Licensed Lay Worship Leader Policy

Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council of The United Church of Canada

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Revised June 14, 2025

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Licensed Lay Worship Leaders
Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council

Preparation and Licensing

Many lay people are called to courageously step forward to give leadership in worship. Those who participate in a Licensed Lay Worship Leader (LLWL) program are choosing to develop their leadership gifts further.

In the Licensed Lay Worship Leader program, the United Church of Canada has recognized a need for people to be supported through a training and licensing program. This gives both the lay leader and the community of faith confidence that their leadership is built upon a strong theological and biblical foundation that is consistent with the ethos of the The United Church of Canada.

A Licensed Lay Worship Leader is a full member who has been determined to have gifts and a sense of call to the ministry of worship leadership and preaching, and who has developed these gifts through participation in a course of study and is licensed by a Regional Council.

LLWLs are not eligible for appointment to any paid accountable ministry personnel position. LLWLs are not eligible, by virtue of their license, to preside at the sacraments or to wear vestments. *https://www.united-church.ca/leadership/entering-ministry/lay-ministry-and-discipleship/lidensed-lay-worship-leaders*

A Licensed Lay Worship Leader is someone who

- is a member of The United Church of Canada
- has been recommended by the governing body of their community of faith to be a Licensed Lay Worship Leader
- is willing to take a course of preparation to be licensed
- is willing to serve as a Licensed Lay Worship Leader under the direction of the Regional Council

https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/handbooklicensed-lay-worship-leaders.pdf

The Region through its Licensing Committee is responsible for determining whether individuals who have completed courses of study for Lay Worship Leadership have acquired appropriate preparation for licensing in the Region.

The Region has responsibility for licensing an individual as a Licensed Lay Worship Leader.

An individual is recommended for licensing, or subsequent renewal of licensing, after an interview process conducted by the Licensing Committee of the Region, including a determination of the person's understanding of the ethos and theology of The United Church of Canada.

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When seeking licensing or renewal, individuals are asked to provide a letter from their home congregation's Session, Official Board or Church Council affirming their membership in good standing and suitability in this role within the wider church.

The Region is required to exercise due diligence by requesting to see a police records check completed within the past 6 months before granting initial license, and every 6 years subsequently.

Ongoing Support and Renewal of Licensing

The Licensing Committee of the Region will arrange an interview with Licensed Lay Worship Leaders to provide support and opportunity to discern if renewal of the license is appropriate. Please see the licensing process below:

1. the initial license will be for a period of one year;
2. an interview will be conducted following the first year of licensing for those seeking to renew their license and subsequent licenses will be for a period of three years with a yearly check-in initiated by the Licensing Committee;
3. those who are already LLWL will move to a three year license if seeking to be re-licensed when their current license expires following upon an interview and recommendation of the Licensing Committee.

A current license remains valid while a Lay Worship Leader remains a member of any Pastoral Charge within the Region. When the Licensed Lay Worship Leader transfers membership to a Pastoral Charge in another Region, they will not function as a Licensed Lay Worship Leader until recognized by that Region. (The Manual 2021 1.11.5)

The Licensing Committee of the Region is expected to help provide opportunity for Licensed Lay Worship Leaders to be engaged in ongoing learning.

Scope of Practice

Licensed Lay Worship Leaders are encouraged to assist the Region in meeting the needs of all Pastoral Charges which are without ministry personnel. It is therefore intended that Licensed Lay Worship Leaders will circulate in the Region so that a number of Pastoral Charges can benefit from their leadership. **The norm for Licensed Lay Worship Leaders is no more than two Sundays per month in a pastoral charge.**

In the case of Congregations with a Called/Appointed Minister:
In instances where there is a called or appointed minister who is on vacation or study leave, a Licensed Lay Worship Leader may fill in as worship leader for the duration of the minister's vacation or study leave to a maximum of five (5) consecutive Sundays, in any one congregation. (Not to include Sabbaticals)

In the case where a Licensed Lay Worship Leader has served five (5) consecutive Sundays (see above) five (5) Sundays would have to pass before the Licensed Lay Worship Leader

could serve again, in that congregation, then reverting to the **norm** of no more than two Sundays per month for the balance of the year.

In the case of Congregations where there is no Called or Appointed Minister:
In instances where there is no called or appointed minister, a Licensed Lay Worship Leader may fill in as a worship leader for the Sundays of a liturgical season, to a maximum of ten (10) consecutive Sundays, in any one congregation. This would cover most seasons of the church year except the long season after Pentecost. This would allow for planning and continuity.

In the case where a Licensed Lay Worship Leader has served ten (10) consecutive Sundays, (see above) ten (10) Sundays would have to pass before the Licensed Lay Worship Leader could serve again in that same congregation, then reverting to the **norm** of no more than two Sundays per month for the balance of the year.

In order to exercise stewardship of Licensed Lay Worship Leadership, at the time of renewal of the license, the Licensed Lay Worship Leader is asked to provide the Region with a complete list of the dates and locations of services of worship led in the past year.

The Pastoral Charge is expected to remunerate Licensed Lay Worship Leaders in accordance with the rate, including travel, in the current Salary and Allowances Schedule issued by General Council each year. It is to be noted that this rate is a minimum. When leading worship on a multi-point Pastoral Charge, it is intended that the Licensed Lay Worship Leader would receive above the minimum rate.

The Licensed Lay Worship Leader is not, by virtue of the role, permitted to serve as Pastoral Charge Supervisor or Regional Representative at Official Board/Church Board/Church Council meetings.

Although it is recognized that there is an element of pastoral care in worship leadership, the Licensed Lay Worship Leader is not permitted to enter an ongoing relationship of pastoral care with the Pastoral Charge or its members. It is expected that the Licensed Lay Worship Leader will refer any requests or requirements for pastoral care (counselling, home visitation, hospital visitation or funerals) to the called or appointed Ministry Personnel or the Pastoral Charge Supervisor for follow-up.

Licensing does not include permission to preside at the sacraments or license to perform marriages.

For their own awareness and protection, Licensed Lay Worship Leaders must complete two mandatory trainings: ***Boundaries (which include the Sexual Misconduct Policy of The United Church of Canada) and the Racial Justice Workshop.*** **They must also have had a police records check, including vulnerable sector, within the last five years.**

For more information, please contact the Chairperson or Secretary of the Licensing Committee (whose names and contact information can be found on the Bermuda-Nova Scotia

Regional Council website under Regional Council Directory and the link for committees) or Executive Minister, Rev. Faith March-MacCuish at fmaccuish@united-church.ca

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