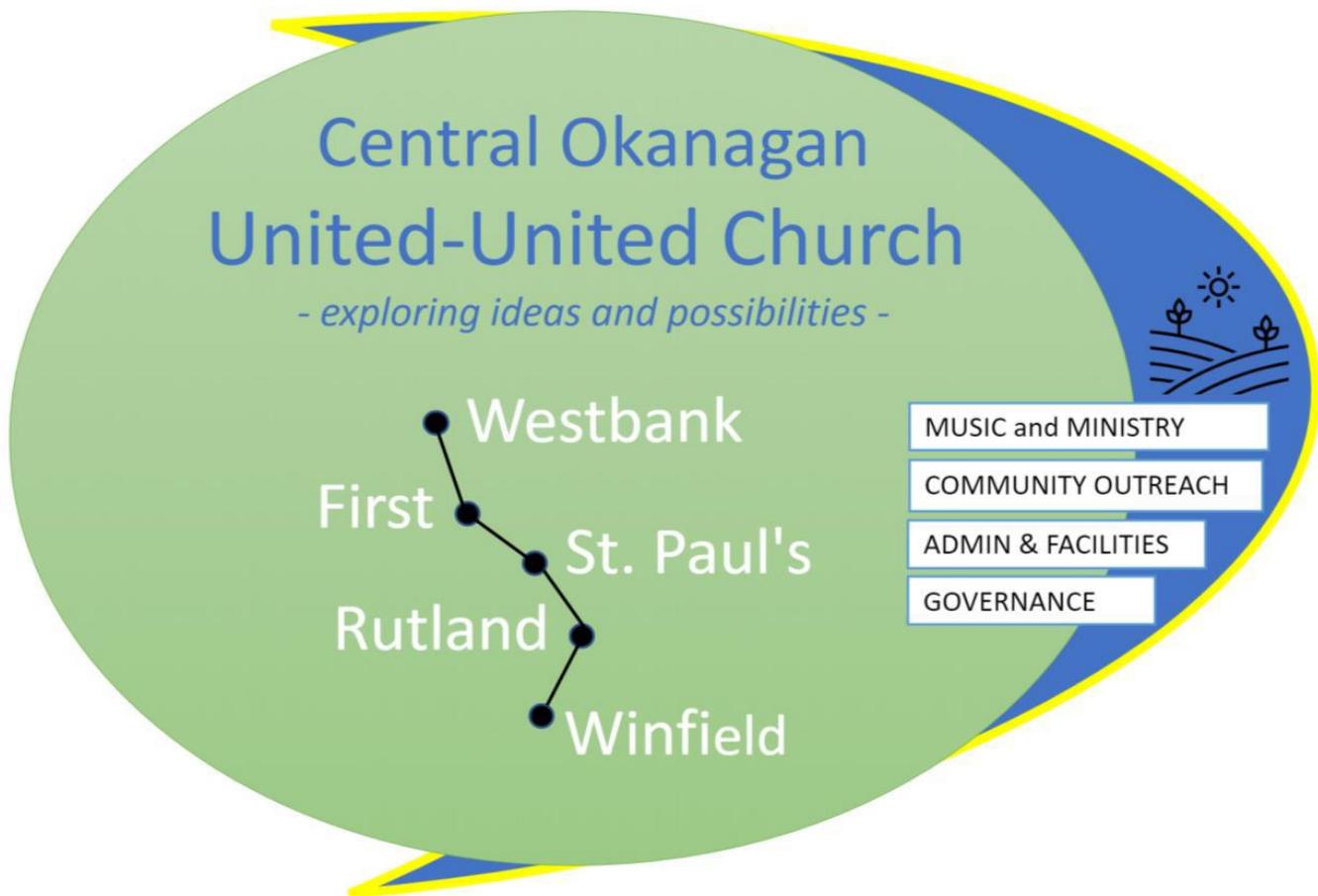


# A Proposal for Mutual Ministry in Central Okanagan United Churches

September 4, 2020



## Contents

Begin with the End in Mind.....	2
The Proposal .....	2
Background “We can’t keep doing this anymore!” .....	2
Theological and Spiritual Grounding .....	5
Process and Decision Making .....	5
Proposal Statement and Proposal Details .....	6
Then what happens?.....	7
But what about.....	7
Some Ideas and Options possible with this proposal .....	8
Conclusion.....	11
Appendix .....	12

## Begin with the End in Mind

This is the first step on the journey. There are numerous opportunities and experiences laying in front of us as a combined community which may include but are not limited to: the ability to experience multiple forms of worship with a diverse set of personnel and gifts; and opportunities to expand ministries to the community to meet needs we may not even be aware of yet.

This proposal is presented with prayer, reflection, and deliberate thought with the hope that it fans into a flame the sparks ignited at the multi-United Church gathering on February 29 2020.

## The Proposal

The Explorer Team ***recommends that the 4 existing communities of faith of Westbank United Church, First United Church Kelowna, St Paul's United Church, and Rutland United Church join to form one congregation with multiple physical locations.***

This would be a first step which would allow the communities of faith to minister with  
***a single governing body***  
***a coordinated and cooperating staff team***  
***a coordinated administration hub***  
***the potential for powerful mission, outreach, and worship***

## Background

“We can’t keep doing this anymore!”

- Alice Mann, Congregational Consultant from her address at Holy Shift in Kamloops October 2019

What does Alice mean?

She means from all the research, and from the observation of our own congregational health and sustainability, we can no longer continue to operate as solo congregations trying to maintain separate staff, buildings, mission and congregational life and vitality. Separate property, separate ministry staff, separate administration staff, separate volunteer groups in outreach, board, Christian formation, and education – separate everything is draining resources and exhausting people. One option is to slowly die back and close churches. One option is to cooperate more radically and share our strengths and resources. For us, yes, but for the future. For those we do not know yet who are searching for a progressive church to live their spiritual values in worship and in the community action.

Following several meetings of the six Central Okanagan United Church ministry staff, board members, and others representing the five participating congregations, a large gathering was

held for all congregation members from these communities of faith in January 2020 to have a day of discernment about the potential of cooperative ministry of some description among these ministries. The event included members of Japanese United Church in addition to the five communities of faith who took part in the development of this proposal.

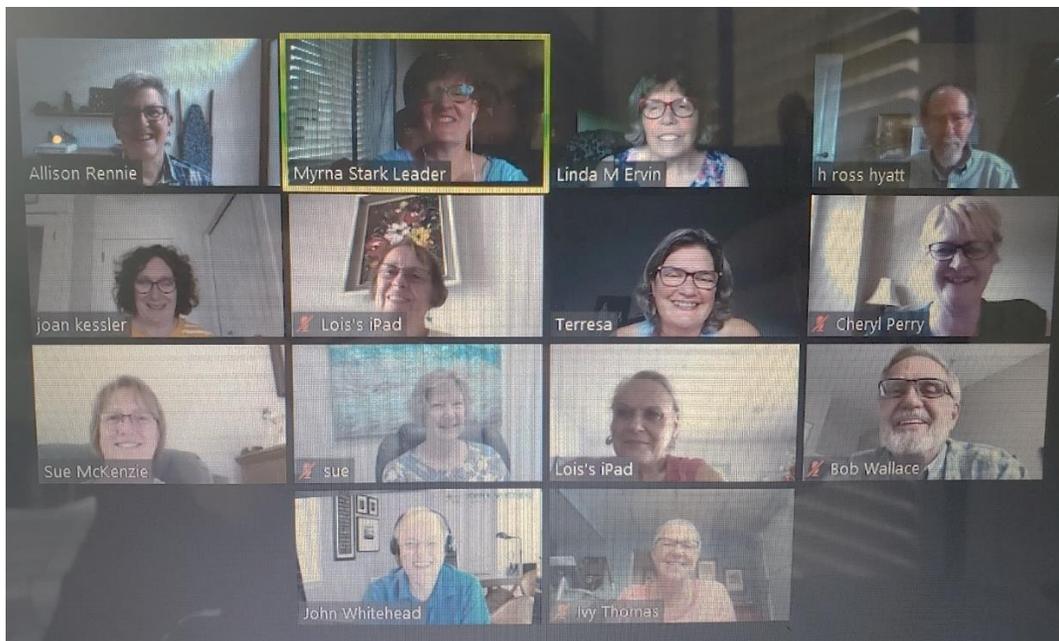
We heard a resounding and unanimous “YES!” at that gathering. Spirit is up to something in our area, and we were strongly encouraged by the group that day – over 100 persons from all five congregations – to hurry up and get on with listening to what this could mean. Remember? The parking lot was overflowing. We were hauling tables and chairs out of the woodwork to accommodate everyone. The kitchen crew were gong at full tilt on coffee production!

Those of you at the gathering will recall the sense of hopefulness that was palpably present as we imagined sharing our considerable and diverse human resources, talents and assets in some way for the Ministry of Christ in the Central Okanagan. The five congregations said yes to change and to a mission-based vision. And we faithfully got to work on what that could mean.

An Explorer working group was established with people from each of the five communities of faith. That group has been meeting in smaller work clusters and as a large group. We have talked, listened, wondered, prayed, written, and drawn, put ideas on the table and taken them off. The goal has been to develop a plan for your consideration. This document reflects the prayerful work of the Explorer group. Here is a proposal for a ministry and mission model that might excite and sustain our United Church’s unique and important presence in the central Okanagan area.

***Who is submitting this proposal?***

Here we are in an online meeting!



Regional Minister: Allison Rennie

First United Church Kelowna: Myrna Stark Leader, John Whitehead, Rev Bob Wallace, Cheryl Perry

St Paul's United Church: Terresa Augustine, Sue Goodwin, Rev Ivy Thomas

Westbank United Church: Lois Jefferies, Lois Schultz

Rutland United Church: Ross Hyatt, Sue McKenzie, Rev Linda Ervin

Winfield United Church: Rev Joan Kessler

### ***What have we done already?***

Within the representative working group, made up of ministry staff and laity from Westbank United, First United, St. Paul's United, Rutland United and Winfield United, we have four focus groups: Governance; Administration & Facilities; Community Outreach; and Music & Worship.

Each of these task groups has met to brainstorm and share ideas and possibilities within their specific focus topic. The idea was to return to the large group with some options about how that aspect of congregational life might become more cooperative.

We met on June 29th to share our thoughts and ideas with the whole Explorer team. There was a high degree of overlap in the work and dreams of the work groups. We took this to be a sign of Spirit's confirmation of the direction of our planning and research.

Over the summer we continued to explore and fine-tune some of these ideas in preparation for decision making about which aspect of all that work should become the core of the proposal for congregational consultation and decision making.

As part of this ongoing work, it became clear that Winfield United, while supportive of the whole project, was not in a place to fully participate in the ongoing planning. They are praying for the project and may be able to join into some aspect of the cooperation in the future. Blessings in your ongoing ministry Lake Country companions!

### ***Who is in charge? What authority does this Explorer team have?***

We pray that Spirit is leading. And Trust this to be the case.

The Explorer Team has no official standing to make binding decisions. We are a sanctioned, ad hoc, task group representing all the participating congregations. Authority is limited to exploring cooperative ministry ideas and making a proposal to governing bodies. The decisions will be made by duly constituted meetings of the participating communities of faith.

## Theological and Spiritual Grounding

As we began to work, we took time to identify the faith-based values and principles that must guide any proposals.

As the Church of Jesus Christ, we will reflect the identity of the United Church of Canada in our work and in our proposals. In addition to the creed, and other commitments that reflect the theological identity of the United Church, we agreed to align our work with these principles:

- We will honour both the sameness and the differences in our communities of faith
- We will respect the strengths and individual needs of each community of faith
- We will Engage in open, inclusive, and forward-facing conversation
- We will be mindful of different community needs and outreach ministry
- We will plan with the future in mind – the proposals must be attractive to both current and future members
- We will be conscious and open to diversity
- We will be responsive to the time and place where the church currently exists
- We will remain rooted in faithful stewardship of our resources

Our exploration work has been grounded in the spiritual practise of discernment. The faithful practise of saying yes and saying no. All along the way we have said ‘yes’ to some ideas, and a thoughtful ‘no’ to others.

*“We assume that the Spirit works in gifted people with skill and insight in discernment, and in the whole community in collective wisdom.”*

## Process and Decision Making

Next steps between now and December

1. This proposal is shared with the governing bodies of Westbank, First United, St Paul’s and Rutland United Churches
  - a. The individual governing bodies then prayerfully engage the proposal and move to a new draft, if there are changes, which will be shared with all four congregations.
  - b. Each community of faith decides on the best way to consult and engage their own community of faith.
  - c. Following a period of consultation, a duly constituted Congregational meeting is held to vote on the proposal.

Broader timeline into the future

Once a proposal has been passed by all communities of faith that in interested in the venture, the proposal is forwarded to the Regional Council Approvals Committee who will review the proposal and advise on next steps as well as approve it. Following approval by the Pacific

Mountain Regional Council, local authority for ongoing decision making about the new cooperative ministry unit will be legitimate.

## Proposal Statement and Proposal Details

The Explorer Team ***recommends that the four existing communities of faith of Westbank United Church, First United Church Kelowna, St Paul's United Church, and Rutland United Church join to form one congregation with multiple physical locations.*** In the United Church official language this is called amalgamation.

This would be a first step which would allow the communities of faith to minister with  
***a single governing body***  
***a coordinated and cooperating staff team***  
***a coordinated administration hub***  
***the potential for powerful mission, outreach, and worship.***

The recommendation would create a foundation for future decision making about mission, ministry and the stewardship of resources which could cooperatively assess the risks and promises of various ventures: property, outreach, ministry staffing team, faith formation, varieties of worship experience and much more.

The recommendation is bold, because the team felt strongly that any of the other options considered would not address the current and future challenges with a truly cooperative response. This one is risky, yes, and full of the promise of sharing wisdom, power, resources, and spaces in radical and faithful ways. The team believes this proposal has arisen under the guidance of the Spirit, in alignment with the guidance of the multi congregational gathering in February, and the guiding principles of the process.

The promise and benefits of amalgamation, or joining of the current communities of faith:

1. Our diverse and considerable assets are more powerful when shared.
2. The new larger entity could host a team of ministry staff with unique gifts and call – faith formation, pastoral care, outreach, worship, music, etc.
3. Decisions about the mission of the United Church in the Central Okanagan would minimize duplication of volunteer, staff and other resources.
4. Being a single ministry unit with shared resources will help focus these resources on the future members and seekers.
5. The current congregations do not have to officially disband or cease to exist. The UCC and CRA recognise amalgamation as an official combining of existing entities. It is administratively straightforward.
6. All current staffing continues as it is without interruption. Calls and contracts simply revert to the new amalgamated congregation until such time as there are decisions taken by the new governing body and congregation about staffing.

7. Property including trust funds and real property simply shifts over to the stewardship of the new governing body. All trustees remain in place from all previous congregations until an annual meeting when a decision about the number of trustees and nominations for those positions is undertaken.
8. Every current congregation will have to face changes and transition to embrace the new congregational entity. It is equally challenging and rewarding for all parties – not in the same way as each other but change for all.
9. CoVid-19 measures have already taught us that new forms of meeting and being the community are possible – imagine a context where there is a mix of some online and some in person gathering all under the umbrella of one Congregation in several different physical and digital spaces!

## Then what happens?

1. Governing bodies meet in a joint meeting to hear the proposal on or by September 19
2. Individual governing bodies consider and approve the proposal by September 30
3. Multi Congregational Event to present the proposal by October 30
4. Individual Congregations consider and agree by November 15
5. Explorer Team prepares report to go to the Pacific Mountain Regional Council for approval
6. Following approval, a timeline of implementation, and strategy for the change and transition is developed cooperatively by the governing bodies

## But what about....

...my sense of belonging in my current congregation?

It is true that there will be changes to the experience of the past for current members of the participating churches. Worship will not be exactly as it has been. The community will not be exactly as it has been. We acknowledge this and recognise the emotional burden that may be for some members. Pastoral care will be a very high priority for the new congregation and through the transition.

The beauty of the maintaining of multiple sites and activities in multiple sites is that you will still have opportunities to be with the people who are 'your' folks, as well as embrace a new larger circle of Christian community.

The experience of this pandemic has brought us to a new understanding about how to be the church without gathering in a specific building. Spirit is encouraging us to open to ongoing discovery about how to be together in faith while being in different locations.

...all the current staff? What would happen to them?

In an amalgamation the assumption is that all staff are maintained in their Calls, and contracts until such time as the new congregation is able to be clear about different staffing needs, job descriptions, roles, duties and teams. There will be changes, and those will be made as a part of the work of the new governing body and ministry personnel team.

Currently there are two congregations who have appointed or short-term ministry staff. So,

change is coming in those ministry positions already. Two congregations already have started or are in some stage of a search process which is paused for a variety of reasons. This is a wonderful moment to reimagine position descriptions to match ongoing ministry staff, and emerging ministry needs.

Other staff such as office and property staff would continue until there is a model for a shared administrative work – it is possible that some of the admin staff may work in different locations.

...our property? Our sanctuary, land, buildings?

In an amalgamation you can hold on to all existing property if you can demonstrate that the property serves the mission and ministry of the new amalgamated congregation. In this case, two of the congregations have property that is being held. One congregation does not have building property of their own – they lease a space. And the fourth has taken a vote to sell the current property and seek a new way to gather.

.... Financial assets and trust funds?

The new governing body and trustees would assume responsibility for all financial assets and a single accounting process and systems would be adopted. All existing regulations for Trust funds (designated or restricted by the giver) would continue as is under the guidance of the Trustees and Governing Body

...Offerings and tithes?

Your financial offering would be given to the new amalgamated congregation for the mission and ministry of Christ.

## Some Ideas and Options possible with this proposal

In the following table are ideas and thoughts which help give more details on what could be possible if the congregations come together to form one congregation with several locations. These ideas would be developed and researched, some will be set aside, some new ideas will arise. All part of the discernment and strategic planning required.

<p><b><i>One pastoral charge which is an 'Amalgamated Congregation'</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Four current communities of faith join together to form a single congregation with multiple sites</i></b></p>	<p>What steps need to be taken?</p> <p>Follow the guidelines of the Regional Council for Amalgamations – see attachment.</p>
<p><b><i>One Governing Body</i></b></p>	<p>What Governance Model?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The United Church provides scope for each congregation to choose a governance model that is fitting for their context.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Pacific Mountain Regional Council would approve the governance model chosen.</li> <li>• There are working models in other congregations who have already taken this path of one congregation, multiple properties, or sites.</li> <li>• We imagined this is a great opportunity to choose a model that would reflect the current context of the church, the society, and our values about how the resources of the new congregation could be stewarded (human resources, time and talents and other assets). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- clarify scope of ‘new entity’</li> <li>- adopt governance model</li> <li>- orient (train) leadership</li> <li>- layout an implementation strategy</li> <li>- communicate with community</li> <li>- monitor and improve governance effectiveness</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Multi campus using current sites, for services or for income purposes (rental)</i></b></p>	<p>Financial Implications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close and detailed work on the financial costs and promise of multiple sites would be undertaken.</li> <li>• We think there is potential for one of the sites to be more of an income generator.</li> <li>• In addition to developing a SMART strategy to guide tasks and keep congregants and broader community informed, we wondered about the hiring of an interim CEO/CFO/Executive Director who will lead the process to join partial or all assets. This will include board input as to if assets are pooled all together from the start with a joint MOU or if only some assets (like a joint fund of operating capital) are collected. There may also need to be a determination as to which existing sites will be used and for what purpose, depending on desired church services, outreach, income generating opportunities such as rentals</li> <li>• Investigate with the City of Kelowna as to the Heritage status of First and what that building could be used for if it was not a church. Fact finding. Can it be sold? Can it be a mission? A museum/tourist attraction. There are many options. This is recommended as a step, no matter which option is selected. It may also consider plans which were created for the new addition, but our committee was not focused on that as necessarily the best solution at this time when facilities are only being used minimally for worship.</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Multiple and varied worship services &amp; times</i></b></p>	<p>Services to meet the needs of the congregation and wider community. This may or may not include and is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Traditional Sunday morning</li> <li>▪ “Contemporary” Sunday</li> <li>▪ Mid-week – Family/Young Adult (in church and in community/ outreach ministry)</li> <li>▪ Taizé – weekly/bi-weekly/monthly/quarterly?? (in church and in community/ outreach ministry)</li> <li>▪ Jazz – weekly/bi-weekly/monthly/quarterly?? (in church and in community/ outreach ministry)</li> <li>▪ Wild Church – weekly/bi-weekly/monthly (in church and in community / outreach ministry)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Children &amp; Family/Messy Church (in church and in community/ outreach ministry)</li> <li>▪ Worship through community service (in church and in community(outreach) ministry)</li> <li>▪ Contemplative Worship (in church and in community(outreach) ministry)</li> <li>▪ Community Outreach Ministry (see list provided in Outreach Exploration / Idea document saved in UCC folder / Google Drive)</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>4 full-time ministry personnel equivalents – or perhaps more!</i></b></p>	<p>Possible Roles for Ministry Personnel—<i>there may be others...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Administration &amp; Administrative Staff Oversight</li> <li>▪ Children &amp; Families / Community Ministry</li> <li>▪ Young Adults / Community Ministry</li> <li>▪ Community Ministry / Outreach</li> <li>▪ Education / Community Ministry</li> <li>▪ Pastoral Care* / Community Ministry</li> <li>▪ Worship* / Community Ministry</li> </ul> <p>*Both pastoral care and worship <i>might</i> be shared amongst the ministry staff</p> <p>Cost: ~ \$300,000 - based on Highest Scale &amp; Experience, noting that some will be at a lower scale and some may request above minimum.</p>
<p><b><i>Pool of musicians to share services</i></b></p>	<p>Current musicians from each participating congregation may opt in or out of participating in the pool. With a variety of worship services and styles, additional musicians may be required to cover all necessary functions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop a matrix that identifies music needed, that aides people in seeing how/where they can fit in and that includes room for new ways of using music in worship both in the church and outside (community ministry).</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Administrative and other Church Staff</i></b></p>	<p>The intent is to retain all staff during a time of transition so that the new congregation, through its governing process, becomes clear about staffing needs, position descriptions, roles, duties and participation in the ministry team.</p> <p>We acknowledge that changes will emerge. These will be made as part of the work of the new governing body and the ministry and personnel team, in consultation with the existing staff.</p> <p>The possibility may emerge to sharing workplaces, or to re-think workloads. Again, these changes will be done with due care for all staff.</p>
<p><b><i>Community Outreach and Mission</i></b></p>	<p>Core Commitments</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Be Christ’s love, light and hope in the community (BE)</li> <li>2. Love our neighbour as God loves us (DO)</li> </ol> <p>What steps need to be taken?</p> <p>Resource key activities based on local need and capacity e.g. Program Coordinator, Project Leads, Champions/ Volunteers/ Community Partners</p> <p>Align activities with Central Okanagan United Churches Core Principles (drafted) and Good Neighbours Creed (to be identified)</p>

Adapt, monitor, and improve programs and services to best or better meet the needs of our neighbours

Utilize established channels, digital and conventional communication strategies and admin services and project champions to promote, engage and retain participation

Identify goals and guidelines in a Community Outreach Terms of Reference

Guiding document that supports team, leaders, and governors.

obtain support and/or adjust community projects identified and further detailed in the discovery document developed by the Community Outreach Working Group:

e.g. 1. Plenty-to-Share a gardening, harvesting, preparation and meal sharing ministry

e.g. 2. BE LOVE equips church members and neighbours to care for and respond well to mental wellness, concerns, or crises

e.g. 3. inJOY accessible social activities that nourish body, mind, and spirit for multiple age groups.

## Conclusion

This is the first step on the journey. There are numerous opportunities and experiences laying in front of us as a combined community which may include but are not limited to: the ability to experience multiple forms of worship with a diverse set of personnel and gifts; and opportunities to expand ministries to the community to meet needs we may not even be aware of yet.

This proposal is presented with prayer, reflection, and deliberate thought with the hope that it fans into flame the sparks that were ignited at the gathering in the early in 2020.

# Appendix 1: The Manual

## 1. Excerpt from The Manual of The United Church of Canada 2019

### A.1.1 Amalgamation of Congregations

The process for an amalgamation is set out below. The congregation and regional council are each responsible for the steps assigned to them.

#### G.1.4.1 Decision by Congregations

Each congregation meets separately to make a decision on a proposal to amalgamate.

#### G.1.4.2 Regional Council Consultation

The regional council holds separate meetings with each congregation to hear their opinions on the proposed amalgamation.

#### G.1.4.3 Regional Council Decision

The regional council makes a decision on whether to approve the amalgamation as a change in the covenantal relationship between the regional council and each of the congregations.

#### G.1.4.4 New Covenant

The regional council and the amalgamated congregation enter into a new covenantal relationship.

#### G.1.4.5 Property

The regional council consults with the congregations on the property needs of the new amalgamated congregation. A congregation may ask its governing body to represent it in this consultation.

- a. **Surplus property of amalgamating congregations:** The regional council may decide that some of the congregations' property will not be needed for the new amalgamated congregation. Any property that will not be needed is called "surplus property."
- b. **Use of surplus property:** The regional council is responsible for all surplus property after the amalgamation and decides how to use the surplus property for the benefit of the United Church.
- c. **Change in property ownership:** Before an amalgamation, the trustees of a congregation hold all property for that congregation. After an amalgamation, the trustees
  - i) hold the surplus property for the United Church, to be used as the regional council decides; and
  - ii) hold all other property for the new amalgamated congregation. This change is automatic when the amalgamation takes place.

#### **G.1.4.6 Congregation Continues to Exist**

A congregation's life does not end when it amalgamates with another congregation. Rather, the congregation continues to exist in ministry as the new amalgamated congregation.

#### **G.1.4.7 Gifts and Bequests**

This section (G.1.4.8) applies to gifts made to a congregation that has amalgamated, whether the gifts are made before or after the amalgamation. "Gifts" include bequests made in a person's will.