

Northern Spirit Regional Council
Pulpit Supply Policy

This policy applies to those who provide pulpit supply worship leadership and who are not members of the Order of Ministry, Designated Lay Ministers, or Licensed Lay Worship Leaders of The United Church of Canada.

The Northern Spirit Regional Council appreciates the willingness of lay people who come forward to offer their faith, insight and skill as worship leaders in Congregations.

Pulpit Supply by United Church of Canada Lay Members/Adherents

The term “pulpit supply” is used to designate those who specifically:

- Offer occasional worship leadership and preaching within the bounds of Northern Spirit Region in the absence of a called or appointed Ministry Personnel;
- Conduct worship when called or appointed Ministry Personnel is away for any reason; and
- Are members/adherents in good standing in their home community of faith within The United Church of Canada.

Pulpit supply worship leaders are not eligible for appointment to any paid accountable ministry position, to preside at sacraments, to wear a preaching stole or clergy collar or to use title designation such as Reverend or Pastor.

Pulpit supply is meant to be “temporary and irregular”.

There are no restrictions on the number of pulpit supply services led by worship leaders in their own Community of Faith.

When an individual provides pulpit supply in a Community of Faith where they are not a member or adherent, they may cover up to three consecutive Sundays a month, to a maximum of ten services per year, in one Community of Faith. Alternatively, they may lead services for one complete month in a six-month period in one Community of Faith. If the community of faith wishes the individual to lead more services, the community of faith must first be granted permission from the Northern Spirit Regional Council Pastoral Relations Commission.

Although it is recognized that there is an element of pastoral care in worship leadership, the pulpit supply worship leader is expected to refer any requests or requirements for pastoral care (counselling, home visitation, hospital visitation) to the called or appointed Ministry Personnel, the Pastoral Charge Supervisor, or the Pastoral Care Team or Committee of the Community of Faith.

For their own awareness and protection, pulpit supply worship leaders are strongly encouraged to review the current Sexual Misconduct Policy of The United Church of Canada.

Communities of Faith are expected to cover travel and meal costs, and are encouraged to offer an appropriate honourarium.

Licensed Lay Worship Leaders are subject to the guidelines of the Northern Spirit Regional Council for Licensed Lay Worship Leaders.

Pulpit Supply by Non-United Church of Canada Lay Leaders or Ordained Clergy

Occasional pulpit supply may be provided by lay leaders or clergy who are not members of The United Church of Canada.

This policy does not apply to congregational members providing pulpit supply in their own Shared Ministry.

Members of another denomination, whether lay or clergy, may lead services not more than four (4) times in a calendar year in any United Church within the Northern Spirit Regional Council unless they have been interviewed by the Regional Council Pastoral Relations Commission, have provided confirmation that they are in good standing in their own denomination, and furthermore, have provided references from their own denomination.

A lay person from another denomination who wishes to lead worship more than 4 times is encouraged to enroll in the Licensed Lay Worship Leaders' Program of The United Church of Canada.

A clergy person from another denomination who wishes to be appointed to a Community of Faith is required to be approved for the Admissions Program by the Office of Vocation.

For their own awareness and protection, pulpit supply worship leaders are strongly encouraged to review the current Sexual Misconduct Policy of The United Church of Canada.

Communities of Faith are expected to cover travel and meal costs, and are encouraged to offer an appropriate honourarium.

End of Life Services of Worship

This policy does not speak to the leadership of end of life services of Worship.

Oversight of end of life practices related to a Community of Faith (including those who provide leadership) remains the responsibility of the Governing Body of the Pastoral Charge. (The Manual (2019) Section B.7.4.1)

Approved by the Regional Council Executive, February 12, 2020.