

## DISBANDING A CONGREGATION

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.1.5: Ending**

A congregation ceases to exist when the regional council makes a decision to disband it as a recognized community of faith.

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

##### **G.1.5.1 Decision by Congregation**

The Congregation decides to end its ministry as a community of faith. It asks the regional council to make a decision to disband it as a recognized community of faith.

##### **G.1.5.2 Decision by Regional Council**

The regional council makes a decision on whether to approve the disbanding of the congregation as a recognized community of faith.

In extraordinary circumstances, the regional council may also decide to disband the congregation as a recognized community of faith on its own initiative, without a decision by the congregation.

##### **G.1.5.3 Effective Date**

When the regional council makes a decision to approve the disbanding of the congregation as a recognized community of faith, it may specify a future date that the disbanding will come into effect. If not, the disbanding comes into effect on the date that the regional council makes the decision.

*The regional council makes the decision to disband the congregation as a recognized community of faith when it passes a motion approving the disbanding.*

The disbanding of the community of faith ends the covenantal relationship between the congregation and the regional council.

##### **G.1.5.4 Property**

*Section G.1.5.4 applies before the disbanding comes into effect. It applies if the regional council has not yet made the decision to approve the disbanding or if the regional council has made the decision and specified a future effective date for the disbanding of the congregation.*

The congregation makes a proposal to the regional council for dealing with the congregation's property, which must be used for the mission of the congregation or the wider United Church. The regional council

makes a decision on the proposal. Both must follow the requirements for dealing with congregational property.

*The regional council may decide to approve the congregation's proposal as presented, it may approve the proposal with changes, or it may decide to deal with the congregation's property in some other way than as set out in the proposal.*

*The requirements for dealing with congregational property are set out in section G.2 below.*

#### **G.1.5.5 Transfer of Members**

The congregation helps its members to transfer to other congregations as they choose.

*The faith life of the people in the congregation continues after the disbanding through other congregations or communities of faith or in other ways.*

#### **G.1.5.6 Records**

The congregation gives its records to the appropriate archives.

#### **G.1.5.7 Remaining Property**

*Section G.1.5.7 applies after the disbanding comes into effect. See section G.1.5.3 above.*

If there is any remaining congregational property after the disbanding is effective, the regional council is responsible for this remaining property. It is up to the regional council to decide how to use that property for the benefit of the United Church.

The General Council may not change the regional council's responsibility for remaining property without the regional council's approval.

*There are resources about disbanding to assist congregations and regional councils. See the Congregational Board of Trustees Handbook 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 (Sections **G.1.3** and **G.1.5**)

1. When the congregation has formally passed a motion to conclude its ministry (disband, cease to exist), a letter to this effect, quoting the approved motion, and including contact information for the Board Chairperson (or equivalent), is sent to the regional council office. This letter will be referred to the Committee on Community of Faith Support.
2. The Committee of Community of Faith Support will consider the request, and will contact the Board Chairperson to discuss the congregation's plans for disposition of any property, transfer of members, submission of records to the archives, and if any further information is needed.
3. 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.
4. If the regional council approves the disbanding of a Congregation, it will set a date for the disbanding to be effective, or, otherwise, the effective date will be the date that the regional council made its decision. Consideration of disposal of any congregational property will be referred to the Northern Spirit Regional Council Property Commission.
5. The congregation will be notified of the regional council's decision, and the Committee on Community of Faith Support and/or the Property Commission will be available to assist the congregation with its next steps, including, if appropriate, a service of celebration to honour the years of worship, service and fellowship of the Congregation throughout its life.