



Issue #1
April 2026

INSIGHTS

Connecting Lay Leaders

So, You've
Said "Yes."
Now What?

So Now You're on M & P...

Maureen Dodd

Maybe you felt called to join your Ministry and Personnel committee. Maybe someone tapped you on the shoulder and invited you to be part of this ministry. (They may have used that popular arm-twisting line, "It's easy, and there aren't too many meetings.") Or maybe you missed some meeting and next thing you knew, you were part of M&P. However it happened, you might be thinking "What Now?"

The UCC has a couple of documents to get you started: [Ministry and Personnel Committees: Policy, Procedures and Practices and Resources for Ministry and Personnel Committees](#). These are useful tools to ensure the whole committee knows what their duties and responsibilities are, so you can be consistent in your messages to staff and to the congregation.

I don't want to terrify you right off the bat, but the M&P committee has a big responsibility. You are the Human Resources Department for your staff. Your actions and decisions can impact their careers and even their mental health. Having worked with different situations, groups and congregations for many years, I will leave you to peruse the official resources on your own and offer some additional tips. These may help you avoid difficult situations and keep the relationships between staff and congregation healthy and productive.

I could give examples of situations I've encountered in churches – what we did, what we should have done, how it turned out – but that would violate the most important tenet of M&P work – CONFIDENTIALITY. The Church is a pretty leaky place and it is critical that M&P business be confidential. That means not blabbing to other staff members, spouses, friends, friends from another church or even the dog. We all know the game of 'Telephone,' where you give someone some tidbit of information, and it gets passed on and on until it bears little resemblance to the truth. Reputations and credibility can be ruined. Unfortunately, we often let these infractions pass, because the person who broke confidentiality 'has a good heart.' Well, if they'd had a good head, they wouldn't be gossiping about M&P business.

About Maureen

Maureen has a background in management and Human Resources, particularly in developing healthy teams and in conflict resolution. She has been involved with several M&P committees, as well as Interim ministry and transition teams in the United Church.

First off, let the congregation know who you are and what your role is. Tell them to contact you with both kudos and areas of concern. (It's important to let them know that you are always happy to hear when things are going WELL. Unfortunately, many folks think that M&P is just the complaints department.)

You will have a lot less work if you only consider issues that come to you from the people directly concerned. One of the most dreaded phrases in any church is "People are saying ..." What people? What exactly are they saying? Many times, I have had someone say to me, "So-and-So was really upset about yadda yadda." I respond, "Well if So-and-So is that upset, they can come to me directly." The do-gooder who is passing on this information will say, "Well, they don't want to make a fuss," or "I just thought you should know." The people who actually have the complaint rarely speak up, so if they don't, it must not have been that important.

Church staff will never please everyone, no matter how hard they work. When a staff member says they have received criticism or a complaint, help them put it in perspective. How much does it matter? Have other people said the same thing? What is the impact if we do or don't act on this? Maybe we just need to listen and say thank you for letting me know. Too often, staff and M&P committees believe they need to act on everything, because we are the Church and we are supposed to be 'nice.' That is exhausting and unnecessary.

Staff burnout is alive and well in churches, so make sure they are all doing the jobs they were hired to do. For example, it's not the minister's job to take over admin work when the secretary is away. It's also not the minister's job to follow up on all action items from a committee meeting. They may choose to do these things occasionally, but it is a bad precedent because

Now that the Easter season is here, and for many congregations, their Annual Congregational Meetings have come and gone, those who said "yes" to taking on roles and responsibilities in their respective Faith Communities might wonder what sorts of supports are out there. That's where we come in. The Lay Leaders Support Team is pleased to offer this as our first of a series of quarterly newsletters to offer some wisdom, guidance, and peer support to anyone who has said "yes." For this first issue, we are pleased to welcome insights from Maureen Dodd.

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then it becomes an expectation, and then they need to put in extra hours to get caught up on their actual duties. Those extra hours usually come at the expense of the staff's personal time.

Another way of supporting your staff, especially the clergy, is to ensure the congregation knows that ministers have personal lives, and that they may NOT be available for every meeting or event. Like all of us, ministers have friends, families, hobbies and interests outside their workplace. One of our jobs as M&P is to make sure the staff take their time off. Cell phones have made this harder, because many congregants have the minister's phone number, so they get no respite. If this becomes an issue, you may want to suggest that the minister go back to 'olden times,' where messages were left at the church office, or in an emergency, with the contact listed on the church voice mail. Ministry is a helping profession, and it can be hard for ministers to set boundaries with people and with their own time. You can help them with this.

Check in regularly with your staff and find out what they are doing OUTSIDE of the Church that gives them joy. Rev. Dan Benson has an excellent blog on this subject on the UCC website, titled "I'm Your Minister, Not Your Friend."

<https://united-church.ca/blogs/round-table/im-your-minister-not-your-friend>

Helping staff to deal with conflict is a critical part of the committee's responsibility. Most people don't like dealing with conflict, and particularly in a church we avoid it. Some people believe that addressing conflict isn't 'nice.' Books have been written about this topic, so I will only give a few suggestions here. Find out what the issue is and why it is important. What has the staff member done so far to address it? Most often, the answer is 'nothing,' because we really want someone else to do it. This is because most people don't have the skills needed to address conflict. It can be useful to find someone who is an expert in this who can offer your staff and your committee some practical statements and tips for healthy conflict. If issues aren't addressed, they eventually blow up and it is harder to get back to a healthy situation.

I hope these few suggestions will set you off on the right footing and lead to LESS work for the committee. It's a big job that is very rewarding. Good luck!

Maureen Dodd

Contact Us!

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Peer Support for Volunteers

We are excited to introduce a new support offering for Community of Faith volunteers. This does not replace the support currently available from the region or national church but serves as an additional resource. It is designed for those seeking guidance from people with direct experience in the same or similar volunteer roles. These experienced peers can help answer your questions or find the information you need in a timely manner, and they can offer support and encouragement for the work we do.

In the past, when we gathered at Presbyteries, we knew who among us could offer this kind of support. Now, we can extend this peer support across the entire region, making it accessible to even more volunteers.

We hope, in time, to expand into a network of volunteers who can develop relationships and deepen their connections with one another.

Below is a list of peer support volunteers and their contact information, presented in a clear chart for easy reference.

Peer Supports: Support for COFs and lay people that may be having an issue with governance or finance. To contact the following peer support people, please contact Rick or Carol with their emails listed below.

Corinne Durston

Oasis United Church
Governance/social enterprise

Terry Welsh

Central Okanagan United Church
Governance

Carol Martin

Oak Bay United Church
cmgmbc@telus.net
Governance/volunteer relationships

Jayne Brooks

Central Okanagan United Church
Treasurer

Ken Fanning

Parkville: Knox Pastoral Charge
Treasurer

Creating a Culture of Cooperation

A Lay Leaders In-Person Gathering and Workshop

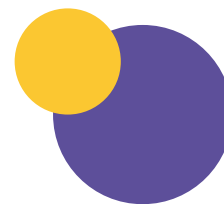
June 3-4, 2026

Kamloops BC

For more information and registration:

<https://www.jotform.com/build/260827118412958>

Register by May 15!



Al Dube

Oak Bay United Church
Treasurer

Roger Eastwood

Lynn Valley United Church
Treasurer

Michael Hare

Alder grove Pastoral Charge
Property/Trustees

Rick Roberts

Grace United Church
Rickroberts0540@gmail.com
Community Connections/partnerships.

We want to be responsive to your needs, so please let us know if there is volunteer work that would benefit from peer support and that isn't listed on our current list.