

# **Licensed Lay Worship Leader**

## **Policy & Guidelines**



**East Central Ontario LLWL Handbook:**

**2022**

## **Licensed Lay Worship Leaders within East Central Ontario Regional Council**

**Background:** This policy came from the work of the Synode of Montreal and Ottawa and the Bay of Quinte Conferences. In December of 2018 the transition Commission of East Central Ontario Regional Council adopted this policy as the basis for a Policy in the new region. Slight revisions have been made in 2022 to change the presbytery and conference references to Regional Council.

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October, 2016)

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## **INTRODUCTION:**

The purpose of this handbook is to outline the policy Of the East Central Ontario Regional Council regarding Licensed Lay Worship Leaders.

The United Church of Canada appreciates the willingness of lay people who come forward to offer their faith, insight and skill as worship leaders in congregations. The Licensed Lay Worship Leadership program is intended to honour and support members of the Laity to share their gifts and express their faith while meeting the vital need of congregations to gather for worship.

This handbook provides a framework to support all those who provide the necessary preparation, licensing, support and oversight of Licensing Lay Worship Leaders. It contains policy guidelines, developed through prior consultation among presbyteries and approved by Bay of Quinte Conference executive, and more recently by the East Central Ontario Executive to ensure that expectations regarding the practice of Licensed Lay Worship Leadership are clear and consistent.

This handbook is meant to complement United Church of Canada guidelines (See Appendices.)

## **I. GOVERNANCE**

### **A Committee Role re LLWLs**

Within East Central Ontario Regional Council, this work is carried out by the Lay Licensed Worship Leaders Forum under the guidance of the Covenant Support Team.

## **1. LICENSING & RENEWAL**

### **1. Initial Licensing**

#### **a) Educational Preparation**

- i. **Course of Study.** The prescribed course of study is based on the requirements set out by The United Church of Canada
- ii. **Courses from outside the Region.** One Of the Governing Body requirements is the question of determining whether individuals who have completed courses of study for Lay Worship Leadership offered across the United Church of Canada have acquired appropriate preparation for licensing in East Central Ontario Regional Council. It is the responsibility of the person seeking licensing to submit proof of course completion and a course transcript/outline describing course components.
- iii. **Educational Standards.** Those participating in a Licensed Lay Worship Leader educational program are expected to observe accepted educational standards with respect to the work involved in becoming a Lay Licensed Worship Leader. This includes, but is not limited to, attendance at all events for Licensed Lay Worship Leaders, participation in all required components of the course, the timely completion of required assignments, an acceptable quality of assignments submitted, and the appropriate use of resources, including being aware of ethical and legal issues regarding plagiarism. Any action deemed to be a breach of accepted educational standards may jeopardize the successful completion of the course and subsequent licensing.

- iv. **Inclusive Language.** East Central Ontario Regional Council encourages use of inclusive language.
- v. **Updating Educational Preparation.** If there has been a gap in time since the individual's educational program or last licensing period, the Regional Council may require evidence of additional continuing education prior to licensing.

**b) Interview prior to recommendation for licensing.**

An individual is recommended for licensing, or subsequent renewal of licensing, after an interview process, including a determination of the person's understanding of the ethos, theology and practice of The United Church of Canada. The individual is also expected to demonstrate understanding of the on-going requirements for licensing renewal and boundaries training requirements. See sections II and V

**c) Letter from Home Congregation**

When seeking licensing or renewal, individuals are expected to provide a letter of recommendation from their home congregation's governing body [Session, Official Board or Church Council] affirming their membership in good standing in their home congregation and suitability for this role within the wider church.

**d) Police Records Check**

we exercise due diligence by requesting to see a Police Records Check (Vulnerable Sector) by requesting to see a Police Records Check (Vulnerable Sector) issued within the past 6 months before granting the initial licence, and subsequently to meet the same standards as those required for active Ministry Personnel. Failure to provide a current Police Check at the appropriate intervals will result in discontinuation of the person's license. See Appendix C for recommended procedure for police checks.

**e) Service of Celebration**

At first licensing and then on an annual basis, Licensed Lay Worship Leaders will be recognized at a public service.

## **2. Renewal of licensing**

### **a) Annual Renewal**

Within the East Central Regional Council, the license of a Licensed Lay Worship Leader shall be renewed each year at the discretion of the Council. Annual renewal shall be assessed based on the policy contained in this resource.

### **b) Regular Contact**

The Region will arrange, at least every three years, a meeting with each Licensed Lay Worship Leaders to provide support and opportunity to discern if renewal of the license is appropriate

### **c) Attending home congregation.**

In addition to being a full member of The United Church of Canada, when not conducting a service it is expected that Licensed Lay Worship Leaders will regularly attend worship and other congregational activities at their sponsoring congregation.

### **d) Church membership**

A current license remains valid while a Lay Worship Leader remains a member of any pastoral charge within the Region. When the Licensed Lay Worship Leader transfers membership to a pastoral charge in another Region, he or she may not function as a Licensed Lay Worship Leader until recognized by that Region. The Region may set a minimum period of membership in the home congregation prior to licensing. (See also “Oversight, in this document: Section III, 2 c”)

### **e) Submission of Preaching Log**

Licensed Lay Worship Leaders, at least annually prior to the renewal of the license, are required to provide the Region with a complete list of the dates and locations of all services of worship led in the previous year, including those services led outside of the bounds of the Region.

### **f) Ongoing Learning**

Licensed lay Worship Leaders are expected to be engaged in on-going learning. Individuals will make use of various paths to further learning, e.g., Con Ed events, books, on-line forums, support groups or mentors, etc. Included in the LLWL’s annual report will be a list of any related continuing education events attended and a list of relevant books that were read or other activities that have been part of their ongoing learning as a Lay Licensed Worship Leader.

### **III. SUPPORT and OVERSIGHT**

#### **1. Support**

##### **a) Support for on-going Learning**

The Committee will encourage on-going learning and seek to provide opportunities for further development of LLWL skills through training and education.

##### **b) Collection and Circulation of Names of LLWLs**

There shall be a list of Licensed Lay Worship Leaders licensed within the bounds of the Region. These names shall be circulated within the Region as those lay people who have been licensed and are approved to lead worship throughout the Region.

##### **c) Mentors for Newly Licensed LLWLs**

Following initial licensing, the Region is encouraged to assign, in consultation with the new LLWL, a mentor for a minimum of one year in order that they might reflect together on the LLWL role and the individual's effectiveness. The Region may, at its discretion, assign a mentor to a Lay Licensed Worship Leader at any time should it feel that this is necessary. The mentor and the LLWL should be informed as to whether or not the mentor may provide reports to the Region for use in the Re-Licensing process .

#### **2. Oversight**

##### **a) Frequency of Worship Leadership**

The Licensed Lay Worship Leader may cover 5 of any 8 consecutive Sundays, to a maximum of ten services per year, in one Pastoral Charge.

##### **b) Evaluation of Preaching**

As a part of oversight of Licensed Lay Worship Leaders, the Region will gather information on preaching effectiveness; for example, by such means as observing preaching, reading submitted sermons, or on occasion asking congregations to provide feedback on the leadership offered by Licensed Lay Worship Leaders.

##### **c) Rules/oversight if Preaching outside Home Region**

The LLWLs are accountable to their home Region. In the event that a Licensed Lay Worship Leader is invited to lead worship in a congregation outside of the East Central Ontario Regional Council, it is expected that they will function within the guidelines. The home Region will process any concerns as part of its responsibility for oversight of the LLWL and will provide a response to those who have expressed the concern.

## **SECTION IV: REMUNERATION**

National Salary Guidelines state “General Council has no authority to establish rates of compensation for lay people engaged by a congregation.” Compensation is “at the discretion of the congregation.” Therefore, LLWL compensation rates set by the Region are guidelines which congregations are strongly encouraged to use.

### **1. Recommended Minimum Rate**

The Pastoral Charge is expected to remunerate Licensed Lay Worship Leaders appropriately. As a guide, the national Minimum salaries document indicates a minimum rate of \$224 for 2022 and \$232 for 2023

### **2. Compensation in Multi-point Charges**

In general, the preaching rate is for the day, not for the number of services provided. LLWLs may serve in multi-point charges. Compensation for travel between preaching sites is expected. The 2022 mileage \$0.46 per Km, and in 2023 mileage is \$0.55 per kms.

### **3. Home Congregation Responsibility**

- a) At least once a year, each congregation which annually sponsors a Licensed Lay Worship Leader is expected to invite their Licensed Lay Worship Leader to lead worship, and remunerate them appropriately as a sign of support of the Licensed Lay Worship Leader.
- b) It is strongly encouraged that, when leading worship within one’s home congregation, the Licensed Lay Worship Leader be paid in accordance with the rate recommended.

## **V. STANDARDS OF CONDUCT -- BOUNDARIES**

### **1. Respecting Local Practices and Traditions**

Licensed Lay Worship Leaders lead worship at the invitation of a local congregation or pastoral charge. It is expected, therefore, that when preparing for worship, Licensed Lay Worship Leaders respect the congregation they are serving with regard to local traditions and practices, worship format, hymnody, language and style of worship leadership.

### **2. Church Roles**

Being licensed to serve as a Licensed Lay Worship Leader does not qualify the person to serve as Pastoral Charge Supervisor or representative of the Region at Official Board/Church Council meetings.

### **3. Appointments or Vacancies**

Being licensed to serve as a Licensed Lay Worship Leader does not permit the person to apply to or fill pastoral vacancies.



**4. Advertising of Services**

Individual Licensed Lay Worship Leaders are not permitted to advertise their services or solicit invitations to lead worship, through any means including the internet, except via appropriate venues designed by the Region for such purpose.

**5. Sacraments and Marriages**

Licensing does not include permission to preside at the sacraments or license to perform marriages. In keeping with the ethos and practice of The United Church of Canada regarding the laity, Licensed Lay Worship Leaders may not seek to be recognized by or affiliated with outside religious organizations in order to perform these functions. Doing so will result in non-renewal of one's license.

**6. Pastoral Care**

Being licensed to serve as a Licensed Lay Worship Leader does not entitle someone to enter into an ongoing relationship of pastoral care with the Pastoral Charge or individual members of a congregation. It is expected that the Licensed Lay Worship Leader will refer any requests or requirements for pastoral care (counselling, home visitation, hospital visitation) to the called or appointed Ministry Personnel or the Pastoral Charge Supervisor for follow-up.

**7. Relationship between LLWLs and Funeral Homes**

Presiding at **funerals** for members or adherents of a Pastoral Charge (including at a funeral home) shall be done only at the invitation of the called or appointed minister, or if there is no appointed or called minister in the pastoral charge, at the invitation of the Pastoral Charge Supervisor, the governing body of the pastoral charge or the presbytery. Conversation with the called or appointed Ministry Personnel or the Supervisor of the Pastoral Charge must happen prior to making any agreement with a family, an individual or a funeral home. If Licensed Lay Worship Leaders conduct a funeral, they must ensure that the information about the service is properly entered in the Burial Register of the Pastoral Charge.

The conduct of funerals, other than as noted above, is not within the purview of the Licensed Lay Worship Leader. Licensed Lay Worship Leaders are not to be "on call" with local funeral homes. All funerals require competency in the area of pastoral care for which Licensed Lay Worship Leaders are not normally trained. Therefore, keeping in mind the duty of care by which all Licensed Lay Worship Leaders are bound, conducting funerals as a side business may be grounds for non-renewal of one's license.

**8. Mandatory Workshops: Healthy Boundaries & Sexual Abuse Policy & Racial Justice**

Within the East Central Ontario Regional Council, all Licensed Lay Worship Leaders are required to have completed the workshop on United Church Policies on Healthy Boundaries and Sexual Abuse Policy and Racial Justice. For their own awareness and protection, Licensed Lay Worship Leaders are encouraged to review on a regular basis the United Church policies on sexual abuse and racial justice.

**9. Liability Insurance? The insurance issue will require clarification under the regional model.**

## **APPENDIX A: Role and Characteristics of Licensed Lay Worship Leaders**

*(from The United Church of Canada Handbook:: Licensed Lay Worship Leaders, October, 2016 and June 2019)*

### **Licence**

#### **What Does “Licensed” Mean?**

In 1925, when the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregationalist churches joined to form The United Church of Canada, lay preachers, as a leadership designation, became part of this union. Today, rather than the designation “lay preachers,” the term “licensed lay worship leader” is used to designate those who offer occasional worship leadership that continues to be part of our life as a church.

Many lay people in a congregation participate and give leadership in worship, but those who participate in a licensed lay worship leadership program are choosing to develop their leadership gifts further. They are not entering an order of ministry. The term “licensed” indicates that an individual has engaged in a course of study and is considered personally and theologically suitable to offer occasional worship leadership within the bounds of the Regional Council.

Licensed lay worship leaders are not eligible for appointment to any paid accountable ministry position. At the discretion of the congregation, they may receive an honorarium for conducting individual worship services (this income must be claimed as taxable revenue). Licensed lay worship leaders are not eligible, by virtue of licensing, to preside at sacraments or to wear a preaching stole or clergy collar.

### **Suitability**

#### **Prior Assessment**

Before expressing interest in participating in a licensed lay worship leader course, and before requesting recommendation to such a course by a pastoral charge governing body, an individual should be able to identify gifts and experiences that lend themselves to ministry of worship leadership and preaching.

- Some people may bring transferrable skills from their life and workplace experience, such as written and oral communication, public speaking, and teaching.
- In addition, some may indicate budding gifts for worship leadership through such congregational activities as facilitating study groups or prayer groups, making presentations at committee meetings, or contributing thoughtful, reflective writing to church newsletters or other publications.
- Of course, an individual may clearly demonstrate worship leadership through leading prayers and liturgy, preaching, and conducting entire services.

### **Personal Qualities**

In affirming that an individual has the potential to participate in a licensed lay worship leaders' program, a governing body is saying that the individual has demonstrated a commitment to the ethos of the United Church and is comfortable with that ethos as it is manifested at the levels of pastoral charge, the Regional Council, and General Council.

Such an individual may possess a prayerful and integrated spirituality, openness to ongoing development and learning, and a desire to share a relevant faith informed by Christian hope and God's Spirit. Other relevant personal qualities may include the ability to

- relate sensitively to a wide range of people
- be discreet and trustworthy
- be aware of boundaries and how to manage them
- engage with ideas in an open and nonjudgmental fashion

Clear written and oral communication skills, as well as organizational skills, are additional assets. While none of us is fully informed, and an individual interested in being a licensed lay worship leader will not have all the necessary competencies at the beginning of their course of study, the assessment process includes looking for evidence of budding gifts that can be further honed.

### **Competencies**

A lay member preparing to become a licensed lay worship leader should meet the following competencies:

- develop their knowledge of the scriptural basis for Christian faith
- understand theological themes
- explore United Church history and polity
- recognize and respect different congregational contexts
- organize and prepare worship liturgy
- understand and write prayers
- become familiar with United Church hymnody as singing our faith
- prepare and deliver sermons
- practise public speaking and presentation

### **Program of Study**

Each approved program will vary according to the congregational context, participants, and availability of resources. The following are suggested topics of study deemed to be important ingredients in a licensed lay worship leader program; each Region will decide how to best structure the content.

### **Program Structure Options**

Various approaches can be followed to structure an educational program. For example:

- Using existing courses and programs offered by theological education institutions, followed by an assessment of an individual's readiness to be recognized by the Regional Council as a licensed lay worship leader.
- Organizing a Regional Council program delivered in a variety of formats, such as
  - independent directed-study programs
  - weekly evening events
  - monthly weekend workshops
  - intensive sessions offered in larger blocks over several days

Weekend workshops in an intensive format offer the greatest access for participants and resource people. Such a format gives time and space to integrate learning through practice and reflection. The Regional Council Lay Licensed Worship Forum may work together to create such a program.

## Encouraging Adult Learners

In developing a curriculum for adult learners, the following should be considered.

- Learning is a life-long process that includes formal institutional education as well as all aspects of a person's life, such as family of origin, relationships, workplace, church life, community engagement, reading, ongoing activism, and contemplation.
- Learning is enhanced by attention to various learning styles, and by opportunities for active engagement combined with time for reflection.
- Learning in a faith context is framed by our understanding of God and of life as a Christian disciple.
- Learning is relevant when it integrates pastoral and theological questions, combines information with relationship building, encourages imagination and creativity along with analysis and synthesis, and promotes confidence as well as competence.

Learning carries potential for transformation as a person, disciple, and worship leader. Old assumptions are examined and new ways of engaging the world are considered. At the axis of old and new is reflection—a process of examining, questioning, affirming, and revising previous perceptions. God calls us to be transformed, to adopt new ways of living that are life-affirming rather than death-dealing. God desires transformation from individualistic to communal ways of being, from self serving to serving others, from despair to hope.

To engage in transformative learning, a learner needs to reflect on current beliefs and thoughts and choose new ways of believing and thinking. Adult educator Patricia Cranton suggests three strands to reflection:<sup>1</sup>

- *Content reflection* explores content or information. For example, offering prayer in worship involves looking at the purpose of prayer at various points in the service (call to worship, offering prayer, prayers of intercession, and so on).
- In *process reflection*, rather than focusing on what prayer is, a liturgist needs to think about how to put a prayer together. What resources are helpful? What experts or manuals need to be consulted? What kinds of tools are useful?
- In *premise reflection*, learners take a step back from the situation and ask underlying questions: Why do we pray? Whom do we pray to? How does prayer shape the one who does the praying?

Content attends to concrete information, whereas process explores how information is put together and what resources will be used, and premise looks at the underlying meaning. A well-rounded learning experience attends to all three reflective strands.

In addition to reflection, educators may consider what elements create an environment of encouragement for adult learners, such as

- attending to the physical setting for learning
- clarifying expectations for learning and assessment
- seeking and being open to input from adult learners
- creating an environment of mutual learning
- establishing realistic and attainable learning objectives
- evaluating the program by drawing on insights from participants, leaders, and presbytery/ district

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<sup>1</sup> Patricia Cranton, *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning: A Guide for Educators of Adults* (San Francisco: Jossey- Bass, 1994).

## **Suggested Program Elements**

In preparing a licensed lay worship leaders course of study, consider the following topics:

### **Worship Leadership**

- Licensed lay worship leader parameters
  - clarifying worship leadership roles and functions
- Worship service
  - exploring United Church worship service structures
  - looking at seasons of a liturgical year
  - examining patterns and forms of worship in The United Church of Canada
  - doing a brief historical overview of worship
- Underlying principles
  - clarifying the focus of a worship service: liturgical season, needs of the congregation, other participants (e.g., musician, lay reader)
  - respecting a congregation’s traditions
- Worship leadership skills
  - structuring and composing public prayers
  - trying out appropriate posture, movement, and gesture
  - practising voice production: volume, pace, rhythm
  - incorporating silence
  - using inclusive language
  - attending to the needs of children and youth
- Pastoral skills
  - anticipating the “pastoral” dimensions of lay leadership in worship
- Worship leadership practicum
  - finding written and online resources
  - assessing quality of resources
  - addressing issues of plagiarism and acknowledging sources
  - preparing and delivering liturgies

### **Preaching**

- Looking at the underlying principles in preaching, such as why we preach
- Using the lectionary
- Understanding and responding to congregational and societal pastoral contexts
- Preparing to preach
- Entering the texts using preaching resources appropriately
- Organizing a text
- Developing and practising delivery skills
- Preaching practicum as opportunities for delivery and receiving feedback on content

### **Biblical Foundations**

#### ***Hebrew Scriptures***

- Introducing approaches to biblical texts
- Exploring historical and cultural contexts of ancient Israel
- Surveying biblical texts

#### ***Christian Scriptures***

- Exploring the economic, political, and religious context of Jesus of Nazareth
- Surveying Paul’s life and ministry in the economic, political, and religious contexts of the Pauline communities
- Looking at the formation of the gospels
- Reviewing types of texts: parables, miracle stories, letters, apocalyptic literature
- Walking through later letters in the Christian scriptures

### **Theological Foundations**

- Who is God?
  - reflecting on biblical images
  - exploring contemporary approaches to understanding God
- Who is Jesus Christ?
  - looking at gospel portraits of Jesus
  - reflecting on different understandings of Jesus
  - exploring contemporary Christologies
- Who is the Holy Spirit?
  - reflecting on the relationship between the three persons of the Trinity
  - exploring the nature and role of the Holy Spirit
- What is church?
  - reflecting on different understandings of what it means to be the church in the world
  - exploring what it means to be a worshipping community that celebrates sacraments
  - surveying church history, including the history of lay leadership and ministry
  - reviewing the formation and history of The United Church of Canada
- Examining other theological topics, such as atonement, grace, creation, mercy, salvation, sacrament, end times, discipleship
- Developing a respectful understanding of other world religions

### **Pastoral and Contextual Foundations**

- United Church ministerial structures
  - clarifying roles and responsibilities at the levels of congregation, Regional Council, and General Council
  - describing roles and responsibilities of licensed lay worship leaders

### **Further Learning**

Learners may identify other learning needs that frame their ongoing development as Christian disciples and their continuing formation for worship leadership, such as

- personal and spiritual formation
- patterns and disciplines of personal prayer and reflection
- varieties and styles of preaching

### **Additional Resources and Assistance**

The General Council Office may be of assistance in identifying additional resources or support for developing a presbytery program of study. Call 1-800-268-3781 and ask for “Ministry Vocations” or “Worship.”

**APPENDIX B: The United Church of Canada Policy on LLWLs**

*(from The Manual of The United Church of Canada (2022), 1.1.11.5)*

**I.1.11.5 Licensed Lay Worship Leaders**

The regional council may license a person as a licensed lay worship leader. The following requirements apply:

- a) the person must be a member of a congregation in that regional council; and
- b) the licence must be for a specified term, which may be renewed.

A licensed lay worship leader serves under the direction of the regional council.

If a licensed lay worship leader becomes a member of a community of faith in another regional council, the person must be recognized by that other regional council in order to continue serving as a licensed lay worship leader.

*There are additional policies and procedures for the education, qualifications, licensing, and recognition of licensed lay worship leaders. See the Licensed Lay Worship Leaders resource available from the [General Council Office](#).*

**APPENDIX C: Resource - Police Check Procedure**

- a. The Region will use a procedure, consistent with United Church policy, for requesting, reviewing, and documenting police checks and for dealing with any issues that might arise. A recommended procedure is:
- b. Prior to licensing, the Region will advise the individual that a police check is needed and that the individual should leave time to complete the process. Some police forces require a letter from an employer requesting the police records check. If any applicant needs one, the Regional Pastoral relations minister will provide a letter. As this is for paid service, there will usually be a fee.
- c. Ideally, the Region will receive the Police Check prior to the interview.
- d. If the police check is not available at the time of the interview, the interview may proceed, but the individual will not be recommended for licensing until the Police Check review process has been completed.