

**Memo: Regarding Staff Associate Ministry**

To: Pastoral Relations & Education & Students Conveners of the  
Presbyteries of Maritime Conference.

January 20, 2004

In order to clarify a number of questions asked recently to the Conference Office regarding Staff Associate Ministry we thought it best to issue this memo. We offer this information as a reminder of the requirements for Staff Associate ministry and also the context and limitations of this ministry.

Let me begin by reminding you of the sources of information we have regarding this ministry. I would encourage you all to review the appropriate manual section and guideline document.

- ❖ The United Church Manual section # 345 list the requirements leading to appointment for staff associates.
- ❖ Our church has also produced a document entitled "Guidelines for Staff Associate Appointments" (MPE 720)
- ❖ We have also had two opinions from the General Secretary of our church regarding staff associate ministry that I will refer to later in this memo.

The working definition of a "**staff associate**" is as follows: (Manual Section 001)

*"means a lay member serving by Presbytery Appointment for a specified term in a Pastoral Charge, Mission, or Outreach Ministry in the area of education, service, or pastoral care, who has the education, training, or life experience appropriate for that particular ministry."*

Once a Presbytery has worked with a Pastoral Charge in order to assess the requirement for a staff associate position and has in hand an appropriate position description, (*education, service, pastoral care*) and has received a request from a pastoral charge for a staff associate appointment the following steps are to be completed.

1. The testing of a call to staff associate ministry begins with the gathering of information regarding the persons character, education, life experience and general fitness for ministry. Form 701 is completed. (Application to be received as Staff Associate) As part of this testing there needs to be a declaration that the individual is in essential agreement with the doctrine of the United Church and has a willingness to conform to the constitution, government and orderly decision making process.
2. A current police records check is provided at the person's own expense.

3. The Presbytery Education & Students Committee will request the Conference Interview Board to interview the potential staff associate for suitability as per Manual Section # 345 (d)
4. Once the recommendation of the Conference Interview Board has been received the Presbytery Education & Students Committee will interview the candidate for staff associate. This committee (E&S) will make a recommendation to the Presbytery regarding Staff Associate status for an individual before any appointment is finalized. If the proposed appointment is to be longer than one pastoral year the Conference Settlement Committee shall be consulted.
5. When the foregoing steps have been completed the Presbytery shall make a decision on recommendation of the Pastoral Relations Committee regarding the actual appointment to a Pastoral Charge, Mission, or Outreach Ministry.
6. When Presbytery approves a designation for Staff Associate appointment they shall designate the person as Staff Associate for the duration of the appointment. Each appointment shall be reported to the Conference Office and to the Division of ministry Employment Policy & Services at the General Council Office.

We have been asked if “staff associate eligibility” could be transferred from one Conference to another?

It would seem that this is a possibility within our polity. The manual section 345 (d) states the following: “interviews by the Conference Interview Board are not required prior to succeeding appointments unless deemed necessary by the Presbytery.”

The Staff Associate Guidelines on page 9 notes the following: “If the person being considered for an appointment as a Staff Associate has previously been interviewed by a Conference Interview Board for a Staff Associate position, the Presbytery E&S Committee may waive the CIB interview.”

The Presbytery Education and Students committee would make a decision to waive the interview by the Conference Interview Board on the basis of ascertaining proof of an earlier Conference Interview Board interview. It would always be helpful to have a person interested in staff associate ministry make a request for his/her former Conference for the personnel file to be transferred to the Conference in which they now reside. When a person is not serving under appointment as a staff associate their status is that of a layperson. Therefore staff associate files are not automatically transferred from one conference to another.

Can a “Staff associate” be appointed to a solo ministry position?

This has been an often talked about possibility within the church in the past couple of years. Upon research and consultation the following is offered for clarification. An opinion from January of 2002 by the General Secretary of the United Church states:

*“In my opinion, a staff associate may be appointed as the only Ministry Personnel in the Pastoral Charge in circumstances where the Presbytery deems it appropriate – where the ministry is one of education, service, or pastoral care.”*

We note that the opinion refers to the type of ministry available for staff associate function as “education, service, or pastoral care.” This is a reminder of the definition of “staff associate ministry offered earlier in this memo from the Manual section 001. There are instances of solo ministry staff associate appointments to outreach ministries, and mission units. I have been told that some of these ministries function out of a Pastoral Charge model of governance rather than as a mission unit. The above information was shared with me by Saskatchewan Conference staff. It is clear within our present polity that staff associate ministry is not an appropriate option for solo appointment to a pastoral charge ministry of “word, sacrament and pastoral care.”

What is the church stance on sacramental license for staff associates?

We again need to offer clarification regarding the fact that those serving in Staff Associate ministry positions **are not** eligible for sacramental license. This point was clarified in an opinion written by the General Secretary of our church in April of 1999. This opinion was later challenged and became a Ruling by the General Secretary in November of 2001. To quote from that ruling: *“It is my Ruling that a Conference would be acting “ultra vires” or, beyond the scope of its powers, if it granted a license to a Staff Associate...”*

In ending we remind you all that this will all change in ways yet untold as we move into “designated lay ministry” over the next many months. We all anxiously await direction from the General Council office regarding these changes.