

Candidacy Pathway: Supervised Ministry Education

The Learning Covenant and Learning Goals

2024



Office of / Bureau de la
vocation

The United Church of Canada
L'Église Unie du Canada

Candidacy Pathway: Supervised Ministry Education, The Learning Covenant and Learning Goals (2024)



Copyright © 2024
The United Church of Canada
L'Église Unie du Canada



The content of this resource is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd) Licence. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.5/ca>. Any copy must include the United Church copyright notice and the Creative Commons licence.

Care has been taken to trace ownership of copyright material contained in this text. The publisher will gratefully accept any information that will enable it to rectify any reference or credit in subsequent printings.

“Conducting Interviews with Intercultural Awareness” adapted from the 2009 United Church resource of the same name, by Steve Willey, Intercultural and Diverse Communities in Ministry.

The United Church of Canada
L'Église Unie du Canada
3250 Bloor St. West, Suite 200
Toronto, ON
Canada M8X 2Y4
1-800-268-3781
united-church.ca

Supported by
**Mission
and Service**

Contents

- About This Resource 4
- About Learning Covenants 5
 - What Is a Covenant? 5
 - What Is a Learning Covenant?..... 5
 - Participants in the Learning Covenant 5
 - How to Create the Learning Covenant 6
 - Sample Learning Covenant Format 7
- Celebrating the Covenant 8
 - Sample Covenanting Service 8
- Developing Learning Goals for the Learning Covenant 10
 - Learning Goal: What do I need to learn?..... 10
 - Action Plans: How will I go about learning? 12
 - Methods of Evaluation: How will I reflect on the experiences of learning? 12
 - Sample Learning Goals 13
- Formal Evaluation 16

About This Resource

This resource augments the [Candidacy Pathway: Supervised Ministry Education—Educational Supervisor's Orientation](#) handbook.

During Supervised Ministry Education (SME), a Learning Covenant creates the framework for the learning that will take place and how it will be evaluated.

This resource is intended to guide candidates and their Educational Supervisors in creating a Learning Covenant based on learning goals. It refers to two additional resources in this SME series: *Feedback and Communication Resource* and *Theological Reflection Resource*.

These and other resources for Educational Supervisors, Community of Faith Connection members, and candidates are available from the Vocational Minister or on the [Candidacy Pathway](#) page of united-church.ca.

About Learning Covenants

What Is a Covenant?

The dictionary defines a covenant as a contract, a written agreement between participants. In the biblical tradition it has a much richer and deeper meaning, building on God's ancient promise:

I will be your God, and you shall be my people.... (Jeremiah 7:23)

Covenant, in this sacred sense, refers to binding together people in mutual trust and loyalty with God and within the community of faith.

What Is a Learning Covenant?

In Supervised Ministry Education, the Learning Covenant articulates the agreement among the participants in the experience. It is a commitment to work, learn, and grow together.

Covenanting is rooted in faith. It assumes and encourages mutual respect, support, openness, and honesty. It anticipates difficulties and offers help in a constructive way. It is intended, primarily, to support learning and growth in ministry.

Participants in the Learning Covenant

Three parties are involved in the Learning Covenant: the Educational Supervisor, the candidate, and the Community of Faith Connection.

Although SME involves a three-way conversation among the candidate, Supervisor, and Community of Faith Connection, the main relationships are between the candidate and the Educational Supervisor and the candidate and their Community of Faith Connection.

Community of Faith Connection

The Community of Faith Connection (CFC) consists of lay representatives of the learning site who are committed to the mission and ministry of the church, to provide support and guidance to the candidate, to be active participants in the Learning Covenant, and to help the candidate to know how their ministry is being experienced.

Additional information about the Community of Faith Connection can be found in the [Community of Faith Connection](#) and [Educational Supervisor's Orientation](#) resources on the Candidacy Pathway webpage.

Educational Supervisor

The role of the Educational Supervisor is to assist the candidate in reflecting theologically on the current call and practice of ministry. This intentional practice of reflection helps to shape individuals toward integrated faith and develops ministers who are aware of themselves, others, the social context, and the big questions of theology and Spirit.

More information about the Educational Supervisor is found in the [Educational Supervisor's Orientation](#) resource.

How to Create the Learning Covenant

The Learning Covenant includes a signed statement (see the [sample](#) below) plus attachments. The total package might cover the topics outlined in this chart.

Topic	What to Include
Educational Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your common understanding of supervision and the roles of the participants? • What does mutual respect mean to the parties in the Learning Covenant? How will you be intentional about developing trust? • What does confidentiality mean in this context? What is your agreement on how confidentiality will be maintained?
Practical Considerations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Logistical details of the agreement, including where and how often meetings will take place for supervision: Who calls and facilitates the meetings? 2. Structure of your time together: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Who is responsible for the agenda? b. What ought to be included in your agenda? c. Things which, by agreement, will not be dealt with during supervision. d. What are the boundaries? E.g., time, space, topics, frequency of meetings.
Learning Goals	<p>Learning goals and action plans, including a list of planned activities and desired outcomes of the following parties in the covenant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidate's learning goals, action plans, and methods of evaluation • Supervisor's learning goals
Feedback and Evaluation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a mutually agreeable process for feedback and evaluation. Include methods and tools to be used during supervision: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Verbatim reports or case studies b. Tapes or sermon manuscripts c. Specific reading assignments d. Journals kept by candidate e. Other 2. Basis for revising or renegotiating the Learning Covenant: How will you review the Learning Covenant to ensure it is being honoured? How might you modify your Learning Covenant if it is no longer satisfactory? 3. When and how will formal evaluation be carried out? Who needs to receive reports, and what are the deadlines?
Agreed Procedures for Conflict Resolution	<p>How will you address conflict if it arises among you? Whom will you consult with, alone or together, if things arise that cause you to seek outside advice?</p>

Topic	What to Include
Rituals	How will you celebrate the Learning Covenant at the beginning, and how will you close it at the end of the experience? How will the wider community be involved?

Sample Learning Covenant Format

Learning Covenant

This Learning Covenant covers the period from _____ to _____
at _____

- Name of candidate _____
- Name of supervisor _____

Supervision will take place on _____ (date) at _____ (location)
with opportunities to reflect on learning goals.

- Name of Community of Faith Connection representative _____

Community of Faith Connection meetings will take place at _____ (location)
with opportunities for reflection on practice of ministry.

Evaluation will occur at the mid-point and end-point of the internship through the following process:

Acknowledging our humanity, we agree to the following process for conflict resolution:

This Learning Covenant with attached learning goals is agreed to by all participants, with opportunities for revision as learning unfolds.

Signatures _____ (candidate)
_____ (supervisor)
_____ (Community of Faith Connection representative)

Date _____

Attachments: The learning goals and action plans of all participants to the covenant are attached as well as additional documents to describe the covenant agreement.

Celebrating the Covenant

Rituals are important in the learning process. Through appropriate liturgies, participants identify and celebrate the various stages of the covenant. A liturgy at the beginning of the Learning Covenant can help to clarify its terms and confirm the commitment of all participants. It is also a way of involving members of the pastoral charge.

Be sure to share the learning goals with the community of faith so the whole community feels involved. This can be done in a variety of ways, such as in a bulletin insert or part of a newsletter.

An ending liturgy offers a way to celebrate the learning experience and acknowledge closure.

Your rituals can be created especially for the occasion or borrowed from the traditions of the church. Usually, they can be included in a regular service of worship at the learning site. In some non-congregational settings, it may be necessary to create a special occasion or use some regular occasion, such as a board meeting.

What matters is that you acknowledge and celebrate the various rites of passage in the Learning Covenant in ways that are appropriate to the site and meaningful to you.

Sample Covenanting Service

Adapted from Trinity United Church, Nanaimo, BC

- Minister: Let us make a covenant together with God and with one another as we begin this journey of learning together.
- CFC member: Into this circle we welcome _____, who will be sharing our congregational life until _____.
- Minister: A covenant is a promise we make with God and with one another, a promise to live God's way. Let us now make a covenant with God and with one another.
- Congregation: In the presence of God and one another, we give thanks for the example and lasting love of Jesus Christ, who shows us how to live God's way.
- Minister: The church recognizes the different paths that lead to ministry and celebrates the particular ministry of each person. There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them.
- CFC member: There are different ways of serving, but the same God is served. Christ is like a single body that has many parts. All of us are Christ's body, and each one is a part of it.

Minister: God has called _____ to learn and serve at _____, and they have accepted this call. _____, are you willing to share your God-given gifts for ministry as you work and worship with this faith community, and are you willing to serve as the Spirit enables you?

Student minister: I will, God being my helper.

Minister: God has called you to be _____'s supervisor. Will you share with them your knowledge and passion for ministry and your love of God, supporting them throughout the experience in our faith community?

Supervisor: I will, God being my helper.

Minister: Members of the Community of Faith Connection (*name them*), you have accepted God's call to fulfill the role as lay leaders in the Supervised Ministry Experience. Are you willing to receive _____'s gifts of ministry, offer wise counsel as _____ grows in their role, and support _____ in their relationship with this community of faith?

CFC team: We will, God being our helper.

CFC member or
Chair of Board: Members of the congregation, you have heard the promises of (*candidate*), (*supervisor*), and the Community of Faith Connection, who have answered God's call to service. Let us pledge to them our support.

Congregation: We promise to support you with love as we all try to live God's way.

Minister: Let us say our United Church Creed together...

CFC member: Let us pray...

All: Loving God, we have made a covenant with you and with one another. We are grateful for this opportunity to learn and grow in faith and understanding of your ministry in the world. Help us to encourage the gifts of all those involved in this covenant relationship. We pray in the name of the One who shows us the way. Amen.

Developing Learning Goals for the Learning Covenant

Both the Educational Supervisor and the candidate will develop their own learning goals. The time and energy that the Supervisor and candidate put into crafting their learning goals will not only help the United Church to equip future leaders but also be an experience of enrichment and personal challenge. The Educational Supervisor may focus their learning goals on growing in their faith, deepening their understanding of ministry and the United Church, or interpersonal goals such as dealing with conflict, giving feedback, and so on.

The Supervisor and candidate may have some goals in common as well as individual learning goals. These goals should relate to the realities of the learning site, including tasks and responsibilities in the ministry position description, as well as those identified during the supervision time together. The candidate will also need to follow the direction of the Candidacy Board on the focus of their learning goals.

Remember: We do not learn from experience; we learn by reflecting on experience. The Learning Covenant enables all participants to reflect both during and after an experience.

The following guidelines will help you create learning goals:

Learning Goal: What do I need to learn?

Learning goals identify what you need to learn and why.

The [*Competencies for Formation for Ministry and Lifelong Ministry Leadership*](#) are the foundation of learning goals. Throughout the Candidacy Pathway process, the Candidacy Board evaluates the candidate's progress in meeting these competencies. When the candidate is approved as ready for Supervised Ministry Education, the Candidacy Board discusses with the candidate which learning goals need particular attention during the experience. The candidate needs to follow the direction of the Candidacy Board to successfully complete the SME requirement of their pathway to ministry.

The [*Guide to Competencies for Formation for Ministry and Lifelong Ministry Leadership*](#) document lists four goal areas:

1. Engage in Spiritual Practices and Development of Identity in Ministry
2. Integrate, Articulate, and Facilitate Learning of Christian Faith
3. Expand Cultural and Contextual Knowledge and Analysis
4. Demonstrate Leadership Skills for Community Life

The candidate should have one goal from each of these competency areas. A single learning goal can cover one or more competencies. The *Guide* provides helpful examples of goal-setting.

The candidate must review the competencies and assess their current strengths and weaknesses. Learning goals are created based on competencies that need further development,

that present opportunity for challenges to be overcome, and/or that will lead to personal and spiritual growth.

For example, the candidate may need to deepen spiritual practices in order to be effective in ministry. Therefore, they might focus on creating a learning goal based on Competency 1a: *Demonstrates evidence of personal and spiritual growth and healthy self-awareness.*

Here are some additional questions to help identify possible areas for learning goals:

- What theological questions do you have—e.g., how do you understand and apply your understanding of the Bible, theology, justice?
- How does your understanding of theology influence your practice of ministry?
- Are your actions consistent with your beliefs?
- What skills for ministry do you need to obtain—e.g., theological reflection (exploring where God is for you in the midst of ministry), leading groups, communicating as an effective listener and speaker?

When the candidate has a list of possible areas for learning, they identify four to six to concentrate on. The Educational Supervisor can choose from one goal area in the [Competencies for Formation for Ministry and Lifelong Ministry Leadership](#).

A simple acronym, SMART, provides helpful guidelines for creating learning goals:

- S** = Specific
- M** = Measurable
- A** = Attainable
- R** = Relevant
- T** = Time Bound

Specific: Specific goals have a much greater chance of being accomplished than general ones. Provide enough detail so the goal and the action plan to accomplish the goal are clear.

Be specific about what you need to learn about skills for ministry. It is not enough to say that you simply need to gain experience.

Measurable: Create goals with measurable progress. A measurable goal has an outcome that can be evaluated and assessed. Learning goals are usually stated with an awareness of where you are beginning and how far along you hope to be by the end of the process. You might use phrases such as “begin to,” “increase my skill in,” or “develop more understanding of.”

Attainable: An attainable goal has an outcome that is realistic given the situation and context. Things like budget, resources, and time need to be considered when creating learning goals. Assess whether your goals can be met at the learning site. For example, having a goal of working with children in a church with no Sunday school and an elderly membership would not be of much value.

Relevant: In the context of preparing for ministry, the learning goals must relate to the [*Competencies for Formation for Ministry and Lifelong Ministry Leadership*](#), to the direction provided by the Candidacy Board, and to the realities of the ministry of the community of faith.

Time Bound: Set timelines for accomplishing benchmarks so the overall goal is achieved.

Action Plans: How will I go about learning?

- How will you work on your goals? How will you know you have accomplished them?
- Action plans are specific to each learning goal; they refer to how learning goals will be achieved. Be as concrete as you can.
- Action plans include an agreement on how much work/time is appropriate to spend on tasks, how tasks are assigned/accepted, to whom the candidate is accountable for the various tasks, and what resources are available (e.g., people, materials, and space).

Example: I want to deepen my spiritual practice for ministry (Competency 1A: *Demonstrates evidence of personal and spiritual growth and healthy self-awareness*). How will I do this? What specific practices will I try? How much time will I devote to this? Whom will I seek advice and wisdom from? What books or articles will I read?

Methods of Evaluation: How will I reflect on the experiences of learning?

- Evaluation of the learning goals should be ongoing in any accountable learning process.
- Evaluation usually works best when it takes place at agreed times and in previously agreed ways. It involves growing in understanding and competence in a spirit of trust, openness, honesty, and mutual respect.
- The emphasis is on what the participants have learned together, taking into account all the discussions that have happened over the duration of the supervised learning. The process includes self-assessment, feedback, critical reflection, and future planning.
- Action plans can be evaluated by using
 - case studies
 - written verbatim reports of conversations or visits
 - a journal of reflections
 - a theological reflection
 - evaluation questionnaires
 - reflections on specific tasks, such as visiting patients in hospital or leading Bible study

Example: I want to deepen my spiritual practice for ministry (Competency 1A: *Demonstrates evidence of personal and spiritual growth and healthy self-awareness*). I will journal after using each spiritual practice and share this with my supervisor. I will keep track of the time I spend in spiritual practice to find a balance that works for me. I will reflect theologically on my experiences and share them with my supervisor and CFC. I will provide one specific example where a spiritual practice helped support me in my ministry on the learning site.

Sample Learning Goals

Example 1: This goal could be for the candidate

<p>Learning Goal: I want to begin to learn how to connect with people one-on-one in conversation about their faith and understanding of God. (Competency 4B: <i>Fosters the community's spiritual life</i>)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Action Plans</p> <p>I will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - visit several people in their homes or coffee shops • practise active listening skills and be intentional about creating space for faith conversations • reflect on how I relate to people who are different from me in age, gender, sexual orientation, cultural background, economic class, and educational background (Competency 3A: <i>Uses contextual analysis to guide participation in God's work and love in the world</i>) • share with my supervisor four written verbatim reports of conversations 	<p style="text-align: center;">Evaluation</p> <p>I will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • observe whether some people are reflecting theologically as a result of our pastoral conversations • keep a journal to record my reflections and learnings • request feedback from the Educational Supervisor and the Community of Faith Connection • request feedback from those experiencing my pastoral care

Example 2: This goal could be for the candidate

<p>Learning Goal: I want to develop my leadership skills in facilitating learning and discussion in a group setting. (Competency 2A: <i>Interprets the Bible and makes it accessible to the community Models effective leadership</i>)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Action Plans</p> <p>I will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify skills I already have and specific skills I want to work on • lead an adult Bible study group for six weeks during Lent • test different educational methods (experiential, storytelling, audiovisuals) to discover my own comfort and convictions about 	<p style="text-align: center;">Evaluation</p> <p>I will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify the changes in my skills • keep a journal to reflect on my learnings • identify the educational methods that were most effective

<p>learning and the responses of adults to different methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> work to integrate my academic learning in biblical and theological understanding with the experience/understanding of lay people 	
---	--

Example 3: This goal could be for the candidate and/or the Educational Supervisor

<p>Learning Goal: I want to learn more about how to give useful feedback, both affirming and critical, in a way that enables growth and openness to trying new methods. (Competency 4A: <i>Models effective leadership: Demonstrates an understanding of effective communication</i>)</p>	
<p>Action Plans</p>	<p>Evaluation</p>
<p>I will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> work with the information provided in this resource and identify ways of implementing the guidelines for offering feedback ask the feedback recipients what could have made the feedback more helpful 	<p>I will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> assess which methods were effective and comfortable

Example 4: This goal could be for the candidate

<p>Learning Goal: I want to practise connecting with community groups in the neighbourhood. (Competency 3C: <i>Exercises creativity, imagination, and good judgment to enable groups and communities to adapt in the face of changing contexts and demands</i>)</p>	
<p>Action Plans</p>	<p>Evaluation</p>
<p>I will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> participate in community events in the neighbourhood learn about the community involvements of members of the congregation read books (<i>name them here</i>) about community ministry 	<p>I will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> present a map of the community of faith's service footprint in the neighbourhood know key neighbours

Example 5: This could be a goal for the candidate.

<p>Learning Goal: By the end of the Learning Covenant, I want to discover my gifts in preaching and grow in my ability to preach using various styles. (Competency 4C: <i>Leads worship designed for meaningful engagement</i>)</p>	
<p>Action Plans</p>	<p>Evaluation</p>
<p>I will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss my understanding of preaching with my Educational Supervisor and the Community of Faith Connection • try various preaching styles (storytelling, teaching, evangelistic, drama, using no notes, etc.) • create a response sheet/feedback form for the Community of Faith Connection to use • keep a journal of my discoveries and learnings 	<p>I will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss my reflections with my Educational Supervisor, including sharing written copies of my sermons and video or audio tapes • meet with my Community of Faith Connection soon after the worship service to share their written reflections on the reaction sheet/feedback form • on a regular basis, share my journals of self-discovery and learning

Formal Evaluation

The Learning Covenant includes a description of how the evaluation process will take place with all participants in the covenant.

Use resources provided to ensure clear and fair processes of communication evaluation are followed throughout the Supervised Ministry Education and during evaluation periods:
[*Candidacy Pathway SME: Feedback and Communication*](#).

It is up to the candidate to ensure that all three reports (the CFC's, the Educational Supervisor's, and the candidate's) are signed by all members, copied, and sent to where they need to be.

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

The evaluation forms are provided to the candidate. The candidate must ensure that the other parties to the Learning Covenant have the appropriate evaluation form. All participants in the Learning Covenant must have a copy of their own form so they can prepare for evaluation at the specified deadlines.

Discuss the process you will follow as you complete the forms.

The Vocational Minister will identify the deadlines for the evaluations to be submitted. Please follow the instructions on the forms to submit the evaluations.

These evaluations are important for the candidate's Candidacy Board to determine successful completion of requirements and to assess growth and formation. The Office of Vocation uses the evaluation to assess the suitability of the learning site and supervisor.