

GUIDELINES FOR USE WHEN CONSIDERING SHARED MINISTRY IN SASKATCHEWAN CONFERENCE

Should you be considering a shared ministry? Here are some things to consider.

- Is your church too small to survive alone? Is the church of your proposed partner(s) also too small?
- Do your churches have a history of working together in your community?
- Are all congregations open to doing things in new and different ways?
- Is one (or all) of your buildings no longer suitable for the needs of the congregation?
- Are there projects (e.g. youth ministry or community outreach) that both churches would like to do but that neither can afford alone?

If you answered **yes** to all or most of these questions, entering into a shared ministry may be a new and exciting way to meet your ministry needs.

The Manual of The United Church of Canada defines “Ecumenical Shared Ministry” as “a pastoral Charge or Outreach Ministry which is shared by the United Church with one or more other denominations, which may be being served by a member of the order of ministry of another denomination, and which is recognized as such by the presbytery, and under its oversight.” (Section 001)

A **shared ministry** may include two or more denominations, and have shared services, shared staff, shared programs, shared buildings or all of these things. You and your partner church(es), and your denominational bodies will need to assess and come to agreement on what will be most effective in your particular situation.

Where do we start? Always begin by contacting your presbytery. Shared ministry has implications for both Pastoral Relations and Finance and Property. Presbytery will name people with expertise in those areas to work with you and your partner church as you work toward a shared ministry agreement.

The following are areas that you, your partner church and your presbytery will need to consider and come to agreement about.

1. Ministry Staff

- Most shared ministries alternate pastorates between their partner church, (i.e. if we have a minister from one denomination now, we will choose a minister from one of the other denominations, on a rotational basis, when that person leaves us).
- Ministers are screened and called/appointed and paid according to the policies of the denomination to which they belong. They are therefore not appointed or their credentials checked by the other denomination(s).

Congregations are encouraged to become familiar with the screening and appointment processes of all the denominations involved in the shared ministry.

- In seeking a minister, it is important to look for someone who places a high value on ecumenism, and who is accepting of the traditions and policies of both or all denominations.

2. Other Staff

- Most denominations have guidelines for the hiring and remuneration of lay employees (such as secretaries, custodians and church musicians). You will need to agree on one set of guidelines (which may be a combination of those of both denominations). In addition to these, it will be important to follow all provincial employment and human rights legislation.

3. Buildings. There are a variety of options, including:

- All congregations, with the approval of their denominations, could sell their buildings and property, and use the moneys received to purchase property and build to meet the needs of the new ministry. This new building would be held in the joint names of both (all) denominations.
- One congregation could sell its building, and use the money realized for renovations/maintenance of the other building. In that case, the shared building should be held in the joint names of both or all denominations.
- All buildings could be maintained, and services held on a rotational basis in all buildings.
- The buildings could be physically combined to make a larger structure.

4. Finances

- The shared ministry is normally funded by the givings of its members, and by any fundraising events its members undertake. There are not usually denominational funds available to support such ministries.
- All denominations have mission funds, such as the Mission and Service Fund of The United Church of Canada. These funds can be supported in one of two ways:
 - The shared ministry may budget a designated amount to be given to each fund.
 - Individual members may designate their donations to the mission fund of their choice.
- Of course, it will be important for the shared ministry to promote the mission funds of all denominations.

5. Denominational Linkages

- The minister will continue to be a member of and accountable to their own denomination, and participate fully in its structure and wider church life.
- The minister will also be invited and encouraged to participate in the denominational bodies of the other denomination(s).
- Individual participants in the shared ministry will continue to be members of their own denominations as well as having responsibilities as congregants of the shared ministry.
- The congregation will be subject to the oversight of Presbytery and of the corresponding structures in the partner denominations.

6. Local Structures

- In preparing your shared ministry agreement, you will create a board or council structure that will meet the decision-making needs of the shared ministry and of all its congregations. **All decision-making structures must be in accordance with the requirements of all denominations.**
- Organizations (e.g. women's groups, youth groups) within the shared ministry will need to decide whether they will maintain separate groups or amalgamate. It will be important to maintain ties to the structures of both or all denominations.
- Lay representatives to all denominational bodies must be members of those denominations and will be elected by the congregation.
- Separate membership and baptismal rolls will need to be maintained for each of the denominations.

7. Worship and Sacrament

- It is important to honour the worship traditions and practices of all denominations. A worship committee consisting of members from all denominations will help this to happen appropriately.
- The shared ministry may choose a style of worship that is uniquely its own, combining the best of both or all traditions, with occasional services that more specifically reflect denominational heritage.
- Or, the shared ministry may offer services which alternate among the traditions.
- It may be most helpful to choose an ecumenical church school curriculum (i.e. Bible Quest, Seasons of the Spirit) rather than a denomination-specific curriculum.
- Sacramental practices should reflect both or all traditions, perhaps on an alternating basis.

PLEASE REMEMBER: ALL DECISIONS YOU MAKE CONCERNING YOUR SHARED MINISTRY MUST BE APPROVED BY THE OVERSEEING BODIES OF BOTH DENOMINATIONS. FOR THE UNITED CHURCH, THIS IS PRESBYTERY.

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