



The United Church of Canada L'Église Unie du Canada

First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council

Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Regional Council

Regional Council 15

Annual Meetings of a Community of Faith that is a Congregation or Pastoral Charge

The “How To” in the midst of a Pandemic!

Tri-Regional Town Hall – January 28, 2021

Questions and Answers

- Q: What if your congregation has between 200-300 members for quorum?
- A: **A meeting of the congregation or pastoral charge may take place only if a minimum number of full members is present; For congregations or pastoral charges with 100 or more members, at least 20 full members must be present. Any congregation 100 and greater, at least 20 full members must be present.**
- Q: Do we have to email or call people *twice* to announce the meeting, or do we just have to email/call people once?
- A: **There is no way to tell with absolute certainty that one email or one phone call would be adequate. The issue is whether members actually receive notice, whichever way is chosen to give notice. It's not an arbitrary “one and done”. If the officers are confident that leaving one voicemail message or sending one email will be enough to inform people, they can do it that way. They'll know for sure when the meeting takes place, as if there are far fewer participants than expected, one notice may not have been adequate. I think extra effort should be put into giving people notice. For example, sending notice by email (or voicemail message) and then following up a week or so later with a reminder just to make sure people got the earlier notice.**
- Q: Can the congregational meeting be announced via Facebook News Groups/Pastoral Charge Facebook Page?
- A: **The person calling the meeting (minister/chair of the annual meeting/pastoral charge supervisor) must act in good faith in calling the meeting and choose the option for notifying members that, in their reasonable opinion, is the best way of getting in touch with the largest number of people under the circumstances.**

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Q&A from Tri-Regional Town Hall – January 28, 2021

The minutes of the congregational meeting should record how notice was given along with the rationale for choosing that method.

Q: What if the annual meeting is embedded in worship?

A: **Having your meeting during worship is permissible in most places, if you keep the protocols and follow your plan. Be mindful of the length of time you are in the same room together with the projection of voices of those wishing to talk. Remain masked for the meeting, the use of microphones and the sharing of equipment is not recommended. If the sharing of microphones is unavoidable please sanitize.**

NS: Dr. Strang has confirmed that while in normal times this may be a congregation's practice, during the pandemic this maybe considered a creative way to get around the existing restrictions and should be discouraged. It is also his hope that gathering numbers, including meeting numbers, will be able to open up soon.

Q: Is June 30th, 2021 just a date set by the region, and is there hope of the Alert Level being changed?

A: **Each of the two amendments (see slides 9-10) are in effect until June 30, 2021, subject to earlier cancellation or further extension by decision of the Executive or Sub-Executive of the General Council.**

Q: Can voting be done by email or by texting?

A: **The Manual section Appendix 3.4 (pg. 189) sets out the ways people can meet (and vote). Text voting is not one of those. The options are in person, telephone conference call, simultaneous web communication (Zoom etc.), email in certain circumstances (which must follow the section 3.4.2 regulations Decisions by E-mail). Reminder, the guiding principle to decision making in The United Church is that everyone can engage in the discussion at the same time. It is in our discussion and prayerful discernment that the Spirit can guide. Therefore, email decision should be the exception.**

Q: What about a hybrid/blended meeting e.g. in person and Zoom?

A: **This would be fine as long as everyone has opportunity to engage in the meeting, have reports in advance, are able to speak to the issues and are able to vote simultaneously.**

Q: What form does the annual report take in COVID times; online or paper?

A: **It is important that the information is shared with those needing to be informed to make decisions. If you are not able to get the information to people by sending it electronically, then a paper copy would be acceptable.**

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Q: On a multi-point charge, is each congregation required to have a meeting —or, is the annual meeting of the Pastoral Charge the only required meeting?

A: **If a pastoral charge has more than one congregation, the congregations and the Regional Council decide how the responsibilities and governance requirements for the community of faith are divided among the congregations and the pastoral charge as a whole. Individual congregations can have their own Annual Meeting to make local decisions and receive local reports (ex. cemetery, church building maintenance, local budgets) and if there are decisions to be made by the pastoral charge ex. pastoral charge budget, reports from joint committees (M&P, Manse etc.) then the pastoral charge would need to have a meeting to approve those items.**

Q: How do you have a meeting if you do not have a Minister?

A: **Please be in touch with your Pastoral Charge supervisor. If you do not have a supervisor, please be in touch with your Regional Minister.**

Q: What is the authority of the Official Board (or equivalent) in regards to items within the Annual Report. Can they, on behalf of the Congregation/Pastoral Charge, approve the budget, appoint trustees and what other things?

A: **General Council Sub-Executive made the follow motion to temporarily amend the responsibility of the congregation or pastoral charge to make a decision on their annual budget by allowing the governing body of the congregation or pastoral charge to fulfil this responsibility where necessary, and where permitted by the regional council. A governing body cannot elect trustees or its own members. (See slide 16-17)**

Q: What about singing with masks in place?

A: **Congregational singing in most places, while not prohibited, is not recommended. If you choose to sing, you must be masked and distanced 2 meters apart on all sides. Depending on your area and COVID level, congregational singing may be prohibited. Make sure you check your province's website. Please also consider your congregation's demographic.**

Q: If full members vote to allow adherents to vote, do we still need the full member quorum to meet?

A: **Yes, Quorum is based on membership.**