

# Congregational Support Commission: Amalgamating - Steps for Beginning Well

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**ARWRC**  
ANTLER RIVER WATERSHED  
REGIONAL COUNCIL



**HFRC**  
HORSESHOE FALLS  
REGIONAL COUNCIL



**WOWRC**  
WESTERN ONTARIO WATERWAYS  
REGIONAL COUNCIL

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## Amalgamation – What is it?

Amalgamation is like a marriage – two congregations commit to becoming one, with promises exchanged, sharing of assets, setting new goals and learning how to blend their separate lives into a new shared existence. It is not a merger, or simply one congregation being blended into another. Instead, it is the birth of a new congregation, a new identity, formed by joining two communities of faith together. While communities of faith may decide to amalgamate for many reasons, often one or both has discerned that they simply cannot continue to carry out their ministry alone. It is time to do something new.

## When is it Time?

Like all living things, congregations experience a life cycle, with a birth, a middle and an end. These changes may happen slowly over centuries or much faster. Sometimes it can be difficult to identify the reasons why a congregation may be struggling in its ministry, but often it is due to changes in the surrounding area, such as shifting demographics, social trends, escalating maintenance costs, fewer volunteers and dwindling finances. When a community of faith discerns that it can no longer carry out its ministry alone, or the way it has in the past, it may be time to consider whether to disband and close, pursue a collaboration agreement with other local churches, or amalgamate with another community of faith.

The decision to amalgamate is often difficult and emotional. It is important to remember that the work of amalgamating well, is a special type of ministry. Those who find themselves carrying out this work are called to oversee the faithful starting of something new that brings together the history and legacy of one or more communities of faith. This is a special and very important aspect of congregational ministry.

Although no one wants to make decisions pre-maturely, leaving it too late can lead to rushed decisions and missed opportunities. Regularly reviewing a congregation's financial viability, volunteer strength, energy levels, and sense of purpose (living faith story) helps identify when it may be time to start preparing to disband, amalgamate with another congregation or explore re-development options.

## Why Amalgamate?

There are many reasons why communities of faith may decide to amalgamate rather than disband. For example:

- all members become part of the new congregation, and retain their sense of community and connection with one another;
- if the two congregations are located fairly close together, this maintains a United Church presence in the area;

- according to the Region's property policy, all the assets of the original communities of faith become the property of the newly formed congregation
- all the property is reviewed to determine what is "surplus" or unneeded, such as duplicate buildings, furnishings, musical instruments, office equipment. The items that are best suited to the ongoing ministry are kept and the surplus items are sold. (this is similar to the experience of a couple setting up house with items from two separate households) The money from the sale of such items generally remains with the new congregation.

## What Happens If We Amalgamate?

- A NEW community of faith is created based on an amalgamation agreement
- All members of both congregations become members of the new community of faith
- All staff, property and investments for both congregations are brought into the new community of faith, and then, in conjunction with the region, decisions are made about what is needed and what is surplus
- Surplus property is sold or donated to other United Church ministries
- Some employees and ministry personnel may be given notice
- A new historic roll is started, previous records are sent to archives
- A name is chosen for the new community of faith
- A governance model is chosen and people are elected to fill positions
- Trustees are elected for the new community of faith
- Information and signing authority is updated for banking, Revenue Canada, investments etc.
- Deeds are updated with new name (if applicable)

## Initial Conversations - Dating

1. A community of faith should reach out to neighbouring congregations to determine interest in amalgamation. This could be done by the community of faith or by asking the covenant commission to facilitate a conversation about possibilities.
2. It is important to determine what you have in common and if both or all the congregations are interested in amalgamating.

## Getting Serious

1. The governing bodies, or the designated working group, from each congregations meet together to complete a "proposal to amalgamate" or "amalgamation agreement". See an example here: [Amalgamation Agreement](#)

## Deciding to Amalgamate as a Congregation

1. The proposal to amalgamate is distributed to the members of all congregations involved.
2. Each congregation meets separately to make a decision on a proposal to amalgamate. Notice of the meeting, and its purpose, is read during public worship for two Sundays. The meeting may take place the next day (Monday) or any time after that.

### Quorum for the meeting:

A meeting of the congregation or pastoral charge may take place only if a minimum number of full members is present, as follows:

- a) for congregations or pastoral charges with 100 or more full members, at least 20 full members must be present;
  - b) for congregations or pastoral charges with between 30 and 99 full members, at least 10 full members must be present; and
  - c) for congregations or pastoral charges with fewer than 30 full members, at least 1/3 of the full membership must be present. (Manual 2019, B.5.5)
3. If the decision for all congregations involved is affirmative, the governing bodies contact the Congregational Support Commission (CSC) of the regional council. Representatives of the Congregational Support Commission (CSC) hold separate meetings with each congregation to hear their opinions on the proposed amalgamation.
  4. The Congregational Support Commission (CSC) of the regional council makes a decision on whether to approve the amalgamation and an amalgamation date is set. (see Things to do Before the Amalgamation Day below)
  5. 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.
  6. The regional council and the amalgamated congregation enter into a new covenantal relationship.
  7. Consultation with the Regional Council and Congregational Support Commission (CSC) is encouraged throughout the amalgamating process. Your Minister for Congregational Support and Mission is the staff person who can assist you.

## Property of the Congregations – Setting up House

When congregations amalgamate, the result is often an excess of equipment, furnishings and even buildings. Decisions need to be made about which items are needed for the ministry of the amalgamated congregation, and what can be declared surplus. The community of faith submits a ministry plan for the property and financial needs of the amalgamated congregations.

The regional council consults with the congregations on the property needs of the new amalgamated congregation and determines what is surplus.

- a. 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. 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. In general, the net proceeds from the sale of real property and/or major asset shall be invested in a restricted fund with the interest to be used at the discretion of the community of faith. The community of faith may also submit proposals to the Congregational Support Commission (CSC) at any time, requesting access to the restricted funds for a specific ministry initiative.
- c. 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.

## What to do with Gifts and Bequests

Gifts made to the previous congregations automatically go to the new amalgamated congregation, even if the gift document refers to the congregation by its former (pre-amalgamation) name. "Gifts" include bequests made in a person's will.

There are resources about amalgamations to assist congregations and regional councils. See the [Congregational Board of Trustees Handbook](#)

## Things to do Before the Amalgamation Date

### Decisions to be Made

1. Determine staffing needs for the amalgamated community of faith
2. Set a date for the last service of each congregation to be held
3. Agree upon the name of the amalgamated congregation
4. Determine where the new congregation will meet
5. Discern the Living Faith Story (ministry vision) for the amalgamated congregation

### Honour Your History:

- Set the date for the last worship service for each congregation. Consider who you might invite, special music, reception details etc.
- Plan a celebration honouring the years of faithful ministry or hold a series of special events in the time leading up to the final service.

- Arrange for registers (baptism, wedding, burial, historic roll), minutes and other documents to be sent to the archives. (see resources for more information)

### **Care for your Members:**

- Communicate with all members about the amalgamation, letting them know that their membership will be carried into the new community of faith.
- Ensure members and adherents are notified about the amalgamation and know when and where the community of faith will be gathering for worship. Provide updated contact information.

### **Care for your Staff:**

- Arrange appropriate severance packages for lay staff as needed. Remember that 90 days notice is the standard used in the United Church. Consult with a lawyer if needed.
- Give proper notice (90 days) to all ministry personnel, called or appointed as needed
- Give proper notice to ADP
- Fill out Record of Employment forms, final tax documents etc.

### **Care for your Finances:**

- Arrange for the final charitable tax return to be filed for each congregation.
- Arrange to have Canada Post forward all mail to the new address for one year to ensure nothing gets missed.
- Determine what charitable number will be used for the amalgamated congregation and notify CRA of the changes
- Update the church name on any investments and accounts
- Update signing authorities

### **Care for your Property:**

- If you have a cemetery, make arrangements for ongoing management
- Consult with the regional council about the future of the land and buildings. If the decision is to sell the building, follow the appropriate steps for this process. (See [Congregational Property Transactions](#))
- Sort through all the furnishings and items belonging to the congregations. See if other United Churches have a need for anything, such as hymn books, laptops, chairs, banners etc. While remembering that trustees are responsible for ensuring fair market value is received, you may choose to have a silent auction for items that do not have a high resale value which will no longer be needed. Remember that items donated to the church cannot be given back to donor families, (CRA rules) but they are welcome to purchase them if they are for sale. Items may also be donated to other United Church congregations and ministries.

- For any item with a higher retail value, such as a grand piano, solid silver or brass items etc. it is best to seek an appraisal and consult with the Congregational Support Commission (CSC) before selling.

A detailed check list is provided in the Trustees Handbook

## Things to Do After Amalgamation:

- Start with a celebration service
- Consider ways to help people get to know one another, for example name tags, small group activities, fun gatherings, or a directory. Enroll in Fresh Start workshops to help build a healthy congregation
- At the first annual meeting following amalgamation, be sure to approve the minutes from the previous annual meeting and any congregational meetings held by the previous communities of faith
- Communicate well and often to keep people informed
- Consider starting a new tradition that represents the new congregation
- Be gentle with one another

## Amalgamations Involving More Than One Regional Council

If the amalgamation involves congregations that are within the bounds of more than one regional council, the regional councils involved must

- a) each approve the amalgamation as a change in the covenantal relationship between that regional council and the applicable congregation;
- b) agree on any conditions to be included; and
- c) get the approval of the General Council. The General Council may make adjustments to the boundaries of the regional councils involved as a result of the amalgamation.



## Sample Motions

### **Amalgamation:**

1. A Congregational Meeting is called. Notice of the meeting must be read during public worship on two Sundays. After notice has been read on the second Sunday, the meeting may take place on the next day (Monday) or on any day after that. (The Manual B.5.4.2 a) The notice must state that the purpose of the meeting is to consider a motion to draft an agreement for amalgamation with (Name) United Church.
2. At the Meeting, the ministry personnel or pastoral charge supervisor must be present. Members can vote to extend voting privileges to adherents. See The Manual B.5.5) for details regarding quorum.

Motion to be considered: “Moved by and seconded by, that the congregation of (name) United Church work with representatives from (name) united church to draft an amalgamation agreement.”

A second motion naming the representatives of the congregation who will work on the draft agreement may be made at this time, or permission may be given to the governing body to appoint the representatives. It is recommended that a member of the Board of Trustees and Finance Committee be included on the team.

Motion to be considered: “Moved by and Seconded by, that (names) be appointed as representatives from (name) United Church to work with the representatives from (name) United Church on a draft amalgamation agreement which will be brought to the congregation for approval.”

9. A copy of the minutes of this meeting are then sent to the Congregational Support Minister for your regional council.
10. The Congregational Support Commission is updated about the proposed amalgamation.
11. When the amalgamation agreement has been completed, each congregation calls a separate congregational meeting, preferably for the same date. At the meetings, the ministry personnel or pastoral charge supervisor must be present. Members can vote to extend voting privileges to adherents. See The Manual B.5.5) for details regarding quorum.

Motion to be considered: “Moved by and seconded by, that the amalgamation agreement between (name) United Church and (name) United Church, dated (date) be accepted, and regional council approval be requested.”

Second Motion to be considered: “Moved by and seconded by, that the amalgamation between (name) United Church and (name) United Church will take place on (date).”

12. A copy of the minutes of this meeting, and the final draft of the amalgamation agreement, are then sent to the Congregational Support Minister for your regional council.
13. The Congregational Support Commission meets to consider the request to amalgamate and will report back to the congregations.

## **Additional Resources**

[The United Church Manual 2019](#)

[Trustees Handbook](#)

[Archives](#) (for information on what to archive and how to send it)

[Service for Closing a Church](#)

[Disbanding: Steps for Closing Well](#)

Considering Redevelopment (coming soon)

## **Antler River Watershed Regional Council**

[ARW Congregational Support Minister](#)

[ARW Property Policy](#)

[ARW Congregational Property Transactions](#)

## **Horseshoe Falls Regional Council**

[HF Congregational Support Minister](#)

[HF Property Policy](#)

[HF Congregational Property Transactions](#)

## **Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council**

[WOW Congregational Support Minister](#)

[WOW Property Policy](#)

[WOW Congregational Property Transactions](#)

## Proposed Agreement of Amalgamation

between

ABC United Church, XYZ United Church

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### Name

The name of the new Community of Faith shall be \_\_\_\_\_ United Church, \_\_\_\_\_ Pastoral Charge.

### Date

The effective date of amalgamation shall be \_\_\_\_\_.

### Mission and Vision

The Mission of Hope United Church shall be "To worship and work to God's Glory".

It is the Vision of Hope United Church that we will:

1. Be a Community of Hope.
2. Be A Community which is Accepting, Welcoming and Sharing.
3. Share our faith story with all, especially our children and youth.
4. Take special care of our elders.

### Governance

The governing body of Hope United Church shall be a Church Council, which shall meet not less than quarterly. Quorum shall be one third of the eligible members (6)

It shall consist of:

1. Officers: Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Ministry Personnel or pastoral charge supervisor (4)
2. Representative to Regional Council (1)
3. Whomever else you decide.

There shall be working groups/committees for \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

Each working group shall report monthly to the Church Council. Working groups are not limited in numbers of members.

There shall be a Nominating Committee consisting of the Chair and a representative of each working group.

Terms of Office shall normally be \_\_\_\_ years. There shall be a sabbatical year before re-nomination to the Church Council for another term. The Treasurer shall be exempt from this term limit.

## Real Property

The Real Property of both congregations shall be combined for the use of Hope United Church and held by the Trustees of Hope United Church.

The portions of the Sale of the Manse shall be combined and the interest continue to be provided to the treasurer of the pastoral charge for the support of the salary of the ministry personnel. Other congregational investments shall be combined for the benefit of Hope United Church, respecting any directions from the original donor, if any. (List of Investments to be attached)

## Consent for Sale of XYZ church

Consent shall be requested by the congregation of XYZ United Church of \_\_\_\_\_ Regional Council to sell the building and property currently occupied by XYZ United Church known as *[legal description of property]*, and the proceeds from the sale after expenses be applied to the work of Hope United Church.

## Proposed Amalgamation Schedule - Subject to Regional Approval

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| March 5 & 12    | Announcement of Congregational Meetings  |
| March 19, Noon  | Congregational Meeting of XYZ.<br>Quorum ____ Full Members   |
| March 26, Noon  | Congregational Meeting of ABC.<br>Quorum ____ Full Members   |
| April 4 7:00 PM | Presentation and Request for Concurrence of Amalgamation and Sale of Property by Official Board  |
| April 25        | Presentation and Request for Concurrence of Amalgamation and Sale of Property by Congregational Support Commission (CSC) of _____ Regional Council |
| May 21 9:45 AM  | Service of Closing, XYZ United Church  |
| May 28 9:45 AM  | Service of Closing, ABC Church, Keady  |
| June 4 10:30 AM | Service of Constitution of Hope United Church.<br>Joint Pastoral Charge service including Communion  |

## Letter to Congregants at time of amalgamation

*This letter is a template for you to customise. It could be sent with a final tax-receipt, or included in a newsletter or pastoral letter at the time of the amalgamation. It could come from the community of faith governance body, the minister, the stewardship committee, the treasurer, or whatever you think works best in your situation.*

Dear Friends,

Not so long ago we had our own distinct congregation. For many years as a Christian family, we gathered regularly to worship and to live our faith together. We shared many joys and sorrows. We witnessed a lot of change. When we struggled, we struggled together. However, in recent days, we have found it necessary to make a difficult but important decision that the best path forward is for us to draw our circle wider, and join others to create a new community of faith. Going forward we hope and pray that together we will be stronger, and that our faith and our ministry will grow.

In the meantime, we want to thank you for your past witness and faith in action. Your presence and your participation in our community and our ministry has made an incredible difference. We are grateful that you chose to be a part of name of previous faith community. We hope and pray you will join us in our new amalgamated church family [optional: include name of new community of faith].

With gratitude for all your generosity, we include some information about giving in our new congregation. Please continue to use your current Offering Envelopes, if you have them.

If you give by Pre-Authorized Remittance (PAR), your regular giving will continue. To increase your gifts, or to make other changes to PAR, please contact: name & contact info of PAR coordinator at new community of faith [or contact [par@united-church.ca](mailto:par@united-church.ca) directly]

[add information about other new ways to give in the new community of faith]

As you establish your giving to our new congregation, please include our shared Mission & Service. Mission & Service is how we transform and save lives, inspire meaning and purpose, and build a better world, as a whole denomination.

If you will be taking time away from our new congregation, please remember that you can continue to support Mission & Service directly. Here's how:

To give on-line with a credit card go to: <https://www.united-church.ca/donate>

Donate by phone using your Visa or MasterCard:

Toll-free: 1-800-268-3781 ext. 2738

Donate by cheque or money order to:  
Philanthropy Unit  
The United Church of Canada  
3250 Bloor St. West, Suite 200  
Toronto, ON M8X 2Y4

Again, thank-you for your generosity.

## Letter to one-time donors at time of amalgamation

*This letter is a template for you to customise. It could be sent to donors who are not members or adherents of the community of faith, especially those who may be one-time donors through on-line giving. It could come from the community of faith governance body, the minister, the stewardship committee, the treasurer, or whatever you think works best in your situation.*

Dear friend,

With gratitude for your generous donation to [name of community of faith] in the last year, we are writing to inform you that our community of faith has amalgamated with another congregation to form [name of new community of faith]. If you wish to further support the mission of [name of new community of faith] as we seek to [insert 1 sentence describing your mission] please consider the following options:

[add your new community of faith info about how to give. ex. On-line URL, mailing address for cheques, etc.]

If you are inspired by the values and work of the United Church as a whole, we invite you to consider making donations to the Mission & Service of The United Church of Canada. Mission & Service is how together we live out God's love in our world.

To give on-line with a credit card go to: <https://www.united-church.ca/donate>

Donate by phone using your Visa or MasterCard:

Toll-free: 1-800-268-3781 ext. 2738

Donate by cheque or money order by mail to:

Philanthropy Unit

The United Church of Canada

3250 Bloor St. West, Suite 200

Toronto, ON M8X 2Y4

We hope this letter finds you well.

Thank-you again, for your generosity.



## Antler River Watershed; Horseshoe Falls; Western Ontario Waterways Regional Councils

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### Amalgamation – Information Update

(to be completed by all partners in amalgamation)

**Pastoral Charge Name:**

**Community of Faith Name:**

Address:

Telephone:

Email address:

Website Address:

**Date of Amalgamation:** Click or tap to enter a date.

**Community of Faith Governing Body, Secretary:**

Address:

Telephone:

Email address:

**Community of Faith, Treasurer:**

Address:

Telephone:

Email address

**Trustee to be contacted:**

Address:

Telephone

Email address

**Current Minister OR Pastoral Charge Supervisor:**

Address:

Telephone

Email address

**Minister's New Call or Appointment**

Pastoral Charge:

Start Date Click or tap to enter a date. End Date (if Appointment) Click or tap to enter a date.

## **Amalgamating with:**

### **Name of Pastoral Charge:**

Address:

Telephone:

Email address:

### **Name of Community of Faith:**

Address:

Telephone:

Email address:

## **After Amalgamation**

### **New Name of Pastoral Charge:**

### **New Name of Community of Faith:**

Address:

Telephone:

Email address:

### **New Community of Faith Governing Body, Secretary:**

Address:

Telephone:

Email address:

### **New Community of Faith, Treasurer:**

Address:

Telephone:

Email address:

### **New Community of Faith, Trustee to be Contacted:**

Address:

Telephone

Email address

### **Current Minister or Pastoral Charge Supervisor:**

Address:

Telephone:

Email address:

## **Regional Council Motions**