
VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATE MINISTER (VAM) POLICY

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMISSION

FOR USE WITHIN WESTERN ONTARIO WATERWAYS REGIONAL COUNCIL

Definition

A Voluntary Associate Minister (VAM) is a recognized ordered minister in The United Church of Canada who is retired or between appointments. At times a Voluntary Associate Minister may be looking for involvement in a community of faith and at other times they may seek designation as a VAM in order to fulfill the *Manual* requirements of a “formal association” in order to provide the functions of ministry outside of a pastoral relationship (*The Manual, section 1.2.5.3*).

Membership

Voluntary Associate Ministers are members of the Regional Council and not of the community of faith with which they are associated. Voluntary Associate Minister 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 to serve as a Voluntary Associate Minister. They contact a community of faith governing body requesting to be designated as a Voluntary Associate Minister.

The Voluntary Associate Minister (VAM) Appointment Form must be completed with the signatures of the secretary of the governing body of the community of faith, the called or appointment ministry personnel, and the applicant for VAM. Once the request is approved, the Human Resources Commission will inform the community of faith.

If the request is to be named a Voluntary Associate Minister in a community of faith in which the applicant has previously served, a covenanting agreement must be completed between the VAM and the incumbent ministry personnel. It is also recommended that all parties discuss the “Disengaging” section of the handbook: *Pastoral Relations: Ministry Personnel* (https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/pastoral-relations_ministry-personnel.pdf). Please contact the Human Resources Commission for more information.

If the request to be named a VAM is not approved the Human Resources Commission will inform all parties involved.

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

1. The primary responsibility of every VAM will be to support the incumbent minister and the governing body in establishing and maintaining a positive pastoral relationship.
2. Pastoral functions performed come under the oversight and discipline of the Office of Vocation.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. If a Voluntary Associate Minister enters into a call at another community of faith, their VAM status shall come to an end. If a VAM enters into an appointment longer than six months their VAM status will also end. Please contact the Human Resources Commission in order to inform them of this change.
6. Designation as a VAM does not mean that a community of faith is required to call upon the VAM to provide functions of ministry in the community of faith (eg: pastoral care, pulpit supply, etc.) Nor does it require the VAM to provide functions of ministry in the community of faith.

Appendix

The Manual 2019 Sections

I.2.5.3 Functions of Ministry—Outside Pastoral Relationship

At any time that ministry personnel are not called or appointed to a community of faith, they may carry out the functions of ministry in the United Church only if

- a) they have a formal association with a community of faith, are acting on behalf of that community of faith, and have the approval of the community of faith's governing body; or

An example of a "formal association" with a pastoral charge would be where the minister has been designated as a "voluntary associate minister" or "honorary associate minister" by the community of faith or its governing body.



- b) they have been appointed to a community of faith to exercise the functions of ministry associated with it.

I.2.5.4 Request—Previous Pastoral Charge

If a ministry personnel is asked by a member or adherent (or their families) of a community of faith where they had previously served to preside at a baptism, communion service, wedding, or funeral, the ministry personnel

- a) must refer the request to a member of the order of ministry who is currently serving under call or appointment to that community of faith; and
- b) may preside only with the approval of the community of faith's governing body.

Pastoral Relations: Ministry Personnel Handbook:

https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/pastoral-relations_ministry-personnel.pdf