PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMISSION: MINISTRY PERSONNEL MARRIAGE POLICY

This policy outlines the regulations regarding marriage licences for ministry personnel in Shining Waters Regional Council.

Date Approved: December 12, 2018	Revision Approved: October 15, 2025	Next review date by Pastoral Relations Commission: June 2025

ELIGIBILITY

a) Permanent licences

Those eligible to hold a permanent licence to conduct a wedding within the Province of Ontario are:

1. Ministry personnel in a covenanted relationship with a ministry recognized by a regional council of The United Church of Canada within the Province of Ontario. This includes ministry candidates who are serving in appointments.

b) Temporary licences

Those eligible to hold a temporary licence to conduct a wedding within the Province of Ontario are:

1. Ministry personnel on the accredited list of ministry personnel maintained by the Office of Vocation who are not in an on-going covenanted relationship with a ministry recognized by a regional council of The United Church of Canada.
2. Ministry personnel from other regional councils within The United Church of Canada who are on the accredited list of ministry personnel and reside outside Ontario.
3. Ministry personnel from other communions, which are recognized by the Canadian Council of Churches or the World Council of Churches.

Notes

i) Retired Designated Lay Ministers are not eligible to be licensed because they are not in an appointment and are therefore considered to be lay persons, and are not eligible to become Voluntary Associate Ministers.

ii) A marriage licence will be valid for one year after the end of an appointment or call. If a minister has not entered into another appointment or call, or into a Voluntary Associate Minister covenanted relationship within this one year period, then their licence will be cancelled.

PROCEDURES

a) Permanent licences

1. All ministry personnel in a covenanted relationship with a community of faith or a ministry recognized by the regional council will be authorized by the regional council to apply for a marriage licence. The Regional Council supports the application with required documentation; however, the Regional Council cannot procure a licence for ministry personnel and it is the responsibility of ministry personnel to ensure that they have an active marriage licence before conducting marriages. The Ontario government marriage office maintains a public online list of all active licences (https://data.ontario.ca/dataset/registered-marriage-officiants). If your name is not on the list, contact your Pastoral Relations Minister.

2. A covenanted relationship for those not called or appointed to a community of faith, or a ministry recognized by the regional council, will consist of a joint statement from the ministry personnel and a community of faith indicating a mutual agreement that conducting weddings is part of the duties of the ministry personnel as specified in the Shining Waters Regional Council VAM Application Form.

   Ministry personnel will be on the list of accredited ministry personnel. In Shining Waters Regional Council, this joint statement is included in the Voluntary Associate Minister form, which must be approved by the appointed or called ministry personnel and the community of faith, and approved by the Pastoral Relations Commission. Shining Waters Regional Council will depend on The United Church of Canada's Church Hub to verify that a minister is on the list of accredited ministry personnel. This means anyone applying for Voluntary Associate Minister status must be registered on www.ChurchHub.ca.

3. The regional council will periodically determine whether a covenanted relationship continues to exist between a ministry personnel and a community of faith.

4. All marriages shall be registered in a marriage register kept by a United Church of Canada community of faith or regional council recognized ministry.

b) Temporary licences for United Church of Canada Ministry Personnel

1. Ministry personnel without a permanent licence for conducting weddings will contact the marriage registration governing official requesting a temporary licence.

2. The governing official will confirm that the ministry personnel is on the list of accredited ministry personnel by checking with the regional council's Office of Vocation Minister.

3. Ministry personnel requesting a temporary licence shall supply a letter of support from the ministry personnel serving the United Church of Canada community of faith in which the wedding is taking place.

4. For "off-site," non-church weddings, ministry personnel shall provide a letter from a United Church of Canada community of faith whose marriage register is being used to register the marriage.

5. All marriages shall be registered in a marriage register kept by a United Church of Canada community of faith or regional council recognized ministry.

6. Temporary licences for weddings to be conducted on the premises of other denominations shall be requested through the governing official of the other denomination.

7. The maximum number of temporary registrations to be authorized for any individual in any calendar year is three. Those wishing to conduct more than three weddings per calendar year will be required to enter into a covenanted relationship with a community of faith or regional council recognized ministry.

8. Ministry personnel applying for a temporary licence must be on the list of accredited ministry personnel

9. Whatever personal record the officiant makes of the event, it must be entered into the marriage register of a congregation according to #4 or #5 above.

c) Temporary Licences for Ministry Personnel who are not recognized by The United Church of Canada

Ministry personnel of a denomination that is a member church of the Canadian Council of Churches or the World Council of Churches will provide a letter of standing from their denomination of accountability. The ministry personnel would be subject to #1 and #3-7, and #9 above.

Ministry personnel from another denomination applying for a temporary licence must have a police records check valid within the last six months.