

## Q&A about Covenants, April 2019

From your Committee on Community of Faith Support

### **What is the point of these covenants?**

The Region is responsible for formation, amalgamation, and disbanding of Communities of Faith. The covenants are like a formation document or agreement. In most cases, congregations completing these covenants were formed 50 to 150 years ago. Newly formed Regions are entering into agreements, or covenants with established communities of faith, which are asked to identify the ways they do their work – governance and ministry summaries. When taken all together, the covenants will be a story of how the United Church in this region is working together to carrying out its mission.

### **Does every community of faith need to do a covenant?**

Short answer is yes. But see also the question below about multi-point pastoral charges.

indigenous communities of faith within the geographic bounds of Prairie to Pine Region will be developing their covenants using different outlines and timelines reflecting their dual membership in Regional Council and an Indigenous Council.

### **We are part of a multi-point pastoral charge. Does each congregation have to do a covenant or just one for the pastoral charge?**

The Region needs to covenant with each community of faith or congregation that has its own governing board. In a multi-point pastoral charge it might be possible in one covenant to include the governing board documents for each community of faith, plus the pastoral charge structure document, plus the ministry summary for the whole pastoral charge. This would be one covenant that included several congregations.

When there are significant differences in how congregations carry out their work, it might be easier to do separate covenants rather than trying to create one covenant for the whole pastoral charge.

If the preaching points on the pastoral charge operate under one common governance structure, then one covenant is all that is required. The ministry summary will no doubt describe the ministry activity done in various sites.

### **What is the deadline for getting these covenants done?**

No firm deadline at this point.

At the inaugural meeting of the Region in June there will be an acknowledgement of work being done on covenants. We anticipate that most covenants will still be “works in progress” at that time.

If communities of faith have a draft to send us by, say May 31<sup>st</sup>, that would be great. Or if you can give us a progress report sometime in late May, that would be appreciated.

The Region will not be able to complete its part of the covenant until after some decisions are made at the inaugural meeting.

We expect that most covenants will be completed by late fall, before Advent. This is later than originally envisioned by the Denominational Remit Implementation team.

### **What happens to the covenants once they are done?**

The Committee on Community of Faith Support will review each covenant. Governance documents will be examined to ensure they are compliant with the Manual. In some cases, this will mean making suggestions for revision – “Yes, we know you are rolling your eyes!”

We will be recruiting additional volunteers to help review the covenants – if you are a person who likes detail and learning what and how other communities of faith are doing things, we’d like to hear from you!

We hope Communities of Faith will refer to their covenants and update them from time to time as they evaluate and assess the changing or continuing work of ministry in their particular contexts.

The completed and signed covenants will also be on file at the Regional Office, and updates will be added as they are submitted.

### **Who is supposed to sign the covenants?**

For the community of faith or pastoral charge this would likely be the chair of the governing body, or maybe the secretary of the governing body. It’s probably not a good idea to have the minister or pastoral charge supervisor sign them – they may have input into covenant preparation, but a representative of the governing body should sign on behalf of the community of faith. In the Region, the Regional Council will determine who signs – maybe the chair, or secretary. We’ll see.

### **Did the Committee on Community of Faith Support really phone every congregation in the Region?**

About 90% of communities of faith in the former MNWO presbyteries were contacted by April 1<sup>st</sup>. We spoke to ministry personnel, pastoral charge supervisors, office administrators. . . They were usually the ones for whom we had or could find contact information. Once the Region office receives information requested on the page titled, “Information to be used in the Prairie to Pine Region Council Data Base,” we will be able to be more direct in some of our communication.