

Congregation Organization Handbook

2006



Prepared by
Support to Local Ministries Unit
General Council Office
The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada

Congregation Organization Handbook



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1. About This Handbook

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

1 Corinthians 12:4–7

Why?

This handbook addresses the many issues that are related to efficient and excellent organization in a local congregation.

The clear call of congregations is to participate in God’s mission to love and bless the world, reach out with the good news of the gospel in both word and deed, support and nurture the spiritual growth of the people in a caring community, and give God glory and praise. The mission of the pastoral charge or congregation is the central reality and force that directs its life and work. It is the reason God has gathered and constituted the community of faith in its particular place in this particular time. This mission is the primary guide to any questions of organizational structure. Each congregation clarifies and articulates its particular sense of mission in a “mission strategy” (*The Manual*, sections 137–138). This strategy accounts for the congregation’s context, “its own religious traditions, its socio-cultural context, the purpose and goals of the Pastoral Charge or Congregation and its relationship to the larger church.” Organizational structures are put in place to enable a pastoral charge or congregation to effectively carry out their mission in the world.

Thus, every congregation needs structures and practices that enable it to pursue its mission to the fullest. Buildings and property need to be maintained. Decision-making processes need to be clear, accountable, and appropriate to the size and context of the congregation. Vulnerable people need to be given safety and security. The congregation’s resources need to be marshalled thoughtfully to enable the many ministry activities to flourish.

Lack of attention to these and other aspects of organization can seriously compromise our ability to be the Church of Jesus Christ.

For Whom?

Whether you are ministry personnel, volunteer or paid staff, a newly elected member of a Board, committee, or group in your local church, or a seasoned veteran of church administration, this book has been written for you. We hope it will help you understand your specific responsibilities regarding organization, and how they relate to the life and effective mission of your congregation.

The United Church of Canada believes that leaders will do their best to make mission as effective as possible. This handbook seeks to provide help by defining organizational essentials, structural options, and key responsibilities for leadership.

Since the United Church is modelled on a conciliar design, in which the different groupings of congregation, presbytery/district, Conference, and General Council support one another in ministry, the work of this church depends on the efforts that you, and people like you in every sphere of church governance, are willing to make so that God's purposes will be achieved. We thank God for your calling into this shared ministry.

For More Information

This handbook has been produced by the General Council's Support to Local Ministries Unit as a guide to pastoral charge structures. Always refer to the most recent edition of *The Manual* as the legal and ecclesiastical authority for congregational organization.

This handbook replaces the following guides formerly published by the Division of Mission in Canada (DMC):

- *Organizational Guide for Board and Committee Members of Congregations in The United Church of Canada*
- *Chair of the Board*

You will see references to other sources of information throughout this handbook. All are available from United Church Resource Distribution (UCRD) (see www.united-church.ca/ucrd) and participating presbytery resource centres (see www.united-church.ca/prc). See also the United Church website, www.united-church.ca, for documents you can download.

May God be with you and strengthen you in your work and witness.

2. About The United Church of Canada

Who We Are

On June 10, 1925, the union of four denominations—Methodist, Congregationalist, Presbyterian, and local Union churches—was solemnized and The United Church of Canada was born. In 1968, the Evangelical United Brethren became part of The United Church of Canada.

Although five denominations joined to form one, traditions from each remain today. The United Church of Canada celebrates diversity and cherishes its ability to “agree to disagree.”

What We Believe

Throughout our history, we have interpreted our faith in changing times. The Basis of Union is the original and binding statement of the mission of the United Church.

Basis of Union

Published in 1925, this document states the mission of The United Church of Canada. The Basis of Union is found in *The Manual*, sections 1.1–16.4.

The Statement of Faith was restated in 1940 by the 9th General Council. Our mission statement was expressed again in 1968 as “A New Creed,” which has been revised over time to its current form:

We are not alone,
we live in God’s world.

We believe in God:
who has created and is creating,
who has come in Jesus,
the Word made flesh,
to reconcile and make new,
who works in us and others
by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:
to celebrate God’s presence,
to live with respect in Creation,
to love and serve others,
to seek justice and resist evil,
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,
our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death,
God is with us.

We are not alone.

Thanks be to God.

Some United Church congregations recite this creed every Sunday.

At the time of writing this handbook, the United Church was discussing a new Statement of Faith. The new statement will not replace previous documents—the Basis of Union, the 1940 Statement of Faith, or the 1968 Creed—but, if approved by General Council, will serve as a supplementary resource for the church.

The Manual: Our Rulebook

Although the United Church cherishes its ability to “agree to disagree,” some disagreements need to be addressed in some way. *The Manual* is a living, working document intended to guide our life as a household and provide a means “by which any member may express convictions and seek justice, from the Congregation through to the General Council” (*The Manual*, Introduction). In other words, *The Manual* is the rulebook we follow.

The Manual

The document that outlines the by-laws of The United Church of Canada. The purpose of law within the church is to order procedures and provide for the consistent resolution of differences. *The Manual* covers correct procedures for most foreseeable contingencies.

We call *The Manual* a living, working document because it changes as policies and procedures change. And policies and procedures change, sometimes frustratingly so, because we believe that “God’s will for the church is continually being revealed, and that the church must therefore be ‘always reformed’” (*The Manual*, Introduction).

Therefore, if you have a question about what the United Church believes as a Christian denomination, refer to the Basis of Union and later faith statements. If you have a question about the by-laws of the United Church, refer to *The Manual*. You will find many references to *The Manual* in this handbook. *The Manual* is updated every three years, after each General Council. Every congregation should have at least one current copy for ready reference.

Throughout this handbook, references are to *The Manual, 2004* (Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 2004). In your work, always refer to the most current edition. You can download it from www.united-church.ca/manual, or order a copy from United Church Resource Distribution (UCRD) or your presbytery resource centre.

Our Structure

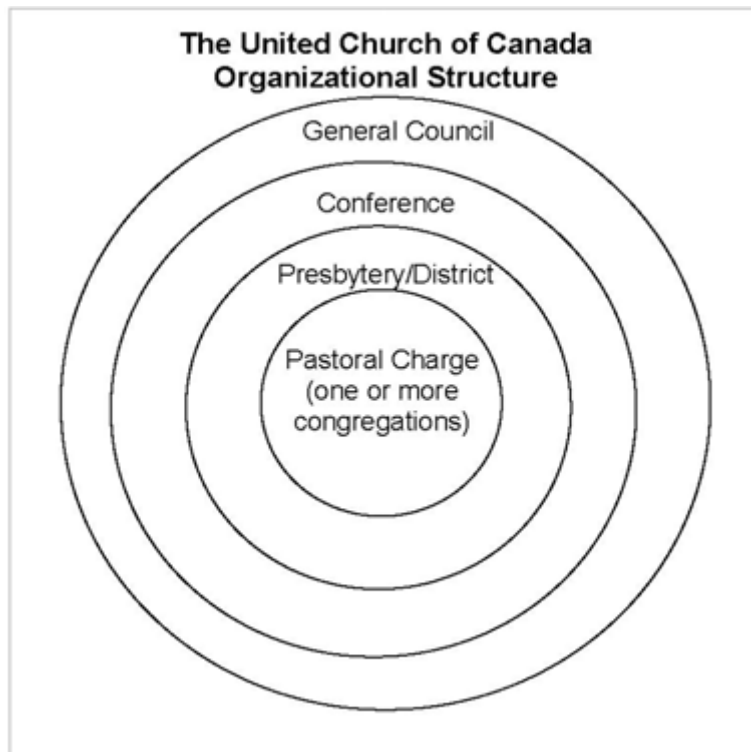
A “court” is a body established by *The United Church of Canada Act*, the Basis of Union, or the General Council that has deliberative and decision-making powers. There are four courts in the United Church structure:

1. congregation/pastoral charge, or its designated Board/Council
2. presbytery/district
3. Conference
4. General Council

The United Church has a conciliar structure, which means that each court is made up of representatives from the next smallest court. Therefore,

- presbytery/district is made up of ministry personnel and representatives from congregations/pastoral charges
- Conference is made up of representatives from presbyteries/districts
- General Council is made up of commissioners, who are representatives of the Conferences

Each court of the church thus has representatives from the pastoral charges, the most basic, local mission unit and court of the United Church. Another feature of our conciliar structure has to do with the importance of spiritual discernment. Since we believe that the Holy Spirit speaks to us in and through our discussions and meetings, each court and its members must be open to hearing what the Spirit may be saying to them during the course of a meeting. So, we do not expect representatives to be bound by the wishes or opinions of those they represent. They are wise to consider such opinions and wisdom when voting, but are always free to vote according to their prayerful reflection and conscience. In this way, a presbytery cannot bind its Conference representatives to vote a certain way on any given matter. Doing so would deny those representatives from hearing God's Spirit active in the life of the court of which they are members.



3. Organization of a Pastoral Charge

Composition of a Pastoral Charge

Pastoral Relationship

The covenant/contract among God, a pastoral charge, its ministry personnel, and the presbytery, which is similar to an employment contract and is overseen by the presbytery.

The basic unit of organization and mission in The United Church of Canada is the pastoral charge. A pastoral charge may consist of *one or more* congregations.

The congregational meeting, or annual meeting of the pastoral charge, is the final authority for matters related to the life and mission of the congregation. The congregation must meet at least once a year to review its mission statement, receive annual reports, elect or remove officers, and approve budgets, and may conduct other business of the congregation. In matters of pastoral relationship, only full members of the congregation can vote, and then only when the meeting is chaired by a representative named by the Pastoral Relations Committee of the presbytery/district (*The Manual*, sections 113–116).

There may be more than one congregational meeting during the year, announcements of which must specify the purpose of the meeting (*The Manual*, section 112). Meetings can be called by the ordered minister, the presbytery/district, lay leadership, or at least 10 members of the congregation (*The Manual*, section 111). A meeting can be assumed to be called if it has been announced on at least two successive Sundays. For instance, a congregational meeting can be announced on one Sunday during worship, on the next Sunday in worship, and can then take place immediately following that worship service.

Members and Adherents

Though we acknowledge that Christ calls each to serve according to his or her particular gifts, *The Manual* states who may serve in an official capacity. There is a distinction between who can serve on the Church Board/Council and who can vote on specific matters. Generally two categories of people participate in congregations:

- members
- adherents

The Manual defines members and adherents as follows:

010 Lay Members.

(a) The members of the Church entitled to all church privileges are those who, on a profession of their faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to Him, have been received into full membership. The children of such persons and all baptized children are members of the Church, and it is their duty and privilege, when they reach the age of discretion, to enter into full membership....

113 The members of a Congregation who are entitled to vote at all meetings are persons in full membership whose names are on the roll of that Congregation. With the consent of these, Adherents who contribute regularly to the support of the Congregation may vote on Temporal Matters.

Some restrictions, rights, and responsibilities are attached to membership. The **members** of the pastoral charge are entitled to vote at all meetings of the pastoral charge on all matters relating to its life and work. They have full and complete responsibility for the operation of the pastoral charge, subject to the Basis of Union specified in *The Manual* (sections 1.1–16.4). The presbytery monitors accountability for this.

Adherents are people who participate in a congregation and who contribute regularly to its life while not being a member (*The Manual*, section 001). With the consent of the members, adherents who contribute regularly to the support of the congregation may vote on many matters of congregational life.

Temporal matters are defined by both inclusions and exclusions. Temporal matters include those transitory and secular matters that pertain to the daily life, work, and finances of a congregation. The following matters are excluded and therefore may only be voted on by members: the calling of a member of the Order of Ministry, a request to a presbytery for an appointment, the election of an elder or Trustee, the order of worship, the discipline of the United Church, the amalgamation of congregations or pastoral charges, or such property matters that require presbytery consent.

If you have any questions about who can vote on any given matter, consult with your presbytery through its Secretary, or your Conference through its Executive Secretary.

Possible Models of Organization

Considering a New Organizational Structure?

The Manual requires that any new organizational structure include a designated Board of Trustees and, by implication, designated people who will address all five administrative functions of congregational life, which are described in Chapters 5–8. In addition, any new organizational structure must be approved by a duly called congregational meeting as the body to which the new structure will be accountable. The presbytery must also approve it.

It is wise to consult early with your presbytery, through its Pastoral Oversight Committee, before embarking on a major change in your congregation's structural design.

We are reminded here that the selection of an organizational model is based on a mission strategy developed and approved by the pastoral charge or congregation (*The Manual*, sections 137–138). If a mission strategy exists, it should be reviewed to inform the development of an organizational model. If a current and relevant mission strategy does not exist, the first step to determining the organizational model is to develop one.

Simply put, the congregation's mission strategy is a statement of the congregation's purpose for being and the particular ways the purpose is lived out in the world. Resources that might be used to develop a congregational mission strategy are available through United Church Resource Distribution (UCRD): *Alive and Well: Renewed Purpose for Healthier Congregations* (Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 2006), and *Discovering Mission: A Tool Kit for Assessing Local Mission Opportunities in Presbyteries and Congregations* (Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 1999).

When considering any new structure, remember that all models must include at least a Ministry and Personnel (M&P) Committee and a Board of Trustees. These two groups are essential to the proper functioning of any congregation or pastoral charge.

The **Ministry and Personnel Committee** “is a confidential, consultative body that supports the pastoral relationship” (*A Handbook for Ministry and Personnel Committees* [The United Church of Canada, revised 2003], p. 3) and normally provides support and accountability for other staff. A detailed treatment of the Ministry and Personnel Committee and its role and functions follows in Chapter 6.

The **Board of Trustees** is a body of members of the congregation or pastoral charge, elected by the congregation or pastoral charge, who hold, in trust for the entire United Church of Canada, all property (land, buildings, and investments) for the purposes of that congregation. A detailed treatment of the Board of Trustees and its role and functions follows in Chapter 7.

A. The Session/Stewards Model (*The Manual* 140–190)

The Session/Stewards model is the most traditional model of organization, and the one that is explained in the most detail in *The Manual*.

The two primary decision-making groups in this model are

1. the **Board of Elders** (also called the **Session**)
2. the **Committee of Stewards**

Each of these two groups meet separately and have distinct areas of responsibility. In this model, the Session and the Stewards are mandated to meet together, along with few others, on at least a quarterly basis; when they meet together, they are called the **Official Board**. See the diagram below.

The Board of Elders, or Session, is responsible for the spiritual leadership of the congregation, including worship, education, pastoral care, and outreach. The ministry personnel of a congregation are members of the Session.

Elders

Elders are people who are chosen by the pastoral charge or congregation for their wisdom, caring, spiritual discernment, and other gifts of the Spirit. They are entrusted with leadership among the whole congregation. Elders must be members of The United Church of Canada.

The Committee of Stewards is responsible for the temporal matters of the congregation, including financial support, property maintenance, and day-to-day administration of congregational life.

Stewards

Stewards are people chosen for their Christian character and ability to transact the temporal and financial business of the pastoral charge or congregation. Wherever practical, Stewards will be full members of the congregation; however, adherents may also be Stewards.

The Official Board includes the following individuals:

- all members of the Board of Elders, also called the Session
- all members of the Committee of Stewards
- the ministry personnel serving the pastoral charge
- representatives from the Ministry and Personnel Committee
- representatives from the Board of Trustees
- representative(s) to presbytery
- representatives from other committees and groups in the church, such as United Church Women, the youth group, and so on



The Official Board model has served the church well since church union in 1925. This structure is often particularly suitable for small congregations.

The Ministry and Personnel Committee is responsible for the oversight and support of salaried staff. The Board of Trustees is responsible for the stewardship of property and the investment of congregational assets.

B. The Unified Board Model (*The Manual* 200–213)

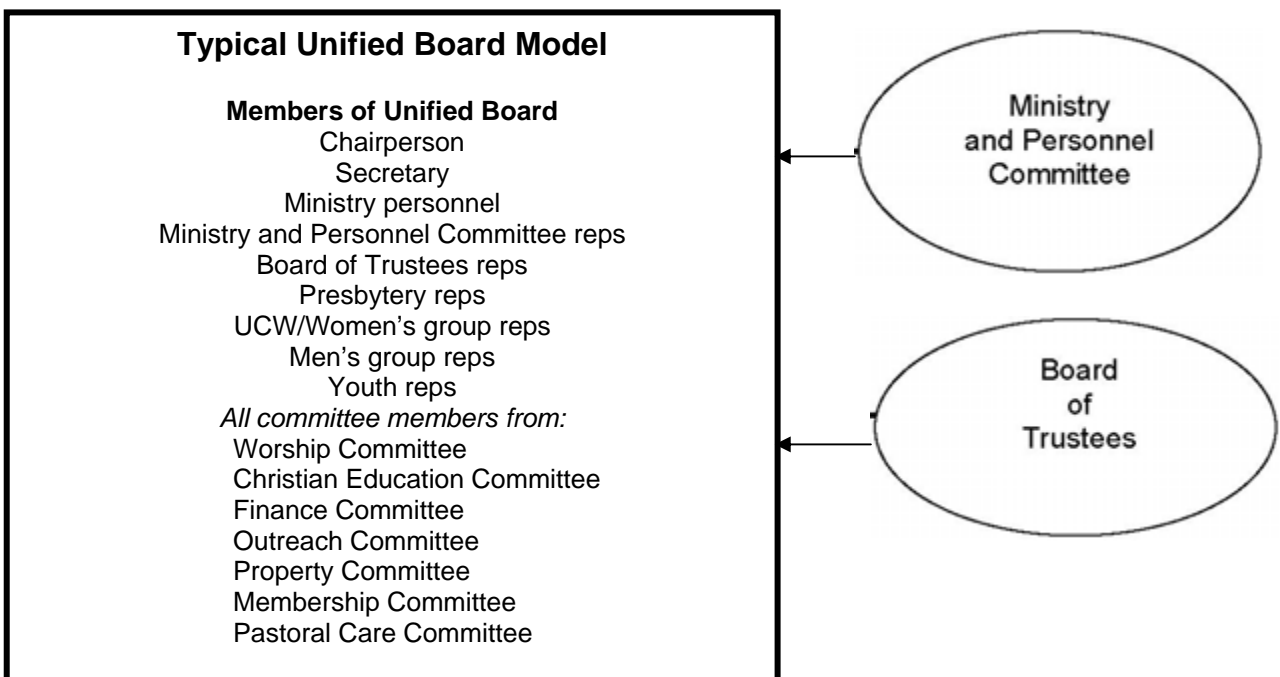
The Unified Board model emphasizes that all aspects of ministry belong to God. It unifies the traditional functions of spiritual leadership and church management in one Board that has several committees. See the diagram below.

All members of the Unified Board are elders and may be assigned a number of families to visit regularly.

Various committees are appointed to perform various functions. Required committees include the Ministry and Personnel Committee and the Board of Trustees. Other committees are optional: Christian Education, Property, Stewardship, Outreach, Worship, Pastoral Care, and so on. If the congregation is large, a Board Executive might be created to manage the work of many committees.

The ministry personnel must be present but usually serve more as a resource in this structure rather than as principal facilitator.

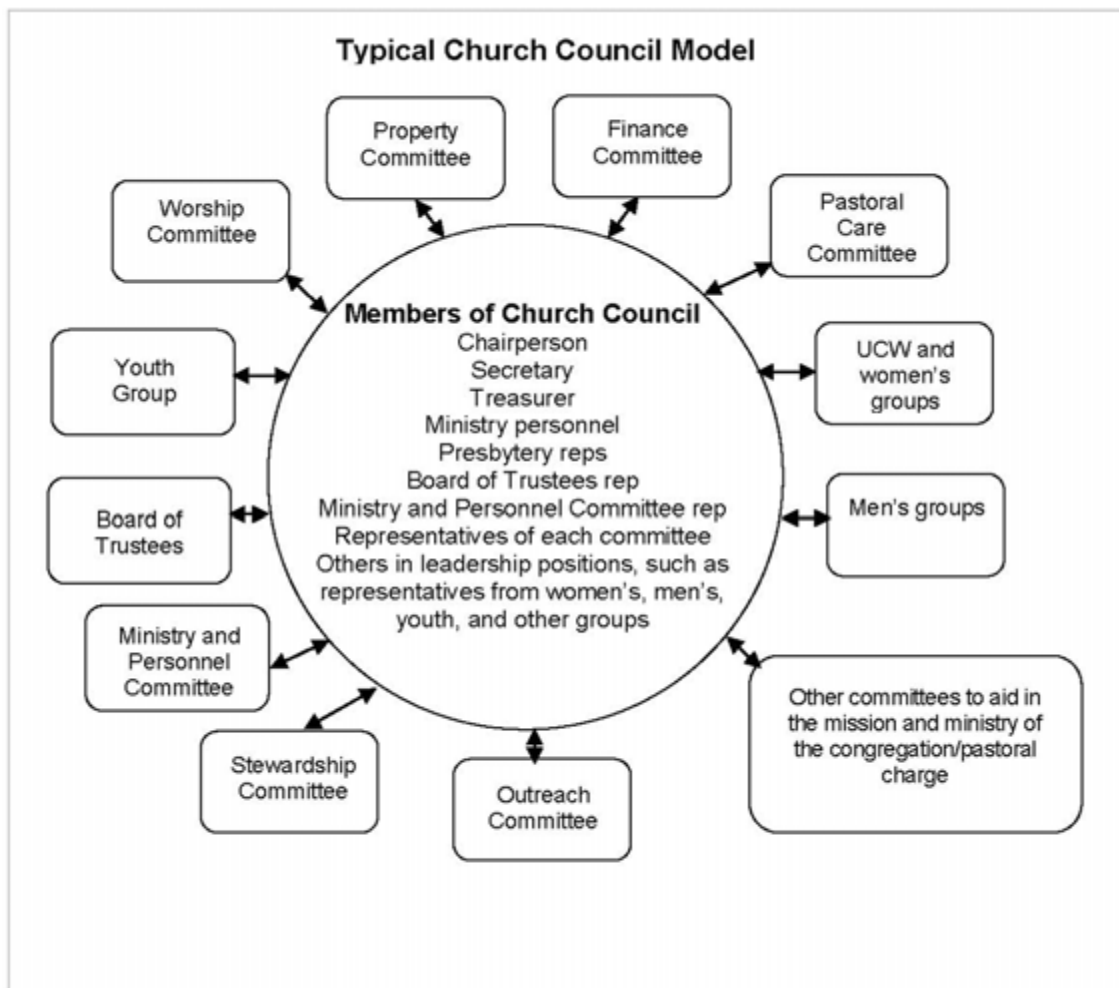
Meetings of the Unified Board involve most of the committee participants, plus representatives from various groups. Together they review all of the activities and plans of congregational life that can be implemented by various committees. The challenge associated with this model often arises when people are willing to serve on a committee of the Board, but are unwilling to attend Board meetings. Another issue arises when committee business and decisions are either undone or reconsidered by the whole Board. Committees often feel that their efforts and ideas are not trusted, or that time is wasted with repetitive processes.



C. The Church Council Model (*The Manual 215–228*)

The Church Council model emphasizes the responsibility of all members of the congregation or pastoral charge to be engaged in ministry. The congregation elects committees, each of which chooses a member (often the chairperson) to represent their committee or ministry on a Church Council. These Council members become the elders of the congregation. The ordered minister may serve as a resource person for the various committees. A larger percentage of the congregation can participate in ministry and mission activities by reducing the number of people needed for decision making. See the diagram below. The Church Council acts as a coordinating body, as a forum for some decisions, and as a place for sharing committee plans and actions.

As is the case in the other models, the Ministry and Personnel Committee and Trustees are required. Other committees will multiply as the ministries of the congregation grow. The committees, however, tend to be oriented around specific tasks rather than general categories of work. Representatives of various groups also represent their constituency on the Church Council. The Church Council continues to develop policy and make plans, which are implemented by the various committees and groups of the congregation.

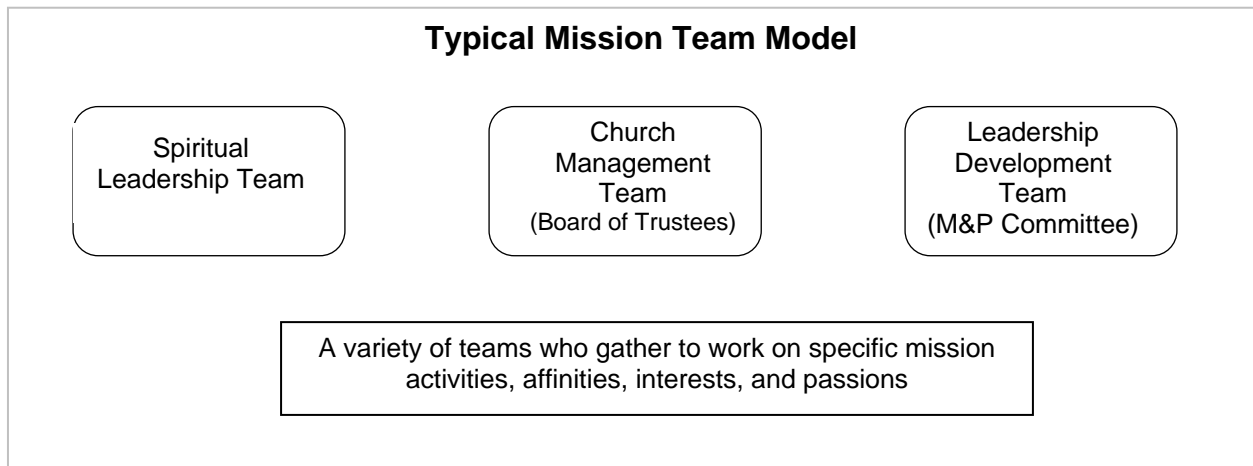


D. The Mission Team Model (*The Manual* 279)

Creative forms of organization are permitted by *The Manual* (section 279). Many congregations have adapted Mission Team structures from their experience in other sectors of community life.

Generally, the most streamlined Mission Team structure creates three teams based on the three areas of responsibility or mission orientation identified as essential to congregational life and work:

- *Spiritual Leadership*: Motivates, equips, and trains leaders for effective ministries within and beyond the church, anchored in the experience of God’s love and the way of Jesus. The work of visitation and pastoral care is assigned to this team.
- *Church Management*: Deploys the resources of the congregation to facilitate the ministries of the congregation. The work of the Trustees is assigned to this team.
- *Leadership Development*: Nurtures volunteer and salaried participants to discern gifts and callings and to work together responsibly in healthy relationships. The work of the Ministry and Personnel Committee is assigned to this team.



Together the members of the three teams make up the Church Board, which is oriented toward policy development and long-range planning. The Church Board delegates much responsibility for mission discernment, design, and implementation to the various group ministries.

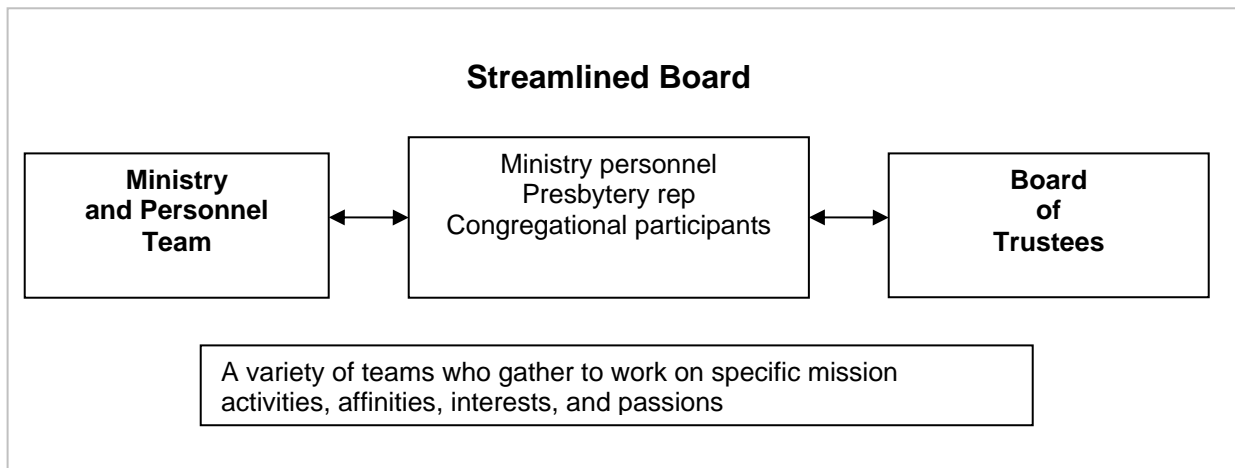
However, each team does considerably more than the former mandates of these committees. The ministry personnel is specifically associated with the Spiritual Oversight Team. Overall policy development remains the responsibility of the whole Church Board, but can be a part of the work of the Church Management Team or the Leadership Development Team. (Note that when the Leadership Development Team is functioning in its Ministry and Personnel Committee role, ministry personnel do not attend).

E. A Streamlined Board Model (*The Manual 279*)

Under the same provision of *The Manual* (section 279) that allows for creative forms of organization, other congregations have adopted a Streamlined Board structure consisting of a small, elected body devoted to mission discernment, mission strategy, policy development, long-range planning, and accountability. This model can also be combined with the deployment of mission teams, as described above.

This model is different from the Unified Board or Church Council. It is usually much smaller. Its members are elected directly by the congregation, and do not represent any particular constituency within the congregation. Those who serve on the Board do not have to serve on any particular group, and those who serve with a group or team do not have to attend Board meetings.

Such a Board can empower mission teams by providing overall directions and boundaries for action, while freeing teams to manage their mission as they see fit. The Streamlined Board discerns mission, forms policy, develops strategies, deploys leaders, and monitors progress. Various staff and participants carry out the mission in whatever way they believe is most effective.



4. Administrative Functions of a Pastoral Charge

Chapter 3 described possible organizational structures for a pastoral charge. None of these may be precisely the same as the structure in your own pastoral charge, but no matter what your local situation is, five key administrative functions need to be performed by every pastoral charge:

- policy development and accountability
- ministry and personnel support
- trusteeship of property and investments
- spiritual leadership
- stewardship of facilities, property, and current finances

The Manual outlines how the five functions could be expressed in just one of the models. For example, in the most traditional organizational structure the five functions are assigned to

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| • policy development and accountability: | the Official Board |
| • ministry and personnel support: | the Ministry and Personnel Committee |
| • trusteeship of property and investments: | the Board of Trustees |
| • spiritual leadership: | the Session |
| • stewardship of facilities and finances: | the Committee of Stewards |

Chapters 5–9 outline in detail what is covered under each of these areas of responsibility.

5. Policy Development and Accountability

Role of the Board/Council

Although the congregational meeting is the final decision-making body for a pastoral charge, authority is delegated to the Board/Council to develop policy, maintain accountability, and make decisions. Depending on the organizational model, all the members of various committees and groups may or may not convene as a Board. In the traditional and mission team models, for example, the members of Session and Stewards or the three teams together convene as a Board. In the Church Council, only representatives of each committee and group may convene as a Board.

In every model, the ministry personnel and the representatives to presbytery/district *must be included* in the Board/Council. Board/Council should meet at least quarterly.

The most important work of the Board/Council is to keep the congregation members focused on their mission statement. All policy development and accountability is based on the mission approved by the congregation.

The Board/Council

- submits to the pastoral charge reports on life and work, including a full statement of receipts and expenditures, indebtedness, and estimates for the coming year
- completes pastoral charge statistical and information forms for the General Council
- elects members of the pastoral charge to be representatives to the presbytery/district
- receives and makes available to the members of the pastoral charge any actions of the presbytery/district, Conference, and General Council
- secures contributions for the work of the whole church, local funds, and the Mission and Service Fund
- authorizes borrowing funds for the day-to-day operations of the pastoral charge
- gives lawful directions to the Trustees concerning property matters when necessary
- represents the pastoral charge as authorized by the congregation(s) in meetings with presbytery/district relating to amalgamation, realignment, reconstitution, or disbanding the pastoral charge
- forwards applications for incorporation from agencies or bodies within the pastoral charge to the presbytery/district
- attends to matters that involve the joint interest of the committees, groups, or teams in the organizational structure
- attends to matters affecting the pastoral charge not assigned to any other body

6. Ministry and Personnel Support

Whatever organizational model a pastoral charge uses, there must be a Ministry and Personnel (M&P) Committee. This committee serves as “a confidential, consultative body that supports the pastoral relationship” and is accountable to the Board/Council (*A Handbook for Ministry and Personnel Committees*, p. 3).

The Manual assigns specific responsibilities to the Ministry and Personnel Committee. The most important responsibility is to offer support for and consultation with people who are employed in the pastoral charge on a full- or part-time basis, and/or who serve the charge as ministry personnel. The committee acts as liaison between those staff and the congregation.

For information in addition to what is offered below, see *A Handbook for Ministry and Personnel Committees* (The United Church of Canada, revised 2003). It is available from UCRD or your presbytery resource centre, or it can be downloaded from: www.united-church.ca/pastoralrelations

The Ministry and Personnel Committee includes not less than three and not more than seven members. The members should be representative of various segments of the congregation and may include one of the lay representatives to presbytery.

The following should *not* be on the Ministry and Personnel Committee:

- staff and ministry personnel of the pastoral charge, or their family members
- Board/Council chairpersons
- chairpersons of committees of the congregation(s) and the pastoral charge
- “other persons in positions of authority...since they are likely to be parties, with personnel, to many of the conflicts about which an M&P Committee consults and mediates” (*A Handbook for Ministry and Personnel Committees*, p. 7)

Members of the Ministry and Personnel Committee

- provide a consultative and supportive agency for the staff of the pastoral charge and for members and adherents of the congregation(s)
- review working conditions and remuneration for the full- and part-time staff and make appropriate recommendations to the Board
- oversee the relationship of other staff to members of the congregation(s) and others
- oversee the relationship between and among different members of the staff with respect to their responsibilities and authority
- consult with all members of the staff about their plans for continuing education
- annually review and evaluate the effectiveness of the staff as those people and positions relate to the mission of the pastoral charge
- maintain close liaison with the Pastoral Relations Committee of the presbytery/district
- regularly review the responsibilities of all staff of the pastoral charge and revise position descriptions when requested by the Board/Council

Key expectations of the Ministry and Personnel Committee members are to each be involved in a discipline of regular prayer, study, and worship within the congregation, to pray for personnel and the congregation, and to continually seek to discern the mission God is calling the congregation to fulfill. In addition, members

- are gifted with a large measure of sensitivity to people and their needs, and cultivate sympathetic understanding, tact, and the ability to listen
- maintain confidences inviolate
- foster a climate of open and responsible communication
- are firm and dependable in adhering to agreed-upon guidelines
- know what salary scales are appropriate for the work being done by staff and are concerned that salaries are just, adequate, and commensurate with staff responsibilities and needs
- are prepared to hear reflectively both appreciation for and dissatisfaction with staff expressed by people or groups in the congregation or by staff colleagues
- make provision for dissatisfaction to be addressed in good faith by the committee
- ensure that expressions of appreciation are communicated liberally, including to staff
- cultivate caring and honesty within the congregation, are firm when needed, and are fair to both staff and the congregation(s) in dealing with their interrelationships

Confidentiality

In order for the M&P Committee to do its work effectively, active and open dialogue on the part of ministry personnel and staff and M&P Committee members is essential. The goal is to achieve an environment of mutual trust where clear messages are given and received, and healthy relationships are established for the furthering of the church's ministry and mission.

Standards for confidentiality need to be negotiated and agreed upon by the committee and ministry personnel and staff, and shared with the Board/Council and the congregation(s). Be clear about what can and cannot be shared beyond the committee. For instance, any matter that is brought to the M&P Committee in confidence by the ministry personnel, staff, or a member/adherent must be kept in confidence (i.e., not told to anyone) until the individual agrees to a wider sharing of the information.

Concerns about confidentiality and the protection of individuals' personal privacy need to be balanced by concerns for accountability. Formal minutes *are not required* at any related meetings, but any notes taken should support what may later be reported. Where changes to position descriptions are recommended, or recommendations about performance that require a response from ministry personnel or staff are made, they should be in writing and traceable.

At the same time, if a complaint or accusation is made, the person it is being made against has a right to know who is complaining and the nature of the complaint. Therefore, the M&P Committee must not consider anonymous or undocumented complaints.

If there is a question about what information may be shared and with whom, the M&P Committee is urged to seek advice from

- the chairperson of the Pastoral Relations Committee of the presbytery/district if the complaint concerns ministry personnel
- the chairperson of the Pastoral Oversight Committee of the presbytery/district if the complaint concerns a member of the congregation

These presbytery committee chairs may refer the matter to the Conference Personnel Minister, to the Pastoral Relations Specialist at the General Council Office, or to General Council Office legal counsel, depending on the nature of the complaint. The M&P Committee should not involve police or legal counsel in matters that come before it without first consulting the appropriate presbytery, Conference, or General Council Office representatives.

Accountability

The M&P Committee is accountable to the Board/Council. The committee may make informed recommendations to the Board/Council, *but it may not take action itself*.

The M&P Committee should report at least quarterly to the Board/Council. These reports should deal with

- summaries of regularly scheduled and other meetings of the committee
- results of any specific work requested by the Board/Council
- goals and objectives of ministry personnel and staff as they relate to the mission statement or goals and objectives of the pastoral charge
- continuing education plans for all ministry personnel and staff
- vacation schedules for ministry personnel and staff
- wider church commitments of ministry personnel
- changes to ministry personnel and staff position descriptions
- annual review processes
- matters arising from the annual review
- remuneration, including salary, housing, and benefits
- terms of employment of ministry personnel and staff, including working conditions
- any areas of concern relating to the job performance of ministry personnel and staff

7. Trusteeship of Property and Investments

All property that is held in trust on behalf of The United Church of Canada or acquired for the use of a congregation or pastoral charge is held and administered by the Board of Trustees. All property and assets are for God's mission to bless creation. Trustees are appointed by or on behalf of the congregation within terms that are set out in the Trusts of Model Deed, which appears in Appendix II of *The Manual*.

Whatever organizational model a pastoral charge chooses, there must be a designated Board of Trustees. In a multi-point pastoral charge there may be a Board of Trustees of the pastoral charge, or a separate Board of Trustees for each congregation. This function is distinct from day-to-day church management functions. It specifically involves those matters related to investments, capital indebtedness, major renovation or capital improvements, and property acquisition. For capital investments, Trustees can avail themselves of The United Church of Canada Foundation to manage funds for the benefit of the congregation. A lower than market fee is charged. Contact the Foundation at 1-866-340-UCCF (8223) or fdn@united-church.ca.

The activities of the Trustees are restricted and governed by Canadian law. The United Church's Trusts of Model Deed sets out the trusts upon which property is held by the Board of Trustees, under the oversight of the presbytery and Conference.

For information in addition to what is provided below, see the *Congregational Board of Trustees Handbook 2004* (The United Church of Canada, 2004). It is available from UCRD or your presbytery resource centre, or it can be downloaded from: www.united-church.ca/mtf/handbooks.shtm

There must be at least 3 and not more than 15 Trustees. The responsibilities of Trustees, how they are appointed, the extent and limits of their powers, and the procedures they are required to follow are set out in sections 250–272 of *The Manual*.

The Board of Trustees must be represented on the Manse Committee (if there is one) and whatever committee, group, or team takes responsibility for church management. Many congregations appoint their Trustees for a longer term of 5 or 10 years because of the legalities associated with title deeds and the long-term nature of property matters. One of the ministry personnel settled or appointed in a congregation/pastoral charge is a member of the Board of Trustees, and has the right to serve as chairperson of the Board of Trustees or to appoint a deputy to act as chairperson. In practice, many congregations elect a chairperson. (See *The Manual*, section 261.)

Adherents may serve on the Board of Trustees, but a majority of Trustees must be full members of the United Church.

The property and assets of a congregation ultimately belong to The United Church of Canada as a whole, and the most important duty of Trustees is to hold, develop, or deploy congregational assets for the total mission of the United Church.

In addition, Trustees

- hold property in trust for the use of the congregation and for the purposes approved by the Board/Council
- oversee the construction of new buildings and repair of existing buildings
- permit the use of church buildings with approval of the Board
- sell, mortgage, exchange, or lease the trust property as directed by the congregation and only with the written consent of the presbytery and in accordance with the provisions set down in *The Manual* (Appendix II) for such purposes
- develop and implement policies for the administration of trust funds in accordance with the mission statement of the congregation
- keep proper accounts and records of all meetings and actions
- give seven days' notice of all special meetings
- submit financial plans for the retirement of mortgages and other capital debts to the congregation, and receive and disburse funds for the payment of principal and interest
- notify presbytery and arrange for the disposition of property and assets should the congregation cease to exist as an organized body, and make recommendations to Conference regarding the use of funds received from the sale of church property

The most important expectation of Trustees is that each be involved in a discipline of regular prayer, study, and worship within the congregation to discern God's mission through the church, and that each be committed to the total mission of The United Church of Canada.

In addition, Trustees can be effective if they

- understand investment markets and recommend investment strategies in accordance with the mission statement of the congregation, or rely on The United Church of Canada Foundation for this expertise
- administer trust investments and make changes when necessary in accordance with the policies of the congregation and in keeping with the values of The United Church of Canada
- monitor the maintenance strategy for properties of the church in co-operation with those in church management
- secure legal and financial advice for the congregation in matters related to the sale, lease, or acquisition of property
- assist the congregation in making wise decisions regarding indebtedness and investments for long-range planning

Title to Property

The legal title to congregational property may be registered in the name of The United Church of Canada or in the name of the Trustees of the congregation. In some cases, title still remains in the name of the Methodist, Presbyterian, or Congregationalist Church that originally joined to form The United Church of Canada in 1925.

In cases where title is held by The United Church of Canada or its predecessors, congregations are moving toward having title transferred to the name of the congregation's Trustees. This move is supported by the national church, and legal staff at General Council Office are happy to assist with the process of transferring title to the Trustees.

However, this does not mean that the property then becomes the exclusive property of the congregation. The property continues to be "owned" by The United Church of Canada and is held "in trust" by the Board of Trustees. In this way, each congregation and future generations are stakeholders in property nationwide whose exclusive purpose is the furtherance of the gospel message and God's mission. The congregation and its Trustees may not sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer the property without the approval of presbytery in writing.

Because the United Church came into being as an act of the Canadian Parliament, its property is separate and apart from the normal course of real estate transactions. As a result, the Trusts of Model Deed is a document most lawyers are unfamiliar with. Dealing with congregational real property is a complicated issue that should be undertaken only in consultation with your presbytery/district and Conference, and with the advice of a lawyer in conjunction with the legal staff at the General Council Office.

Since congregational property is held by Trustees, they have the foremost responsibility for respecting the legal governance of the different courts of the United Church in regard to congregational property.

Trustees must follow the lawful directions of the pastoral charge or congregation Board/Council. Furthermore, they may not make certain decisions regarding property (such as major renovations, sale, lease, demolition, or construction of new buildings) without first obtaining the consent of the Board/Council and presbytery/district. Also, where there ceases to be an organized congregation, the Conference determines how the property is to be used for the mission of the church.

Money

The Board of Trustees is required to keep accounts showing all monies received and disbursed by them. These accounts *must* be produced on request of the ministry personnel, the chairperson of the Committee of Stewards or equivalent, or the Committee of Stewards or equivalent.

The accounts of the Board of Trustees must be audited or reviewed annually. The auditor is appointed by the Committee of Stewards or equivalent and should be someone at arm's length from the congregation.

The United Church of Canada has a strong tradition of concern for justice and well-being of all people and all of God's creation. To this end, the United Church has produced *Mission and Investing: A Guide for United Church of Canada Congregations and Organizations* (2002), a publication that suggests ways of investing assets ethically. It is available from UCRD or your presbytery resource centre.

Insurance

The Board of Trustees is responsible for ensuring that the congregation carries adequate property and liability insurance at all times. The Trustees are not necessarily responsible for actually retaining an insurance agent and arranging insurance, but they should make sure these tasks are undertaken by the Board/Council in the congregation/pastoral charge and that adequate insurance is maintained.

Maintaining adequate insurance is a vital responsibility for a church to retain its charitable status under the Income Tax Act.

On the insurance policy, the Trustees should be shown as the named insured (e.g., Trustees of the XYZ United Church). For comprehensive general liability purposes, the named insured should be further defined to include Trustees of the congregation plus ministry personnel, church officials, employees, and volunteers while acting within the scope of their duties on behalf of the insured; and any person who was formerly in one of these capacities with respect to acts performed on behalf of the insured. "Acts performed" should include failure or omission to act.

Inventory

The Board of Trustees keeps an up-to-date inventory of the contents of church property (including replacement value of the items), as well as an up-to-date appraisal of replacement cost for buildings and significant contents (such as an organ or piano). Inventory lists should be kept in a safe place off church premises such as a safety deposit box.

Meetings and Reports

The Board of Trustees must meet at least annually to prepare its report for the annual meeting of the congregation.

The Board of Trustees reports regularly (perhaps quarterly) to the Board/Council, and reports annually to the congregation as to financial planning.

8. Spiritual Leadership

The responsibility for spiritual leadership rests with the Session in the traditional model or with its equivalent in other organizational models. This function is usually associated with committees, groups, or teams responsible for worship, membership outreach, pastoral care, and education. Spiritual leadership includes both supervising and being involved in the congregation's work to care for its members and reach out to the community.

Traditionally, those who engage in the spiritual leadership of the congregation are known as elders. Elders must be full members of the church (except in special circumstances such as an ecumenical shared ministry where the pastoral charge has received presbytery approval to appoint non-church members subject to triennial review). In some models, the title "elder" may include all members of the Board. In any case, these are people who have been specially chosen by the congregation to oversee the spiritual interests of the pastoral charge or congregation, together with the ministry personnel of the charge.

The most important duty of spiritual leadership is to help the congregation discern where God is at work (mission) in the lives of individuals and households in the congregation as a whole, and in the world around the congregation. Spiritual leaders will help the congregation and its people to be led by the Holy Spirit to participate in God's mission to bless all creation.

In addition, the Session or equivalent

- oversees the admission or removal of individuals from membership
- oversees the conduct of members, with power to exercise discipline
- oversees the congregation's duty of care to children, youth, and challenged adults
- oversees Christian education (often a subcommittee of the Session)
- oversees the development of policy regarding sacraments and special services
- oversees the administration of the sacraments
- oversees religious formation, e.g., baptism and confirmation education
- oversees the order of public worship
- oversees the care of the poor and visiting of the sick
- oversees the outreach of the congregation in evangelism and social action
- receives and judges petitions and appeals from members and transmit these to presbytery
- recommends to presbytery/district suitable lay members to be licensed as lay preachers
- recognizes suitable lay members as inquirers and recommends to the presbytery suitable inquirers to be candidates for ordered ministry
- keeps the roll of the congregation and a record of children and adherents
- keeps the register of baptisms, marriages, and burials
- ensures the support of seniors in the pastoral charge

The most important expectation of elders is that each person be involved in a discipline of regular prayer, study, and worship within the congregation to discern the mission of the congregation, and that each participate in ministries of witness, action, or pastoral care.

In addition, elders/members

- visit members and newcomers
- visit those who are sick or living in institutions
- discern special needs and help the church address them
- build caring relationships in the congregation and community
- identify community needs and help the congregation address them
- talk readily with people about Christian faith
- administer any special benevolent funds of the congregation

9. Stewardship of Facilities and Finances

Church management involves the “temporal matters” of congregational life—the day-to-day responsibilities of running the church institution.

Traditionally, the responsibility for church management has been assigned to the Committee of Stewards. Other organizational models may assign responsibilities to committees for finance, property, or stewardship.

Note that matters related to investments, capital indebtedness, major renovation or capital improvements, and property acquisition are not day-to-day decisions and are reserved for the Trustees.

The Stewards/Finance Committee

Many congregations specifically have a Finance Committee. If not, its duties may instead be covered by the Committee of Stewards or the Stewardship Committee. In exceptional cases, its duties may be covered by the Board of Trustees. All of the following duties and expectations apply no matter what organizational model is used. It is usually desirable for members of the Finance Committee to be members of the congregation, but this is not required. Members should be committed to the mission of the congregation and be knowledgeable about financial subjects. The treasurer will relate to the committee either as a voting member of the committee or as an ex officio member.

The most important duties of the Finance Committee include maintaining and deploying the assets of the congregation to fulfill the mission of the congregation to the highest standards of excellence possible. In addition, the committee

- secures contributions for the current expenses of the local congregation, including the salary of the ordered minister(s), required payments to the Pension Fund, presbytery allocations, and the Mission and Service Fund of The United Church of Canada
- disburses the money received for these purposes according to a congregationally approved budget
- prepares and presents annually to the Board and congregation a properly audited/reviewed statement of all receipts and expenditures, together with a budget of estimated needs for the coming year
- secures contributions from participants through regular giving, including pre-authorized remittance (PAR)
- presents regular reports on the condition of finances and property to each meeting of the Board
- elects annually a chairperson, secretary, and treasurer
- monitors the work of the treasurer in keeping records for all receipts and disbursements
- maintains the property for effective day-to-day use

The duties of maintaining the finances of the church include

- ensuring that two people count the offering after worship each Sunday, noting the amounts for the treasurer and making the deposit immediately
- developing budgets annually for congregational discussion and approval
- linking to the Stewardship Committee to plan fundraisers and stewardship education campaigns
- linking to the Board of Trustees regarding investment strategies, proposed major capital expenditures, and possible gifts to the church
- providing support to the treasurer
- monitoring the budget
- ensuring that participants' contributions to the Mission and Service Fund of The United Church of Canada are remitted at least monthly
- ensuring that quarterly (at least) financial statements are available to the congregation/pastoral charge for information
- writing an annual report regarding activities of the past year and proposed activities for the coming year

The most important expectation of members of the Finance Committee is that each person be involved in a discipline of regular prayer, study, and worship within the congregation to discern the mission of the church. Each member should be committed to the highest standards for financial accounting and property maintenance. In addition, each member

- applies good management procedures in caring for the congregational finances
- participates in planning or implementing annual financial visitation strategies
- monitors the proportionate spending in each area of activity of the church, and makes recommendations for the annual budget that reflect the mission priorities of the congregation
- ensures that church property is safe and accessible for children, seniors, and people with physical challenges
- ensures that church property and technology are protected and secure
- ensures that church property provides a healthy environment for personal and spiritual growth and for carrying out the congregation's mission

The Treasurer

The role of treasurer comes under the oversight of the Finance Committee, Committee of Stewards, or Board of Trustees. Congregations are strongly advised to obtain a copy of the *Financial Handbook for Congregations* (The United Church of Canada, revised annually), available from www.united-church.ca/mtf/handbooks.shtm or from UCRD. This comprehensive resource is updated annually and contains thorough information to assist church treasurers in their regular duties.

The T3010A Annual Return Form

In order to maintain its status as a charitable organization, each congregation must complete and file a T3010A form within six months following its year end. This task generally falls to the church treasurer; however, it is the Board/Council's responsibility to ensure that it has been properly completed and filed. Again, consult the *Financial Handbook for Congregations* for a guide to completing the T3010A form.

10. Due Diligence and Duty of Care

The United Church of Canada as a whole has a legal, moral, and spiritual duty to care for and protect participants in our church programs. This is a legal principle called “duty of care.” Church groups have been, and will be, held legally responsible for ensuring that reasonable measures are taken to ensure safety.

The Duty of Care Program in the Support to Local Ministries Unit works with those who manage, deliver, and oversee approximately 400 non-congregational ministries across the country. The work includes developing administrative standards, monitoring their implementation, and accrediting ministries using the name of The United Church of Canada.

Exercising a duty of care involves taking steps to avoid causing foreseeable harm to another person or his or her property. Boards and directors of specialized and institutional ministries of the United Church have the responsibility to exercise the care, diligence, and skill of a reasonably prudent person in the oversight of their organization’s governance.

This is no less true for congregations and pastoral charges of The United Church of Canada. Great care and effort must be taken by Boards/Councils and all people in congregational leadership to ensure that all those who come under their care are protected and safe while participating in any programs or activities.

For further information, please see www.united-church.ca/duty and *Faithful Footsteps: Screening Procedures for Positions of Trust and Authority in The United Church of Canada* (The United Church of Canada, 2000), which can be downloaded from the same webpage.

11. The Presbytery (*The Manual*, 310–393)

The United Church of Canada is governed under a conciliar system. The circle of church government next to the congregations and pastoral charges is the presbytery. The organization, authority, and duties of presbytery are laid out in *The Manual*, sections 310–393.

The presbytery is a court of ministry personnel and representatives of local churches gathered to provide fellowship and support among congregations in the area. The presbytery is a cluster of several pastoral charges, usually geographically based. Newfoundland-Labrador Conference is made up of two districts, rather than presbyteries, the East District and the West District (they are the only Conference with this particular model). A few presbyteries are not geographically based, but are grouped together around certain needs or areas of ministry (such as French-language ministry). Some presbyteries have paid staff to aid in the mission and ministry of the presbytery and the pastoral charges within its bounds.

Meetings of presbytery are held at stated intervals as agreed upon by the members: four times each year in some cases, more often in others. Some presbyteries have formed zones or clusters, so that more frequent meetings of neighbouring churches may be held to deal with area or regional concerns.

The presbytery operates through a system of standing committees, each of which provides leadership in a specific area of responsibility, such as Pastoral Relations, Pastoral Oversight, or Social Justice. These committees serve as a source of help for the local church in particular areas of concern.

The membership of presbytery includes all ordained or commissioned members of the Order of Ministry and lay ministry personnel serving pastoral charges, lay representatives of pastoral charges, and certain others who represent the United Church Women (UCW)/Women’s Ministry Network (WMN) presbyterial, the United Church Men, or membership at large.

The duties of presbytery are to

- oversee the health and religious life of the pastoral charges within its bounds
- oversee all ministry personnel within its bounds and students in the process of training for ministry
- oversee all church property and finances
- act as the major method of communication between courts of the church, namely
 - among pastoral charges
 - between pastoral charges and Conference
 - between pastoral charges and General Council
- develop and approve new ministries, and conclude others

Each congregation within the United Church names *at least one layperson* (or more, depending on the number of members of the congregation) as their representative to the presbytery. The lay representative must be a “full member” of the congregation.

It is the responsibility of lay representatives to presbytery to

- attend presbytery meetings
- participate in the work of presbytery
- report to presbytery regarding their home congregation
- report back to their congregation regarding presbytery discussions and decisions

The presbytery representative is normally a member of the Board/Council of the congregation. In the case of multi-point pastoral charges, each congregation is entitled to at least one representative (see *The Manual*, section 310(b)v).

It is also the responsibility of the presbytery representative to discern the Spirit and call of God during presbytery meetings and to vote on issues according to that discernment, even if it means voting against the will of the congregation. In other words, presbytery representatives *are not bound to vote according to the will of their congregation* if they feel called to vote otherwise. This is a point to consider when choosing a person to represent the congregation.

12. The Conference (*The Manual*, 400–470)

The Conference encompasses several presbyteries, usually within a specific geographic area. There are 13 Conferences in The United Church of Canada, most of which are based on geographic location. The exception is the All Native Circle Conference, which incorporates First Nations presbyteries and many pastoral charges from Quebec to Alberta. Every Conference has pastoral charges and presbyteries within its bounds.

Conference generally meets once a year; this meeting is the gathering of lay representatives of presbytery and Order of Ministry personnel who together hear reports from the presbyteries and Conference committees, receive petitions from presbyteries and pastoral charges, offer direction, and make decisions regarding future ministry and mission within the Conference. These decisions are often called “resolutions.” Conference also receives and sends proposals from pastoral charges and presbyteries to General Council.

The Conference ordains and commissions candidates to the Order of Ministry, and deploys and supports ministry personnel. It generally has staff who serve as a resource for educational activities and programs to support presbyteries/districts and pastoral charges.

13. The General Council and General Council Executive (*The Manual*, 500–549)

The General Council is a triennial (every three years) gathering of commissioners (elected representatives) from the 13 Conferences of the church. They gather to make national policy decisions, discern God’s call to the national church, and elect a Moderator, who serves as the chief elected official of the church for the next three years.

Commissioners are elected from every Conference across the United Church, including lay and ministry personnel. General Council meets once every three years to hear reports from the Conferences and General Council committees, receive petitions/proposals from Conferences, and make decisions regarding the ongoing and future mission and ministry of the whole church.

The work of each General Council is recorded in a publication called the *Record of Proceedings*, issued after each triennial meeting. Between meetings of the General Council, the Executive of the General Council leads the national church. The Executive usually meets twice per year. The General Secretary of the General Council is The United Church of Canada’s chief administrative officer, and oversees the staff of the General Council.

14. The General Council Office (*The Manual*, 600–735)

The term “General Council” is also often used to refer to the General Council Office, which is the national office of The United Church of Canada, located in Toronto, Ontario. The General Council Office consists of several units whose function is to aid in the mission and ministry of the national church, the Conferences, presbyteries/districts, and pastoral charges of The United Church of Canada. These units are

- Office of the Moderator and General Secretary (OMGS)
- Financial Stewardship (FINS)
- Financial Services (FS)
- Information Technology Services (ITS)
- Ministry and Employment Policies and Services (MEPS)
- Resource Production and Distribution (RPD)
- Ethnic Ministries (EM)
- Faith Formation and Education (FFE)
- Support to Local Ministries (SLM)
- Justice, Global and Ecumenical Relations (JGER)
- Ministères en français (UMiF/Ministries in French)

The work of the General Council Office is supported by The Mission and Service Fund. Approximately 11 percent of The Mission and Service Fund’s annual revenue is used to finance General Council Office programs and staff salaries.