

Admission Resources for Discernment



Welcome

This is a critically important time in your life as you contemplate entering ministry in The United Church of Canada and potentially move to Canada.

We encourage you to spend time discerning your call to this ministry and ensuring that you fully understand the requirements for admission.

After you have reviewed this document, please contact officeofvocation@united-church.ca to let us know you are interested in pursuing the admission process.

To help you understand ministry leadership in the United Church and what is required to make the transition, you will be assigned an accompanier (see appendix below). This is a person in ministry leadership in the United Church who can help you understand

- the doctrine and ethos of the United Church.
- the cultural realities of living and ministering in Canada.
- the requirements for Canadian immigration. Note: All immigration matters must be initiated and completed by you (the applicant) and may take some time. Details about the process can be found at www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship.
- the financial implications of moving to Canada and pursuing admission in the United Church.

To affirm that you are in essential agreement with the statement of doctrine of the United Church and that you agree to comply with the polity of the United Church, please review the following documents:

- [*The Manual*](#)
- [*Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice for Ministry Personnel*](#)
- background document on the United Church's understanding of [essential agreement](#) (<https://commons.united-church.ca>; search "essential agreement")

For ministers who live outside Canada, here are some additional points to think about. Having all of these areas covered will give you a good foundation from which to begin your ministry if you do choose to live in Canada and serve in The United Church of Canada.

Culture

It will be an interesting time as you

- encounter different ways of experiencing and expressing faith. Canada is quite secular and multicultural, and even Christian communities might engage their faith in ways that seem strange or different to a new minister.

- are exposed to different foods, languages, and music from various cultures.
- possibly experience racial and cultural biases. Moving from a place where you are a member of the dominant culture, to a place where you are a visible minority, will be a challenge but also an opportunity for growth.

Appointment/Job

It is your responsibility to find a ministry opportunity in a pastoral charge. Help will be available through [ChurchHub](#), the online system that the United Church that enables ministers to post and update their credentials and ministry profile, and lists the available positions across the country. The onus of completing a profile, applying for jobs, and interviewing is on you, the minister.

Climate

The geography of Canada varies from coast to coast to coast. There are areas that are classified as desert (in British Columbia) and there is the stunningly beautiful area of Nunavut in the North. It is possible for average temperatures to vary from +40 to -40 degrees Celsius in different parts of the country throughout the year.

- Winter can bring significant amounts of snow and cold temperatures. If you are coming from a warm climate, you will need to purchase appropriate winter clothing.
- Appropriate clothing includes a sturdy winter coat, boots, gloves, winter hat, scarf, and wool socks.
- It is better to buy these items when you are in your pastoral charge because temperatures and amounts of snow in different areas vary widely.

Accommodation

Only a few pastoral charges still maintain a manse for minister's use.

- Where no manse is available, you have to find your own housing. Other denominations outside of Canada provide housing, but this is not the case in the United Church.
- The salary scale that is quoted to you when you are offered a position allows for housing costs, but you will need to make your own financial arrangements for renting or buying a home.
- Renting housing will include having enough money for the first and last month's rent.
- Other costs you are responsible for include utilities: electricity (called hydro in Canada), Internet, telephone, cable TV, gas, heating (may be included in electricity or gas), and water, depending on where you choose to live.

Travel to Canada

Canadian Immigration Refugees and Citizenship (CIRC) is the agency that issues work permits for you and any qualifying members of your family, and study visas for your children. The consulate to which you applied for permission to enter Canada will provide you with details on the process you will need to follow at your first point of entry into Canada.

- You are responsible for getting yourself and your family to Canada. It is best for you to enter at the airport that is closest to your intended pastoral charge.

Transportation while You Are at Work

- You are responsible for your daily transportation for work responsibilities. No car is provided by the pastoral charge. The contract you have with your pastoral charge will include various allowances for work-related travel, but you will need to purchase your own car and car insurance, and pay for all maintenance costs (including winter tires).
- If possible, come to Canada with a valid International Driving Permit. It will help you in the process of acquiring your Canadian driver's licence. There is a cost attached to this process.
- Even though you may be an experienced driver, finding someone to give you some helpful tips about driving in snow and ice would be useful.

Health Insurance

All Canadian residents have access to hospitals and doctors without paying out of pocket. The provincial and territorial governments are responsible for managing, organizing, and delivering of health care services for their residents. This means that *some* provinces have a waiting period of three months before you will have health care services paid for by the government. It is a good idea to budget for purchasing private health insurance for the initial three-month period.

Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island provide immediate coverage upon arriving in the province, with the appropriate documents. All the other provinces have a waiting period of three months.

Documents

- Have as many original documents as possible: birth certificates, academic certification, professional certification, immunization certificates, and any health-related documents. If your documents are not originals but copies, please have the copies certified before you leave home.

Credential Clearance

When you feel you have discerned that God is calling you to enter the admission process, please work with your assigned accompanier to obtain the application form.

The application form gives detailed instructions about all the documents that must be submitted, including

- work history
- educational background
- current police records check
- letters of reference from people who have known you for **two years or more**

- narrative responses to questions
- letter of standing and record of service within your denomination
- proof of ordination or commissioning: must be original certificate, which will be scanned and returned to you promptly
- academic transcripts: must be sent directly from the school

When your application is complete, the Office of Vocation determines whether you meet the eligibility requirements for entry into the admission process. To review the criteria, refer to *Admission to the Order of Ministry Policy and Procedures* (www.united-church.ca/handbooks).

Entrance Interview

The Admission Board schedules and conducts an interview with you.

You are expected to have an accompanier with you at interviews with the Admission Board. The accompanier is someone who knows you well but is not a relative.

The purpose of the entrance interview is to

- discern whether your understanding of The United Church of Canada, the Canadian context, and the requirements of the admission process are sufficient at this initial stage
- evaluate whether you are in essential agreement with the statement of doctrine of the United Church and whether you agree to comply with the governance and polity of the United Church
- assess your suitability for ministry leadership within The United Church of Canada by taking into consideration the written responses to questions provided in the application, letters of reference, and responses during the interview
- measure your openness to lifelong learning
- determine the requirements for orientation

If you are found suitable for admission, you will be notified that you may proceed with the next steps in the process. An Office of Vocation minister will help to guide your next steps.

Appendix: Accompaniers Wanted for Admission Applicants

Purpose

Accompaniers will walk with ordered ministers discerning whether to apply to serve The United Church of Canada through the admission process. This role is particularly significant for those ordered ministers outside of Canada.

Culture shock is significant for overseas applicants. For example, those in the Methodist tradition are used to the denomination stationing them. For some the exchange rate means that the resources they thought they had to emigrate are insufficient for the move. For some the affirming and inclusive stance of the United Church is a challenge. Manoeuvring through immigration also can be difficult.

Experience shows that individuals value knowing someone in Canada who can guide them.

Expectations

Admission applicants are asked to orient themselves to Canada and to The United Church of Canada before applying. Accompaniers ensure that potential applicants have a resource and relationship through this orientation phase and while gathering the necessary documents for the application.

- Accompaniers may be the support person for the applicant at the initial interview with the Admission Board.
- Accompaniers initiate contact with the potential applicant once assigned by the staff. They may act as a bridge between the applicant and staff responsible for clearing credentials, particularly if the applicant is not fluent in English.
- While accompaniers can continue the relationship once the admission minister is serving the United Church, that is not an expectation.
- Support throughout the admission process is provided by staff. The accompanier does not need to be an expert in the admission process, just familiar with the impact of moving to Canada.
- The accompanier may be someone the applicant references when asked about their discernment process.

Skills and Experience

Accompaniers

- are volunteers who have cross-cultural experience and bring an understanding and experience of the country or continent of the potential applicant
- are preferably ministry personnel

- have good communication skills in English or French and, if possible, another language commonly spoken by potential applicants, such as Swahili, Korean, etc.
- can encourage and build collegial relationships
- are positive about The United Church of Canada and realistic about the joys and challenges facing immigrants

Recruiting, Training, Matching

- Accompaniers are recruited and trained by the program coordinator responsible for the admission process.
- Admission applicants are assigned to a particular accompanier by staff who are responsible for clearing credentials.
- Each accompanier may be assigned to more than one applicant.

Expressions of Interest to Become an Accompanier

Accompaniers may be invited or may express their interest to Angie Musonza, program assistant for admission: amusonza@united-church.ca.