

VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATE MINISTER (VAM) AND MARRIAGE LICENCE POLICY

SHINING WATERS REGIONAL COUNCIL (REGION 10)

MARRIAGE LICENSES:

I. 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.

b) Temporary licences

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

1. Ministry personnel in good standing 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 in good standing 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) Previous Conference policies/procedures have permitted retired Designated Lay Ministers to apply for temporary licences. Because the One Order of Ministry remit failed, DLMs who retire continue as lay people. Thus they are not eligible to be licensed because they are not in an appointment

ii) A marriage licence will be valid for six months 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 covenant relationship within this six month period, then their licence will be cancelled.

II. Procedures

a) Permanent licences

1. All ministry personnel in a covenanted relationship with a community of faith will be authorized by the regional councils to apply for a marriage licence.

2. A covenanted relationship for those not called or appointed to a community of faith 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. Ministry personnel will have a valid police records check in accordance with General Council policy and have completed any other training required by General Council policy, currently boundaries and racial justice training.

Note:

In Shining Waters Region, this joint statement is included in the Voluntary Associate Minister form which must be signed by the ministry personnel and the community of faith, and approved by the Pastoral Relations Commission. Shining Waters Region will depend on the United Church of Canada's Church Hub to verify police records check and mandatory training requirements. 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

1. Ministry personnel without a permanent licence for conducting weddings will contact the marriage registration governing official requesting a temporary licence.
(Note: In Shining Waters Region, this official is Joan Bailey, who can be contacted at jbailey@united-church.ca)
2. The governing official will confirm the ministry personnel's standing by checking the Office of Vocation Church Hub.
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 have a valid police records check in accordance with General Council policy and have completed any other training required by General Council policy, currently boundaries and racial justice training.

9. Ministry personnel from another denomination applying for a temporary licence must have a police records check valid within the last six months.
10. 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.

Ministry personnel of a denomination which 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 3-10 above.

VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATE MINISTERS (VAMs)

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:

The VAM form is found on the Shining Waters Regional Council web site. It must be filled in completely, including the signatures of the Pastoral Charge Secretary of the Board/Session (or equivalent), the called or appointed Ministry Personnel, and the Voluntary Associate Minister.

Forward the completed form to the Shining Waters Regional Council office. The Administrative Assistant will then forward the material to the Pastoral Relations Commission for consideration and action.

Once the request has been approved, the Regional Council will retain a copy and provide one 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, the Regional Council will contact all parties.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

As stated on the Voluntary Associate Minister (VAM) Appointment Form for use within Shining Waters Regional Council:

“By signing the Voluntary Associate Minister form the VAM 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.
3. When there is a **change in a pastoral relationship** within a Community of Faith, the Voluntary Associate Minister must reapply for their status. The new minister has the option to approve or not approve the re-appointment of a Voluntary Associate Minister at the pastoral charge level.

4. If a VAM enters into a call at another community of faith, their VAM status shall end. If a VAM enters into an appointment longer than six months, their VAM status will also end.