

Registration of Ministry Personnel to Solemnize Marriages

Within the Northern Spirit Regional Council

Weddings conducted under the auspices of The United Church of Canada are part of the regular pastoral and outreach ministry of the church. Weddings are also services of worship. Individuals have the right to receive, and Communities of Faith the responsibility to provide, pastoral care during the planning of weddings and afterward as persons live out their marriage.

Ministry Personnel are licensed to solemnize marriages by provincial and territorial governments as authorized by their religious bodies. All jurisdictions served by the Northern Spirit Regional Council require that marriages be recorded in a Marriage Registry provided by a Community of Faith. All licenses issued to Ministry Personnel are arranged by the Regional Council Office.

The Regional Council is responsible for authorizing registration of clergy to officiate at weddings within its bounds. This authorization occurs automatically for all United Church ordered ministers (Ordained and Diaconal), Designated Lay Ministers, and Candidates for Ministry, who are called or appointed to Pastoral Charges and other special pastoral ministries accountable to the Regional Council (e.g., Chaplains). The Regional Council can also give approval to requests for the right to perform weddings for other persons (e.g., ordained supply ministers) serving in Communities of Faith where other licensed persons are unavailable. **All Ministry Personnel must be compliant with standards set by the Office of Vocation, having completed mandatory Racial Justice training, up-to-date Personal and Professional Boundaries training, and having completed their Annual Declaration re police records check.**

Ordained or Diaconal Ministers who are not serving a Regional Council-appointed position may be designated by their Community of Faith as Honourary Associate Ministers. This designation must be reported to the Regional Council, so that arrangements can be made for Clergy Registration re solemnization of marriages, and so that standards compliance can be monitored. This designation must be renewed and reported annually by the Pastoral Charge.

In order to honour the Community of Faith focus for weddings, to ensure accountability for both persons solemnizing marriages and those being married under the auspices of The United Church of Canada, and to comply with provincial and territorial regulations, the Northern Spirit Regional Council has adopted the following policy for the issuing of licenses to marry:

1. Permanent clergy registration for the solemnization of marriages is arranged for the use of Ministry Personnel during the course of their active pastoral ministry within a particular ministry setting. Persons regularly called or appointed to pastoral ministry will be accountable both to their Community of Faith and the Regional Council for the conduct of weddings as part of their pastoral duties and responsibilities.
2. All such weddings conducted by persons in #1 above will be at, or part of, their ministry in the Community of Faith to which they have been called or appointed, unless appropriate arrangements have been made with, and agreed to, by another Community of Faith.
3. Communities of Faith may designate United Church ministers who are not in current ministry positions, including retired ministers, as Honourary Associate Ministers. This is an annual designation, and may include activation of the Honourary Associate Minister's registration to solemnize marriages on behalf of the Pastoral Charge, at the discretion of the Regional Council.
4. Communities of Faith may request special temporary registration for United Church ministers not currently serving in a Pastoral Charge position, retired United Church ministers, or qualified United Church ministers from outside the Regional Council, to perform specific weddings on specific days for persons whose weddings they wish to host or sponsor. To make such a request, please contact the Regional Council Office.
5. All weddings performed under the auspices of The United Church of Canada will be in compliance with provincial or territorial legislation, and will be recorded in an appropriate register.