

Pastoral Relations Commission  
**LICENSED LAY WORSHIP LEADER**  
**POLICY AND GUIDELINES HANDBOOK**  
April, 2025

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**Antler River Watershed Regional Council**

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## INTRODUCTION

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### **Purpose of this Handbook**

The purpose of this handbook is to outline the policy of the Antler River Watershed Regional Council of The United Church of Canada regarding Licensed Lay Worship Leaders within its bounds.

Each Licensed Lay Worship Leader has the responsibility to ensure that all *conditions* of their requirements are met as outlined in the current *Manual* and this handbook.

The Antler River Watershed Regional Council appreciates the willingness of lay people who come forward to offer their faith, insight and skill as worship leaders in Communities of Faith. 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 Communities of Faith to gather for worship.

This handbook provides the policy guidelines approved by the Pastoral Relations Commission of Antler River Watershed Regional Council, and for use throughout the Regional Council to ensure that expectations regarding the practice of Licensed Lay Worship Leadership are consistent.

The contents of this document do not replace, but are meant to complement, the policies for Licensed Lay Worship Leaders as outlined in *The Manual* and *Licensed Lay Worship Leaders*.

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## ANTLER RIVER WATERSHED REGIONAL COUNCIL PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMISSION STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

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- based on *Licensed Lay Worship Leaders, The United Church of Canada, June 2019*

### Preparation and Licensing

#### Initial Licensing

Antler River Watershed Regional Council Pastoral Relations Commission has the responsibility for licensing an individual as a Lay Worship Leader.

#### Course of Study

The Pastoral Relations Commission is responsible for setting out the prescribed course of study which is based on the requirements set out by The United Church of Canada. The Pastoral Relations Commission is responsible for determining whether individuals who have completed courses of study for Lay Worship Leadership offered beyond the boundaries of the Antler River Watershed Regional Council meet the requirements to be licensed.

#### Educational Standards

Those participating in a Licensed Lay Worship Leader educational program are expected to observe accepted educational standards with respect to the work involved in becoming a Licensed Lay Worship Leader (LLWL). This includes, but is not limited to, attendance at events for Licensed Lay Worship Leaders, participation in all required components of the course, the timely completion of required assignments, an acceptable quality of assignments submitted, and the appropriate use of resources, including being aware of the risk of plagiarism. Any action deemed to be a breach of accepted educational standards may jeopardize the successful completion of the course and subsequent licensing.

#### Educational Oversight

The Pastoral Relations Commission shall appoint a “*Licensed Lay Worship Leader Resource Team*” to oversee the program for the initial and ongoing training of Licensed Lay Worship Leaders, as well as the support and supervision of the Licensed Lay Worship Leaders themselves.

#### Readiness to Serve

An individual may be recommended for licensing, or subsequent renewal of licensing, after an interview process conducted by the Human Resource Commission’s Licensed Lay Worship Leader Resource Team, including a determination of the person’s understanding of the ethos, theology and practice of The United Church of Canada.

#### Initial License and Re-Licensing

The Pastoral Relations Commission shall have the authority to license a Lay Worship Leader. A license shall be renewed every **three** years at the discretion of the Pastoral Relations Commission.

#### Community of Faith Support

When seeking licensing or renewal of a license, individuals shall provide a letter from their home community of faith's governing body (Session, Official Board or Church Council) affirming that their membership in good standing in their home community of faith and their suitability in this role within the wider church.

### **Police Records Checks**

The Licensed Lay Worship Leader Resource Team shall exercise due diligence by requesting to see a Police Records Check (Vulnerable Sector) issued within the past six months before granting an initial license, followed by an annual declaration. The Licensed Lay Worship Leader Resource Team may also request an updated police records check. Failure to provide a current Police Records Check/annual declaration at the appropriate intervals will result in suspension of one's license.

### **Ongoing Support and Renewal of License**

#### **Regular Check-in**

The Licensed Lay Worship Resource Team will meet regularly with each Licensed Lay Worship Leader to provide support and opportunity to discern if renewal of the license is appropriate. Renewal will be based on the policy contained in this resource.

#### **Jurisdiction**

A current license remains valid while a Lay Licensed Worship Leader remains a member of any pastoral charge within the Antler River Watershed Regional Council.

#### **Transferability**

A Licensed Lay Worship Leader transferring membership in the United Church from one community of faith to another community of Faith in the same regional council shall continue to be recognized as a Licensed Lay Worship Leader. If a Licensed Lay Worship Leader transfers their membership to a community of faith in another regional council, they must be recognized by that regional council in order to continue serving as a Licensed Lay Worship Leader.

#### **Continuing Education**

The Licensed Lay Worship Leader Resource Team is expected to provide opportunity for Licensed Lay Worship Leaders to be engaged in ongoing learning. Licensed Lay Worship Leaders are expected to participate in continuing education events on a regular basis. The LLWL will update annually their completed continuing education and a self-assessment.

#### **Clustering**

Licensed Lay Worship Leaders are encouraged to form cluster groups for mutual support.

#### **Personal Worship**

In addition to being a full member of The United Church of Canada, when not conducting a service it is expected that Licensed Lay Worship Leaders will regularly attend worship and other community of faith activities at their sponsoring community of faith.

### **Stewardship of Licensed Lay Worship Leadership Resources**

#### **Meeting Regional Council Needs**

Licensed Lay Worship Leaders are encouraged to assist the Antler River Watershed Regional Council in meeting the needs of all communities of faith which are without ministry personnel. It is therefore intended that Licensed Lay Worship Leaders will circulate within the regional council so that a number of communities of faith can benefit from their leadership.

### **Frequency of Preaching**

The Licensed Lay Worship Leader may cover no more than three consecutive Sundays in a month in any one community of faith. If asked to lead worship for more than three Sundays in a single community of faith, the Licensed Lay Worship Leader and the community of faith must seek the approval of the Licensed Lay Worship Leader Resource Team **before** doing so.

### **Preaching in another Regional Council**

In the event that a Licensed Lay Worship Leader is invited to lead worship in a community of faith outside of the regional council, it is expected that they will seek the permission and function within the guidelines of that particular regional council.

### **Accountability**

Licensed Lay Worship Leaders are required, on an annual basis, to provide the Licensed Lay Worship Leader Resource Team with a complete list of the dates and locations of all services of worship led in the previous year, including those services led outside of the bounds of the Antler River Watershed Regional Council. Included in this report will be a list of continuing education events attended. Individuals may also wish to submit a list of relevant books that were read as part of their ongoing education as a Licensed Lay Worship Leader.

### **Mentorship**

Following initial licensing, the Licensed Lay Worship Leader Resource Team will assign Licensed Lay Worship Leaders a mentor for a minimum of one year in order that they might reflect together on their role and effectiveness. The Licensed Lay Worship Leader Resource Team may, at its discretion, assign a mentor to a Lay Licensed Worship Leader at any time should it feel that this is necessary.

### **Respect for local practices**

Licensed Lay Worship Leaders lead worship at the invitation of a local community of faith. When preparing worship services, Licensed Lay Worship Leaders shall respect the community of faith that they are serving with regard to local traditions and practices, worship format, hymnody, language and style of worship leadership, following the direction and instructions of the local community of faith or ministry personnel.

### **Remuneration**

The community of faith shall remunerate Licensed Lay Worship Leaders appropriately. The remuneration will be the same as the one listed for 'Visiting Ministry Personnel' found in the current *Minimum Salaries & Reimbursements for Ministry Personnel*, noted in the Overview. All monies earned must be declared as taxable income. A T4A tax form must be issued by the community of faith to an individual for any amount in excess of \$500 per year.

### **Cancellation**

If a service is cancelled after the LLWL is booked, the church is responsible for paying 75% of the pulpit supply rate. No mileage is expected (if the person did not travel to the church).

### **Local support**

Each community of faith that annually sponsors a Licensed Lay Worship Leader is encouraged to occasionally invite their Licensed Lay Worship Leader to lead worship, and to remunerate them appropriately, as a sign of support of their Licensed Lay Worship Leader.

### **Preaching in one's own Community of Faith**

When leading worship within one's home community of faith, it is expected that the Licensed Lay Worship Leader be paid appropriately (see **Remuneration** section in this document).

### **Representing the Regional Council**

A Licensed Lay Worship Leader may not represent the regional council at their local church meeting, by virtue of their role as LLWL. The representative of the regional council at a Council/Board meeting shall be either the ministry personnel called or appointed to the pastoral charge or a duly appointed Pastoral Charge Supervisor. A Licensed Lay Worship Leader is not, by virtue of the role, permitted to serve as Pastoral Charge Supervisor for their own pastoral charge. Nor are they permitted to apply to or fill pastoral vacancies.

### **Representing one's own Community of Faith**

A Licensed Lay Worship Leader may be duly elected by their community of faith to represent that community of faith at Regional Council meetings as the Lay representative.

### **Pastoral Care**

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 or with individual members of a community of faith. 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.

### **Sacraments**

Licensing as a Lay Worship Leader does not include permission to preside, under any circumstance, at the sacraments (Baptism and Communion). Celebrating the sacraments through arrangements with a non-United Church of Canada agency may result in the loss of one's license to serve as a Licensed Lay Worship Leader. Please note an 'Agape meal' is allowed but "communion" language is not to be used. See *Celebration God's Presence* (p 550-551) for direction.

### **Funerals**

Presiding at funerals for members or adherents of a community of faith (including at a funeral home) shall be done only at the invitation of the called or appointed minister of that community of faith, the Pastoral Charge Supervisor, or the Pastoral Relations Commission. Conversation with the called or appointed ministry personnel or the Pastoral Charge Supervisor of the community of faith must happen prior to making any agreement with a family, an individual or a funeral home. If, after following all the above noted steps, the Licensed Lay Worship Leader conducts a funeral, they must ensure that the information about the service is properly entered in the Burial Register of the community of faith.

### **Relationship with Funeral Homes**

Conducting funerals, other than as noted above, is not within the purview of the Licensed Lay Worship Leader. Licensed Lay Worship Leaders are not to be "on call" with local funeral homes. All funerals require competency in the area of pastoral care for which Licensed Lay Worship Leaders are not normally trained. Therefore, keeping in mind the duty of care by which all Licensed Lay Worship Leaders are bound, conducting funerals as a 'side business' may be grounds for non-renewal of one's license.

### **Advertising**

Individual Licensed Lay Worship Leaders are not permitted to advertise their services or solicit invitations to lead worship through the use of any social media or on the internet, except via appropriate venues designed by the regional council for such purpose.

### **Duty of Care**

For their own awareness and protection, Licensed Lay Worship Leaders are encouraged to review on a regular basis the Sexual Abuse Policy of The United Church of Canada. (see: *Sexual Abuse Prevention and Response: Policy and Procedures*, The United Church of Canada, January 2019).

In the Antler River Watershed Regional Council, all Licensed Lay Worship Leaders must have completed the Sexual Abuse Awareness/Boundaries workshop and the Racial Justice workshop offered by The United Church of Canada, as well as completing refresher courses as required.

### **Liability**

For liability insurance purposes, a Licensed Lay Worship Leader is covered by Antler River Watershed Regional Council for their worship leadership services only.

### **Licensed Lay Worship Leaders from other Regions**

The Antler River Watershed Regional Council welcomes LLWLs who are in good standing from another regional council of the United Church of Canada.

### **Governance of Licensed Lay Worship Leaders**

The Antler River Watershed Regional Council Pastoral Relations Commission shall appoint a “*Licensed Lay Worship Leader Resource Team*” to oversee the program for the initial and ongoing training of Licensed Lay Worship Leaders, as well as the support and supervision of the Licensed Lay Worship Leaders themselves.

### **Composition of the Licensed Lay Worship Leader (LLWL) Resource Team**

The Licensed Lay Worship Leader Resource Team shall consist of **at least** seven (7) members:

- two (2) Ministry Personnel [OM, DM, DLM];
- two (2) Lay people [not a LLWL]; and
- three (3) Licensed Lay Worship Leaders
- And one of whom is a member of the Pastoral Relations Commission.

Quorum for this committee will consist of four members, one of whom must be Ministry Personnel. The Regional Minister for Pastoral Relations shall be an ex-officio member of the committee.

### **Collection and Circulation of Names of Licensed Lay Worship Leaders**

The Licensed Lay Worship Resource Team of the Pastoral Relations Commission shall, on an annual basis, circulate the names of those who are approved to preach within the regional council.