

Covenant Commission: Community of Faith Profile Preparation

Regional Councils



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Community of Faith Profile

(From Pastoral Relations: Community of Faith (2019))

The Community of Faith (CoF) Profile is not just about searching for a new minister. It is about faithful reflection and prayerful discernment about your ministry and community context.

The governing body is responsible for preparing the profile (PR: CoF, 13) including the living faith story. The purpose of the community of faith profile is

- to articulate the community of faith's witness to the gospel;
- to articulate the ministry needs of the community of faith; and
- to summarize the community of faith's resources and community context.

This work may be divided up in any way that suits the community of faith. The governing body may prepare the profile or appoint a team to prepare the profile, or the whole community of faith may participate in preparing the profile (PR: CoF, 14).

In each section of the community of faith profile, honesty is important. Together, the various pieces of the profile express: This is who we are, and these are the resources we have (PR: CoF, 20).

The people tasked with creating the profile will want to consult with several groups.

1. The community of faith: It is mandatory to consult with the community of faith. The profile should reflect the desires of the community of faith.
2. The incumbent ministry personnel: You may wish to consult with the current ministry personnel (including an intentional interim minister). They will often have insight into your community of faith and its current and future needs.
3. Ministry and Personnel (M&P) Committee: You may wish to consult with the M&P Committee. Its members will be familiar with your previous ministry personnel and their roles, responsibilities, and leadership.
4. The governing body and the Community of Faith approve this portion of the profile.
(*Note: If in a search the community of faith will also approve the position description*)

For consultation with the community of faith, you can choose from a variety of approaches:

- written requests for feedback (e.g., given out with the Sunday bulletin and collected during coffee hour)
- phone interviews
- face-to-face conversations: one large group, small group conversations, or focus groups
- identifying a group of people in your faith community as listeners and asking them to speak with as many people as possible about a specific set of questions or ideas and report back to the team.

You may want to focus the time with the community of faith on a particular area or ask broad questions about the ministry needs in general.

Try to plan your consultation in such a way that it is easy for everyone to participate, not just people who are already leaders. It is important to hear from everyone: youth, young adults, children, adherents, seniors, people who only attend on Sunday, families who come to the church for all their life passages (weddings, baptisms, funerals) but don't attend regularly.

The purpose of the community of faith profile may be achieved by the completion and compilation of the elements of the profile.

If a community of faith (CoF) is not moving toward a search these are the elements of the profile to be uploaded to ChurchHub:

- living faith story;
- demographics;
- financial viability;
- real property;
- manse report, if applicable; and

If a community of faith (CoF) is moving toward a search, a liaison will be appointed, what is already posted will be reviewed and updated, and two additional elements will be required. These are:

- position description(s);
- learning site requirements, if applicable.

Financial Viability Review

The financial viability review continues to summarize the community of faith's resources. This form will help the governing body and the search team consider the financial situation of the community of faith and of each point in a multi-point charge.

It is difficult to make financial decisions for a community of faith. Once you have collected the data, discuss the patterns you see and their implications, and meet at least once with the treasurer to discuss them. Use your observations to make recommendations. If you have completed a narrative budget that is distinct from your living faith story, you can attach it along with your financial viability review.

As you complete the financial viability review, the following guidance may be helpful:

- Total revenue to include PAR, envelopes, fundraising, other income. Do not include onetime bequests.
- Question 1: Your expenses, revenues, and balances can be found for past years in the financial statements of your annual meetings. If you had capital changes, please include

them in the comments. The treasurer will appreciate assistance from the search team in gathering this information.

- Question 3: If you have experienced a deficit, consider the following: How have you managed your finances? Did you borrow from yourselves? From others? If the deficits were in the last three years, what are your plans for turning this situation around? How long have you struggled with deficits?
- Question 4: If you have outstanding loans, how much is still owing? To whom? At what interest rate? Does the interest plus the principal exceed 20% of the community of faith's income? Did you have a plan for paying that money back before you borrowed it? If so, how is it working?
- Question 5: Maintenance is the regular work for keeping your building(s) running. If your building is heated electrically, you probably can't separate utilities and fuel. Just put in the one number under Utilities.
- Questions 6–8: It is sometimes difficult to remember how contributors donated in past years. Please do your best here. This information is valuable for projecting your future financial resources.
- Question 10: Include funds from the sale of a manse here.

Recommendations

Your treasurer or stewardship committee, and your governing body might be asked to help look at the data to make recommendations. Consider the following:

- Patterns seen in givings over the years
- Patterns in expenses
- Cost of the building(s)
- Patterns seen in the community of faith (givers)
- Moving expenses (more information available in the Financial Handbook for Congregations at www.united-church.ca)
- Efficiency of your buildings and upgrades that might be needed soon

Because this tool is part of your community of faith profile and pastoral relations process, it asks that you specifically speak to staffing costs and ongoing viability. Other recommendations might include the need for a stewardship program or property upgrades or simply note that the community's call of ministry personnel is supported by these financial viability findings.

As you finish stating your observations on the financial viability worksheet you need to consider what recommendation you will make about the amount of ministry time and in what category. **This information must be included for your profile to be complete.** Please review the following before making your recommendation:

Having examined your current financial situation, you will want to examine the minister's salary schedule (www.united-church.ca/leadership/church-administration/ministers-salary-schedule-and-cost-living-groups) and work with your treasurer to determine the cost of ministry personnel at different increment

categories. This will include salary, allowances, and employer contributions to government plans, pension, and benefits. Your treasurer will perhaps understand these tools more clearly than members of the search team:

- The United Church of Canada provides Budgeting Tools for Treasurers on the General Council website for both ministry personnel and lay employees. Go to: www.united-church.ca/leadership/church-administration/budgeting-tools-treasurers.
- Please note that in addition to the employer costs noted in the tables in these United Church tools, there are employee and employer premiums for Employment Insurance and Canada Pension Plan. (Tables for these costs are available on the Canada Revenue Agency website: www.cra-arc.gc.ca)

This is information to help you prepare for your living faith story that you will upload to ChurchHub.

Financial Viability Work Sheet

Please find a copy of the Financial Viability Worksheet here: [Financial Viability Worksheet](#)

Demographics

The living faith story helps to both articulate the community of faith's witness to the gospel and articulate its ministry needs. The demographics section begins to summarize the community of faith's resources and context of ministry.

This is information to help you prepare for your living faith story that you will upload to ChurchHub.

Demographics Work Sheet

Please find a copy of the Demographics Worksheet here: [Demographics worksheet](#)

Living Faith Story

What is a Living Faith Story?

The living faith story articulates the community of faith's ministry focus. The living faith story is your opportunity to share why you exist as a community of faith. All communities of faith are expected to develop a living faith story, review it regularly, and share it with the regional council so that support can be programmed. The living faith story is an opportunity to tell a story about where God is leading the community of faith.

While the Living Faith Story serves a purpose in the relationship with the denomination in terms of pastoral relations and community of faith support, it is intended to be more than an exercise in compliance. The creation of a Living Faith Story is an invitation for your community of faith to engage intentionally a conversation about ministry and mission.

The Financial and Demographic sections are part of the information gathering to understand the bigger picture of your community of faith and community context. These worksheets help inform the living faith story and assist the region in determining needed supports.

The living faith story can be narrative—or it could be an audio or video recording of the community of faith telling their story. It is hoped that this stage will not be onerous. The community of faith may present its story in any way it chooses. Remember, if you are entering a search, this is what ministry personnel will look at to determine if you are a good fit. Some possibilities are:

- If your community of faith has recently participated in a visioning exercise, you could use your ministry goals, vision statement, and current realities articulated in that work.
- A narrative budget and other applicable material (that names your ministry both within and beyond the community of faith) from the Called to Be the Church giving program (www.stewardshiptoolkit.ca) could be suitable.
- Use an existing vision or long-range planning document.
- Finally, of course, you can develop a unique, original living faith story, which articulates the ministry of your community of faith.

Why are we being asked to create a Living Faith Story?

The creation of a Living Faith Story can be a spiritual practice for the community of faith as it reflects on its ministry, mission, and faithful witness to the Gospel. It is an intentional way of engaging communities of faith in articulating their purpose and faith. In a time when the church is dealing with a changing cultural context it provides an opportunity ask questions about how

Ask the “WHY” question

Why do we gather as a community of faith?

Why am I a participant in the life and ministry of this community of faith?

Why does God's mission need our community of faith?

communities of faith understand their particular ministry. Creating a Living Faith Story is an invitation to articulate, assess, and perhaps even reframe how we are being church.

How is a Living Faith Story used?

1. It is a requirement for communities of faith in the pastoral relations process.
2. It is part of the covenantal relationship with the Regional Council and part of the self-assessment process with the Regional Council.
3. It is posted on ChurchHub as a description of the community of faith.
4. It is a guide to use by your community of faith in shaping ministry priorities and sharing a vision of your community and mission.
5. For those communities of faith in search of a new ministry covenant, this is your invitation to ministry personnel to consider whether they are being called to your ministry context.

Where is it shared?

1. It is posted as part of the community of faith profile on ChurchHub.
2. The Regional Council accesses the Living Faith Story as a resource for the ongoing work of support and oversight.
3. When in pastoral relations search, the Living Faith Story is a required part of the community of faith profile that is posted for ministry personnel in search to view.

Who Prepares the Living Faith Story?

1. The Governing Body could do this work or appoint a working group to draft.
2. Community of faith could be engaged in the process through consultation and approval.

The Living Faith Story is required to be part of the Community of Faith Profile approved by the community of faith in the pastoral relations process. It would be best practice to have the community of faith approve the Living Faith Story whether or not it is in an active pastoral relations process, both as a communication and educational opportunity.

What Support is available to help in developing the Living Faith Story?

1. This resource.
2. Regional Council Minister for Congregational Support and Mission

Living Faith Story Worksheet

Please find a copy of the Living Faith Story Worksheet here: [Living Faith Story Worksheet](#)

An alternative version of the living faith story based on the ministry categories can be found here: [Living Faith Story Categories Worksheet](#)

Real Property Worksheet

Real property is described as any land or buildings you own that is not the cemetery. This does not include contents. If you do not have any other real property please send in the worksheet with “Not Applicable”

Please find a copy of the Real Property Worksheet here: [Real Property Worksheet](#)

Manse Information Worksheet

If your community of faith has a manse, please include Manse Information Summary Sheet. If you do not have a manse please send in the worksheet with “Not Applicable”

Please find a copy of the Manse Information Worksheet here: [Manse Information Worksheet](#)

Overall Assessment

A living faith story and the other elements of a community of faith profile may point to the need for further conversation about future ministry options.

A profile may recommend a new pastoral relationship or a change in terms of a call or appointment. The community of faith may discern that it is called to be a Supervised Ministry Education site for candidates for ministry, or that it would like to be a partner with a community outreach project. (PR: CoF pg. 14)

A community of faith may also consider a collaborative ministry with other neighbouring communities of faith.

To what future is your community of faith leaning?

What supports do you need?

Feel free to have a discussion with your Minister for Congregational Support and Mission

Submitting the Package

1. Once the governing body gathers all the information together, and agree on its content, a congregational meeting is called to approve all community of faith profile information.
2. The designated community of faith representative sends all the information to the region and copy/pastes specific information to ChurchHub.
3. All community of faith profile worksheets along with the cover page are sent to the Minister of Congregational Support & Mission where they will be looked at and

feedback provided. All documentation will be forwarded to the Covenant Commission to be received for information.

Antler River Watershed and Horseshoe Falls Regional Councils send to: LAllin@united-church.ca

Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council send to: jneff@united-church.ca

Please find a copy of the Community of Faith Profile Cover Page here: [CoF Profile Cover Page](#)

Communicating with the Community of Faith

The following could be used in a worship bulletin or website update to keep a community of faith up to date on the work of those leading the pastoral relations process, while respecting the confidentiality of the search process.

After a change in pastoral relations is announced:

The chair of the governing body/council/session/board could write something like: “Since our minister _____ submitted their letter to request a change in pastoral relations, we have experienced a profound sense of loss. Their time among us has been very significant to our faith community. These next three months together will be an important time for each of us to say goodbye. We will inform you soon about our plans to celebrate _____’s ministry before their departure. We will soon share with you the next steps to search for a new minister.”

When the community of faith enters the pastoral relations process:

The chair of the governing body/council/session/board could write: “We want to assure you that we have been in touch with staff from _____ regional council about the process of searching for a new minister. Briefly, the process ahead may involve the governing body/council/session/board appointing a supply minister for the next _____ months. During this time, the governing body/council/session/board will appoint a team to develop a community of faith profile. They will invite all of you to be part of a time of consultation as they develop the profile that tells the story of our church. This profile, once approved by you, will be posted on the United Church’s online pastoral relations tool, ChurchHub. A search team will be named and they will review profiles of ministry personnel, conduct interviews, check references, and eventually make a recommendation to a meeting of our whole faith community. Our goal is to select a minister whose gifts and skills are a good match with who we are as a church. Please pray for God’s spirit of discernment to be at work both in our community and in our future minister.”

When a team is developing the community of faith profile:

“Your team is busy working on the first step of the pastoral relations process, which is developing the community of faith profile. You will all be involved in the consultation for this process. The first opportunity is _____.”

When the community of faith is asked to approve the community of faith profile:

“Our team has completed the community of faith profile. We are grateful for everyone’s input as we work to tell the story of our church. The governing body/council/session/board has approved the profile and calls a meeting of our faith community on (*date*) to consider approving the community of faith profile. If approved, it will be posted on the United Church’s online pastoral relations tool, ChurchHub, for viewing by ministry personnel who are searching for a new pastoral relationship.”