

Office of Vocation

Structure and Responsibilities

January 2019



Office of / Bureau de la
vocation

The United Church of Canada
L'Église Unie du Canada

Office of Vocation: Structure and Responsibilities (January 2019)



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About the Office of Vocation

The Office of Vocation is part of the structure of the United Church. The Board of Vocation is an elected body that oversees the Office of Vocation, honouring and living into intercultural mission and ministry.

The authority and responsibility of the Office of Vocation, along with the membership of the Board of Vocation, are described in *The Manual, 2019*, under E. Office of Vocation.

Description

In order to carry out its responsibilities the Office of Vocation consists of the Board of Vocation, and the following committees and commissions. It is supported by staff in the General Council Office and deployed Office of Vocation ministers.

The Board of Vocation

The Board of Vocation is the elected member body accountable for the work of the Office of Vocation to the General Council. It may bring proposals to the General Council or its executive. It may assign the work from the General Council to any of its committees or commissions. It receives and responds to correspondence directed to it. It determines the standards for accreditation upon recommendation of the Standards for Accreditation Committee.

The Board of Vocation in preparation for the next triennium receives the names from the pool of people nominated by the regional councils to the General Council Nominations Committee in order to appoint the members of its committees and commissions. The National Indigenous Council appoints one member to the Board of Vocation. The General Secretary may seek other names to ensure appropriate balance of experience including intercultural perspectives and the various streams of ministry. The Board of Vocation itself is appointed by the General Council through its Nominations Committee from this same pool of nominees. Terms of office for all elected members in the Office of Vocation are three years renewable once.

In the oversight and discipline of ministry personnel, the Board of Vocation has specific responsibility for establishing a Formal Hearing Committee or an Appeal Committee. Decisions of the Remedial Committee or the Credentialing Committee may be appealed to the Board of Vocation. Decisions of the Board of Vocation from formal hearings or appeals may be appealed to the Judicial Committee of the General Council.

See appendix A for the Office of Vocation procedure to address concerns about ministry personnel.

Standards for Accreditation Committee

The Standards for Accreditation Committee (Standards Committee) implements the policies set by the General Council by recommending standards to the Board of Vocation in the areas defined by *The Manual*, section E.2.2. These standards are to contribute to the effectiveness of ministry personnel in their leadership in communities of faith and beyond, responding to God's call.

The Standards Committee may consult with appropriate bodies such as the National Indigenous Council, La Table, and the Deans and Principals of the Theological Schools. It may set up task groups to carry out a piece of work.

The Standards Committee will ensure that mandatory trainings have appropriate content and that there are resources to carry out the standards such as a system to offer mandatory training webinars. In this 2019–2021 triennium, it will support other educational bodies such as Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Committees, which will function as educational teams across the country.

Credentialing Committee

The Credentialing Committee responds to applications from ministry personnel for the following, determining credentials according to the policy and processes of the General Council and guided by the pertinent resources:

1. intentional interim ministers;
2. educational supervisors;
3. readmission;
4. ministry partners;
5. admission applicants (*Note: the Standards Committee, in implementing the recommendations of General Council, may determine that admission is the work of a separate committee*);
6. military chaplains; and
7. other chaplaincies as required.

It may ensure support for special ministries, such as intentional interim ministries.

Response Committee

The work of this committee is described in appendix A.

The Response Committee ensures that there are trained and supported reviewers, investigators, consultants, conflict resolution facilitators and people with other expertise as required.

Timely response to concerns is essential and so the coordinator of the Office of Vocation, a staff position in the General Council Office, will take the initial steps to process these, accountable to the Response Committee.

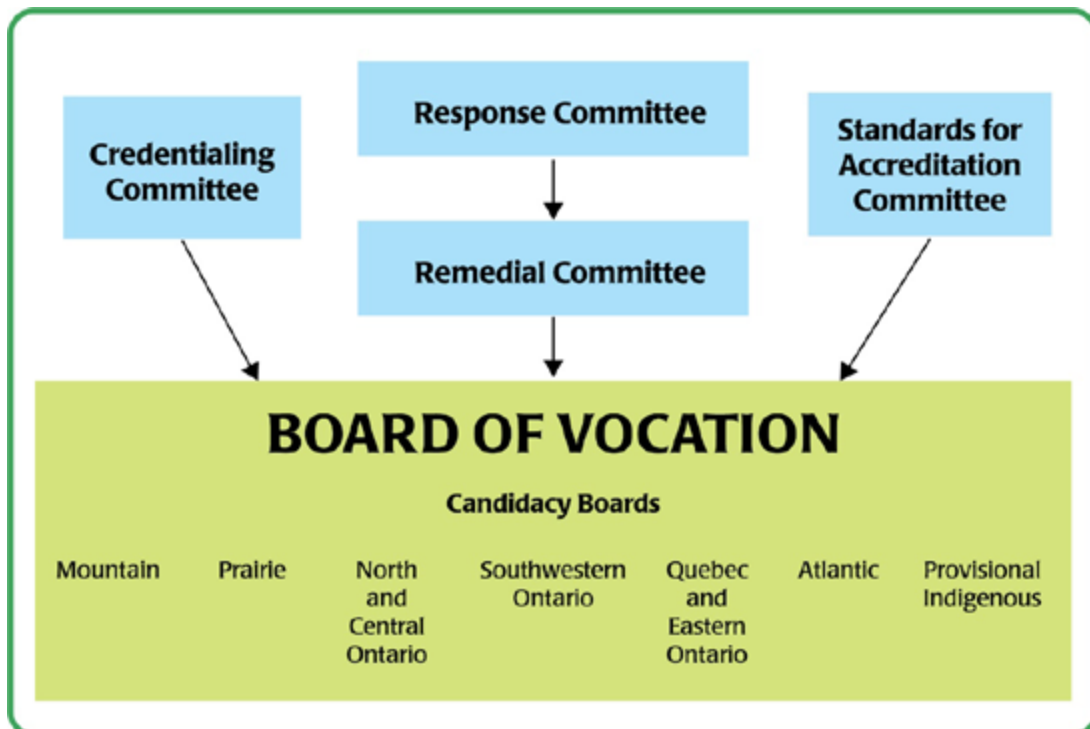
Remedial Committee

The work of this committee is described in appendix A.

Candidacy Boards

The six Candidacy Boards serving in different geographies, and the Council on Learning serving the Indigenous Church, are commissions of the Board of Vocation. The National Indigenous Council determines the members of the Council on Learning. All are appointed by the Board of Vocation.

The Candidacy Boards and Council on Learning have the responsibilities outlined in the resources related to the Candidacy Pathway, including naming candidates, terminating candidacy, and determining readiness for accreditation for commissioning to the diaconal ministry of education, service, and pastoral care; ordination to the ministry of word, sacrament, and pastoral care; and recognition of designated lay ministry. See *The Manual* section E.2.3 and H. Entering Ministry.



Appendix A: Procedure to Address Concerns about Ministry Personnel

This procedure supplements the provisions in *The Manual* relating to oversight, review, and discipline of ministry personnel. Where an inconsistency exists between this procedure and *The Manual*, the relevant provision of *The Manual* takes precedence.

Definitions

1. The following are terms used in this procedure:
 - (a) “Consultant” is a trained person on a roster maintained by the Office of Vocation with the role of acting as a liaison to a complainant or respondent.
 - (b) “Coordinator” is a managerial staff member of the Office of Vocation.
 - (c) “Conflict resolution facilitator” is a trained person on a roster maintained by the Office of Vocation with the role of attempting to facilitate the resolution of concerns and issues in dispute, which may include restorative justice, mediation, and negotiation.
 - (d) “Investigator” is a trained person on a roster maintained by the Office of Vocation with the role of investigating concerns of misconduct raised against a ministry personnel and making findings of fact.
 - (e) “Reviewer” is a trained person on a roster maintained by the Office of Vocation with roles that include assessing the effectiveness of a ministry personnel.
 - (f) “Ministry personnel” is a general term that refers to a member of the order of ministry, designated lay minister, candidates serving under appointment, diaconal supply, and ordained supply.
 - (g) “Standards” includes all published educational, ethical, and practice standards as well as all reporting obligations required of ministry personnel by the United Church.

All other capitalized terms have the meanings given to them in *The Manual* or in resources incorporated by reference in *The Manual*.

Responsibilities

2. The Office of Vocation will establish and maintain the membership of the Response Committee and Remedial Committee, ensure a roster of trained consultants, conflict resolution facilitators, investigators, and reviewers, and provide Accessibility Assessment and Effectiveness Support to ministry personnel.
3. The Response Committee is responsible for receiving and assessing concerns and determining the most appropriate process or committee to address eligible concerns.
4. The Remedial Committee is responsible for:
 - (i) ensuring compliance by ministry personnel with the authority of the United Church;
 - (ii) assessing and deciding whether to accept an investigator’s findings in relation to allegations of misconduct;

- (iii) assessing and deciding whether to accept a reviewer's report findings with respect to the effectiveness of a ministry personnel;
 - (iv) determining the appropriate disposition of substantiated concerns, which may include initiating formal complaints before a Formal Hearing Committee where warranted.
5. Accessibility Assessment is responsible for determining if a ministry personnel has been or is incapacitated and the extent of that capacity, and supporting the ministry personnel's rehabilitation, where appropriate. In fulfilling its responsibilities, Accessibility Assessment works in collaboration with the Restorative Care Plan service providers and the appropriate regional council minister and Office of Vocation minister.
 6. Effectiveness Support is responsible for the development and oversight of directed programs.
 7. A Formal Hearing Committee and an Appeal Committee are each comprised of three of the elected members of the Board of Vocation. The Appeal Committee has responsibility for hearing and determining appeals by ministry personnel of decisions made by the Response Committee, the Remedial Committee, or other decision-making body of the Office of Vocation. The Formal Hearing Committee has responsibility for conducting formal hearings to consider formal complaints and recommendations brought forward by the Remedial Committee.
 8. The work of the Board and the Office of Vocation will be performed fairly and in a manner such that any decision made with respect to ministry personnel is transparent to and understandable by the ministry personnel, with due regard to their individual circumstances.
 9. The Board of Vocation or its Committees, at their sole discretion, may conduct all or part of their duties via audio and/or video conferencing.
 10. Elected members of the Board of Vocation or its Committees, when responding to a concern raised against a ministry personnel must declare a conflict of interest if they a) have had prior involvement in the matter; or b) have any other conflict that could bias or be perceived to bias the decision of the Board or committee.

Compliance with Standards of the United Church

11. Ministry personnel are required to recognize the authority of the United Church. Ministry personnel must ensure that they fulfill all their obligations to the United Church, unless expressly excused.
12. Ministry personnel who are not performing any of the functions of ministry will be excused from compliance and maintained on the registry of accredited ministry personnel of the Office of Vocation with the status of "good standing with limitations." (Examples include pensioners and ministry personnel in receipt of restorative care/long-term disability benefits.) Prior to resuming the performance of any of the functions of ministry, such

ministry personnel are required to bring themselves into compliance and have their status revised to “good standing,”

13. The Office of Vocation will maintain records in relation to the compliance of ministry personnel with the standards of the United Church, and monitor ministry personnel’s compliance, including completion of mandatory training and the annual filing of the declaration relating to criminal charges.
14. Ministry personnel who are unable to meet a compliance deadline, and have not been expressly excused, are required to submit an explanation in writing with respect to the failure to meet the deadline. Where circumstances warrant, the applicable Office of Vocation minister may, at their discretion, arrange for assistance to aid the ministry personnel in achieving compliance and may extend the deadline for compliance or enter into a deadline extension agreement with the ministry personnel.
15. Where the ministry personnel continues to be non-compliant with a standard, such non-compliance constitutes misconduct and the Office of Vocation will refer the matter to the Remedial Committee.
16. Prior to taking remedial action, the Remedial Committee will issue a Formal Notice of Non-compliance to the ministry personnel, with a copy to the chair of the Ministry and Personnel Committee, or equivalent, of the ministry personnel’s community of faith, and the applicable regional council. In these circumstances, the Remedial Committee may provide the ministry personnel with a finite extension to comply with the standard, failing which the ministry personnel will be suspended without pay, unless they appear before the Remedial Committee and show cause why they should remain in “good standing” and their eligibility to perform the functions of ministry personnel should not be suspended.
17. Where the ministry personnel does not show cause, the Remedial Committee will advise the ministry personnel, the chair of the Ministry and Personnel Committee, or equivalent, of the ministry personnel’s community of faith, and the applicable regional council of the ministry personnel’s suspension and status of “not in good standing.” Where the ministry personnel remains non-compliant for a further 90 days, the Remedial Committee will initiate a formal complaint and recommend to the Board of Vocation that a Formal Hearing Committee be established to consider whether the ministry personnel’s name should be removed from the registry of accredited ministry personnel and be placed on the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary).

The Response Committee

18. (a) Subject to subsection (b), the Response Committee will consider concerns regarding misconduct, effectiveness, or incapacity of ministry personnel, raised by
 - (i) the Ministry and Personnel Committee of a community of faith/pastoral charge or a governing body of a community of faith or other ministry;
 - (ii) the ministry personnel;

- (iii) a regional council or Office of Vocation minister;
- (iv) another ministry personnel;
- (v) a consultant under the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy;
- (vi) a member, adherent, or congregant of a community of faith/pastoral charge or a person for whom the ministry personnel was pastorally responsible; or
- (vii) a reliable third party.

Candidates: Notwithstanding any other provision of this document, all concerns received relating to standards of practice of a candidate for ministry will be dealt with by the Candidacy Board. Investigations into concerns received relating to breach of ethical standards by a candidate will be dealt with by the Response Committee, but the Candidacy Board is responsible for making decisions in response to the investigator's report.

- (b) The Response Committee will not consider a concern if, in its opinion,
 - (i) the last incident of conduct or action by the ministry personnel giving rise to the concern occurred more than 12 months ago, with the exception of concerns relating to sexual abuse and/or sexual misconduct as defined in the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy;
 - (ii) the concern does not constitute misconduct, ineffectiveness, or incapacity on the part of a minister; or
 - (iii) the concern is frivolous, vexatious, manifestly without substance, or made for an improper purpose.
19. *No apparent case:* Where in the opinion of the Response Committee the concern as presented does not disclose any facts that, if true, would constitute misconduct, ineffectiveness, or incapacity on the part of a ministry personnel, the party raising the concern will be offered opportunity to provide additional information, failing which the concern will not be considered.
20. As soon as reasonably possible after receiving a concern, the coordinator of the Response Committee will
- (a) provide the complainant with confirmation that the concern was received;
 - (b) notify the ministry personnel that a concern regarding their conduct or actions was made and provide the ministry personnel with a copy of the concern, or, if the coordinator considers it appropriate in the circumstances, a summary of the concern raised;
 - (c) ensure that pastoral care is provided/offered to the ministry personnel and other affected people, as warranted; and
 - (d) refer the concern to a consultant, regional council minister, Office of Vocation minister, as warranted.
21. The Response Committee will consider an eligible concern and refer it to one of the following:

- (a) Accessibility Assessment;
- (b) a conflict resolution facilitator, provided that parties are agreeable;
- (c) a reviewer; or
- (d) an investigator,

whichever, in the opinion of the Response Committee, is most appropriately suited to address the concern raised. In making the referral, the Response Committee will give consideration to the outcome of any previous concerns relating to the ministry personnel. The referral is not subject to appeal.

22. The coordinator of the Response Committee will keep the individual who raised the concern apprised of the status of the concern, including its ultimate outcome.

Interim Measures

23. The Response Committee, in consultation with the regional council and the Office of Vocation,
- (a) may make an interim order appropriate in the circumstances. Unless urgent intervention is needed, ministry personnel will be provided with the opportunity to make submissions prior to an interim order being issued; and
 - (b) determine the “standing” of the ministry personnel and/or financial support for the ministry personnel, pending the outcome of the investigation or review process.

Accessibility Assessment

24. Accessibility Assessment will act in a manner consistent with human rights legislation, the Restorative Care Benefit Plan, and the Long-Term Disability Policy.
25. Representatives from the United Church’s third-party medical adjudication service provider may act in an advisory capacity to Accessibility Assessment.
26. If, after making inquiries, Accessibility Assessment has reasonable and probable grounds to suspect that the ministry personnel may be incapacitated, it may
- (a) require the ministry personnel to submit to physical or mental examinations by health professionals specified by the Accessibility Assessment; or
 - (b) refer a concern to the regional council minister and/or the Office of Vocation minister, pending the completion of a medical assessment.
27. (a) Where a report from a health professional confirms that the ministry personnel is incapacitated from performing the functions of ministry personnel to a limited extent, Accessibility Assessment will advise the applicable Ministry and Personnel Committee/community of faith and the regional council of the medical limitations so that the parties may engage in the accommodation process and may refer the matter to Effectiveness Support, as warranted.

- (b) Where a report from a health professional confirms that the ministry personnel is totally incapacitated from performing the functions of ministry personnel and the United Church's restorative care provider or the long-term disability benefit provider concurs, the ministry personnel will be considered in "good standing with limitations" and not eligible for call, appointment, or other position until cleared to return to work
 - (c) Where a report from a health professional indicates that the ministry personnel poses or is likely to pose a harm or injury to themselves or others, the Response Committee will determine what interim measures, if any, are warranted and the ministry personnel's status will be "not in good standing."
 - (d) Where a report from a health professional confirms that the ministry personnel is not incapacitated, the Response Committee will refer the concern to either a reviewer or an investigator.
28. Accessibility Assessment will not disclose the personal health information of ministry personnel to anyone, except as permitted under the *Personal Health Information Privacy Act* (or comparable legislation).

Conflict Resolution

29. The Office of Vocation may assign conflict resolution facilitators to provide guidance and conflict resolution services to various related entities including
- (a) the Indigenous Church;
 - (b) a regional council to aid with early intervention of concerns relating to ministry personnel; and/or
 - (c) a pastoral charge/community of faith in relation to concerns of workplace harassment under the Workplace Harassment Policy.
30. Conflict Resolution services may be offered to attempt to facilitate the resolution of concerns between ministry personnel and the party raising the concern.
31. If the ministry personnel and the party raising the concern reach a resolution to the concern, they propose it to the Response Committee, and the Response Committee may endorse or reject the resolution.
32. In the event that a conflict resolution process is unsuccessful or the Response Committee rejects the resolution arrived at by the parties, the Response Committee will refer the concern to
- (a) a reviewer; or
 - (b) an investigator,
- whichever, in the sole discretion of the Response Committee, is most appropriately suited to address the concern raised.

The Remedial Committee

33. A reviewer will conduct a review and prepare a report setting out evidence and making findings of fact and one of the following findings:
 - (a) the ministry personnel has fulfilled the functions of ministry personnel in an effective way;
 - (b) the ministry personnel has not fulfilled the functions of ministry in an effective way; or
 - (c) there are reasonable and probable grounds for believing that the ministry personnel has acted in a way that is a proper ground of discipline.
34. An investigator will conduct an investigation into allegations of misconduct and prepare a report setting out the evidence and the findings of fact.
35. The Remedial Committee may obtain and consider information that relates to ministry personnel from criminal or quasi-criminal proceedings.
36. The Remedial Committee will provide the ministry personnel with a copy of the applicable report/information obtained and provide the ministry personnel with the opportunity to make submissions to the committee. After considering the submissions of the ministry personnel and meeting with the reviewer/investigator, the Remedial Committee will
 - (a) accept the findings and/or the opinion of the Reviewer/Investigator;
 - (b) reject the findings and/or the opinion of the Reviewer/Investigator; or
 - (c) remit the matter back to the reviewer/investigator with questions that may require that the reviewer/investigator engage in a further inquiry and provide a supplemental report.
37. Where the Remedial Committee accepts that a ministry personnel has not fulfilled the functions of ministry personnel in an effective manner, has engaged in misconduct or there are reasonable and probable grounds for believing that the ministry personnel has acted in a way that is a proper ground of discipline, then prior to determining the disposition of the concern, the Remedial Committee will consider
 - (a) any prior dispositions of concerns that relate to the ministry personnel including those arrived at through informal dispute resolution;
 - (b) any prior decisions of the Remedial Committee, or its predecessor, that relate to the ministry personnel;
 - (c) any previous support provided by Effectiveness Support, or its predecessor, that relate to the ministry personnel;
 - (d) the input of the person concerned in matters arising under the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy;
 - (e) any reliable, relevant information that relates to the ministry personnel, including information from the applicable regional council; and,
 - (f) the submissions of the ministry personnel.

38. The Remedial Committee will declare that
- (a) the ministry personnel's status is "not is good standing", and
 - (b) the ministry personnel will be suspended and the matter will be
 - (i) referred to Effectiveness Support to develop a directed program; or
 - (ii) brought forward, as a formal complaint, to the Formal Hearing Committee with a recommendation for a disciplinary sanction, which may include that the ministry personnel's name be removed from the registry of accredited ministry personnel of the Office of Vocation and placed on the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary),
- whichever the Remedial Committee deems appropriate in all the circumstances.
39. The applicable Regional Council will be advised of the course of action taken by the Remedial Committee.

Effectiveness Support

40. In developing a directed program for a ministry personnel, Effectiveness Support may consider:
- (a) any previous support provided to the ministry personnel;
 - (b) the submissions of the ministry personnel relating to the content and requirements of a directed program;
 - (c) the opinion of the applicable regional council; and/or
 - (d) the opinion of the Office of Vocation.
41. The directed program will be administered by Effectiveness Support in consultation with the applicable regional council. Effectiveness Support will ensure it periodically reports regarding the ministry personnel's progress in the directed program.
42. Provided the ministry personnel is actively engaged and fully compliant with the directed program, the Office of Vocation will provide the ministry personnel with their standard remuneration while they are engaged in a directed program.
43. Effectiveness Support may recommend to the Remedial Committee that the ministry personnel has successfully completed a directed program. Where the Remedial Committee accepts the recommendation, it will restore the ministry personnel's status to "good standing" and the coordinator will advise all applicable parties.
44. Where Effectiveness Support advises the Remedial Committee that ministry personnel
- (a) has refused to submit to its authority; and/or
 - (b) has not successfully completed a directed program,
- the Remedial Committee may bring the matter forward to the Board of Vocation to establish a Formal Hearing Committee with the recommendation that the ministry personnel's name be removed from the registry of accredited ministry personnel and be placed on the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary).

Hearings before the Board of Vocation

45. Formal Hearing Committees and Appeal Committees are comprised of three of the elected members of the Board of Vocation. The Chair of a Formal Hearing Committee or an Appeal Committee will be the Chair of the Board of Vocation, if practicable. In the event that this not is practicable, the Board of Vocation will appoint a chair of the Formal Hearing or Appeal Committee.
46. An Appeal Committee will hear and consider appeals by the ministry personnel of appealable decisions made by the Response Committee or the Remedial Committee or another committee of the Board, that relate to the ministry personnel. A Formal Hearing Committee will hear and consider a formal complaint or a recommendation of the Remedial Committee.
47. Formal Hearings and Appeals will be conducted in accordance with the *Statutory Powers Procedure Act (Ontario)* or equivalent legislation.
48. A Formal Hearing Committee and an Appeal Committee may engage in mediation of the matter before it at any stage in the proceedings with the consent of the parties. If mediation is not successful, the Committee retains the power to determine the matter through the hearing process.
49. When the Formal Hearing Committee determines that the ministry personnel has engaged in misconduct, the Formal Hearing Committee may accept the sanction recommended by the Remedial Committee, or it may issue such other sanctions as it deems just and reasonable in all the circumstances, including one or more of the following: issuing an admonishment, a suspension, restitution, and/or removing the name of the ministry personnel from the registry of accredited ministry personnel of the Office of Vocation and placing it on the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary).
50. A Formal Hearing Committee and an Appeal Committee may consult with the coordinator, a member of General Council staff, and/or legal counsel for advice relating to procedural matters.
51. A Formal Hearing or an Appeal Hearing will be held within the geographic bounds of the regional council in which the concern arose or in another location that is desirable, having regard to the convenience of the ministry personnel, the witnesses, and the Formal Hearing Committee or Appeal Committee.
52. The decision of a Formal Hearing Committee or an Appeal Committee will be provided to the applicable regional council.
53. The decision of a Formal Hearing Committee or an Appeal Committee is final and binding. Such a decision may only be appealed, with leave, to the Judicial Committee.