

Norval United Church is blessed! We have a long history of dynamic ministers, staff, and volunteers who have all shaped the faith community we love and cherish today. As we look forward to new possibilities on the horizon, it is important to be clear about how our leadership model has grown and continues to evolve to address new realities. When NUC called Heather Power, we moved away from the previous ministry model to a team ministry structure. This means that, although Heather and Jen have specific domains of responsibility and autonomy, they work collaboratively to uplift and support the overall mission of NUC as they foster a team approach to ministry. Moreover, the work of Heather and Jen is enhanced by our wonderful staff and volunteers who contribute to the leadership and administration of NUC.

This year we will be introducing something new, called a Voluntary Associate Minister (or VAM); a voluntary position as provided in the policies and procedures of The United Church of Canada. A VAM is an individual available, if needed and requested by Heather and Jen, to provide support to the mission and work of NUC. In some instances, Heather and Jen will consult with the Executive about the need/request. A VAM is not paid, does not have decision making authority, is free to choose if they want to take on a task requested of them by Heather and Jen, and does not participate in leadership roles or serve on church committees or teams. Critically, a VAM enters into an agreement with a community of faith and its incumbent ministers to share their gifts and energy. The VAM agreement is intended to build healthy boundaries. The goal is to structure an agreement that will avoid any misunderstanding about roles, responsibility, and authority. It is also important for you, the congregation, to understand the role of a VAM. This is the chief purpose of writing to you now.

Paul Ivany has a desire to serve NUC as a VAM. Over the spring, Heather and Jen met with Paul and representatives from the Regional Council to work out a plan that is respectful of all parties involved. Ultimately, it is an agreement between Heather, Jen, and Paul. In this role, Paul will be accountable to this agreement with Heather and Jen, and to the Regional Council. The Executive Committee discussed the possibility and supported the agreement going forward. Heather, Jen and Paul developed the plan in consultation with Regional Council and will continue to assess the agreement.

As you can imagine, given that Paul was recently a minister at NUC, this VAM relationship required very careful consideration. It is important that we, as a church family, empower Heather and Jen to be the ministers of NUC. Members of the community of faith should not behave as though 'Paul is back', to be called upon just as before. Paul is on a voluntary basis, available to support Heather and Jen. Members of the community of faith are expected to reach out to Heather or Jen if they have questions, concerns or needs. It is not appropriate for members of the congregation to reach out to Paul for these matters. Heather and Jen may call upon Paul, for tasks that he has agreed to perform, when they feel he can help and support their work. Paul is under no obligation to provide any service, and he can say no when asked.

Although Paul is retired and no longer our minister, he is still connected to and part of our congregation. He is a friend to many members of our community and that fact needs to be honoured and celebrated. When the time is right, Paul would like to return to regular in-person worship with us. The timing of this is being prayerfully considered by Heather, Jen, Paul and the Executive. We want to ensure enough time has passed to facilitate a healthy transition to our new ministry team. When that time comes, we will celebrate Paul as a friend and part of our church.

If you have questions about this VAM agreement, please reach out to the Transition Team:  
[transitionteam@norvalunited.ca](mailto:transitionteam@norvalunited.ca)

Norval is indeed blessed! We are growing and moving through challenging and exciting transitions.