



**Antler River Watershed,
Horseshoe Fall,
and Western Ontario Waterways
Regional Councils**



United Fresh Start Congregational Program Modules

Website: <https://united-church.ca/leadership/supporting-ministry/united-fresh-start>

Congregations and their minister(s) are free to choose how many and which modules they would like to take from the list.

The Facilitator Rate per session is the “Visiting Minister” rate from the Minimum Salary Schedule for Ministry Personnel:
[Ministers’ Salary Schedule and Cost of Living Groups | The United Church of Canada \(united-church.ca\)](#)

2026 rate:
\$261 per session,
mileage \$0.60 per KM

Core Modules

The following modules are considered core to **United Fresh Start** when it is used in response to a change in a pastoral relationship. They cover the underlying theory of transitions (*Transition*); the basic story-telling process that begins to build relationships (*History-Sharing and Understanding*); the reminder that self-care during this time is important, too (*Family and Friends: Leading an Integrated Life*), and how to enter a new community of faith (*Entering a New System*).

Entering a New System – A community of faith is a living system, and the arrival of a new leader causes disruption to its equilibrium. Participants identify healthy ways to enter the system. This module provides practical methods for engaging the community of faith in sharing histories, exploring norms and expectations, and committing to on-going feedback.

Family and Friends: Leading an Integrated Life – Finding time for family, friends AND self is often difficult during a time of transition. During this session participants look at their use of time, boundary-setting, and the extent of their

support networks, and begin to think about how professional life, time for family and friends, and respite all need to be part of an integrated life.

History-Sharing and Understanding – The ministry personnel person, the regional council, and the community of faith all enter into this new relationship in the context of their histories, personal and institutional. Sharing these histories promotes understanding and trust, helping to build the relationship. This module incorporates a process that facilitates the story-telling.

Transition – This module introduces the concept of transition (as opposed to change), exploring ways of responding appropriately given where people (the ministry personnel person and the congregants) are in their response to change.

General Modules

The following modules should be chosen according to the needs and interests of participants. The order of listing is alphabetical and does not indicate degree of importance.

Building Respectful Congregations – In this workshop, participants will examine the Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy of the UCC as a guideline to help define what a respectful congregation looks like and how to create and maintain a respectful and healthy work and congregational environment.

Conflict Part I: Awareness – From a base definition of conflict this module explores types of conflict and helps participants assess their personal styles for dealing with conflict and learn how to recognize the early warning signs.

Conflict Part II: Diagnosis and Response – In this module participants are introduced to Speed Leas' levels of conflict and the concept of behavioral covenants. Appropriate interventions for different levels of conflict are discussed.

Church Size and Its Implications – This module introduces the latest in church size theory, asks participants to look at their own experience with different size communities of faith, and raises questions about the implications of size for their current community of faith.

Decision-Making: Style and Clarity – Participants explore the factors to consider in determining how decisions should be made and who should be involved, using case studies to promote their understanding. They analyze the decision-making styles of their communities of faith and their consequences and look at the impact of culture on decision-making.

Dialogue: Searching for Common Ground – How do we learn to live in harmony with those with whom we have deep disagreement? Focusing on what we share in common, instead of our differences, and foregoing the need to convert we can create a space that allows us to live and worship side-by-side. In

this module participants learn and practice how to phrase the kinds of questions that will open up that space.

Diversity – To help participants engage in conversations on differences; to help participants avoid making assumptions about those who are different from each other; to begin talking about difference as a regular part of life in communities of faith — especially related to cultural expectations, power, and privilege. A focus of this module is on being intentional about questions of power and privilege to help the community of faith become one that honours diversity and becoming an intercultural church.

Exit and Entrance: Patterns, Emotions and the Wilderness – This module helps participants understand that the success of a transition depends in part on how exits and entrances are handled. They reflect on the exits and entrances involved in the current transition, from the perspective of both ministry personnel and the community of faith and learn to become more intentional about entering a new ministry.

Family Systems Theory – This module provides an introduction to Rabbi Edwin Friedman’s family systems theory and its particular application in times of transition in communities of faith.

Finances: What You Need to Know – Getting a handle on the financial situation of a new parish can be challenging. This module provides a road map through the financial maze, including a look at the requirements governing community of faith finances.

Habits, Norms and Expectations – This module is designed to help participants identify the habits, norms and expectations of their communities of faith, particularly in the areas of liturgy and worship, music, programs and structure, and staff. Participants also explore the underlying sources of these expectations. Ministry personnel identify their own habits, norms and expectations so that differences between these and those of the community of faith can be explored and resolved.

Leadership for Our Times – A look at the demands being made on leaders in today’s world, this module builds on the work of Ronald A. Heifetz and Peter Steinke. Participants do a quick assessment of their leadership style and analyze current challenges facing their communities of faith, using Heifetz’s and Steinke’s models to craft an appropriate response.

Leading Planned Change – The very fact that a new ministry personnel person has been called introduces change into a system, and sometimes other changes are thrust upon a community of faith even if the time is not appropriate. Participants identify those changes that are occurring in their community of faith and learn how to help people navigate through them.

Organizational Systems Theory: Using Organizational Analysis in Congregations – This module introduces participants to a structured way to analyze the effectiveness of their community of faith systems. Starting from a mission focus, participants look at the current context for ministry and how structure, rewards, relationships, leadership, and other mechanisms support or detract from achievement of mission.

Planning for Effective Ministry – Planning is a spiritual discipline, and clarity of mission and vision are the foundations for good goal-setting. Planning is part of a cycle, a model for which is presented in this session. Participants identify the type of planning already occurring in their communities of faith, where their communities of faith are in the planning cycle, and what should be done next.

Polarities: Differences to be Managed – Polarities involve opposing viewpoints, neither of which is “right” or “wrong,” and both of which have positive aspects. This module introduces the polarity matrix as a process for engaging these complex issues, which often lie at the heart of on-going community of faith conflict, and coming up with potential solutions. Participants learn the difference between “polarities to be managed,” and “problems to be solved.”

Free Self-led E-Modules:

There are three free self-led modules available at <https://unitedfreshstart.ca/>.

This includes:

- Transition
- Family Systems Theory – The Community of Faith as a System
- Entering a New System

Power, Authority and Influence – This module introduces participants to various types of power in the community of faith and gives them tools for assessing power structures. The module defines power, how it can be used, and how to deal with both formal and informal power in communities of faith.

Renegotiating Roles and Expectations – When one's understanding of role, or expectations of self, do not align with those of members of the community of faith, renegotiations are in order. This module outlines some ways to begin those renegotiations, including tips on how to give and receive feedback and how to hold difficult conversations.

Role Clarity – This module helps participants understand the role expectations – both formal and informal – placed on ministry personnel by their communities of faith and to assess the impact of a community of faith's culture and history on these expectations. A card sorting exercise is used to define role priorities.

Wellness: Caring for Self in Transition – Spiritual, physical, mental, emotional and relational health are all important, and any or all may suffer during times of transition. The rhythms of a holistic life, so important to wellness and balance, may be difficult to maintain in a new place without familiar people and routines to draw upon. Through reflection participants get in touch with what they need to do to maintain their balance during the stresses and strains of transition.