



**The United Church of Canada
L'Église Unie du Canada**

Ministry Vocations, Human Resources Unit
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Process for Discernment, Appointment, and Recognition as a Designated Lay Minister

Always check the United Church website (www.united-church.ca) for the most up-to-date forms and guidelines.

The Discernment Process

Individual

Before becoming an inquirer, a person must be a full member of The United Church of Canada for *24 months* and currently involved with a congregation (*The Manual*, section 343).

1. People who believe they are called to or wish to explore Designated Lay Ministry should contact their session, church council, or church board and ask that the congregation set up a discernment committee.
2. The individual fills out the first part of form **DIS 201: Action Recognizing an Inquirer** and gives it to the session.

Session or Equivalent

1. The session meets with the individual and decides whether they will recognize the person as an inquirer and set up a discernment committee.
2. If a discernment committee is to be initiated, the session names two representatives to the committee and the inquirer names one. All members of the committee need to be members of the congregation, including the person chosen by the inquirer, and one should be an elder or equivalent.

When naming committee members, the session looks for some of these qualities: willingness to share faith, good listener, good questioner, knowledge of the United Church and its ministry, and ability to be supportive as well as analytical.

3. If proceeding, the clerk of session (or equivalent) completes **DIS 201** (page 1) and sends it to the Presbytery/District Education and Students Committee.

Presbytery/District Education and Students (E&S) Committee

1. The Presbytery/District Education and Students Committee receives the applicant as an inquirer and appoints one or two representatives to the discernment committee.
2. The committee also completes **DIS 201** (page 2) and distributes copies as indicated on that page.

3. The presbytery/district representative to the discernment committee is responsible for calling the first meeting and preparing the discernment committee for its work. *The 12 months of the discernment process begin on the date recorded by the Presbytery/District E&S Committee on DLM 501.*

Discernment Committee

1. The discernment committee meets with the inquirer at least six times over a 12-month period to discuss issues of belief and spirituality, ministry and call, leadership and lifestyle, the United Church, and educational requirements.

The education requirements for Designated Lay Ministry can be found on the last page of this leaflet.

DIS 200: Discerning a Call contains helpful information about meetings, processes, and requirements. It is available to download from www.united-church.ca/handbooks or to order from United Church Resource Distribution.

2. At the end of the process, the discernment committee makes a recommendation regarding the individual's call. This may be to apply for an appointment as a designated lay minister or to continue active participation in a congregation.
3. The discernment committee fills out **DIS 202(a): Report and Recommendation of Discernment Committee** and forwards it to the session or board of the congregation.
4. Depending on the recommendation of the discernment committee, the inquirer completes **DLM 502(b): Application for Appointment as a Designated Lay Minister**, and the discernment committee presents its recommendations and the application to the inquirer's session.

The Appointment Process

Session

1. The session receives the discernment committee's recommendations and the inquirer's application and makes a decision to recommend or not recommend the individual for appointment.
2. The session completes **DLM 503: Actions by Session and Presbytery/District Regarding Applicants for Designated Lay Ministers**, page 1, and sends it with the original of **DIS 202(a)** and the application **DLM 502(b)** to the Presbytery/District E&S Committee.

Presbytery/District Education and Students Committee

1. When the session recommends appointment as a Designated Lay Minister, the Presbytery/District E&S Committee completes **DLM 503**, page 2 top, and sends it to the Conference Interview Board (CIB) with **DIS 202(a)** and the application from the inquirer **DLM 502 (b)**.
2. The CIB meets with the inquirer. Following the interview, the CIB fills out **DLM 503**, page 2 bottom, and returns it to the E&S Committee with the CIB's recommendation.
3. The E&S Committee interviews the inquirer and makes its recommendation to the presbytery/district regarding the person's readiness for appointment as a designated lay minister.
4. Two members of the E&S Committee sign **DLM 503**, page 3, "Police Records Check." This section must be fulfilled prior to the presbytery/district decision.
5. Then they send **DLM 503**, **DLM 502(a)**, and **DLM 502(b)** to the presbytery/district secretary.
6. Following presbytery/district approval, the presbytery/district secretary completes and signs **DLM 503** (page 3) and distributes it as indicated on that page.
7. Participation in an educational program is a requirement of appointment and includes a minimum half-time appointment to a presbytery/district vacancy for supervised ministry education. The E&S Committee must confirm the individual's acceptance into the program at Calling Lakes Centre, complete **DLM 503(b): Approval of Appointment for Applicants for Designated Lay Ministry**, and forward it to the Conference Internship and Educational Supervision Committee.
8. The Conference Internship and Educational Supervision Committee must approve the pastoral charge or ministry setting as a supervised ministry education site and supervisor and forward **DLM 503(b)** to the appointing Presbytery Pastoral Relations Committee. **DLM 503(b)** becomes part of PR 433 AP.

The Recognition Process

1. The Presbytery/District E&S Committee retains a central role throughout the recognition process. The committee
 - conducts an *annual interview* to assess ongoing suitability and readiness for recognition as a designated lay ministry
 - helps to *clarify* the applicant's learning goals for the DLM Education Program and assess successful completion
 - makes *final recommendations* to the presbytery/district regarding recognition as a designated lay minister
2. Each year, DLM applicants are required to complete **DLM 505: Applicant Self-Assessment Form**. The education centre provides a report on the applicant's progress using **DLM 517: Annual Education Centre Report**. The supervised ministry education site and supervisor provide a report using **DLM 508: Designated Lay Minister Evaluation Report**. All forms go to the Presbytery/District E&S Committee.
3. Each year, the Presbytery/District E&S Committee completes **DLM 506: Annual Confirmation of Designated Lay Minister Status by Presbytery/District** and sends it to presbytery/district for confirmation.
4. Applicants should maintain a current file of documents of their process.
5. At the beginning of the final year of the DLM Education Program, the applicant completes **DLM 509: Application to Be Recognized as a Designated Lay Minister** and sends it to the Presbytery/District E&S Committee.
6. The E&S Committee has a final interview with the applicant, completes Part 2 of **DLM 509** and sends it to the presbytery/district for action.
7. In consultation with the Presbytery/District Pastoral Relations Committee and the Conference Settlement Committee, the applicant for recognition is reappointed to his or her current ministry setting or another appointment is negotiated.
8. The home presbytery/district votes on the recommendation from the Education & Students Committee to recognize or not recognize the applicant as a designated lay minister.
9. Recognition takes place at the presbytery/district in a service of worship.

Educational Program for Designated Lay Ministry

The educational program for Designated Lay Ministry is offered by Calling Lakes Centre. The overall design is a three-year community-based program consisting of three components:

1. **Supervised Ministry Education.** Three years of reflection and integration on the practice of ministry with an educational supervisor and Lay Supervision Team in a presbytery appointment at a Conference-approved learning site. The appointment is at least half-time.
2. **Learning Circles.** Six residential learning circles over three years, each of 10 days' duration to be held in January and June. 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. The learning circles are required for all students regardless of previous formal learning or experience.
3. **Complementary Courses.** Complementary courses are chosen to round out the educational program based on the learning needs and particular ministry focus of the student. Three courses, each a semester or equivalent, are taken at theological school, university, or educational centre or other venue, as approved by the Designated Lay Ministry program coordinator and Presbytery/District Education and Students Committee.

For more information, contact the DLM program coordinator at

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