

AMALGAMATION OF CONGREGATIONS

In The Manual (2019) of The United Church of Canada, information is located in:

Section G.1: Life Cycle of a Congregation.

Section G.1.3: Changes during the Congregation's Lifetime

A congregation may experience one or more of the following changes its lifetime:

- a) amalgamating with one or more other communities of faith;
- b) becoming a single-point pastoral charge, part of a multi-point pastoral charge, or part of a different multi-point pastoral charge
- c) relocating; and
- d) concluding its ministry.

All of these changes require the approval of the regional council and a change to the covenant between the congregation and the regional council.

Section G.1.4: Amalgamation of Congregations

The Process for an amalgamation is set out below. The congregation and regional council are each responsible for the steps assigned to them.

G.1.4.1 Decision by Congregations

Each Congregation meets separately to make a decision on a proposal to amalgamate.

G.1.4.2 Regional Council Consultation

The regional council holds separate meetings with each congregation to hear their opinions on the proposed amalgamation.

G.1.4.3 Regional Council Decision

The regional council makes a decision on whether to approve the amalgamation as a change in the covenantal relationship between the regional council and each of the congregations.

G.1.4.4 New Covenant

The regional council and the amalgamated congregation enter into a new covenantal relationship.

G.1.4.5 Property

The regional council consults with the congregations on property needs of the new amalgamated congregation. A congregation may ask its governing body to represent it in this consultation.

- a. **Surplus property of amalgamating congregations:** The regional council may decide that some of the congregations' property will not be needed for the new amalgamated congregation. Any property that will not be needed is called "surplus property".
- b. **Use of surplus property:** The regional council is responsible for all surplus property after the amalgamation and decides how to use the surplus property for the benefit of the United Church.
- c. **Change in property ownership:** Before an amalgamation, the trustees of a congregation hold all property for that congregation. After an amalgamation, the trustees
 - i. hold the surplus property for the United Church, to be used as the regional council decides; and
 - ii. hold all other property for the new amalgamated congregation.

This change is automatic when the amalgamation takes place.

G.1.4.6 Amalgamations involving More Than One Regional Council

If the amalgamation involves congregations that are within the bounds of more than one regional council, the regional councils involved must

- a) each approve the amalgamation as a change in the covenantal relationship between that regional council and the applicable congregation;
- a. agree on any conditions to be included; and
- b. get the approval of the General Council. The General Council may make adjustments to the boundaries of the regional councils involved as a result of the amalgamation.

G.1.4.7 Congregation Continues to Exist

A congregation's life does not end when it amalgamates with another congregation. Rather, the congregation continues to exist in ministry as the new amalgamated congregation.

G.1.4.8 Gifts and Bequests

This section (G.1.4.8) applies to gifts made to a congregation that has amalgamated, whether the gifts are made before or after the amalgamation. "Gifts" include bequests made in a person's will.

The gift automatically goes to the new amalgamated congregation, even if the gift document refers to the congregation by its former (pre-amalgamation) name.

There are resources about amalgamations to assist congregations and regional councils in the Congregational Board of Trustees Handbook (Sections 91 to 93) available from the General Council Office.

STEPS IN THE PROCESS

In the Northern Spirit Regional Council, the following steps have been outlined to fulfill the requirements of The Manual (Section **G.1.4**)

1. Early in discussions about future congregational life, the congregation is advised to consult with the Committee on Community of Faith Support for resources to guide the congregation into the process.
2. When the congregations have formally decided to amalgamate, a letter to this effect, quoting the approved motions, and including contact information for the Board Chairpersons (or equivalent), is sent to the regional council office.
3. The Committee of Community of Faith Support will meet with each of the congregations separately to gather opinions on the proposed amalgamation.
4. Once the Committee on Community of Faith Support has all the information it needs, it will make its recommendation to the regional council or its executive.
5. If the regional council approves the amalgamation, it will set a date for the amalgamation to be effective, or, otherwise, the effective date will be the date that the regional council made its decision.
6. The congregations will be notified of the regional council's decision, and consultation will be held with the congregations regarding property and determination of what property may be designated as surplus. Disposal of any surplus property will be referred to the Northern Spirit Regional Council Property Commission.
7. The Committee on Community of Faith Support will be available to assist the newly amalgamated congregation with its next steps, including arrangement of a service to celebrate the new covenantal relationship with the regional council.