

# Admission to the Order of Ministry

Handbook of Procedures for  
Ministers of Recognized Christian Denominations  
Called to Serve in  
The United Church of Canada

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January 2011



The United Church of Canada  
L'Église Unie du Canada

Admission to the Order of Ministry



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### **What's new in this edition**

- Corrections made regarding role of presbytery.

# Introduction

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Welcome. Thank you for your interest in ministry in The United Church of Canada. The United Church, as a united and uniting denomination, welcomes ministry leadership from other recognized global Christian traditions who feel called to serve The United Church of Canada. Such ministers may apply for “admission” into the United Church.

## Purpose

The purpose of the policy and procedures for admission is

- to welcome ministry applicants from recognized global Christian traditions who feel called to serve The United Church of Canada, regardless of race, gender, or sexual orientation
- to continue to strive to meet the needs of all United Church congregations for ongoing ministry leadership
- to ensure that all members and adherents of The United Church of Canada worship in a safe environment, by verifying the character and competence of applicants

## Contact

If you would like more information about being admitted into the order of ministry of The United Church of Canada, please contact:

Program Coordinator, Admissions  
Human Resources  
3250 Bloor St. West, Suite 300  
Toronto, ON  
Canada M8X 2Y4

Tel: +1-416-231-5931 ext. 3142 *or* 3037  
Toll-free: 1-800-268-3781 (within North America)  
Fax: +1-416-232-6072  
E-mail: [admissions@united-church.ca](mailto:admissions@united-church.ca)  
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## Background

The United Church of Canada welcomes ministers from other Christian denominations to share in the ministry and mission of Jesus Christ, as it is lived out by the people of The United Church of Canada. The United Church was founded through a union of Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregationalist churches on June 10, 1925. The Wesleyan Methodist Church of Bermuda entered the union in 1930. The Canada Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church became a part of the United Church in 1968. Since 1925, other smaller groups of churches and individual congregations have joined The United Church of Canada. As a united and uniting church, we are committed to ecumenical cooperation and mutual recognition of ministries. The United Church is an active member of the World Council of Churches, the Canadian Council of Churches, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and the World Methodist Council.

The United Church of Canada is committed to inclusiveness and the full and equal participation in ministry of all persons, regardless of their race, gender, or sexual orientation. The United Church has over 3,300 congregations and other missions units and is seeking to become a racially and

culturally diverse denomination that meets the needs of all of its faith communities. Applicants for admission who are not proficient in one of Canada's official languages are encouraged to gain a working knowledge of either English or French in order to be able to participate fully in the life and leadership of The United Church of Canada and the Canadian context in which they will be living.

Ministers in The United Church of Canada enjoy both privileges and responsibilities. Admission into the order of ministry of The United Church of Canada requires essential agreement with the doctrine of The United Church of Canada as stated in the Basis of Union. Education is also necessary to gain an understanding of the ethos, polity, and history of the United Church.

The United Church of Canada is committed to ensuring that all its members and adherents worship in a safe environment. Therefore, the character and competence of applicants for admission will be verified through appropriate procedures. Only ministers whose credentials have been cleared for service by the Human Resources Unit of the General Council Office are permitted to serve congregations of The United Church of Canada.

It is the applicant's responsibility to provide all necessary documentation and complete the six components of the admission process:

1. application and credential clearance
2. initial interview
3. initial appointment
4. education for orientation
5. final interview
6. rite of admission

The Program Coordinator, Admissions, is available to answer questions and concerns throughout the process.

Ministers admitted to The United Church of Canada from other recognized global ecumenical Christian traditions make a valuable contribution to a wide variety of ministries and missions. Thank you for your interest in serving within The United Church of Canada.

# Policy Statement

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## 031 Policy

The United Church of Canada recognizes that duly ordained or diaconal women and men admitted from other recognized global Christian traditions make a valuable contribution to its wide variety of ministries and missions.

The United Church of Canada is committed to inclusiveness in its evolving mission in the Canadian context, including the full and equal participation in ministry of all persons, regardless of their race, gender, or sexual orientation. It is also committed to becoming a racially and culturally diverse intercultural denomination that meets the needs of all of its faith communities. Those admitted are required to be in essential agreement with the doctrine of The United Church of Canada, as stated in the Basis of Union, and to acquire through education an understanding of the ethos, polity, and history of the United Church. The United Church shall provide information, guidance, and mentorship throughout the admission process.

The United Church of Canada is committed to ensuring that all its members and adherents worship in a safe environment. Therefore, the character and competence of applicants for admission to the Order of Ministry of The United Church of Canada will be verified through appropriate procedures.

The General Council shall approve the policy for admission of ordained or diaconal ministers from other denominations. The procedures relating to the implementation of this policy shall be approved by the Executive of the General Council and reviewed from time to time in order to remain relevant to rapidly changing realities. The policy and procedures shall be made available by the General Council Office.

*Passed by 40th General Council 2009, effective August 1, 2010*

# Summary of the Admission Process

## 1: Application and Credential Clearance

### Applicant:

- submits to Human Resources form ADM 305A (Application for Admission), which includes a statement of essential agreement with United Church doctrine and polity
- requests educational transcripts
- provides proof of standing as an ordained or diaconal minister, or ordination or commissioning, a police records check, and contact information for references

### Human Resources Unit:

- reviews the application and documentation
- requests reference letters and a letter of standing from contacts provided by applicant
- clears the applicant to continue in the admission process
- informs the applicant and the Conference personnel minister

Applicant is cleared to continue in the admission process

*If yes, continue to next component.*

## 2: Initial Interview

### Human Resources Unit:

- forwards credential clearance letter and applicant's file to the Conference

### Applicant:

- contacts the Conference to arrange an interview

### Conference Interview Board:

- interviews the applicant regarding suitability for ministry in the United Church
- makes a recommendation to the Conference Executive

Applicant is eligible for initial appointment

*If yes, continue to next component.*

## 3: Initial Appointment

### Applicant:

- applies for a vacancy
- if appointed, serves under presbytery/district oversight

*Search Committee (of pastoral charge, presbytery accountable ministry, or presbytery recognized ministry):*

- interviews the applicant
- if the position is a match, recommends one-year appointment (renewable for up to three years)

### Presbytery/District:

- oversees the appointment
- if desired, pairs the applicant with a mentor
- appoints a pastoral charge supervisor

Applicant serves in initial appointment while completing education

*See next component for educational requirements.*

## 4. Education for Orientation

### *Human Resources Unit:*

- identifies education requirements to orient applicant to the United Church
- upon verification, informs the Conference personnel minister

### *Applicant:*

- completes educational requirements through courses, online study, residential programs, or community learning
- verifies completion to Human Resources within three years
- if necessary, works to gain a working knowledge of either English or French

### *Pastoral Charge Supervisor:*

- reports on progress annually to Presbytery/District Pastoral Relations Committee

## 5. Final Interview

### *Pastoral Charge Supervisor:*

- when the term of the initial appointment is complete, reports to Presbytery/District Pastoral Relations Committee with recommendations

### *Presbytery/District:*

- reviews and forwards report to Conference

### *Conference Interview Board:*

- conducts final interview
- forwards its recommendation to the Conference Executive

### *Conference Executive:*

- makes recommendation to admit applicant to Conference annual general meeting
- communicates its recommendation to presbytery/district
- sends form ADM 309b (Intent to Recommend Admission) to Human Resources

### *Human Resources:*

- circulates applicant's name to all presbyteries for information

## 6. Rite of Admission

### *Applicant:*

- secures an appointment or call

### *Conference:*

- celebrates Rite of Admission at an annual Celebration of Ministries Service

Applicant completes identified education within three years

*If yes, continue to next component.*

Conference recommends admitting applicant to order of ministry

*If yes, continue to next component.*

Applicant is admitted to the order of ministry of The United Church of Canada

# Eligibility

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Normally, the United Church recognizes ordination or commissioning to the diaconal ministry of education, service, and pastoral care performed by churches holding memberships in the World Council of Churches or in a national Council of Churches. Other applicants will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

The Human Resources Unit requires applicants to show evidence that

- their commissioning or ordination was within a recognized global Christian tradition
- their commissioning or ordination was duly performed by the authority charged with the exercise of this church power within the commissioning or ordaining communion
- their commissioning or ordination was carried out in the name of Christ by the invocation of the Spirit and the laying on of hands (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6)
- their understanding of commissioning and ordination is compatible with the ordering of ministries in The United Church of Canada

Applicants who are ineligible for admission according to these requirements can instead enter the candidacy stream to seek commissioning to diaconal ministry, or ordination to ordained ministry, according to the procedures of the United Church.

## **Agreement with Doctrine and Polity**

Applicants will be required to answer the following questions:

1. What are your reasons for applying for admission to the order of ministry of The United Church of Canada, and what has led to any change of views?
2. Are you in essential agreement with the doctrine of the United Church?
3. Are you willing to conform to the governance and polity of the United Church?

# Procedures

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## Component 1: Application and Credential Clearance

The process begins when the applicant submits form ADM 305A (Application for Admission) with all required initial documentation to the Human Resources Unit of the General Council Office. This documentation includes

- a statement of essential agreement with United Church doctrine and polity
- a notarized certificate of ordination or commissioning
- a police records check (dated within six months)
- names of references that Human Resources can contact
- a contact in the current denomination who can provide a letter of standing

The applicant must also contact relevant educational institutions to request that transcripts be sent directly to Human Resources.

The Human Resources Unit acknowledges receipt and reviews the application within three to six weeks, then requests reference letters and a denominational letter of standing.

When it is impossible to obtain a letter from the applicant's home denomination; reasonable efforts are made by Human Resources to determine the applicant's standing in the denomination. (*Note: Where standing is refused by a denomination based solely on criteria that would not prevent service with The United Church of Canada—such as divorce, marriage, or sexual orientation—the letter of good standing may be waived at the unit's discretion.*)

When documentation is complete, the Human Resources Unit assesses the applicant's credentials and determines if the applicant is cleared to continue in the admission process. If at any time during the admission process new documentation comes to light, Human Resources has the authority to initiate another review of the applicant's credentials.

Human Resources notifies the applicant that he or she has been cleared by letter. The Program Coordinator, Admissions, is available to assist with Conference contacts regarding appointments, immigration questions, work visas, and so on.

An official letter of clearance to proceed and a copy of the applicant's file are sent to the Conference personnel minister for information, and to the Conference Interview Board for interview preparations and recommendation of suitability.

### **Helpful Hint:**

Admission forms are available on the United Church website: [www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca).

ADM 301 (Applicant Checklist) is a helpful step-by-step overview of the process.

## **Component 2: Initial Interview**

An official credential clearance letter and a copy of the applicant's file are sent to the Conference personnel minister and Conference Interview Board, of the Conference where the applicant will be seeking an appointment.

The applicant contacts the Conference personnel minister or executive secretary/speaker to arrange an interview with the Conference Interview Board.

The Conference Interview Board interviews the applicant regarding suitability for ministry in the United Church and provides a recommendation to the Conference Executive.

If the applicant resides overseas, the initial interview may take place in the applicant's country of residence. If practicable, this interview is arranged by the appropriate General Council working units in place of an interview by the Conference Interview Board. However, the applicant must be interviewed by the Conference Interview Board within the first six months of appointment, and presbytery/district may terminate the appointment if it is not satisfied.

Presbytery waits until it has received the Conference Interview Board's recommendation that the applicant is eligible to proceed in the admissions process before making an appointment.

### Component 3: Initial Appointment

It is the applicant's responsibility to find an initial appointment, consulting the Conference personnel minister, the convenor of the Presbytery Pastoral Relations Committee, and/or Human Resources for such resources as the vacancy list. The applicant may apply for vacant positions in pastoral charges, presbytery/district accountable ministries, or presbytery/district recognized ministries. The relevant search committee conducts an interview.

Once a match has been made, the Pastoral Charge Search Committee recommends the applicant to the pastoral charge for appointment, or the presbytery/district accountable ministry or presbytery/district recognized ministry recommends the appointment to the presbytery/district.

The applicant serves an initial appointment of one year. The appointment can be renewed for up to three years, giving the applicant a maximum of 36 months in which to complete educational requirements (component 4). In that period, applicants should stay with the Conference they applied to, but can work with different presbyteries in that Conference.

The applicant serves in the initial appointment under presbytery/district oversight. The presbytery/district appoints a pastoral charge supervisor. If desired, presbytery/district can also appoint a mentor—an optional support person who is paired with the applicant throughout the process (*see below*).

Upon completion of educational and all other requirements, the applicant is eligible to receive a call to the pastoral charge where the initial appointment has been served.

#### **Mentoring in the Admission Process**

**Purpose:** The relationship with a mentor creates a safe place for reflection and growth. The mentor should possess the skills to create a trusting, supportive relationship and be able to help an applicant more fully understand United Church ethos and practice of ministry. The mentor may be the first person the mentee consults when questions arise about seeking admission to the order of ministry. The mentor is a “companion on the way,” not the applicant's supervisor, therapist, best friend, or advocate within the courts of the church.

Mentoring begins when an applicant is declared suitable for ministry in the United Church and has been appointed by presbytery/district to an initial appointment. The mentor is specifically in a guiding, supportive role. The mentor is not expected to report at the end of the admission process, nor is the mentor the same person as the pastoral charge supervisor. The mentor may, at the request of the admission applicant, attend the final interview.

**Qualifications:** Mentors are recommended by the presbytery/district or selected by the mentee. They should have compassion, sensitivity, commitment, and language skills to communicate adequately. Mentors have received training or have experience in accompanying people. Their training should include racial justice training and an appropriate amount of cultural sensitivity training. Our hope is that mentors shall be ministry personnel who have completed the training or have experience in providing ongoing support to a mentee. To fulfill the role of mentor, experience both in ministry and leadership in The United Church of Canada is essential. The individual must faithfully be committed to God and the church, be knowledgeable of the ethos of the United Church, and be an active participant in the courts of the church, namely, presbytery/district, and Conference.

## **Component 4: Education for Orientation**

Based on the educational transcripts submitted with the initial application, the Human Resources Unit identifies any necessary educational program requirements to orient the applicant to The United Church of Canada. These educational requirements are not intended to supersede the education applicants bring to the church, but to orient applicants to the ethos of The United Church of Canada.

The educational competencies include

- United Church theology, polity, and history
- United Church worship and sacraments
- Christian education and resources
- Sexual Abuse Policy, Racial and Gender Justice Policy, and educational initiatives to promote cultural sensitivity

The applicant can complete educational competencies through courses, online study, summer residential programs, or community learning. If English or French is not the applicant's first language, educational competencies can be gained through community learning programs.

Applicants for admission who are not proficient in one of Canada's official languages are encouraged to gain a working knowledge of either English or French in order to be able to participate fully in the life and leadership of The United Church of Canada and the Canadian context in which they are living.

The pastoral charge supervisor reports on progress annually to the Presbytery/District Pastoral Relations Committee.

It is the applicant's responsibility to verify completion of the educational competencies to the Human Resources Unit. Upon receipt of verification, Human Resources forwards a copy of the report to the Conference personnel minister.

## **Component 5: Final Interview**

The process of admission to the order of ministry of the United Church is intended to be a time of discernment and decision-making for both the applicant and the United Church. Either party may end the appointment early by following the early termination procedures. For applicants working in a pastoral charge, presbytery would be responsible for early termination; in a presbytery recognized ministry, it is the appropriate supervisory body.

When an applicant has completed the term of the initial appointment, the pastoral charge supervisor makes a report, including any necessary recommendations, to the Presbytery/District Pastoral Relations Committee. The committee reviews the report and recommendations, and forwards a copy to the Conference Interview Board and Conference personnel minister.

Then, the Conference Interview Board conducts a final interview of the applicant. At the applicant's request, the applicant's mentor may attend this interview. Following the interview, the Conference Interview Board forwards its recommendation to the Conference Executive.

The Conference Executive makes a recommendation to the annual general meeting of Conference (or where empowered to do so, makes a decision) as to whether the applicant should be admitted to the order of ministry of The United Church of Canada, and communicates its recommendation to the presbytery/district.

Human Resources circulates the applicant's name to all United Church presbyteries for information. Should a member of any presbytery have a concern about an applicant, the member should let it be known to the Human Resources Unit.

When a decision is made to admit an applicant, the presbytery is free to renew the applicant's appointment. If the decision is not to admit, the applicant's appointment cannot be renewed, and the applicant is ineligible for any other appointment within the United Church.

If the decision is to allow the applicant to proceed, the Conference Executive (or designated staff) completes form ADM 309b (Intent to Recommend Admission of a Minister from Another Church), and forwards it to the Human Resource Unit.

## **Component 6: Rite of Admission**

To be admitted, the applicant must have secured an appointment or call. Applicants may submit their names to the Settlement Committee for appointment or call.

The Rite of Admission into the United Church takes place at the Conference's annual Celebration of Ministries Service. The applicant has now completed the admission process, and is a member of the order of ministry of The United Church of Canada.

# Other Appointments

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## Ministers Serving Ethnic Ministry Congregations

Diaconal supply or ordained supply appointed to a designated Ethnic Ministry congregation may elect not to seek admission to the order of ministry of the United Church, and may be reappointed so long as the appointment is to the Ethnic Ministry congregation. Their credentials must nonetheless be approved by the appropriate General Council working unit (component 1). They should also orient themselves to the ethos of The United Church of Canada to the satisfaction of the appropriate General Council unit.

## Ecumenical Shared Ministry and Mutuality in Mission

An Ecumenical Shared Ministry is a pastoral charge or outreach ministry that is shared by the United Church with one or more other denominations that may be served by a member of the order of ministry of another denomination.

The United Church of Canada's Mutuality in Mission program welcomes global partners as part of an in-depth mission project lasting one to three years.

While both Ecumenical Shared Ministry sites and the Mutuality in Mission program welcome ministers from other denominations, the purpose of each is ecumenical partnership and the building of relationships. Ministry personnel may not apply to the admission process from either of these contexts.

Ministry personnel serving the United Church through the Mutuality in Mission program who wish to make a lifelong commitment to the United Church through admission to the order of ministry of The United Church of Canada must first complete their Mutuality in Mission program and return to their country of origin. Any future application for admission must be made from the applicant's country and church of origin.

For more information on The United Church of Canada's Ecumenical Shared Ministries and Mutuality in Mission programs, please contact the General Council Office of The United Church of Canada:

### *Ecumenical Shared Ministry*

Program Coordinator for Congregational  
and Community Development  
Tel: +1-416-231-5931 ext. 4063  
Toll-free: 1-800-268-3781 (within North America)

### *Mutuality in Mission*

Program Coordinator,  
Global Mission Personnel, People in Partnership  
Tel: +1-416-231-5931 ext. 4018  
Toll-free: 1-800-268-3781 (within North America)

# Important Notes for Applicants

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Please take note of these important points when preparing your application:

1. Please complete Form ADM 305A to submit your application, with responses to the questions on separate sheets of 8½ x 11 paper. Mail or e-mail the application to the Human Resources Unit.
2. Files that are inactive for three years will be closed and returned to the applicant with a resubmission letter and all documents submitted to date.
3. An applicant with a closed file has the option of resubmitting, with current documentation.
4. It is your responsibility to request that transcripts from academic institutions be sent directly to the Human Resources Unit, to provide names of references, and to provide the name of a denominational authority for the letter of good standing.
5. In the event that the Human Resources Unit is unable to contact your references, it is your responsibility to provide a contact to the reference or the name of a new reference.
6. Documentation, including the police records check and the denominational letter of standing, must be original and dated within six month of receipt. Photocopies will only be accepted if notarized. Original or notarized copies will be returned to the applicant at the conclusion of the admission process.
7. Educational competencies will be considered if they meet United Church of Canada standards. Please take note that the educational requirements of admission are not intended to supersede the education you bring to the church, but to add an understanding of the ethos of The United Church of Canada.
8. Admission applicants and those ministers wishing to fill ordained and diaconal supply positions will not be appointed to a pastoral charge, presbytery/district accountable ministry, or presbytery/district recognized ministry before the Conference Interview Board has completed its recommendations stating suitability for ministry in The United Church of Canada.



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