

Licensed Lay Worship Leadership Guidelines

Alberta and Northwest Conference

The United Church of Canada

I Introduction and Purpose

Alberta and Northwest Conference appreciates the willingness of lay people who come forward to offer their faith, insight and skill as worship leaders in Congregations. The Presbyteries of the Conference have partnered with St. Stephen's College, Edmonton, to offer support to lay worship leaders through an educational program which provides resources and enhances understanding of worship practices in The United Church of Canada. The Licensed Lay Worship Leadership program is intended to honour and encourage members of the Laity to share their gifts and express their faith while meeting the vital need of congregations to gather for worship.

Sections II and III of this document quote information about Licensed Lay Worship Leadership from the General Council handbook *Licensed Lay Worship Leaders: Guidelines for Preparation* and *The Manual of the United Church of Canada (2010)*.

Section IV provides guidelines approved by the Alberta and Northwest Conference Executive, and suggested for use throughout Alberta and Northwest Conference to ensure that expectations regarding the practice of Licensed Lay Worship Leadership are consistent among the Presbyteries of the Conference.

II Role and Characteristics of Licensed Lay Worship Leaders

(from Licensed Lay Worship Leaders: Guidelines for Preparation: The United Church of Canada, June 2009)

In 1925, when the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregationalist churches joined to form The United Church of Canada, lay preachers, as a leadership designation, became a part of this union. Today, rather than the designation "lay preachers," the term "Licensed Lay Worship Leader" is used to designate those who offer occasional worship leadership that continues to be part of our life as a church.

Specifically, a **Licensed Lay Worship Leader** is a person who:

- has completed a course of study and, after appropriate recommendation and evaluation processes by Presbytery/District, is licensed to offer occasional worship leadership and preaching within the bounds of that Presbytery/District in the absence of a regularly designated minister.
- conducts worship when a regularly designated minister is away due to illness, continuing education course work, or vacation.

- is a member in good standing in a local Congregation who has been determined by his/her home Congregation and local Presbytery/District to have gifts and a sense of call to a ministry of worship leadership and preaching. Through participation in a Presbytery/District-approved course of study, these gifts and call are developed further, giving both the Licensed Lay Worship Leader and the Congregation confidence that worship leadership is built upon a theological and biblical foundation consistent with the ethos of the United Church.

Many lay people in a Congregation participate and give leadership in worship, but those who choose to participate in a Licensed Lay Worship Leadership program are choosing to develop their leadership gifts further. They are *not* entering an order of ministry. The term “licensed” indicates that an individual has engaged in a course of study and is considered suitable for this ministry by a congregational Session, Board, or Council as well as that Congregation’s Presbytery/District. Licensed Lay Worship Leaders are not eligible for appointment to any paid accountable ministry personnel position, although they may receive standard remuneration for conducting individual worship services on the basis of the “Worship Leadership and Preaching” rate, including travel, in the current *Salary and Allowances Schedule* issued by General Council each year. They are not eligible, by virtue of licensing, to preside at sacraments or to wear vestments.

Prior Assessment

Before expressing interest in participating in a Licensed Lay Worship Leader course, and before requesting recommendation to such a course by a congregational Session, Board, or Council, an individual has gifts and experience that lend themselves to a ministry of worship leadership and preaching.

Some people may bring transferable skills from their life and workplace experience, such as written and oral communication, public speaking, and teaching.

In addition, some may indicate budding gifts for worship leadership through such congregational activities as facilitating adult study groups and prayer groups, making presentations at committee meetings, and contributing thoughtful and reflective writing to church newsletters or other publications.

Of course, an individual may clearly demonstrate worship leadership through leading prayers and liturgy, preaching, and conducting entire services.

Personal Qualities

In affirming that an individual has the potential to participate in a Licensed Lay Worship Leaders program, a Session, Board, or Council is saying that this individual has demonstrated a commitment to the ethos of the United Church and is comfortable with that ethos as it is manifested at the levels of Pastoral Charge, Presbytery/District, Conference, and General Council.

Such an individual may possess a prayerful and integrated spirituality, openness to ongoing development and learning, and a desire to share a relevant faith informed by Christian hope and God’s Spirit. Other personal qualities may include:

- the ability to relate sensitively to a wide range of people

- be discreet and trustworthy
- engage with ideas in an open and non-judgmental fashion

Clear written and oral communication skills, as well as organizational skills, are additional assets. While none of us is fully formed, and an individual interested in being a Licensed Lay Worship Leader will not have all the necessary competencies at the beginning of her or his course of study, evidence of budding gifts that can be further honed is part of the assessment process.

Competencies

During a Licensed Lay Worship Leaders course of study, competencies will be explored such as:

- developing knowledge of the scriptural basis for Christian faith
- understanding theological themes
- exploring United Church history and polity
- recognizing and respecting different congregational contexts
- responding to pastoral issues in congregational contexts
- organizing and preparing worship liturgy
- understanding and writing prayers
- becoming familiar with United Church hymnody as singing our faith
- preparing and delivering sermons
- practising public speaking and presentation

III The United Church of Canada Policy on Licensed Lay Worship Leaders

(from The Manual of The United Church of Canada (2010), Section 344)

The Presbytery shall make enquiry as to the ability, character, and doctrine of a person recommended by a Session or Church Board or Church Council to be licensed as a Licensed Lay Worship Leader, and shall conduct a written examination on the course of study required by the appropriate General Council working unit. Upon successful completion of these requirements, the Presbytery shall issue a licence to the person on the prescribed form. The Licensed Lay Worship Leader shall be recognized at a public service to be held under the direction of the Chairperson of the Presbytery.

Presbytery Direction. The person licensed as a Licensed Lay Worship Leader shall function under the direction of the Presbytery.

Transferability. A Licensed Lay Worship Leader transferring membership in the United Church from one Pastoral Charge to another Pastoral Charge in the same Presbytery shall continue to be recognized as a Licensed Lay Worship Leader. A Licensed Lay Worship Leader transferring membership to a Pastoral Charge in another Presbytery shall not function as a Licensed Lay Worship Leader until recognized as a Licensed Lay Worship Leader by that Presbytery.

Renewal of Licence. The licence of a Licensed Lay Worship Leader shall be renewed each year at the discretion of the Presbytery within the jurisdiction of which such Licensed Lay Worship Leader is a member in good standing of a Congregation.

IV Alberta and Northwest Conference Standards of Practice

(approved by the Executive of Alberta and Northwest Conference, October 6, 2011)

Preparation and Licensing

In Alberta and Northwest Conference, the licence of a Licensed Lay Worship Leader shall be renewed each pastoral year (July 1 to June 30) at the discretion of the Presbytery.

In Alberta and Northwest Conference, the course of study which prepares individuals for Lay Worship Leadership is that provided through St. Stephen's College, Edmonton.

Individuals may also choose to take the Lay Worship Leaders program for personal interest only.

Each Presbytery is responsible for determining whether individuals who have completed courses of study for Lay Worship Leadership offered by Presbyteries outside Alberta and Northwest Conference have acquired appropriate preparation for licensing in that Presbytery.

The Presbytery has responsibility for licensing an individual as a Licensed Lay Worship Leader. Presbyteries are to determine which Presbytery committee will assume primary responsibility for support and coordination of the Licensed Lay Worship Leaders program.

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

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.

Presbyteries are required to exercise due diligence by requesting to see a police information check completed within the past 6 months before granting initial license, and every 6 years subsequently.

Licensed Lay Worship Leaders will be recognized at a public service to be held under the direction of the Chairperson of the Presbytery in accordance with The Manual Sec. 344 (a).

Ongoing Support and Renewal of Licensing

The appropriate committee of the Presbytery will arrange annual meetings with Licensed Lay Worship Leaders to provide support and opportunity to discern if renewal of the license is appropriate.

A current license remains valid while a Lay Worship Leader remains a member of any Pastoral Charge within the Presbytery. When the Licensed Lay Worship Leader transfers

membership to a Pastoral Charge in another Presbytery, they will not function as a Licensed Lay Worship Leader until recognized by that Presbytery (The Manual Sec. 344 (c)).

The appropriate committee of the Presbytery is expected to provide opportunity for Licensed Lay Worship Leaders to be engaged in ongoing learning.

Stewardship of Lay Worship Leadership Resources

Licensed Lay Worship Leaders are encouraged to assist the Presbytery 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 Presbytery so that a number of Pastoral Charges can benefit from their leadership.

The Licensed Lay Worship Leader may cover three consecutive Sundays a month, to a maximum of ten services per year, in one Pastoral Charge. Alternatively, the Licensed Lay Worship Leader may lead services for one complete month in a six month period in one Pastoral Charge. If asked to lead worship for more Sundays, the Licensed Lay Worship Leader is to seek the approval of the appropriate committee of the Presbytery before agreeing to do so.

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

The Pastoral Charge is expected to remunerate Licensed Lay Worship Leaders in accordance with the "Worship Leadership and Preaching" 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, but not necessarily the full rate for each worship service.

When leading worship in the Pastoral Charge where their membership is held, it is expected that Licensed Lay Worship Leaders receives the same honorarium as any other lay member of the Pastoral Charge who leads worship. If an honorarium is provided to members of the Pastoral Charge, it is not subject to the current *Salary and Allowances Schedule* issued by General Council each year; it is set at the discretion of the Official Board of the Pastoral Charge.

The Licensed Lay Worship Leader is not, by virtue of the role, permitted to serve as Pastoral Charge Supervisor or Presbytery representative at Official 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, by virtue of the role, permitted to enter an ongoing relationship of pastoral care with the Pastoral Charge. It is expected that the Licensed Lay

Worship Leader will refer any requests or requirements for pastoral care (counselling, home visitation, hospital visitation) to the called or appointed Ministry Personnel or the Pastoral Charge Supervisor for follow-up.

Like any person, a Licensed Lay Worship Leader may conduct a funeral. However, the conduct of funerals within a Pastoral Charge (including a funeral home located within the bounds of a Pastoral Charge), is to be arranged in consultation with the called or appointed Ministry Personnel or the Supervisor of the Pastoral Charge. If the Licensed Lay Worship Leader conducts a funeral, s/he must ensure that the information about the service is entered in the Burial Register of the Pastoral Charge.

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 are encouraged to review the Sexual Abuse Policy of The United Church of Canada found in The Manual Sec. 073.

For liability insurance purposes, the Licensed Lay Worship Leader is covered by Presbytery for their worship leadership services only.