

## Northern Spirit Regional Council

### Guidelines for Managing Overtime in a Community of Faith (Pastoral Charge)

#### **Background**

Working long hours and perhaps, many days at a time, is not a new experience for people in Ordered or Designated Lay ministry. In recent years some have begun to count overtime hours and days, presenting it to Pastoral Charge as owed back to the minister in compensatory time off. Some bring from our secular culture the perspective of keeping track of statutory holidays which have been worked, expecting to be rewarded with an equal number of days off. Some Pastoral Charges have been surprised by this, and have felt dictated to by the minister. In addition, ministers may feel parishioners take for granted that the ministry staff person will offer up these extra hours whenever necessary, often claimed from personal and family time. Where this overtime comes from personal and family time, this can be experienced as abusive. The Regional Council feels it would be helpful to offer guidelines and suggestions for dealing with this potential irritant.

#### **Conviction Statements**

- \* We are called to ministry (to prayer, caring, and service) which in reality is without boundaries and often does not permit itself to be placed in neat tidy time blocks.
- \* Both congregations and people in ordered ministry need to set a limit to the work hours of clergy to ensure that they live healthy, well balanced lives, and that their significant relationships are also cared for.
- \* Pastoral Charges need the care of their clergy in a consistent, predictable manner, amid pastoral crises as well as ordinary times.
- \* Both Pastoral Charges and their Ministry Personnel should be discussing and negotiating these needs together, balancing the sometimes-contradictory pressures in respectful ways that honour the needs and dignity of all.
- \* There are pressures and stressors in ministry which cannot necessarily be removed. In those times, the act of naming, sharing, celebrating and grieving can be healing in itself.

#### **Ways to Handle 'Overtime' Needs and Realities**

- A) One option is to adapt some of the provisions from the General Council (of The United Church of Canada) Human Resources Policy Manual, including the following:
  - i) Overtime would be calculated as those hours worked over 40 hours per week.
  - ii) Overtime hours should be reported to the congregation's Ministry and Personnel (M&P) Committee each month, and the M&P Committee should report on this, as appropriate, to the Governing Body.
  - iii) Compensating time must be taken within a reasonable amount of time (1, 3, or 6 months) of the week in which the overtime was worked.
  - iv) Overtime hours should be sporadic and temporary in nature. If they are regular and consistent, the job description itself needs to be reviewed.
- B) Another option is for the ordered ministry person and the Pastoral Charge, through its M&P Committee, to sit down annually, or at regular intervals, to consider the extra demands on the minister's time and how this can be managed, respecting the minister's personal life and needs, as well as the congregation's requirements; and to work out policies and procedures

appropriate for the Pastoral Charge. Resolution of the, sometimes conflicting, needs could include:

- i) Granting some time off after Christmas, after Easter, in February or at another time agreed upon by both parties.
- ii) Alternate ways of managing demands on the minister's time that would keep working hours under 40 hours per week.
- iii) Other supports or rewards to the minister which would help compensate for the extra demands and pressures on the minister's time.

These policies and procedures should be communicated periodically to the Governing Body and the congregation(s).

### **Observations Related to the Ambiguity and Uniqueness of Ministry**

1. Many clergy have significant community involvement which springs from the faith and passion of the minister, involvement which the Pastoral Charge often values as well. We believe Ministry Personnel and M&P Committees will strive to distinguish between community service which is part of the personal service of the minister – as it is for other lay people – and those involvements which seem to pertain more closely to the professional role and responsibilities of the minister.
2. Some pastoral responsibilities of clergy may not involve long hours (for example, pastoral care around crisis, death and trauma) but may require high energy on behalf of the minister. This reality needs to be factored into the minister's self care and need for 'Sabbath time'.

### **Conclusion**

We believe that the nature of our ministry, shared between ordered and lay persons, flowing from the call of the gospel, makes option B (above) far more compatible with our faith and ethos. We believe option A may offer clear guidelines and responses to some specific problems, but option B leads us into a process, a conversation of clergy and lay leaders. We believe that, while clear policy options may work well in institutions and secular businesses, Christian communities of faith are each unique, and are called to conversation, sharing and mutual care, as they do ministry together.

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## **APPENDIX ONE: A Possible Agenda for Option B**

### **Conversations Around Workload, Rest, Self-care and 'Overtime'**

- What has nourished your faith and energy for ministry, in the past few months?
- What has drained your energy and enjoyment of your work?
- How does your approximate hours of work per week compare to the number we have agreed upon as ideal?
- How much time in community involvement have you spent, and how much of that do you consider part of your professional role as clergy?
- What experiences of rest and 'Sabbath time' do you need to replenish the balance for you?
- What areas of stress do you experience that this M&P Committee or the Pastoral Charge as a whole can help to lessen?
- Are there other pieces of your ministry and self care that you would like us to understand?