

Admission to the Order of Ministry

November 2016

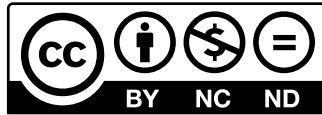


The United Church of Canada
L'Église Unie du Canada

Admission to the Order of Ministry (November 2016)



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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



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WHAT'S NEW

- Under Component 2: Initial Interview, the Ministry and Employment Unit circulates the applicant's name to all presbyteries.

Introduction

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

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 3,000 congregations and other mission units and is seeking to become a racially and culturally diverse denomination that meets the needs of all of its faith communities.

The Admission 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. 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 Ministry and Employment 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 | 4. education for orientation |
| 2. initial interview | 5. final interview |
| 3. initial appointment | 6. rite of admission |

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

Policy Statement

H.8. Admission from Other Denominations

8.1 Policy

The United Church recognizes that diaconal or ordained men and women who are admitted from other recognized global Christian traditions make a valuable contribution to the United Church's wide variety of ministries and missions.

The United Church 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.

8.2 Readiness and Suitability for Admission

A minister from another denomination may be admitted to the order of ministry of the United Church if

- (a) they have an understanding of the ethos, polity, and history of the United Church that they have acquired through education;
- (b) they are in essential agreement with the doctrine of the United Church as stated in the Basis of Union; and
- (c) they agree to comply with the polity of the United Church.

8.3 Decisions

The appropriate General Council working unit is responsible for deciding whether a minister from another denomination may enter the admission process.

The Conference is responsible for the final decision on whether to admit a minister of another denomination to the order of ministry of the United Church. The Conference considers the presbytery's recommendation when making this decision.

The Manual, 2016

Eligibility

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 Ministry and Employment 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
- they have completed a Master of Divinity or an equivalent degree in theology

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?

Summary of the Admission Process

1: Application and Credential Clearance

Applicant:

- submits to Ministry and Employment Unit form ADM 302 (Application to Enter Admission Process), 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

Ministry and Employment 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

Ministry and Employment 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

Ministry and Employment Unit:

- circulates applicant's name to all presbyteries

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 or presbytery-accountable 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
- appoints a mentor
- appoints a pastoral charge supervisor (see *The Manual*, section I.2.5.2)

Applicant serves in initial appointment while completing education

See next component for educational requirements.

4. Education for Orientation

Ministry and Employment Unit:

- identifies educational 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 Ministry and Employment Unit within three years
- if necessary, works to gain a working knowledge of either English or French

Pastoral Charge Supervisor:

- is appointed by the presbytery/district to supervise the work of the pastoral charge
- prepares a report on the state of the pastoral charge for the 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 at Conference annual general meeting
- communicates its recommendation to presbytery/district
- sends form ADM 306 (Intent to Recommend Admission) to Ministry and Employment Unit

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

Procedures

Component 1: Application and Credential Clearance

The process begins when the applicant submits form ADM 302 (Application to Enter Admission Process) with all required initial documentation to the Ministry and Employment 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 (original document dated within six months; no photocopies)
- names of people that the Ministry and Employment Unit can contact to provide references
- 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 Ministry and Employment.

The Ministry and Employment Unit acknowledges receipt and reviews the application, then requests reference letters and a denominational letter of standing.

If the applicant is refused a letter of standing, the Ministry and Employment Unit will make reasonable efforts to determine the applicant's standing in the denomination. (*Note:* When a letter of standing indicates that the applicant is not in good standing based solely on criteria that would not prevent service within The United Church of Canada—such as divorce, marriage, or sexual orientation—the requirement of good standing in the applicant's current denomination may, at the unit's discretion, be waived.)

When documentation is complete, the Ministry and Employment 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, the Ministry and Employment Unit has the authority to initiate another review of the applicant's credentials.

Ministry and Employment notifies the applicant that they have been cleared by letter.

Please note that files that are inactive for three years will be closed. The applicant will be notified that their file is closed and will be given the option of submitting current documentation, including a current police records check and a new letter of standing.

Admission Forms:

Admission forms are available on the United Church website: www.united-church.ca.

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.

The presbytery must wait until it has received the decision of the Conference Executive regarding suitability to serve in The United Church of Canada before approving an appointment.

The Conference sends form ADM 303 (Confirmation by Conference Regarding Suitability of Applicant for Admission) to the Ministry and Employment Unit to confirm the candidate's suitability to serve in the United Church.

The Ministry and Employment Unit circulates the applicant's name to all presbyteries within one year of the interview. Should any presbytery have a concern about an applicant, they must follow the guidelines for objections—see appendix (p. 16). The deadline for objections to be brought forward is six months after the name is read at a presbytery meeting to encourage presbyters to engage the process promptly. The United Church will continue to meet the duty of care beyond the six-month deadline; however, the concern would likely be directed through a different process than outlined in the appendix.

If the applicant resides overseas:

1. 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 the presbytery/district may terminate the appointment if it is not satisfied.
2. The Ministry and Employment Unit may interview an applicant living outside Canada and forward recommendations to the Conference Interview Board. In such cases, the applicant must be interviewed by the Conference Interview Board within the first six months of appointment, and the presbytery/district may terminate the appointment if it is not satisfied with the admittand.

Component 3: Initial Appointment

In the United Church, an appointment is a covenant relationship between a minister, a local ministry, the presbytery/district, and God.

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 the Ministry and Employment Unit for such resources as the vacancy list. The applicant may apply for vacant positions in pastoral charges or presbytery/district accountable ministries. The relevant search committee conducts an interview.

Follow pastoral relations policies and procedures to appoint the applicant to a pastoral charge or presbytery-accountable ministry. See *The Manual*, section I. Pastoral Relations, and the Pastoral Relations: Engaging and Supporting resource. For offshore applicants, moving costs are covered only from the port of entry into Canada.

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. The presbytery/district appoints a mentor—a support person who is paired with the applicant throughout the process (*see p. 12*).

When the applicant has been admitted to the order of ministry in The United Church of Canada, they may receive a call to any pastoral charge, including the one 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 appointed by the presbytery/district. 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 Ministry and Employment 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 polity
- United Church theology
- United Church history
- United Church worship and sacraments
- Christian education and resources
- Sexual Abuse Policy, Racial Justice Policy, and educational initiatives to promote cultural sensitivity

When the applicant has secured an appointment, they contact the Program Coordinator, Ministry Vocations, at the General Council Office to receive the most up-to-date information on how and where the educational requirements can be pursued. This may include online study, community learning, directed studies, or courses at a United Church theological school.

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 Ministry and Employment Unit will inform the Conference Interview Board, Presbytery/District Pastoral Relations Committee, Conference Executive, and the Conference personnel minister of the educational progress of each admittand appointed in that Conference.

It is the applicant's responsibility to verify completion of the educational competencies to the Ministry and Employment Unit using form ADM 304 (Confirmation of Completion of Educational Requirement). Upon receipt of verification, the Ministry and Employment Unit 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 requesting a change in pastoral relations with 90 days' notice. The presbytery/district must approve the request for change.

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.

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 Conference terminates the admission process of an applicant, the applicant may not apply for at least three years from the date of the Conference decision.

If the decision is to allow the applicant to proceed, the Conference Executive (or designated staff) completes form ADM 306 (Intent to Recommend Admission), and forwards it to the Ministry and Employment 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 settlement.

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

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.

Appendix: Guidelines for Objections

The following are guidelines for dealing with objections re: admission of applicants to the order of ministry of The United Church of Canada.

A. Conference

1. The objection must be in writing and include supporting documentation. It must be sent to the executive secretary of the Conference in which the objection is made (the “objecting Conference”), with a copy to the General Council Ministry and Employment Unit.
2. The executive secretary of the objecting Conference must forward the objection to the executive secretary of the Conference where the applicant is under appointment (the “admitting Conference”).
3. The executive secretary of the admitting Conference must inform the presbytery/district where the applicant is under appointment.
4. The executive secretary of the admitting Conference must inform the applicant in writing that there is an objection to his or her admission, and provide the applicant with a copy of (i) the objection, (ii) the supporting documentation, and (iii) these guidelines.

B. Commission

5. The admitting Conference (through its Executive or Sub-Executive) must establish a Commission to deal with the objection.
6. The mandate of the Commission will be:
 - (i) to consider the objection;
 - (ii) to make a finding on the validity of the objection;
 - (iii) to make a decision whether to recommend to the admitting Conference that the applicant be admitted to the order of ministry; and
 - (iv) to report its finding and decision to the Executive of the admitting Conference for information only.
7. The Commission must consult with the General Council Ministry and Employment Unit before it makes a finding or decision.
8. The Commission must make a finding on whether the objection is valid (true and accurate). In order to be found valid, an objection must be based on facts. The person making the objection must either (i) have direct, firsthand knowledge of the facts or (ii) refer the Commission to other people who do. In either case, the Commission must be able to confirm the truth and accuracy of the information directly with the people who have knowledge of the facts. The information must be clear and convincing enough that the commission believes it is more likely than not to be true. *See also paragraph 13 below.*
9. If the Commission finds that the objection is not valid, it must recommend that the applicant be admitted.

10. If the Commission finds that the objection is valid, it must decide whether to recommend that the applicant be admitted. In making this decision, the Commission must refer to the Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice for Ministry Personnel in The United Church of Canada. The Commission must consider whether the applicant has complied with the Ethical Standards and functioned appropriately under the Standards of Practice, based on the validated objection. See paragraph 13 below.
11. The Commission must work in a confidential manner, remembering that it is accountable to the Executive of the admitting Conference.
12. No one who is in a conflict of interest in relation to the applicant may serve as a member of the Commission. If a member becomes aware during the course of the Commission's work that he or she is in a conflict of interest, the member must declare it and withdraw from the Commission. If the member does not declare the conflict (i) any other member of the Commission may raise the issue and (ii) the Commission must then decide whether the member who is alleged to be in a conflict of interest may continue on the Commission.

C. The Applicant

13. Before the Commission makes its finding and decision, it must give the applicant an opportunity to meet with the Commission to respond to (i) the objection and (ii) the question of whether to recommend the applicant for admission.
14. The applicant may be accompanied by a support person when meeting with the Commission.
15. The Commission must inform the applicant in writing of the Commission's finding and decision at the same time as the Commission reports its decision to the Executive of the admitting Conference.

D. Decision

16. The Commission must report its finding and decision to the Executive of the admitting Conference for information, with a copy to (i) the General Council Ministry and Employment Unit and (ii) the objecting Conference.
17. If the Commission recommends that the applicant be admitted, the Executive of the admitting Conference must forward the recommendation to the admitting Conference for final decision on whether to admit the applicant.
18. If the Commission recommends that the applicant not be admitted, the applicant's name will not be submitted to the admitting Conference for final decision.



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