

Draft Agreement between Eastminster and St. Matthew's United Churches, Belleville, Ontario  
November 2022

Rationale: St. Matthew's

1. St. Matthew's has experienced a decrease in numbers of members and adherents in past years. Pre-pandemic Sunday Worship attendance for November, 2019 was approximately 35 people.
2. Reduced attendance levels have resulted in a decline in general offerings to support the costs of maintaining its buildings and staff. In addition, the pandemic has reduced general offerings further.
3. St. Matthew's has been without an appointed or called minister for the past three years. The posting for a half-time minister has been unable to attract and secure a candidate for the position.
4. At present St. Matthew's would be challenged to afford a half-time minister, even if one could be found.
5. The congregation would like to continue its Sunday worship, and its presence and community outreach in the west end of Belleville.
6. Council decided in the summer of 2021 to explore the possibilities of sharing a minister or ministers with the Eastminster community of faith.

Rationale for Eastminster

1. Although Eastminster is still a strong congregation, it too has experienced a decrease in numbers of members and adherents over the past decade. Pre-pandemic Sunday Worship attendance for November 2019 was approximately 170 people.
2. Lower attendance and the loss of members have resulted in offerings not meeting Eastminster's General Fund needs. The pandemic has reduced general offerings further although the General Fund shortfall was temporarily masked by government support for salaries (CEWS) during the pandemic. These supports ended in October, 2021.
- 3. Specifically, Eastminster can no longer sustain its current staffing model financially.**
4. Since the Fall of 2019, Eastminster's Finance Team has been looking at options that might alleviate the financial shortfall. One was to combine staffing arrangements with another pastoral charge. Another involved renting part of the building to another organisation.
5. Both Eastminster and St. Matthew's are characterized by an aging demographic, with an increasing number of members who are becoming infirm and unable to be as active as previously.

Therefore, the following proposal is made to the congregations of Eastminster and St. Matthew's:

1. That the congregations agree to share the services of the Eastminster minister (currently Rev. David McMaster) and the pastoral care minister (currently Rev. Frank Hamper) beginning in January of 2022.
2. That there will be two worship services on Sunday mornings, with worship at St. Matthew's beginning at 9:30 am and worship at Eastminster beginning at 11:00 am.
3. That the minister will devote approximately 20% of his time to St. Matthew's, providing ministry of the word, sacraments, pastoral care and general leadership assistance.
4. That the Minister of Pastoral Care will be available to members and adherents of St. Matthew's as well as to those of Eastminster. This may increase the number of hours of the minister of pastoral care up to a maximum of 20 hours per week.
5. In support of the above activities, the congregations will form joint committees for Ministry & Personnel and Worship & Education, with at least two members from each church elected to each committee.
6. That as opportunities arise, the congregations commit to sharing other staff functions. For example, St. Matthew's commitment to the current pianist will be complete at the end of the 2021/22 academic year. At that time, the services of the Eastminster Director of Music (currently George Couperus) for Sunday worship would be extended to St. Matthew's. When other staff vacancies occur for shared positions, the congregations commit to working together through the appropriate process to replace the person. For vacant positions that are not currently shared, the joint Ministry & Personnel committee will review that position to determine if duties can be shared between the two locations and work together to seek and hire a suitable candidate.
7. That the congregations commit to continuing to explore together ways to be more effective and efficient in delivery of our ministries. To that end each congregation will continue to send three representatives each to a Collaboration Planning Committee, which will bring further recommendations to the Councils of each church for consideration and potential adoption.
8. That the congregations commit to regular assessment and evaluation of the relationship between them on a quarterly basis for the first year, and regularly thereafter at times decided by the councils and at least as frequently as the self assessments required by the United Church of Canada. These assessments will be done by the Collaboration Planning Committee, shared with each church Council, and with the Annual Congregational Meetings of each church.
9. That the congregations will meet together at least once a year to review and celebrate the accomplishments of this arrangement and to approve its extension, with any amendments that may be approved at that time.
10. Should either congregation wish to withdraw from this arrangement, a duly constituted congregational meeting will be required to approve the withdrawal, and three months' notice provided to the other congregation through its Council.
11. Regional Council – Both congregations agree to

- work with the Regional Council (ECORC) to approve the “one-staff, two-church” agreement ministry model.
- work with Regional Council to make any changes necessary to the minister’s call.
- consider the possibility of becoming a Two-Point Pastoral Charge in the future.

Resources:

1. In recognition of the services of the Eastminster minister, St. Matthew’s agrees to provide remuneration to Eastminster for the services of the Minister and any administrative support provided by Eastminster staff relative to St. Matthew’s. The amount of this remuneration will be negotiated annually at budget time, with quarterly revisions if necessary due to changes in the amount of time required by St. Matthew’s. For 2022.
2. St. Matthew’s agrees to pay for pastoral care provided to its members and adherents at the same hourly rate as Eastminster does currently.
3. Any future joint resourcing of staff positions will be negotiated based on expected percentage of time required by each congregation.