

PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

*“We, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.”
(Romans 12:5)*

The Pastoral Relations Committee of Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Region works throughout the year to support the Communities of Faith within our Region, so that as a church, we can be who God calls us to be with appropriate leadership for each Community of Faith.

Our committee meets on the second Tuesday of each month via Zoom (including in July and August when a smaller committee executive meets), and as a committee, we strive for geographic representation from across the Region. Our 2025 Committee members were: Hugh Ellis (January – May), Barb Prowse (January – May), Kelly Burke (January – May), Neal Palmer (June – December), Franklyn James (June – September), Greg Davis, Aaron Billard, Ian Manson, Nancy Nicol (secretary), and Kate Jones (chair).

The most significant factor in the life of our committee this year came in the form of our staff support, the Regional Minister for Pastoral Relations and Community of Faith Support. Over the 12 months of 2025, our Region had 4 different Regional Ministers (Kendall Harrison from January – March; Debbie Aitken and Elizabeth Stevenson from May – September; Lloyd Bruce from November – December), and also received support from Heather Sandford (First Dawn Eastern Edge) and David Hewitt (Bermuda Nova Scotia) in the in-between months.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all 6 of these Regional Ministers for the support that they offered to our committee in 2025; to thank all of the members of the Pastoral Relations Committee in 2025 as we worked together in some very challenging circumstances this year; and to thank everyone in our Region who said “yes” when we approached you and asked if you would be willing to serve as a Pastoral Relations Liaison or a Pastoral Charge Supervisor. Truly, the work of Pastoral Relations is the work of all of us, and I am deeply grateful to all of the gifts that were shared for the work this year.

Some of the projects that we worked on as a committee in 2025 were:

- Had conversations around Covenanting Services. As per the Manual, a Covenanting Service is required for all calls, and for appointments of 3 months or longer. Our conversations were focused on short-term appointments (e.g. 3-6 months), and we discerned that there are two distinct types of appointments – appointments that fill a vacancy, and appointments that are intentional supply appointments while the search process continues. The former type of appointment should have a covenanting service if the appointment is 3 months or longer.
- Support for Collaborative Ministry conversations in different parts of the Region, including one cross-Regional Collaborative Ministry that has now been formed that straddles FSLDW and BNS.
- Worked on developing processes for requesting Marriage Officiant Licences for clergy entering one of our provinces for calls or appointments. This is a gap that was identified after Kendall’s death, and we apologize to anyone who was caught in the gap and thank you for your patience as we resolved this matter.

- Prioritized training more Pastoral Relations Liaisons to increase our pool of people able to undertake this work on our behalf. Thank you to everyone who has stepped in to this ministry!
- Approved a Stated Supply Ministry Agreement between St. Peter's Presbyterian Church and Rev. Chris Walker (Stanley Pastoral Charge and Kingsley-Birdton Pastoral Charge).
- Began a conversation about Lay-Led Congregations in this Region, and how we can better support them. This conversation is continuing into 2026.
- Began a conversation about implementation of the Sacraments Elders training and licencing in our Region. This conversation is continuing into 2026.
- Began a conversation about the need for a Voluntary Associate Minister (VAM) policy for our Region. After some initial conversations, it was determined that this was not the most pressing issue for our committee to work on at this time as there have been no requests for VAMs and no current situations where such a policy might be helpful.

In addition, we continued with our routine work:

- Approved 4 Calls and 23 Appointments
- Approved 7 Community of Faith Profiles
- Approved 4 position descriptions in situations that did not require a new Community of Faith Profile
- Approved Sacramental Privileges for 2 Candidates
- Approved 7 Changes in Pastoral Relations due to retirement or changing calls
- Gave our agreement to 2 Communities of Faith becoming Learning Sites (in collaboration with the Office of Vocation)
- Passed 4 motions related to Communities of Faith closing.
- Re-licensed 13 LLWLs in our Region, and continued to offer training, support, and regular interviews
- Re-Approved one Pastoral Charge as a "Lay-Led Community of Faith"
- Appointed Pastoral Charge Supervisors and Pastoral Relations Liaisons as required
- Offered support to Communities of Faith in times of upheaval and transition

There are three sub-committees or working groups related to our committee that report to the committee. These are:

- Pension Conveners (renamed in 2026 as Retirees and Pensioners Support and Advocacy Group)
- Self-Assessment Working Group
- LLWL Oversight

One gift that Lloyd Bruce brings to our Region in his new role as Regional Minister for Pastoral Relations and Community of Faith Support is bringing better organization to our spreadsheet of Pastoral Charges in Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Region. There are now clear systems in place to keep this spreadsheet updated, and it has been reformatted to offer much more helpful information to us.

An additional benefit of this improved information management is that Pastoral Charge Supervisors and Pastoral Relations Liaisons are now appointed with much better efficiency than

they were in the past. (This is helped by our committee's focus this year on increasing the number of trained Liaisons in our Region.)

Some of the statistics for our Region, as of January 12, 2026:

- 108 Pastoral Charges
- 153 Preaching Points
- 13 Collaborative/Cooperative Ministries
- 50 Pastoral Charges filled by a call (46%)
- 25 Pastoral Charges filled by appointment (23%)
- 33 Pastoral Charges without call or appointment (31%)
- 18 Pastoral Charges were in an active search process (some of these currently have a call or appointment, while some are currently without a call or appointment)
- 20 Pastoral Charges are functioning as "lay-led" (this is an estimate, as there is not currently a clear demarcation line when a church stops actively searching and begins functioning as lay-led)
- 43 Pastoral Charges have a Pastoral Charge Supervisor in place
- 23 Pastoral Charges have a Pastoral Relations Liaison in place.

Looking ahead to 2026... My time as chair will be ending as of our annual meeting in early June, though I have one year left in my term on the committee so will be around to assist and mentor the incoming committee chair. Thank you to the Region's Nominating Committee for their ongoing work (as of the time of writing this report) to identify a new chair; as well as their work in filling the vacancy on our committee following last year's annual meeting. (We welcomed Sonja Wright to our committee in January 2026.)

We have a number of significant projects underway, though we are only a couple of months in to 2026. A Sacraments Elder training session has been planned for this spring, and we will be developing a licensing process for Sacraments Elders. A Pastoral Charge Supervisor appointment form, revised policy, and annual reporting document have been developed – Pastoral Charges currently with a Supervisor, as well as the Supervisors, received a copy of these documents and they are now available on our Region's website. And our work on developing processes for recognizing and supporting Lay-Led Communities of Faith continues.

We, together, are the United Church of Canada in the Gaspé, PEI, and New Brunswick; and as a Pastoral Relations Committee, we strive to support the church so that we all can be equipped for the work that God calls us to do. And may God bless each of us as we celebrate God's presence, and as we share God's love with the world.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kate Jones
Chair, FSLDW Pastoral Relations Committee