

Designated Lay Ministers Policy and Procedures

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The United Church of Canada
L'Église Unie du Canada

Designated Lay Ministers Policy and Procedures



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What's New

This handbook replaces the designated lay ministry section in the *Handbook for Designated Lay Ministry and Congregational Designated Ministry* (January 2009) and procedures previously contained in *The Manual, 2007*.

Following a motion of the 40th General Council 2009, the procedural policy related to designated lay ministers is found in this handbook, which is approved, and can be modified from time to time, by the Executive of the General Council.

Please note the following procedural changes as of spring 2010:

Requirements

- discernment has been reintegrated into one process for all those considering a call to ministry leadership
- the Licensed Lay Worship Leader course is no longer a prerequisite for applicants for DLM

Recognition

- DLM applicants are recognized by presbytery, no longer by Conference
- a process of prior learning assessment and recognition has been established for former staff associates seeking recognition

Appointment

- a DLM in a presbytery appointment may serve as chair of the Official Board (or equivalent) and as a member or chair of the Board of Trustees
- DLMs may only be appointed to presbytery-accountable ministries, no longer presbytery-recognized ministries
- DLMs who are retired and retained on the roll of presbytery may, at the discretion of Conference, be licensed to administer the sacraments within the presbytery to which they are accountable

Theological Basis

The church is a community of believers (*ecclesia*) called into existence by the presence of Jesus Christ and the call to continue Christ's ministry in the world. Through the Spirit, who enlivens and renews the church, all members are called to discipleship to contribute to Christ's ministry, the work of the church. The church is about God's mission in the world; that there will be shalom for God's creatures and healing for God's creation. Mission and ministry cannot be separated. . . .

Designated lay ministers are members of the church who exercise gifts for leadership in mission and ministry that emerge from within a local congregation or community ministry. Their ministries are presbytery accountable and serve local communities. Because their ministry emerges out of a local pastoral or ministry need, educational preparation may vary. Designated lay ministers are required to complete an educational program while under appointment, and completion of the program provides eligibility for subsequent appointments. While under appointment, designated lay ministers function in the aspects of ministry leadership relating to their appointment and they are also accorded membership in presbytery. At the end of an appointment, the presbytery and designated lay minister discern together questions of ongoing ministry and presbytery membership. Because designated lay ministry is dependent on appointment, it is celebrated (re-enacted) at each appointment. The appointment of a designated lay minister is liturgically enacted by the presbytery either in a presbytery meeting or in the local ministry.

Designated lay ministry is flexible, responsive to local need and responsive to the gift of the Spirit. Designated lay ministers are appointed to varied leadership in the ministries of the church specific to the work undertaken.

Accountable ministry takes form in The United Church of Canada in ordered and designated lay ministry roles. Ordered and designated lay ministers are called by God to exercise leadership within the church. They respond to the yearning of the church to be faithful in its participation in God's mission in the world. To be faithful and effective in that mission, accountable ministers need to be grounded in their spiritual life; secure in their identity; passionate in their mission; and effective in their organization, directed toward equipping the members of the body for engaging the mission and ministry of Christ's church. Because of the importance of all of these tasks, the church recognizes ordered and designated lay ministers and holds them accountable for the faithful exercise of leadership.

—From "Statement on Paid Accountable Ministry" adopted by the 40th General Council 2009

Further information on the background and development of lay ministry in The United Church of Canada may be found at www.united-church.ca/minstaff/pastoral/leadership/designated.

Definitions

The ministry of Jesus Christ, through The United Church of Canada, compels all of us to accept roles for mission and leadership.

Our leadership roles vary in scope and in degree. Within the spectrum of leadership roles, the church calls some lay members to assume roles for defined periods of time that are accountable to the wider church beyond their congregation or local ministry. Lay members who accept these presbytery-accountable ministry positions are known as designated lay ministers for the duration of their appointment.

Leadership roles may include the work of preaching, worship, sacrament, pastoral care, education, or other forms of service. When lay members of the church complete the prescribed training program, or its equivalent, they may be recognized by their presbytery/district as eligible to serve as designated lay ministers without further training or certification. The church honours the level of skill, work, and commitment of designated lay ministers by including them as ministry personnel and ensuring a minimum standard of financial support.

Throughout this handbook, certain terms are used with a specific meaning in the context of church membership and leadership roles. These terms are defined in the by-laws of the United Church (*The Manual, 2010*, section 001):

“**Designated Lay Minister**” means a lay member of the United Church appointed by a Presbytery to serve in a Presbytery Accountable Ministry. This category does not include persons serving as Candidate Supply, Intern Supply, Student Intern, or Student Supply.

“**Presbytery Accountable Ministry**” means any ministry within the jurisdiction of the Presbytery for which the Presbytery has the responsibility for oversight.

“**Ministry Personnel**” means those persons who are members of the Order of Ministry, those lay persons under appointment as a Designated Lay Minister, Candidate Supply, Intern Supply, or Student Supply, and those persons from other denominations under appointment as a Diaconal Supply or Ordained Supply. It does not include persons serving as Congregational Designated Ministers.

A further term that is defined for the purpose of this handbook is *recognition*.

“**Recognition**” means the acknowledgement by a presbytery that a lay person has completed the process of discernment, met the educational requirements, and is deemed ready to serve in a presbytery-accountable ministry as a designated lay minister without the need for direct supervision by a pastoral charge supervisor or educational supervisor.

Policy

022 Inquirer.

- (a) Application. A person whose belief is that they have a call to ministry shall approach the Clerk of Session or Secretary of the Church Board or Secretary of the Church Council of the Congregation of which they are a member and ask to be recognized as an Inquirer.
- (b) Requirements. To be an Inquirer, a person must:
 - i. have been a member of the United Church and active in a Congregation of the United Church, for at least twenty-four (24) months. The question of what constitutes requisite activity in a Congregation for a given person is to be considered and determined by the Session or Church Board or Church Council;
 - ii. be currently in close association with a Congregation of the United Church;
 - iii. be willing to meet periodically for at least one (1) year with a Discernment Committee of the Congregation and the Presbytery and be willing to have their call to ministry tested by the church; and
 - iv. be recognized as an Inquirer by the Session or Church Board or Church Council and by the Presbytery.

343 Designated Lay Ministers.

The Presbytery shall have authority to appoint a Designated Lay Minister to fill a Vacancy in a Presbytery Accountable Ministry. The General Council has approved policies and procedures relating to Designated Lay Ministers. These policies and procedures must be followed in matters of education, appointment, accountability, discipline, and recognition of Designated Lay Ministers. These policies and procedures shall be available from the General Council office to any Court or other body of the United Church and to any person seeking appointment as a Designated Lay Minister. (2010)

- (a) Appointments. Appointments shall be to a specific ministry for a specified term to be determined by the Presbytery. The term of such an appointment shall not extend beyond June 30 of each year without the prior consent of the Conference Settlement Committee. Appointments may be renewed. (2010)
- (b) Agreement with Doctrine and Polity. To be appointed as a Designated Lay Minister, a person must be in essential agreement with the doctrine of the United Church and be willing to abide by the Polity of the United Church. (2010)
- (c) Sacraments.
 - i. The Conference may grant to a Designated Lay Minister for whom the Presbytery has decided to make application after having received a request from the Session or Church Board or Church Council a licence to administer the sacraments on a specific Pastoral Charge for the duration of their appointment. (2010)
 - ii. The Conference may, at its discretion, grant to a Designated Lay Minister who has been recognized by the Presbytery and for whom the Presbytery has decided to make application after having received a request from the Session or Church Board or Church Council a licence to administer the sacraments within the jurisdiction of the Presbytery to which the Designated Lay Minister is accountable. (2010)

The Conference may grant to a lay member of the United Church who at the time of their retirement was serving as a Designated Lay Minister who had been recognized by the Presbytery and for whom the Presbytery has decided to make application a licence to administer the sacraments within the jurisdiction of the Presbytery, in cooperation with the Session or Church Board or Church Council and under the oversight of the Presbytery. (2010)

—*The Manual, 2010*

Manual References

001:	Definitions
041.1:	Ministry Positions
067:	Primary Courts of accountability and discipline
153(b)v, vii:	Duty of the Session to recommend lay members to Presbytery
310:	Presbytery membership
363:	Oversight of Ministry Personnel
364:	Charged with a Criminal Offence
368:	Discontinued Lay Ministry Appointment List
410:	Conference membership

Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice

Designated lay ministers are ministry personnel of The United Church of Canada, appointed by presbyteries/districts to serve presbytery-accountable ministries. The policy that defines the effectiveness of ministry personnel, known as the Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice, was approved by the 38th General Council. Please familiarize yourself with these standards (www.united-church.ca/minstaff/pastoral/guidelines).

Procedure

1. Inquirer Stage

An individual begins a process with a congregation to discern the direction of his or her call to ministry

All Christians are called to ministry, or service, as the people of God. For those who experience God calling them to particular roles as ministry personnel in the church, there are specific processes to determine suitability and readiness. Membership in The United Church of Canada for 24 months and active involvement with a congregation are requirements for beginning the 12-month discernment process.

Information about discernment in the United Church may be found in *Discerning a Call* (DIS 200) and in “Process for Discernment, Appointment, and Recognition as a Designated Lay Minister” (DLM 510) available online at www.united-church.ca/handbooks.

Forms

There are a number of forms for the designated lay minister procedures. We try to keep the number of forms at a minimum, but they do provide clarity of information, document decisions, ensure accountability, and provide historical documentation for audit purposes. A listing of the relevant forms may be found in Appendix A. Always check the United Church website (www.united-church.ca) for the most up-to date forms and guidelines.

2. Applicant Stage

The presbytery/district determines the individual's suitability and readiness to be appointed as a designated lay minister and engage in the path to recognition

At the end of the discernment process, the discernment committee may recommend to the Presbytery/District Education and Students (E&S) Committee that an inquirer is suitable to serve as a designated lay minister.

When the E&S Committee receives a recommendation that an inquirer is suitable, it arranges for the inquirer to be interviewed by the E&S Committee and the Conference Interview Board. If the inquirer is found to have the capacity to engage in ministry leadership, the presbytery/district makes a decision to receive or not receive the inquirer as an applicant for designated lay ministry. Acceptance into the Designated Lay Ministry Diploma Program and a presbytery appointment are requirements to complete the path to recognition as a designated lay minister.

The applicant's preparation for recognition includes successful completion of the Designated Lay Ministry Diploma Program and Supervised Ministry Education in a presbytery appointment.

Applicants may contact their Education and Students Committee for information about Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR), a process that recognizes knowledge and skills gained from previous experience and education that may be assessed as an equivalency for components of the recognition requirements (see Appendix B).

Diploma Program

The Diploma Program consists of learning circles and complementary courses.

Six residential learning circles over three years, each of 10 days' duration, held at Calling Lakes education centre are required. The learning circles introduce theory and theology, guide students in reflection on integrating the content with the practice of ministry, and provide a peer setting for deepening formation in lay ministry. A Web-based online community supports preparation for and follow-up after the learning circles.

Complementary courses are chosen to round out the educational program, based on the learning needs and particular ministry focus of the student through consultation with the DLM program coordinator at Calling Lakes and the Presbytery/District Education and Students Committee. Three courses, each a semester or equivalent, are taken at a theological school, university, or educational centre.

Supervised Ministry Education/Presbytery Appointment

Applicants are required to complete a minimum of three years of reflection on the practice of ministry with an educational supervisor and a lay supervision team in a presbytery appointment at a Conference-approved learning site. The appointment is a minimum of 20 hours per week.

It is the responsibility of the designated lay minister, in consultation with the Presbytery/District Pastoral Relations Committee and Education and Students Committee, to find an appointment appropriate for his or her educational process. Designated lay ministers may be appointed to presbytery-accountable ministries in either solo or team ministry contexts.

The Presbytery/District Education and Students Committee approves readiness for the appointment and the Conference Internship and Educational Supervision Committee ensures that the appointment site is suitable for the purpose of Supervised Ministry Education.

The Presbytery/District Pastoral Relations Committee may approve the appointment once it has been notified of the suitability of the site for educational purposes. The committee will also appoint a pastoral charge supervisor.

Sacraments

The presbytery/district may, upon receipt of a request from the Official Board (or equivalent), make an application to the Conference for the applicant to be licensed to administer the sacraments on the pastoral charge to which he or she is appointed for the duration of the appointment.

Presbytery and Congregational Membership

Applicants may be appointed to a pastoral charge or presbytery-accountable ministry that is outside of their home presbytery. In this case, the applicant would be a member of the presbytery in which he or she is appointed, but the recognition process would remain under the oversight of the Education and Students Committee in their home presbytery. Designated lay ministers also retain congregational membership, normally within their home congregation.

Education and Students Committee

The Presbytery/District Education and Students Committee retains a central role throughout the applicant stage. The committee

- conducts an annual interview to assess ongoing suitability and readiness for recognition as a designated lay minister
- helps to clarify the applicant's learning goals
- receives input from various participants in the applicant's process
- assesses successful completion of the preparation program
- makes a final recommendation to the presbytery/district to recognize or not recognize the applicant as a designated lay minister in The United Church of Canada

For further information about the role of the Education and Students Committee, refer to "Process for Discernment, Appointment, and Recognition as a Designated Lay Minister" (DLM 510) and "Procedures for Presbytery/District Education and Students Committee" (CAN 213), available at www.united-church.ca/handbooks.

3. Recognition Stage

The presbytery/district determines an applicant's completion of the preparation program and readiness to be appointed as a designated lay minister without the need for direct supervision

When the Education and Students Committee recommends to presbytery/district that the applicant be recognized, the presbytery/district makes a decision and enacts the recognition in a service of worship.

Applicants may only be recognized if they have an active presbytery appointment. The presbytery/district, in consultation with the Conference Settlement Committee, reappoints the recognized DLM to his or her current ministry setting, or another appointment is negotiated.

Appointments

Designated lay ministers are eligible for presbytery appointments that fill vacancies or supply positions within pastoral charges and other presbytery-accountable ministries.

A recognized designated lay minister meets the quorum requirements for meetings of the pastoral charge or congregation. Additionally, a designated lay minister may chair the Official Board (or equivalent) of the pastoral charge, and be a member of or the chairperson of the Board of Trustees.

Sacraments

The presbytery, upon receipt of a request from an Official Board (or equivalent), may make an application to the Conference for a recognized designated lay minister to administer the sacraments. The licence authorizes the designated lay minister to preside at the sacraments within the jurisdiction of the presbytery to which the designated lay minister is accountable.

Conference, Presbytery, and Congregational Membership

When appointed to a pastoral charge or presbytery-accountable ministry, designated lay ministers are a member of the presbytery in which they are appointed, and expected to be an active participant in the life and work of the presbytery. Designated lay ministers are also a member and active participant of the Conference in which they serve. Finally, as lay members of the United Church, designated lay ministers retain congregational membership, normally in their home congregation.

At the end of a pastoral relationship, it is the role of the presbytery together with the designated lay minister to discern questions of ongoing ministry leadership and presbytery membership. Continuous presbytery membership is not assumed at the end of a pastoral relationship, and designated lay ministers are not transferred from one presbytery to another. At the beginning of each appointment, the new pastoral relationship is celebrated in worship at a presbytery meeting or at the local ministry.

Retirement

Designated lay ministers who at the time of their retirement are serving in a presbytery appointment are retained on the roll of presbytery and may, at the request of the presbytery, be granted a licence to administer the sacraments by the Conference within the jurisdiction of the presbytery, in cooperation with an Official Board (or equivalent).

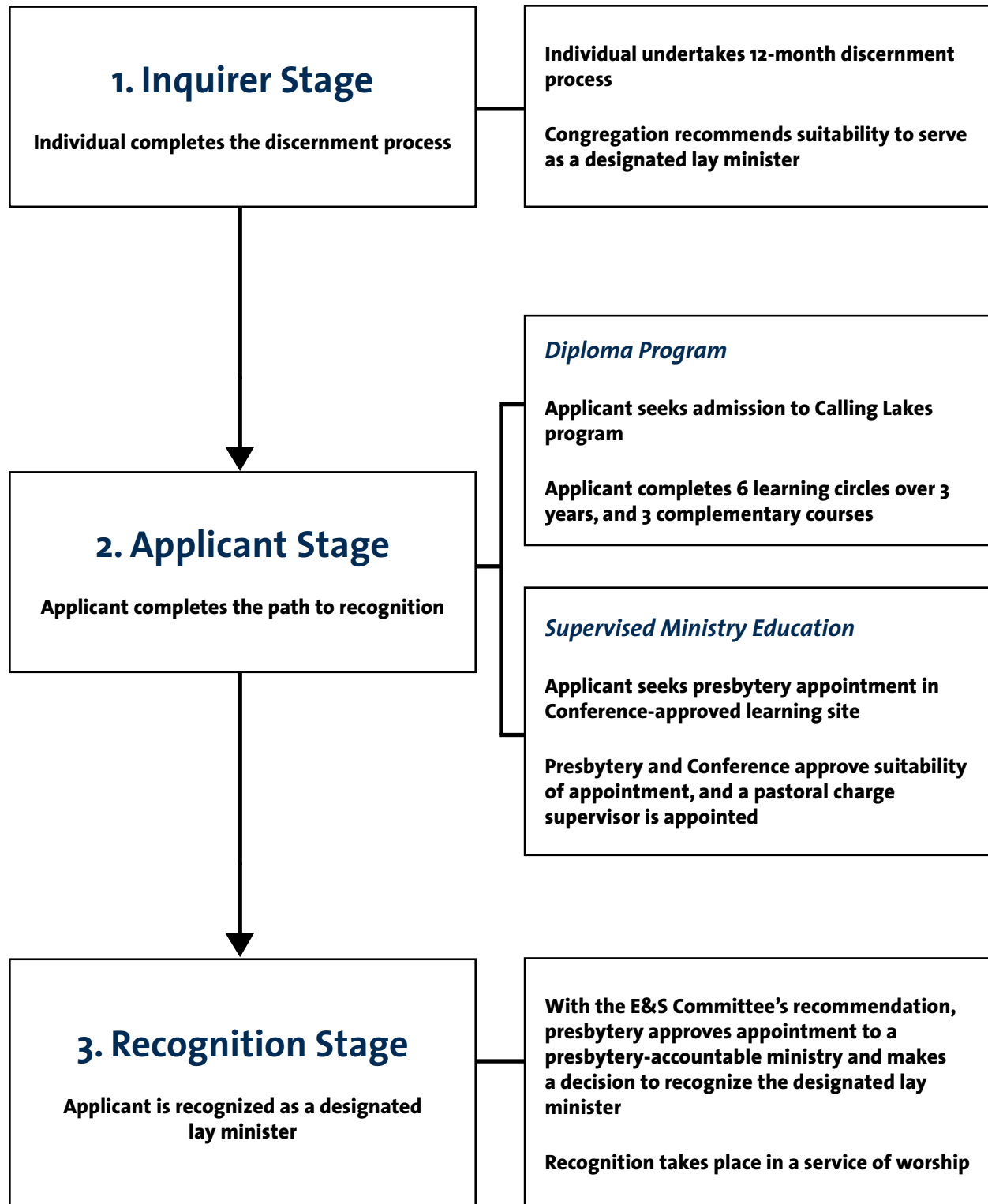
Former Staff Associates (DLM not recognized)

Individuals previously appointed as staff associates are now designated lay minister applicants, as they have not yet been recognized. Former staff associates should meet with their Education and Students Committee for assessment of their qualifications and recommendations for recognition.

A prior learning assessment adviser is available through the General Council Office as well as a prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) panel to provide recommendations to Education and Students Committees regarding a suitable program of preparation.

Former staff associates are not required to complete the discernment process. Please refer to Appendix B.

Becoming a Designated Lay Minister



Appendix A: Forms and Handbooks

Up-to-date forms and handbooks can be found at www.united-church.ca/forms and www.united-church.ca/handbooks. From time to time their numbers or titles change. We encourage you to refer to the website for the most current versions. Each form specifies what it is used for and how it is routed.

DIS 200	<i>Discerning a Call</i>
DIS 201	Action Recognizing an Inquirer by Session and Presbytery/District
DIS 202(a)	Report and Recommendation of Discernment Committee
DLM 500	Presbytery/District Record Card for Designated Lay Ministers
DLM 502(b)	Application for Appointment as a Designated Lay Minister
DLM 503	Actions by Session and Presbytery/District Regarding Applicants for Designated Lay Ministry
DLM 503(b)	Approval of Appointment for Applicants for Designated Lay Ministry
DLM 504	Initial Certification to DLM Education Program
PR 433 AP	Record of Appointment
DLM 505	Applicant Self-Assessment Form
DLM 506	Annual Confirmation of Designated Lay Minister Status by Presbytery/District
DLM 507	Application for Supervised Ministry Education
DLM 508	Designated Lay Minister Evaluation Report of Educational Supervision
DLM 509	Application to Be Recognized as a Designated Lay Minister
DLM 510	Process for Discernment, Appointment, and Recognition as a Designated Lay Minister
DLM 517	Annual Education Centre Report to Presbytery/District E&S Committee re Designated Lay Ministers
CAN 213	Procedures for the Presbytery/District Education and Students Committee

Appendix B: Former Staff Associates and Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) is a widely utilized process that involves the identification, documentation, assessment and recognition of learning (i.e. skills, knowledge and values). This learning may be acquired through formal education, but also through informal study, including such things as: work and life experience, training, spiritual practices, independent reading, volunteer activity, travel, and hobbies.

One of the most important things to understand about PLAR is that it does not recognize experience. It recognizes the knowledge and skills that people gain from their experience. *What is important is not what the person has done, but what they have learned through what they have done.*

Recognition of prior learning is primarily used to determine if a person has fulfilled the requirements of an education or training program or professional certification. PLAR can identify areas of content that do not need to be repeated. It also helps the learner in developing clear learning goals to address gaps in knowledge, skill, values, attitudes, formation and integration.

Growing in self understanding and awareness is noted as one of the most profound benefits of using a PLAR process. The rigor of reflection through a well supported process can be a substantial tool in deepening the learning that is being tested for through the process.

—“*Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition for Designated Lay Ministry in the United Church of Canada,*”
Caryn Douglas, *Lead Consultant, Leading by Example, September 2009*

When the designated lay minister category became policy in the United Church, lay pastoral ministers, lay pastoral ministers-in-training, and staff associates serving appointments all became known as designated lay ministers. While the title for all three categories was changed to designated lay minister, people serving in these categories were at different stages of the process to be recognized.

- Lay pastoral ministers had completed their educational program and were recognized by Conference. Their title changed to designated lay minister.
- Lay pastoral ministers-in-training had a presbytery appointment and were engaged in the educational program offered, at that time, through United Theological College. They continued to fulfill the requirements to be recognized as a designated lay minister and were commonly known as DLM—not yet recognized. The LPMit program at United Theological College concluded in June 2010.
- Staff associates serving in a presbytery appointment had fulfilled their requirements for appointment. Staff associates are commonly known as DLM—not yet recognized. As such they are required to engage in a recognition process. The inquiry and applicant stages of the process were deemed to have been completed for staff associates who were currently in a presbytery appointment or who had been appointed in the three previous years.

Recognition Process for Currently Appointed Designated Lay Ministers (Former Staff Associates)

In order to engage the recognition process, staff associates must meet with their Presbytery/District Education and Students Committee for assessment of their qualifications and recommendation regarding further educational requirements and recognition, if any. It is the E&S Committee's role to make a recommendation to the presbytery/district regarding readiness of the staff associate for recognition as a designated lay minister.

To assist the E&S Committee, an assessment process with a prior learning assessment adviser is available. The adviser will work with staff associates to develop a portfolio of learning in the areas of *being*, *knowing*, and *doing*. A General Council Office Assessment Panel, working in consultation with the adviser, will provide recommendations to Education and Students Committees.

Recommendations will be made in four categories:

- 1) Ready for Recognition—no further educational requirements are needed
- 2) Specified number of courses needed prior to recognition
- 3) Exemptions and/or recommended courses
- 4) The DLM Diploma Program is required

Costs for the prior learning assessment adviser are subsidized by the General Council Office but will require a contribution of \$100 by the individual being assessed. Education and Students Committees may contact the General Council Office for further information.



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\$2.00 or download from www.united-church.ca/handbooks