

Governance Basics

For drafting and reviewing local governance structure documents

The Manual (2021)

B.7.1 Responsibilities of the Congregation or Pastoral Charge

A congregation or pastoral charge is responsible for having a governing body. It must

- a) decide on a governance model for the congregation or pastoral charge;
- b) elect the members of the governing body.

B.7.2.1 Governing Body Structure

The governing body may be any structure that

- a) fulfills all of the responsibilities of a governing body in these bylaws;
- b) fulfills the membership and other requirements for a governing body in these bylaws;
- c) is approved by the congregation or pastoral charge; and
- d) is approved by the regional council.

The governing body may take any shape the congregation or pastoral charge chooses, with the approval of the regional council. For example, a very small congregation may have the entire membership of the congregation serve as the governing body.

The following three structures are common:

- a) the Session/Stewards/Official Board model;
- b) a unified board model, called the Church Board; and
- c) a council structure, called the Church Council.

A congregation or pastoral charge that has one of the above structures may continue with it. The regional council's approval is not required.

CCFS Comments:

In a multi-point pastoral charge each separate community of faith needs a (written or unwritten) governance structure that enables decisions to be made by people elected to fill positions on a church board / council / leadership team / etc.

In addition, there needs to be a governance structure whereby the communities of faith work together to make certain decisions affecting the whole pastoral charge.

Here are some things that need to be considered and should be made clear in any pastoral charge governance document presented to the Regional Council for approval.

1. **Identity** The governance document should identify the community(ies) of faith by name, and briefly identify the type of governance structure each is using.
2. **What is the governing body of the Community of Faith or multi-point Pastoral Charge called?** Some possibilities: Board, Council, Leadership Team, Oversight Council.

In a multi-point pastoral charge, the pastoral charge governing body is sometimes called the Official Board, Joint Board, Pastoral Charge Board.

3. **Review the Manual (2021) Section B.6 & B.7 on Officers and Organization** of a Pastoral Charge. These sections apply to communities of faith organized as single entities and to those organized in multi-point pastoral charges. In any United Church congregation or pastoral charge, it should be understood that if local practices are inconsistent with the provisions in the Manual, it is the by-laws of the most-recently-available United Church Manual that take precedence.
4. **Membership in a Pastoral Charge (Manual (2021) Section B.3)**
This section is easily applied to a single-point pastoral charge. The governance document for a multi-point pastoral charge would ideally indicate that the members and adherents in each of the participating communities of faith are considered members of the pastoral charge.
5. **Responsibilities of the Governing Body.** See Manual (2021) Section B.7.4
In the case of a multi-point pastoral charge, indicate which of the responsibilities of the governing body (B.7.4) will most reasonably be fulfilled by the individual communities of faith, which will be overseen or fulfilled by the pastoral charge governing body, and which will be shared. If there are shared responsibilities, the governance document should describe how will they be shared. If the community of faith / pastoral charge has additional expectations of the governing body, they should be identified and described briefly.

For Multi-Point Pastoral Charges:

In United Church structure, the following responsibilities and decisions are normally assigned to the governing body of the multi-point Pastoral Charge rather than to governing bodies of the communities of faith, or are shared in some way:

- a. personnel matters related to shared staff – ministry personnel, secretarial support for staff. This usually involves having a single Pastoral Charge Ministry & Personnel Committee.
- b. Communication and reporting to the Denominational Council is usually in the name of the Pastoral Charge rather than the component communities of faith, eg, Mission and Service contributions, statistics, Denominational Assessments.
- c. Worship is usually a shared responsibility, with the Pastoral Charge involved at least in the setting of worship times across the whole pastoral charge, and perhaps accepting a common order of service. Some worship matters may be determined by the individual communities of faith according to their traditions, preferences and needs. Decide what happens in the absence of called or appointed ministry personnel - will each community of faith be on their own to make arrangements and decisions or will the pastoral charge be responsible for this?

- d. Will policies related to marriage, baptism, burial will be made by the Pastoral Charge on behalf of all the communities of faith, or will individual Communities of faith have differing policies? What about the record books related to the preceding pastoral acts – one or several?
- e. Think about the charitable number - If donations are given to individual communities of faith it is best that each community of faith have a charitable number, but the pastoral charge may also have one if there is reason for it.
- f. Is there shared property, either real property like a manse, or investments? If so, the Pastoral Charge governing body will be responsible for managing these assets and will need to have a Board of Trustees. The Trustees of the individual communities of faith could, jointly become the Trustees for the Pastoral Charge, or the pastoral charge could elect a separate Board of Trustees.

6. Members and Offices of the Governing Body – Manual (2021) B.7.3 and B.7.6

These Manual sections are easily applied in a single-point pastoral charge.

Officers - minimum a Chairperson, a Secretary, a Treasurer.

M&P Committee and Board of Trustees Both of these are required in a pastoral charge governance structure or there must be evidence that there is provision in the structure for the responsibilities to be appropriately fulfilled.

For Multi-Point Pastoral Charges

In a multi-point pastoral charge there are additional issues and options to consider, and the governance document should be clear on how members and officers are determined. Which Pastoral Charge Governing Body positions are filled by election at Pastoral Charge meetings? Which positions are filled by virtue of a person's position on communities of faith governing bodies?

The governance document would ideally indicate that all points in a multi-point pastoral charge will be represented on the pastoral charge governing body.

Additional pastoral charge Committees may be helpful and necessary in order to fulfill the responsibilities of the Pastoral Charge. Will there need to be corresponding committees in each communities of faith?

7. Meetings & Members - The Pastoral Charge, as well as each Community of Faith must meet at least annually (Manual B.5).

The Governing Body of a Pastoral Charge needs to meet at least quarterly. See Manual (2021), sections A.4 and B.7.7 for additional requirements related to meetings of the governing body. Since it is probably individual Communities of Faith which receive or remove people as full members, and maintain the record of those members, the Pastoral Charge might agree that all those who are Full Members of the communities of faith that make up the Pastoral Charge will be considered Full Members of the Pastoral charge in any instance where that is a relevant detail.

- 8. Writing the Governance Document** - Try to keep it as simple as possible while still being clear about who does what. There is no need to repeat large sections of the Manual, but it is often helpful to refer to it , eg. “The election, eligibility and responsibilities of Officers of the Official Board will be determined by the Manual requirements (Manual 2021, B.7.6), and additional duties may be added by the Official Board.”

When describing some common and routine action it is often helpful to use the phrase “shall normally”, as in “The Board shall normally meet in September, November, January and May.” This phrase indicates the common and desired action, but allows for variation when / if circumstances necessitate.

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