

PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMISSION: VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATE MINISTER (VAM)

This policy outlines the regulations regarding Voluntary Associate Ministers (VAMs) in Shining Waters Regional Council.

Date Approved: December 12, 2018	Review date by Pastoral Relations Commission: 2025
Revised policy approved: February 22, 2022	

DEFINITION AND ELIGIBILITY

A Voluntary Associate Minister (VAM) is a ministry personnel who is not called or appointed to a community of faith and has entered into a formal association with a pastoral charge to exercise agreed upon functions of ministry. A VAM must be on the Office of Vocation registry of accredited ministry personnel, with the following criteria met: a) in good standing; and b) in compliance with the current standards of The United Church of Canada (including: racial justice training; boundaries course; boundaries refreshers when applicable; police records check and annual declaration with respect to criminal charges.

A community of faith and the called or appointed minister must request approval by the Pastoral Relations Commission for the appointment of a VAM. Ministry personnel may not apply to become a Voluntary Associate Minister to a Community of Faith that has no appointed or called minister.

MEMBERSHIP

Voluntary Associate Ministers are members of the Regional Council and not of the community of faith with which they are associated. Volunteer Associate status shall be seen as equivalent to any appointment in terms of membership and discipline.

THE PROCESS

An ordered minister may enter into an agreement with a community of faith and the incumbent minister/s to serve as a Voluntary Associate Minister.

The VAM application form is available on the [Shining Waters Regional Council website](#). The on-line form requires the agreement of the Pastoral Charge, the called or appointed Ministry Personnel, and the Voluntary Associate Minister.

The completed form will be sent to Shining Waters Regional Council and presented to the Pastoral Relations Commission for consideration and approval.

Once the request has been approved, Shining Waters Regional Council will retain a copy and provide an emailed copy to the community of faith Secretary or Board/Session (or equivalent), the called or appointed Ministry Personnel, and the Voluntary Associate Minister.

If the request is not approved, Shining Waters Regional Council will contact all parties.

By submitting the Voluntary Associate Minister form, the Voluntary Associate Minister and other parties are agreeing to the following:

1. Pastoral functions performed come under the oversight and discipline of the Office of Vocation.
2. The Voluntary Associate Minister named in the agreement may receive honoraria for weddings or funerals and for presiding and/or preaching in regular worship; however, there is no expectation of honoraria, stipend, or travel allowance from the community of faith to which they are accountable.

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3. The Voluntary Associate Minister and the incumbent minister/s will have a conversation at the time of application regarding expectations of the Voluntary Associate Minister and agreed upon areas where the Voluntary Associate Minister may be involved in assisting with ministry functions and tasks. These areas are listed on the VAM application form.
4. When there is a change in a pastoral relationship within a Community of Faith, the incumbent Voluntary Associate Minister may continue in that Community of Faith. When a newly appointed or called minister begins, the Voluntary Associate Minister and the newly called or appointed minister will have a conversation, facilitated by the M&P Committee, regarding expectations of the Voluntary Associate Minister and agreed upon areas where the Voluntary Associate Minister may be involved in assisting with ministry functions and tasks. A report of this conversation will be filed with the M&P Committee.
5. In situations of team ministry, when one member of the team leaves the pastoral relationship or when a member is added, the same conversation as is outlined above should take place.
6. If a Voluntary Associate Minister enters into a call at another community of faith, their VAM status shall end on the beginning date of the call. If a VAM enters into an appointment longer than six months, their VAM status will be put on hold on the beginning date of their appointment. They may resume their VAM status at the original Community of Faith after their appointment has ended.