should be carefully recorded in the Historic Roll.

- 5) Congregational Records that are not shared by the Pastoral Charge will need to be forwarded to the Archives.

Official Records: The official records of the congregation (Registers of Baptism, Marriage and Burials; Historic Roll and/or any other Membership Rolls; Minutes of Session, Stewards, Congregation, Council, Official Board, Trustees, UCW and any other organization of the congregation) are the property of The United Church of Canada. Such records must be sorted and a list of them made and sent to the Regional Archivist at the Regional office. That person will then advise on how to send these items. It is not appropriate for such records to be held by an individual, nor is it appropriate to have them deposited in another archives. The Region should be informed that the transfer of documents has been completed with a list of relevant documents attached.

Financial records: Once all disbursements are complete, arrangements need to be made for the safekeeping of the financial records. Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) should be consulted with regard to their requirements for retention of records (normally no longer than seven (7) years) and for the filing of the final charitable status return and the revocation of charitable status number. Financial records are not normally kept at the Archives. The Region should be informed

where these records will be retained. Normally that would be the local Treasurer or individual designated by the Pastoral Charge.

Payroll records: For congregations that have been part of the Pastoral Charge Payroll Service the payrollservice provider, ADP, stores files electronically for seven years.

- 6) In cases of amalgamation with a neighbouring congregation or pastoral charge, it may be necessary to transfer some of the records to the other congregation or pastoral charge. If this should occur, a written statement shall be sent to the Region and to Archives giving details of this action.

For two or more congregations that amalgamate, the Canada Revenue Agency Number of at least one of the congregations must continue in force to prevent valuable data being lost; for instance, it is vital that current employment data from a congregation being closed be transferred to a continuing CRA business number.

In the case of a congregation closing or amalgamating with another congregation, a final Statistical and Information Report should be filed. The form is available through Statistical & Information Coordinator at the national office of the United Church.

In the case where there is a remaining Pastoral Charge only the disbanded congregational records are forwarded to the Archives.

- 7) After the disposition of assets has completed, the Trustees submit a final plan for the distribution of any remaining assets (e.g. bank accounts, congregational property items not disposed of etc.)

## Step 3

### Re-engagement with Pastoral Relations

- 8) The Pastoral Relations Committee will work with the called, appointed or designated Ministry Personnel, Pastoral Charge Supervisor or Regional Council representative to plan the closing service.
- 9) Once all assets have been properly disposed of the Pastoral Relations Committee will need to pass a motion to formally disband the community/Pastoral Charge for the purposes of central records and the national church.
- 10) If there is any remaining congregational property after the disbanding is effective, the regional council is responsible for this remaining property. It is up to the regional council to decide how to use that property for the benefit of the United Church.

Readers may find this process bureaucratic and cumbersome. Please keep in mind that discontinuing a community of faith that has been operating for decades is a careful and sensitive process. Also, at the Regional level, the Committee members may not be familiar with your circumstances or your journey of faith and as an oversight body, act to ensure that the actions authorized by the UCC Manual are appropriately fulfilled.

Approved by FSLDW Pastoral Relations – Nov 8, 2022

Approved by FSLDW Executive Committee - March 30, 2023