

Lay Supervision Team

A Guide

The United Church of Canada



L'Église Unie du Canada



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The United Church of Canada
L'Église Unie du Canada
3250 Bloor St. West, Suite 300
Toronto, ON
Canada M8X 2Y4
1-800-268-3781
www.united-church.ca

Copies of this booklet are available from www.united-church.ca and from:

Ministry Vocations
The United Church of Canada
Phone: 416-231-7680
Toll-free: 1-800-268-3781
Fax: 416-231-3103, Attn. Ministry Vocations
E-mail: ministry@united-church.ca



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1. Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to the Lay Supervision Team for your Supervised Ministry Education site. The United Church of Canada thanks you for making the commitment to serve as a member of this committee.

The Lay Supervision Team (LST) is a representative group of lay people associated with the Supervised Ministry Education site who are dedicated to the ministry and mission of the church. They are available to assist the student minister* to grow personally, intellectually, professionally, spiritually, and in social awareness.

LST members function as interpreters about the life of the congregation. They also interpret the process of education and supervision to the congregation. LST members also need to be open to their own learning about the wider processes of the church; the functions of ordained, diaconal, and lay ministers; and their own Christian calling.

The time and energy you put into this role will not only help the United Church train future leaders of our church—it will also be an experience of enrichment and personal challenge for you. Based on the concept that we are all lifelong learners, it is assumed that every member of the Lay Supervision Team has some learning goals related to his/her faith and understanding of ministry and the United Church, or personal goals of relationship, dealing with conflict, giving feedback, and so on. Members of the Lay Supervision Team are encouraged to identify one or two goals for themselves and then to seek ways to accomplish these goals.

Please refer to *Learning Together: A Covenanting Resource for Supervised Ministry Education* (SME 226) for further guidelines.

- * For the purposes of this document, “student minister” refers to a candidate for ordained ministry who is fulfilling an internship, a candidate for ordained ministry who is appointed as part of a ministry-based education program, or an applicant for designated lay ministry fulfilling the Supervised Ministry Education requirement for recognition.

2. Purpose and Role

Appointment of Lay Supervision Team

The Lay Supervision Team is appointed by the Official Board or its equivalent. If this is done in advance, then the LST can begin its work well before the arrival of the student minister.

It is recommended that five to eight people serve on the team. The team should be representative of the congregation and of the community in which ministry occurs. It should include people of all ages, male and female.

It is *not* appropriate to appoint a paid staff person; the chair of the Official Board, session, or council; the treasurer; any member of the Ministry and Personnel Committee; or anyone else who may have a conflict of interest with the student minister.

The Lay Supervision Team does not replace the Ministry and Personnel Committee of the congregation, even if the student minister is the only ministry personnel on the site.

Accountability

The Lay Supervision Team is accountable to

- the student minister to assist her/his process of learning
- the Official Board or its equivalent that appointed the team
- the Conference Committee on Internship and Educational Supervision for the quality of the education on the site and the evaluations of the work undertaken
- Ministry Vocations in the Human Resources Unit of the General Council Office for the oversight of the education and formation of a person for ministry leadership

Responsibilities

Lay Supervision Team members are active participants in the learning covenant that is made with the student minister and supervisor.

The LST's primary role is to support, accompany, and encourage the student minister in this learning opportunity by

- sharing their perceptions and knowledge of the site and the community. LST members reflect with the student minister on the practice of ministry experiences and the learning opportunities that take place during the internship.
- offering feedback to the student minister. The LST contributes to integrating the learning and fulfilling the learning covenant.
- engaging in conversation and reflection on experiences. The LST members grow in their own understanding of the ministry of the whole people of God.
- helping the student minister gain skills for ministry leadership, deepen awareness of pastoral identity, enhance her/his spirituality, and gain interpersonal awareness.

Some key skills for the Lay Supervision Team:

- a vision of ministry as a shared endeavour between the laity and the minister
- friendship
- listening
- confidentiality
- a willingness to share your faith
- knowledge of different aspects of the congregation
- the ability to observe behaviour and offer constructive feedback

The LST does *not* provide disciplinary oversight of the student minister. That is the role of the Ministry and Personnel Committee, which has oversight of all staff in the pastoral charge. In any situation where there appears to be a conflict of roles, the Conference Committee on Internship and Educational Supervision should be consulted for advice and guidance.

Conflict Resolution

The learning covenant includes a process for resolving differences that cannot be resolved by those involved, including naming a third party to assist in the process.

The Lay Supervision Team should discuss its role should a conflict arise between the student minister and the supervisor or between the Lay Supervision Team and the student minister, and at what point you would call on the third party named in the covenant.

For further information on resolving conflict, refer to *Learning Together: A Covenanting Resource for Supervised Ministry Education* (SME 226).

3. Meetings

Meeting with the Supervisor before the Student Minister Arrives

- The supervisor helps with planning and with training the LST for its role in educational supervision. Once the student minister is on site, the supervisor does *not* attend regular meetings of the LST. The supervisor *does* meet with the LST and the student minister to review the mid-point and final evaluations.
- Introduce the LST members and share some of the history of your congregation.
- Clarify the role of the LST.
- Plan to attend the orientation event provided by the Conference Committee on Internship and Educational Supervision.
- Discuss how you will work together to determine an agenda for each meeting.
- Discuss the available learning experiences and the task needs of the congregation.
- Clarify your roles in the learning covenant, and begin to share learning goals and action plans.
- Write to the student minister welcoming her/him. You might include a copy of the annual report, newsletter, bulletin, and so on. You might also encourage members of the congregation or site to send notes of welcome.
- Discuss how you can help the student minister with any housing concerns and how you can introduce him/her to the community. Pre-introduce the student minister to the congregation through notes in the bulletin, newsletter, and so on.
- Plan to appropriately share the learning covenant with the whole congregation.
- Plan a ritual to introduce the student minister and mark the beginning of the learning covenant.

Planning for Meetings

As stated earlier, the main purpose of the Lay Supervision Team is to assist the student minister to grow personally, intellectually, professionally, spiritually, and in social awareness.

To achieve this, the committee needs to be intentional about focusing on the learning goals of the student minister and providing constructive feedback. To this end, the Lay Supervision Team should meet at least every two to three weeks. For student ministers who are appointed for a year or more, meeting once a month is sufficient. You may need more meetings at the beginning to get to know the student minister and develop the learning covenant. You may also need extra meetings to finalize the mid-point evaluation and the final evaluation.

Other details to consider:

- The convenor or chair of the committee should be someone who can encourage all members of the LST to take part in the discussion and express their points of view.
- Hold meetings in a comfortable place with no distractions, such as a church room or in the homes of LST members.

- Be sure to discuss the question of confidentiality as a group early on.
- The agenda of meetings should be decided ahead of time by the LST convener or chair and the student minister, or by the whole committee at its previous meeting.
- The length of meetings will depend on how long you need in order to deal with the concerns and agenda of the student minister and the members of the LST. It is recommended that about two hours be set aside for each meeting. This will allow time for people to probe the issues of ministry to some depth, as well as allow some time for worship and socializing.

Note: Since the meetings are intended to focus on the learning goals and experiences of the student minister, it is *not* appropriate for his/her partner or other family members to be present. The LST may invite the student minister's partner/family to a social gathering, however, to welcome and get to know them.

Typical Meeting with Student minister

A typical meeting might follow this format:

1. Open with a devotion/worship time: prayer, reading, singing, or centring meditation.
2. Check in to see how people have been doing since the last meeting.
3. Invite the student minister to share some aspect of ministry she/has has been engaged in, and discuss the experience as a group.
4. Provide any feedback that is available at this time.
5. Review the learning covenant.
6. Determine which aspect of the learning covenant you will discuss at your next meeting, and set the date.
7. End the meeting when you decided it would end.
8. Share brief closing remarks or reflections on the meeting.

Make sure

- someone takes notes
- all participants have an opportunity to speak and share
- everyone practises active listening

Outline of Meetings

| | Purpose/Tasks |
|--|--|
| First Meeting with Student Minister | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be intentional about getting to know one another. • Clarify the role and purpose of the LST. • Talk about how the meetings will be conducted—timing, location, prayer. • Discuss the meaning of confidentiality and commit to how you will (or will not) share information during and outside the meetings. • Ensure all members have a copy of this booklet, a copy of <i>Learning Together</i> (SME 226; download from www.united-church.ca), and the appropriate evaluation form. • Begin the process of preparing the learning covenant, and set a date for completion. • Make plans to recognize the learning covenant and the participants in a service of worship. Refer to <i>Learning Together</i> (SME 226) for a sample liturgy (download from www.united-church.ca). |
| Mid-Point Evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the mid-point evaluation and share it with the supervisor and the student minister. Distribute as indicated on the evaluation form. • Review the learning covenant and make changes, if necessary. |
| Third-to-Last Meeting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make plans for the final evaluation. • Discuss how the student minister will say goodbye to the many people who have become important to her/him. Plan a ritual and party to end the relationship. |
| Second-to-Last Meeting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet without the student minister present. • Discuss and respond to the evaluation questions. • Arrange for someone to type up the evaluation responses. • Finalize the arrangements for the farewell event(s). |
| Final Meeting with Student Minister | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite the supervisor to be present. • Complete the final evaluation process and sign the evaluation form. • As a committee, with the student minister, have some rite of closure for the end of the learning covenant to celebrate the experience. |
| After Final Evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the experience of the Lay Supervision Team. • Evaluate the work of your team. • Prepare a report for the church committee to whom you are accountable. |

4. Providing Feedback and Evaluation

What Is Feedback?

Feedback is **an ongoing process of comment** offered to the student minister in response to his/her learning goals. This happens formally in regular meetings and informally through conversation and sharing of leadership.

- Be honest.
- Be caring. “Speak the truth in love.”
- Remember how powerful those who evaluate us seem in our lives.
- Be as clear and descriptive as possible. Use examples to illustrate your comments.
- Do not leave any surprises to the end.

Lay people can often give helpful feedback on sermons, pastoral visiting, small group leadership, “presence” at church events, and so on. Sometimes the best sharing comes out of our own experiences. For example, how helpful (or unhelpful) was the church/minister in a time of illness or grief? What are your expectations in such situations?

Refer to *Learning Together: A Covenanting Resource for Supervised Ministry Education* (SME 226) for more information about feedback.

What Is Evaluation?

An evaluation is **the formal summary of the feedback that has already been offered**. It is not the time to raise new concerns or surprises.

Share evaluation forms early in your meetings so everyone will know what is expected. Take notes at every meeting rather than wait until the mid-point or end to complete the evaluation.

Discuss the process you will follow as you complete the forms. Many Lay Supervision Teams choose to write individual responses before completing a group response. After each party to the learning covenant has completed her/his own evaluation form, meet with the supervisor and the student minister to share and discuss your evaluation comments and then sign the completed forms.

Please forward the evaluations to the appropriate parties as indicated on the forms. These evaluations are important for the student minister’s home Presbytery/District Education and Students Committee to determine successful completion of requirements and to assess growth and formation. The school will use the information to assist the student minister with future learning needs. The Conference Committee on Internship and Educational Supervision uses the evaluation to assess the suitability of the learning site and supervisor.