

Candidacy Pathway: Roadmap

2024



Office of / Bureau de la
vocation

The United Church of Canada
L'Église Unie du Canada

Candidacy Pathway: Roadmap (2024)



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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

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About This Resource

The United Church of Canada celebrates that God calls individuals with varying gifts and abilities to the vocation of ministry in order to faithfully lead the church in living out its purpose through ministries of bold discipleship, daring justice, and deep spirituality.

You are exploring this resource because you or someone you know has been encouraged to consider a vocation of service to the ministries of the church. This resource outlines the process for **discerning suitability** for that vocation and the pathway for **equipping** oneself for ministerial leadership in The United Church of Canada. This resource is a guide; the policies informing the pathway are found in the [Candidacy Pathway: Policy](#).

The Indigenous Context

The [Calls to the Church](#)¹ Preamble states:

We, the Indigenous ministries and communities of faith of The United Church, declare that we will tell our own story of what ministry means for us. We will decide for ourselves who we are, who constitutes our ministries groups and practices.

Within this context, the Indigenous Office of Vocation supports and guides those who are called by their Indigenous community into ministry in The United Church of Canada, offering the Indigenous Candidacy Pathway of discernment, formation, and preparation for those individuals.

How to Use This Resource

This resource provides you, and those who accompany you, with an overview of the path you will walk to discern and prepare for a vocation of ministerial leadership in The United Church of Canada. It provides checklists to follow and useful information on how to pursue the requirements of the Candidacy Pathway. You may wish to check off the boxes as you go to track your progress.

Share this resource with those who support and guide all aspects of your preparation.

If you need help or guidance along the way, please contact a Vocational Minister.

¹ The Calls to the Church were adopted by General Council 43 in Oshawa, ON, in 2018.

Initial Steps and Discerning Your Call

q Become Familiar with the United Church Website

Discerning your call to ministry begins with familiarity with the church in which you will live out that call. Ministry is a lifelong vocation of service for which your preparation in candidacy is only the beginning. Take time to read and reflect on the church's ministries of discipleship, justice, and spiritual flourishing on the United Church website. Know that ministers continue to develop their competence for ministry leadership *throughout* their years of service. Reflect particularly on these resources related to a vocation in ministry:

- [Statement on Ministry](#): Review this document to better understand the various ways to serve in ministry in the United Church and the differences between them, including the programs of preparation for each type of ministry.
- [Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice for Ministry Personnel](#): Provides the standards that ministry personnel must follow. In your application to the Candidacy Board you will be asked if you agree to follow these standards. To answer this question truthfully, you must review this document.
- [Guide to Competencies for Formation for Ministry and Lifelong Ministry Leadership](#): Identifies the competencies the church requires in its ministry leaders. These learning outcomes will be used in your education and formation to shape learning goals and to assess your competence for ministry leadership.

q Learn about the Candidacy Pathway

The Candidacy Pathway is the process you must follow to become a minister in The United Church of Canada. Please familiarize yourself with the policy so you understand what guides the process. The document that outlines the policy, [Candidacy Pathway: Policy](#), is on the website.

The Candidacy Pathway includes seven non-sequential phases in which the church

- **calls** forth leaders
- **identifies** their promise and suitability for ministry
- **accompanies** their preparation through accountability to a Candidacy Board and support by a Circle of Accompaniment
- **equips** candidates at theological schools, in Supervised Ministry Education (educational supervisors and community of faith connections), and on field placements.
- **assesses** candidates for promise; suitability to be a candidate; readiness for Supervised Ministry Education; readiness for recognition, commissioning, or ordination
- **authorizes** for a Supervised Ministry Education appointment or another candidate supply appointment; for commissioning; recognition, or ordination
- **celebrates** candidacy; recognition, commissioning, or ordination

The Candidacy Board oversees the Candidacy Pathway process and assesses each person's path from **promise, suitability, and readiness** toward the **celebration** of call into the ministries of the church. Throughout your journey you will meet with the Candidacy Board and are responsible for following their direction.

q Review the Resources that Guide the Journey

As you make your way through this resource, you will find references to documents and resources that play a role in the Candidacy Pathway process. They are available on the [United Church website](#).

Most are located on the [Candidacy Pathway](#) page. You can find others by using the search function in the top right-hand corner of any page. The Leadership tab at the top of the website takes you to pages related to entering ministry. Continue to explore the website to locate the resources you'll require:

- [Candidacy Board Resources](#): Vol. 1 includes best practices for the Candidacy Board to fulfill their role of overseeing the process. When you have an interview with the Candidacy Board you may want to review Vol. 2.
- [Circle of Accompaniment](#): Provides information on the role of the Circle of Accompaniment and resources for its members. When the Candidacy Board indicates that you should establish your Circle of Accompaniment, refer to this document.
- [Supervised Ministry Education resources](#): Describe the requirements for Supervised Ministry Education and how they can be accomplished.

The introductory video on the Candidacy Pathway webpage offers an overview of the Candidacy Pathway. It's a good idea to start by watching this [video](#).

q Keep Integration in Mind

The Candidacy Pathway involves three sources of preparation for ministry:



- communities of faith, where you will learn and practise
- theological school or centre, where you will study and reflect
- supported spiritual and vocational discernment for growing into your identity as a minister

The pathway offers opportunities to learn from all three sources. Most importantly, the pathway is designed for you to integrate learning and experience from all three sources. Integration is the key principle in the Candidacy Pathway—the way you bring together what you know, what you can do, and who you are.

The Candidacy Board is charged with overseeing not only your steps along the Candidacy Pathway, but *also* the integration of your ability, knowledge, and identity.

q Understand the Concept of Discernment

Discernment is often described as prayerful or faithful decision-making. The decisions on leadership of the church must be discerned within community. The entire Candidacy Pathway includes discernment. Candidacy Board members seek the Spirit's leading in all of the decisions that need to be made on the pathway.

Your daily life includes making decisions. It's called discernment when you seek to involve God in your decision-making. Discernment is also the spiritual practice of identifying the ways in which the Spirit is at work in your life. It involves taking the time to reflect, notice, and attend to where the Spirit is leading you. It is an ongoing and lifelong journey of seeking to live faithfully.

Discernment starts by asking questions and continues by including the Spirit in exploring the answers. It hinges on this main question: What is God's hope for my life?

Because discernment is done in community and is shaped by community, though you may feel the Spirit nudging you in particular ways, it is also important to explore this within community. Does your community affirm your understanding of your call? In what ways might the community help you to discern faithfully?

How to Discern

- **Attend a Discernment Retreat:** If you wish to immerse yourself in discerning your call, participating in a Discernment Retreat is the best option. Contact a Vocational Minister or the Office of Vocation for information on upcoming opportunities.
- **Read, pray, explore:** The [Discerning a Call to Lead webpage](#) includes resources for discernment, including books, videos, and spiritual practices.
- **Walk yourself through the items below:** At this initial stage of your journey a variety of factors require prayerful consideration, and particular questions need to be explored. The following items do not need to be done in a particular order, and some of the items in the list intersect with each other. Take the time you need to discern where the Spirit is leading you in your call to ministry leadership.

q Discern with an Elder or Minister

A mandatory part of your pathway is to meet with at least one minister or Elder in The United Church of Canada. This person may be a diaconal, designated lay, or ordained minister. If you hope to serve in an Indigenous community of faith, you can meet with an Elder.

First, identify the person you would like to meet with. You will see later in this document that this person writes a letter as part of your initial application. Ensure that the individual is aware of this requirement.

You can meet with your Elder/minister as many times as needed for your mutual discernment. Focus your time together on the following:

- Share the story of your faith journey and ask for feedback.
- Talk about how you feel God is calling you to ministry leadership and ask whether they affirm this direction for your life.
- Ask questions about what it is like to be ministry personnel in the church, and examine whether the reality matches your understanding. Discern together whether this role matches your gifts.
- Research on the website and discuss with your minister/Elder the differences between diaconal and ordained ministry. You will choose one of these paths early in your education and formation for ministry.

Information for the Elder or Minister

You've been asked to guide someone who is prayerfully discerning a call to ministry. This is a privilege and a gift. Thank you for considering this important role.

When the person is ready to submit an application to meet with a Candidacy Board, they will ask you to write a Mentor Letter. This letter will include the following:

- observations concerning the person's call to faith, theology, and/or call to ministry
- a description of the person's involvement and leadership in church and/or community
- comments on the person's spiritual gifts and gifts for ministry
- comments on possible challenges facing the person

The letter must be submitted using the appropriate online form, which will be provided once the applicant submits their own application.

q Choose Your Educational Path

The journey to ministry leadership requires extensive commitment to formation and competency development. During this time of initial discernment, you must learn about the various educational requirements for both diaconal and ordained ministry and explore how to accomplish them.

There are several paths of formation and education toward ministry. All schools are encouraging and helpful in creating opportunities for candidates to meet the United Church requirements for ordered ministry (called a *testamur*) regardless of your previous or recent experience in higher education. Explore websites or speak directly to the registrar about what accommodations they can provide based on professional learning assessment or medical requirements.

[Candidacy Pathway: Policy](#) outlines the requirements for entering ministry. You are encouraged to meet with someone who is knowledgeable about the educational requirements and programs for meeting them, including contacting the schools or speaking with a Vocational Minister.

The schools where you can meet requirements for ordered ministry include:

- Vancouver School of Theology
- Emmanuel College, University of Toronto
- Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax
- United Church Studies at Montreal Dio in association with McGill University's School of Religious Studies
- St. Andrew's College in association with Saskatoon Theological Union
- Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre (for Indigenous ministries testamur and Indigenous Designated Lay Ministry)
- Centre for Christian Studies, Winnipeg (for Diaconal Ministry)

If you have completed all or some theological education in preparation for serving another denomination and are now discerning a call in The United Church of Canada, any of these schools can assess where you would enter their program in order to complete United Church requirements.

Reflect on the following questions as you research the various educational programs:

- What educational path will be best for you?
- What factors influence your choice of educational program? What factors limit or restrict your consideration of an educational program?
- How are you discerning the best program for you?

At this time of exploring and discerning your educational path, you need to be aware of the Supervised Ministry Education (SME) requirements in the various streams and programs for ministry. Be in touch with a Vocational Minister or contact schools directly to learn more about their SME requirements.

United Church Theological School	Programs of Study	Website
Atlantic School of Theology Halifax, NS	3-year on-campus Master of Divinity degree and 5-year Master of Divinity summer distance program; Bachelor of Theology degree	astheology.ns.ca
Centre for Christian Studies Winnipeg, MB	4-year Diploma in Diaconal Ministries	ccsonline.ca
Emmanuel College Toronto, ON	3-year on-campus or hybrid Master of Divinity degree	emmanuel.utoronto.ca
Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre Beausejour, MB	Diploma in Indigenous Ministry (for ordained, diaconal, and Indigenous designated lay ministry)	sandysaulteaux.ca
St. Andrew's College Saskatoon, SK	3-year Master of Divinity degree	standrews.ca

United Church Theological School	Programs of Study	Website
United Church Studies at Montreal Dio/Études de l'Église Unie du Canada à Dio Montreal, QC	3-year on-campus Master of Divinity degree, 4–5 year Bachelor of Theology/Master of Divinity combined, 90-credit Licentiate in Ministry	montrealdio.ca/ucs/
Vancouver School of Theology Vancouver, BC	3-year on-campus or hybrid Master of Divinity degree	vst.edu

q Discern Implications

Ministry is a commitment that affects all aspects of your life. During this time of discernment, explore the questions below and discuss the implications with your friends and family.

- How might your current life commitments be affected by becoming a minister?
- What are the short- and long-term implications of pursuing theological education and earning a minister's salary on you and your family?

Application to Meet with the Candidacy Board

When you are ready to meet with the Candidacy Board to further discern your call to ministry, you must submit an application. This section provides the steps to follow and information to guide your way.

q Contact a Vocational Minister

Their [contact information](#) is on the [Candidacy Pathway webpage](#). Choose one based on your context. One Vocational Minister serves the national Indigenous Church and six Vocational Ministers serve particular geographical areas across the country. If you are francophone, please contact the Vocational Minister for Quebec and Eastern Ontario.

The Vocational Minister will talk with you to ensure you're ready to submit an application. They will then give you access to the online portal called [ChurchHub](#), which is where you access forms, submit documents, and track your whole Candidacy Pathway process.

q Determine the Type of Your Initial Application

The Candidacy Pathway unfolds in a different way for every person. You must discern the best way forward for your circumstances. As you discern the steps in this section, please seek assistance from a Vocational Minister.

During your Candidacy Pathway process, the Candidacy Board assesses for promise, suitability, and readiness. These assessments may be spread out over time and take place during several interviews, or they may be accomplished during one interview. This partly depends on the type of initial application you submit to the Candidacy Board. Determining the extent of your first application is based on where you are in your discernment, the program of study you intend to pursue, and the direction of the Vocational Minister.

See [Professional Assessments and Lifelong Leadership Development](#) below for guidance on when to submit a professional third-party assessment to support your application. Be aware of the checklist for meeting expectations of leadership development throughout the Candidacy Process.

There are three possible scenarios for the type of application you can submit ahead of your first interview with a Candidacy Board.

Scenario 1: Promise

If you are still exploring the questions in the [Discernment](#) section above and wish to seek the wisdom and guidance of the Candidacy Board, submit only the application for Promise. It includes the following:

- Promise Application: narrative questions
- Police Records Check: levels 1/2 (vulnerable sector) checks dated within six months
- Résumé: education and work history

- Promise Reference 1
- Promise Reference 2
- Promise Elder/Mentor letter
- School report, if attending

Police Records Checks

Review [Police Records Checks](#), which includes additional information including your responsibility for annual filing.

During the first interview, the Candidacy Board uses the following criteria to assess your promise for candidacy:

- You can articulate your call to ministry and to a particular stream of ministry.
- You have received affirmation from others in the church who support your call to ministry.
- You have the capacity to develop the gifts and attributes required for ministry leadership, including a deep spiritual life and self-knowledge as articulated in the [Guide to Competencies for Formation for Ministry and Lifelong Ministry Leadership](#).
- You possess the willingness to learn and grow.

After your first interview, the Candidacy Board determines the next steps on your pathway. This may include submitting the application for suitability and an appropriate third-party assessment (see [Professional Assessment and Lifelong Leadership Development](#) below).

Scenario 2: Promise and Suitability

If you have clear answers to the questions posed in the Discernment section, then—in addition to submitting the application for Promise—you can also submit the application for Suitability. To complete the application for Suitability you must

- a) have been actively involved in the United Church for the last 24 months;
- b) be a member in good standing of the United Church;
- c) have completed mandatory trainings; and
- d) agree to become a member of the United Church pension plan and group insurance plan upon eligibility for enrolment²
- e) complete any required personal, vocational, or leadership assessment

The mandatory trainings are offered as webinars (online workshops) through United in Learning. Please visit [CHURCHx.ca](https://www.churchx.ca) to register for and complete the trainings. Currently there are two: Racial Justice (sessions 1 and 2); and Personal and Professional Boundaries for Church Leaders (Introduction).

² At time of publication (2024), a new requirement e) was not yet reflected in *The Manual*. The following will be included in future editions of *The Manual* starting in 2025: e) complete any required personal, vocational, or leadership assessment.

It is recommended (or may be required) that you include in your application for Suitability, the report of a professional third-party assessment. This report supports your Suitability application and indicates your commitment to growing in self-awareness and developing your leadership. It may take several months between booking and receiving the report from an assessment, so talk to your Vocational Minister if you have concerns about getting a professional assessment in time.

Your Suitability interview requires the following documents to be submitted ahead of time:

- Suitability Application
- Proof of Membership
- Boundaries Completion (as noted on ChurchHub)
- Racial Justice Completion (as noted on ChurchHub)
- Third-party assessment report, if any
- Third party assessment self-reflection, if submitting report
- School report, if attending

During your first interview, the Candidacy Board assesses your promise for candidacy following the criteria outlined in the Promise section above. They also assess for Suitability based on the following criteria:

- You have a well-thought-out plan for pursuing theological education and have started to identify potential learning goals.
- The third-party assessment report affirms your strengths for ministry leadership and identifies some achievable goals for further learning and development.

After your first interview, the Candidacy Board may approve you as a candidate, they will outline your next steps on the pathway in order for you to be approved as a candidate, or they may not make you a candidate and will affirm your gifts for lay leadership.

Applicant or Candidate?

When you have submitted an application to meet with a Candidacy Board, you are called an applicant. When the Candidacy Board determines that you show promise and suitability for ministry leadership, you are called a candidate.

Scenario 3: Promise, Suitability, and Readiness for Supervised Ministry Education (SME)

In addition to submitting the two applications outlined above, the initial application to the Candidacy Board may include a request for assessment of readiness for Supervised Ministry Education. This applies if you have already completed theological education or if you intend to enrol in a program of study that incorporates SME.

During your first interview, the Candidacy Board assesses your Promise and Suitability for candidacy following the criteria outlined in the two previous sections. They also assess for Readiness for SME based on the following criteria:

- You have sufficient education or training to take on the responsibilities of ministry.
- You have identified potential learning goals for the SME experience in relation to the resources [Guide to Competencies for Formation for Leadership and Lifelong Ministry Leadership](#) and [Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice for Ministry Personnel](#).
- You have given thought to the type of ministry setting or context where your learning goals may best be fulfilled.

Your application for this interview includes submitting the following documents ahead of the interview:

- Readiness for SME Application
- SME Reference 1
- SME Reference 2
- SME Learning Goals
- Third-party assessment report, if any
- Third-party assessment self-reflection, if submitting report
- School report

The Candidacy Board determines the number of interviews on a case-by-case basis in order to approve you as a candidate and to authorize readiness for SME.

q Submit Your Initial Application

Please follow the instructions on the application forms on [ChurchHub](#). If you need assistance, contact a Vocational Minister or e-mail candidacypathway@united-church.ca.

The Candidacy Board

Once your initial application has been received, you will be assigned to a Candidacy Board. There are seven Candidacy Boards across the country. The initial application invites you to identify which Candidacy Board you would like to be assigned to. Your choice may be based on where you live, where you anticipate going to school, if your first language is French, or if you intend to serve Indigenous communities of faith. The Office of Vocation makes the final determination on which Candidacy Board you will be assigned to.

Here are the names of the Candidacy Boards:

Mountain
Prairie
North & Central Ontario
Southwestern Ontario
Quebec & Eastern Ontario
Atlantic
Indigenous

Choose the Quebec & Eastern Ontario Candidacy Board if you want to communicate in French. The Indigenous Candidacy Board is for those who intend to serve Indigenous communities of faith and for students at the Sandy Saulteaux Spiritual Centre.

Professional Assessment and Lifelong Leadership Development

Professional assessments help to identify areas for development and growth in relation to the [Guide to Competencies for Formation for Ministry and Lifelong Ministry Leadership](#) and to shape your learning goals throughout your pathway and beyond. Professional assessments are conducted by licensed third-party organizations, consultants, and other professionals. These assessments are among many tools the Candidacy Board uses to identify and discern your promise and suitability for ministry and your readiness for ministry leadership.

Your Candidacy Board and Vocational Minister will discern with you when and how to best benefit from an assessment. For example, a vocational assessment might be recommended or required ahead of a Promise or Suitability interview. To prepare for or during Supervised Ministry Education, a leadership or intercultural assessment might be required. Some schools require that candidates for ministry are assessed.

Early in your candidacy, you are expected to use one or more of the following tools for **building self-awareness**. These professional third-party assessments are sometimes offered by the theological school or are available through pastoral leadership organizations or professional counselling services that may be recommended by Vocational Ministers.

- professional third-party:
 - EQi assessment and report
 - leadership assessment and report
 - intercultural development inventory and report
 - vocational assessment and report

q Reflection on Assessment

Professionally administered assessments include a session with the consultant or organization's representative to discuss the results and invite self-reflection.

In addition to sharing the report from the assessment, the Candidacy Board will ask for your reflections on what you learned. For example, were you surprised by any results or comments in your assessment? If so, why did these surprise you? What is the most valuable learning for you in doing the assessment? How has that informed your self-understanding of your leadership skills?

You will provide this reflection in advance, and you must complete this step of the Candidacy Process.

q Commitment and Habits for Lifelong Leadership Development

Candidacy is the beginning of a lifelong call to ministry as United Church ministry personnel. All ministry personnel are expected to develop their ministry leadership ([Guide to](#)

[Competencies for Formation for Ministry and Lifelong Ministry Leadership](#)) over their lifetime in ministry. Commitments and habits for meeting this expectation begin in candidacy.

Readiness for ministry **includes** demonstrating the commitment, skills, and habits for **lifelong leadership development**. For example, you are expected to do one or more of the following:

- complete a leadership assessment (EQI, ESCI, leadership 360, etc.) and
 - create learning goals for Supervised Ministry Education and beyond
 - engage a professional leadership coach (includes leadership assessment)
 - engage a professional ministry mentor
 - engage reflective pastoral supervision
 - engage a spiritual director
 - participate in a peer-support group (committed to the practice of critical feedback)
 - keep a professional portfolio or CV of professional development courses and workshops
 - have a five-year continuing education plan

Candidates can apply for bursaries to offset some of the associated fees. Candidates in appointments can use their continuing education allowance for costs associated with many of these services.

Interviews

q Prepare for Your Interview

The Candidacy Board follows the guidelines and best practices in [Candidacy Board Resources](#) (both volumes). You may wish to review the [Interview Handbook](#) ahead of your interview since it includes sample interview questions.

The Candidacy Board is trained and committed to take into account diverse realities and experience among interviewees. These include cultural, language, physical, visual, auditory, and neurodivergent considerations. Speak with your Vocational Minister in advance about anything the Board should know in order to conduct as fair and equitable an interview with you as possible.

q Submit All Reports by the Interview Deadline Provided by Your Candidacy Board

Documents for All Applicants/Candidates and All Streams

Promise

- Promise Application
- Police Records Check

- Résumé
- Promise Reference 1
- Promise Reference 2
- Promise Elder/Minister letter
- School report, if attending

Suitability

- Suitability Application
- Proof of Membership
- Boundaries Completion (as noted on ChurchHub)
- Racial Justice Completion (as noted on ChurchHub)
- Third-party assessment report, if any
- Third-party assessment self-reflection, if submitting report
- School report, if attending

Readiness for Supervised Ministry Education

- Readiness for SME Application
- SME Reference 1
- SME Reference 2
- SME Learning Goals
- Third-party assessment report, if any
- Third-party assessment self-reflection, if submitting report
- School report

Supervised Ministry Education

- SME Check-in Evaluation
- SME Mid-Term Evaluation
- SME Final Evaluation
- SME revised learning goals (potentially)
- Professional Leadership Assessment

Readiness for Commissioning/Ordination/Recognition

- Readiness for Ordination/Commissioning/Recognition Application
- Final school report

Documents for Only Diaconal OR Designated Lay Ministry Candidates

Field Education Evaluations (diaconal students only)

- Field Education Evaluation Year 1
- Field Education Evaluation Year 2
- Field Education Evaluation Year 3

Benchmark Application (for either diaconal students or DLMS)

- Diaconal Benchmark Application **OR**
- DLM Benchmark Application **AND**

Optional Applications and Documents (not applicable to every candidate)**Readiness for Appointment**

- Readiness for Appointment Application

Withdrawal from Candidacy Pathway

- Letter from applicant/candidate noting withdrawal

q Choose an Accompanier

Applicants and candidates bring an *accompanier* with them to interviews with the Candidacy Board. An accompanier is someone who knows you and your faith journey reasonably well but is not

- a spouse or partner
- a relative
- another applicant or candidate
- your minister
- someone involved in your academic evaluation (this includes professors and instructors at theological schools and programs as well as supervisors in ministry)
- someone who is in a position of authority over you or you over them
- a member of the congregation that you may be currently serving as a leader

The accompanier will support you through the process, be a silent witness to the interview, offer observations to the interview team when invited, can take notes when the Candidacy Board communicates their decisions and directions to you, and assist you in debriefing after the experience.

q Review the Interview Process

The day and time for your interview will be communicated in advance. Plan to dedicate a four-hour block of time for the interview process, which will unfold as follows:

- The interview team reviews your application before you arrive; they design your interview based on your written information. Ahead of the interview date you may be asked to prepare a presentation or case study to deliver to the interview team.
- An interview team of three to five people will meet with you for approximately 1.5 hours. Expect to be sharing with people who are genuinely interested in you and what you have to say.
- It is the policy and practice to record interviews when technology allows. The interview team will let you know if the interview is being recorded.
- In a break halfway through the interview, both you and the interview team will assess how the interview is progressing.

- When the interview is over you will leave the room. Your accompanier may be invited to meet briefly with the interview team to share any concerns and whether they believe the interview team experienced an accurate reflection of who you are.
- Based on both your initial written information and the interview itself, the interview team takes time to develop their recommendations.
- Several interviews will be taking place at the same time with different interview teams. When all of the interview teams have completed their recommendations, the whole Candidacy Board meets to hear the recommendation of each interview team and to make a formal decision.
- You and your accompanier will be invited to join the Candidacy Board to receive their decision and guidance on your next steps. You can ask questions for clarification.
- A written record of the decision, direction, and guidance of the Candidacy Board is shared with you within two weeks of the interview.

Circle of Accompaniment

Q Learn about the Circle of Accompaniment

Refer to [Candidacy Pathway: Circle of Accompaniment](#) for more information on the purpose and role of the Circle of Accompaniment.

Q Establish a Circle of Accompaniment

Ministry is not independent work; it is shared among lay people, with ministry colleagues, and with ecumenical partners in the community. Building relationships of support and accountability is key to a vocation in ministry. Establishing a Circle of Accompaniment is your way to demonstrate and practise this aspect of ministry while in the Candidacy Pathway.

Your Candidacy Board will ask you to identify your Circle of Accompaniment, which you are responsible for maintaining throughout your candidacy. ChurchHub includes a place for you to keep track of your involvement or encounters with your Circle of Accompaniment. During interviews, the Candidacy Board will ask you to reflect on your experiences with your Circle.

You are responsible for inviting people to be part of your Circle of Accompaniment. You can choose one or more formats:

- **Group Format:** The Circle of Accompaniment may be a small group of people, perhaps four or five, who gather for regular meetings. This group might come from your education program or be lay leaders and ministers you know and trust.
- **Individual Format:** The Circle may be made up of people you meet with one on one who fill particular supporting roles. These roles may include
 - a spiritual director—or Elder, if preparing for ministry within the Indigenous context—to focus on ongoing discernment, personal awareness, and identity
 - a mentor who is experienced in the requirements of the Candidacy Pathway and of your chosen ministry stream, who helps you navigate your journey
 - a person who helps shape your learning goals and provides feedback on your ongoing growth and development
- **Professional Format:** Professional mentorship and coaching (see [Professional Assessment and Lifelong Leadership Development](#)) enhances, and *may with permission* stand in for a Circle of Accompaniment. Ask your Vocational Minister about opportunities for professional accompaniment.

Q Keep Track of Meetings with Your Circle of Accompaniment

The Candidacy Board wants to ensure that you have adequate and effective support. They are also interested in you demonstrating your capacity for building and maintaining relationships of support and accountability. Your ongoing journey will include updating your Candidacy Board on the work of the Circle of Accompaniment.

The Ongoing Journey

Once you meet with the Candidacy Board for your first interview, the remainder of your journey is guided by the Candidacy Board. They provide you with the required steps based on your unique circumstances. You are required to follow the direction of your Candidacy Board. For this reason, the remaining checklist is quite broad.

q Develop Your Competency for Ministry Leadership

You are responsible for demonstrating growth in relation to suitability and readiness for ministry leadership to the Candidacy Board throughout your pathway, and beyond. Ensure that you complete the requirements in the **Equip** phase of the pathway, including the required program of study for your chosen stream of ministry. Annual school reports are an important part of demonstrating both your knowledge and capacity for integration. This phase also includes Supervised Ministry Education, field education placements, and/or other structured learning opportunities, depending on your stream of ministry and your particular learning needs. Focus your growth and development on specific learning goals based on the [Guide to Competencies for Formation for Ministry and Lifelong Ministry Leadership](#). ChurchHub includes space for theological school reports, assessment on the Competencies for Formation for Ministry, and templates to keep track of your learning goals.

In the Equip phase of Candidacy Pathway:

1. Applicants and candidates are equipped to live out God’s call to ministry leadership through ongoing formation, spiritual growth, and development.
2. There are two components to the education and other preparation for ministry:
 - a) Credentialing: acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for effective ministry leadership, and beginning the development of the “habits” or “arts” of ministry and that lead to credentialing; and
 - b) Competency: the development, through substantial experience in the field, of the “habits” or “arts” of ministry that leads to the deepening of competency for effective ministry leadership.
3. The United Church needs ministers who are trained for ministry in the United Church and who have knowledge and an appreciation of the United Church’s polity, ethos, traditions, and theology.
4. The United Church relies on the theological schools related to the United Church to provide the training, knowledge, and appreciation required for ministry in the United Church.

—*The Manual*, H.3.5

q Meet with Your Candidacy Board

The Candidacy Board can interview you at any time during your pathway. They may want to check in, address concerns, and provide guidance or support.

You can also ask to meet with your Candidacy Board at any point of your pathway.

The **Assess** phase of Candidacy Pathway continues throughout your theological education and formation for ministry, including field placements and/or Supervised Ministry Education appointments. Several different interviews are part of this phase. The Candidacy Board conducts interviews following the minimum guidelines in the chart that follows, based on the program of study you are pursuing, and where you are in your individual pathway.

Program of Study	Type and Purpose of Interviews	Scheduling of Interviews
Atlantic School of Theology: Summer Distance Program	Promise and Suitability for Candidacy	Beginning of process
	Readiness for Supervised Ministry Education	Before third year of program
	Benchmark: assess progress on learning goals and competency development based on the <i>Guide to Competencies for Formation for Ministry</i>	Recommended before fifth year of program but not required
	Readiness for Ordination	Final year of program
Centre for Christian Studies (Diaconal Stream)	Promise and Suitability for Candidacy	Beginning of process
	Benchmark: assess progress on learning goals and the focus of learning goals for competency development based on the <i>Guide to Competencies for Formation for Ministry</i>	Before third field placement
	Readiness for Commissioning	Final year of program
Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre	Promise and Suitability for Candidacy Readiness for Supervised Ministry Education (for ordination and Indigenous Designated Lay Ministry streams)	Beginning of process
	Benchmark: assess progress on learning goals and the focus of learning goals for competency development based on the <i>Guide to Competencies for Formation for Ministry</i>	Designated Lay Ministry: halfway through program Diaconal or ordained: before fourth year of program
	Readiness for Commissioning, Ordination, or Recognition	Once all requirements are nearly complete—typically at least 4 months before anticipated date of celebration

Program of Study	Type and Purpose of Interviews	Scheduling of Interviews
Emmanuel College; Atlantic School of Theology (non- Summer Distance); United Church Studies at DIO; Vancouver School of Theology; St. Andrew’s College	Promise and Suitability for Candidacy	Beginning of process
	Readiness for Supervised Ministry Education	Typically final year of program—candidates may have reason to begin SME at an earlier time (see SME section for more details)
	Readiness for Ordination	Once all requirements are nearly complete—typically at least 4 months before anticipated ordination date
Designated Lay Ministry Program	Benchmark: assess progress on learning goals and the focus of learning goals for competency development based on the <i>Guide to Competencies for Formation for Ministry</i>	Halfway through program
	Readiness for Recognition	Final year of program

Celebration

Candidacy

- q When you are approved as a candidate, the Office of Vocation will notify the regional council in which you live or have an appointment. The regional council may choose to make you a corresponding member (if you do not have an appointment). The regional council celebrates new candidates at their annual meeting.
- q Once the Candidacy Board approves you as a candidate, you are given access to the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP). Information on this service is available on the [Benefits Centre website](#). You will receive a notification from the Office of Vocation about your enrollment.

Commissioning, Ordination, or Recognition

The regional council commissions, ordains, or recognizes at a celebration of ministries service based on receiving the confirmation of readiness for commissioning, ordination, or recognition from the Office of Vocation. The regional council must also receive confirmation that a covenant relationship is in place with a community of faith or there is an offer of employment to a paid accountable/recognized ministry, as determined by the regional council.

When you get to this point in your pathway, additional information will be provided.

Remember to contact your Vocational Minister when you have questions or need guidance.

Prayer for the Journey

God of the Way,

you are the road we travel,
and the sign we follow;
you are bread for the journey,
and the wine of arrival.

Guide us as we follow in your way,
holding on to each other,
reaching out to your beloved world.

And when we stray,
seek us out and find us,
set our feet on the path again,
and lead us safely home.

In the name of Jesus, our Companion, we pray. Amen.

—Janet Cawley, 1996 (*Voices United* 648), used with permission