

## Backgrounder #7: Sample Covenant

The relationship between communities of faith and their regional council would be defined by a covenant of mutual commitment and accountability. The terms of each covenant would vary, with simpler versions envisioned for more informal communities of faith, but a covenant for a community of faith that has staff and property might include the following elements:

*Seeking to work together as part of The United Church of Canada to celebrate God's presence, seek justice, and love and serve others, and believing that a covenantal relationship, intentionally and willingly entered into by parties, is the most powerful form of commitment:*

*Pine Tree United Church covenants to:*

### *Description*

- 1. conduct its activities and engage its relationships in a manner that reflects the doctrines of the United Church;*
- 2. provide spiritual support to members and participants as they journey in Christ;*
- 3. conduct worship and other spiritual activities that nurture the spiritual journeys of members and participants; and*
- 4. identify and assist members in considering the possibility of being called by God to serve as ministers or in other leadership roles in the church.*

### *Membership*

- 5. establish membership policies that are consistent with denominational policy; and*
- 6. seek new members, and celebrate their welcoming into Christ's community of faith.*

### *Governance and Finance*

- 7. establish a governance structure that is consistent with denominational policies;*
- 8. carry out strong, theologically grounded stewardship to support the activities of Pine Tree United Church and the ministry and mission of the United Church;*
- 9. establish annual budgets and financial statements that are approved by the members;*
- 10. pay the assessments to support the wider United Church as set by the denominational council;*
- 11. establish a plan for the capital assets of Pine Tree United Church, which is approved by the members;*
- 12. as appropriate, acquire, purchase, sell, lease, renovate, and otherwise deal with the buildings, land, and other property of Pine Tree United Church consistent with the denominational and regional property policies; and*
- 13. perform an annual self-assessment of Pine Tree United Church and file it with Pacific Regional Council.*

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### *Staffing*

14. *engage ministers accredited by the College of Ministers and such other staff as may be needed; and*
15. *enter into agreements with each of its ministers and staff that set out the terms and conditions of the relationship and are consistent with the personnel policies of the United Church and applicable statutes and regulations.*

### *Support and Services*

16. *seek support, services, and advice from the Pacific Regional Council and its staff when appropriate to do so.*

### *Ministry and Mission*

17. *establish an annual ministry and mission plan with goals for the activities of Pine Tree United Church and its contributions to the Mission and Service Fund;*
18. *actively participate in the ministry and mission work of clusters, networks, regional initiatives, and denominational initiatives of the United Church; and*
19. *engage in mission activities, with ecumenical partners where possible, locally or beyond, that reflect a commitment to God's love for those outside the church and for God's creation.*

### *Wider Church*

20. *fund and send one layperson and one minister to Pacific Regional Council as representatives of Pine Tree United Church; and*
21. *fund and send one layperson and one minister to the denominational council as representatives of Pine Tree United Church.*

*The Pacific Regional Council covenants to:*

*Support and Services*

1. *provide support, services, and advice to Pine Tree United Church through its staff;*
2. *enable access to specialized technical and professional services from the staff of the denominational council if such services are beyond the knowledge of the regional staff;*
3. *provide training for ministers and laypeople of Pine Tree United Church to enable them to function effectively and meet changing programs, policies, and expectations; and*
4. *enable healthy relationships between the ministers and Pine Tree United Church.*

*Ministry and Mission*

5. *provide support to enable ministry and mission activities at Pine Tree United Church, including the sourcing of funds for such projects;*
6. *serve as a liaison with mission partners in other denominations and faiths for mission projects on a regional, national, or international level; and*
7. *encourage the development and ongoing activities of local clusters of communities of faith and of networks that lift up different aspects of the life of the United Church.*

*Journeys to Ministry*

8. *appoint persons to accompany candidates for ministry from Pine Tree United Church during their faith journey; such persons will report to the College of Ministers whether the person is suitable for ministry; and*
9. *appoint a supervisor for the internship of a candidate at Pine Tree United Church; such person will report to the College of Ministers whether the person is suitable for ministry.*

*Administration*

*If Pine Tree United Church is not functioning effectively or is failing to meet its responsibilities as set out in this covenant, the Pacific Regional Council may take such action that it considers necessary in the situation.*

*Dispute Mechanisms*

*Disputes may arise within Pine Tree United Church, between ministers or staff and Pine Tree United Church, among ministers and staff, and between Pine Tree United Church and Pacific Regional Council.*

*Pine Tree United Church and Pacific Regional Council agree to:*

1. *comply with the dispute resolution mechanisms as established by the United Church;*
2. *attempt to mediate a resolution of the dispute unless it would be inappropriate to do so;*
3. *agree to binding arbitration to determine all outstanding issues; and*
4. *comply with any agreement reached or decision issued.*

*Dated at {insert place and date}*

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*On behalf of Pine Tree United Church*

*Dated at {insert place and date}*

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*On behalf of Pacific Regional Council*