

The United Church of Canada  
Kent Presbytery  
Education and Students Committee

# The Programme for Licensed Lay Preachers

Information and Guidelines  
for Lay People seeking Licensing  
and their Church Sessions/Councils

Prepared by  
The Education & Students Committee  
Kent Presbytery  
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## **Licensed Lay Preachers Programme - Kent Presbytery**

Have you been thinking about becoming a licensed lay preacher in Kent Presbytery? Has a lay person in your congregation mentioned an interest in lay preaching? Is there someone in your congregation you would like to encourage to become a licensed lay preacher? It is our hope that this book will help to guide you along the path toward licensing and will be able to answer some of your questions. When in doubt, always remember that your Presbytery Education and Students Committee (E&S) is here to help you.

### **Leadership Role of the Licensed Lay Preacher**

According to the Division of Faith, Formation, and Education in the United Church of Canada a Licensed Lay Preacher is a person who has completed a course of study required by that General Council unit. After the appropriate recommendation and evaluation processes, this person licensed by his/her presbytery to offer "occasional" worship leadership and preaching within the bounds of that presbytery in the absence of the regularly designated minister. The Licensed Lay Preacher helps out when the regularly designated minister may be away due to illness, on holidays, or at some continuing education courses.

### **Polity**

Information regarding polity in the United Church of Canada is found in The Manual. Your minister or clerk of session should have a copy of this book. In The Manual, one can find information regarding the role of presbytery in the licensing process as well information on the programme of study and oversight.

### ***Qualities, Competencies, and Skills needed by Licensed Lay Preachers***

**Spiritual qualities:** Licensed Lay Preachers are people who are in 'essential agreement' with the doctrine and polity of the United Church and be willing to conform to the constitution and government of the United Church. They are prayerful people who integrate their spirituality with their everyday life. They are committed to ongoing spiritual growth, discipleship, and exhibit a desire and willingness to grow in their faith journey. They are also people who are willing and able to share with others a faith of hope and openness to the Spirit.

**Interpersonal qualities:** Licensed Lay Preachers are people who are able to relate sensitively to a wide range of people, who are discreet and trustworthy, and who are open and non-judgmental. They work well with others, are able to deal with conflict in relationships, and are able to maintain appropriate confidentiality.

**Competencies and skills:** Licensed Lay Preachers have a basic working knowledge of the scriptural bases of Christian faith, of theological themes, of the history of the wider church, of United Church history, and of relevant polity. They are able to recognize and respect the differences among the various settings and are able to preside and preach effectively. They are able to respond appropriately to whatever pastoral issues with which they might be confronted.

## For Prospective Licensed Lay Preachers

***I think I might be ready to pursue licensing for lay preaching in Kent Presbytery!  
What do I do now?***

**1. *Are you a member of the United Church?*** In order to become a licensed lay preacher in any presbytery of the United Church it is essential that you are a member of the United Church of Canada and have strong ties to a congregation. If you are not a member, or do not have a relationship with a local congregation, your first step is to find a church home. Most churches will provide guidance for adults who are interested in joining the church. Please make an appointment to speak with a local minister.

**2. *Meeting with your church session/council.*** The process toward licensing requires the support of your home church. In order to secure this support you will need to have an active membership within your home congregation. When you have made the decision to pursue licensing it is required that you meet with your church session/council to share with them your plans and your hopes, as it is ultimately your session/council that is responsible for making the recommendation to license you. If your church is in support of your plans they will sign the form which you will receive from the Kent School for Christian Studies. Please return the form of support to your E&S committee. It is the hope of Kent E&S that the session/council will plan to meet with the student once a year to check-in with the progress through the course of study and to see if there are any concerns.

**3. *Registering with Kent School for Christian Studies.*** When you are ready to begin the journey toward licensing you will need to register with the Registrar of the Kent School for Christian Studies. The chair of E&S can get you this information. Be sure to tell the registrar that you are planning to pursue the course of studies for licensing. The registrar will see to it that you receive a form for your session/church council to sign if they are in support of your plans. You will be invited to meet with the E & S Committee: at this time for your first interview re: Qualities, Competencies, (etc.) p. 1

**4. *Begin classes at the Kent School of Christian Studies.*** The normal programme leading to licensing as a Lay Preacher shall extend over at least two (2) years, and shall include: the study of theology and church history, Old Testament, New Testament, preaching, worship, and pastoral skills. It is essential that you successfully complete 6 required courses in order to be licensed.

**5. *Meeting with your church session/council.*** Once you have successfully completed the 6 required courses you will need to make an appointment to meet with your session/council, requesting that they recommend to presbytery (through E&S) that you be licensed as a lay preacher within the presbytery.

**6. *Interview with E&S.*** Once the E&S committee has received the recommendation from your session/council you will need to be interviewed by the E&S committee. Someone from E&S will be in touch with you regarding the time and place of your interview. You should be prepared to answer questions about your faith journey as well as questions about theology, scripture, polity, and pastoral care.

**7. Recommendation to Presbytery.** Upon successful completion of your E&S interview, you will be recommended to presbytery for licensing. There will be a service of recognition at Presbytery, at a later date.

**8. Annual check in, reports, and interview with your session/council.** Being a licensed lay preacher involves on going support and encouragement from your home church; it also requires continued spiritual growth, openness to the Spirit, and displayed competence on the part of the lay preacher. Every year your license will come up for renewal. It shall be renewed each year at the discretion of the Presbytery, with the support of the home congregation.

**9. Annual gathering.** Every year the Kent Presbytery E & S will host a worship service at a Presbytery meeting in order to celebrate the renewal of licenses, the continuation of your lay ministry, and as an opportunity to provide support and friendship. We hope you will plan to attend this important event!

**10. Life long learning.** Our learning does not stop with the completion of our required courses! It is hoped, and expected, that each experience you have will broaden your understanding of your ministry and help you build upon and develop your skills. In order for a License to be renewed you will be required to complete, audit or attend at least one course either from our own school or another Presbytery, institution or training centre.