

# ATLANTIC SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY UNITED CHURCH FORMATION PROGRAM February, 2008

The United Church Formation Program at Atlantic School of Theology contributes to an individual's formation for ministry in The United Church of Canada. Formation is life-long, multi-faceted and may include:

- life experience
- engagement in the life of a congregational faith community
- formal programs of theological education
- programs, courses, conferences, retreats in areas of interest
- spiritual direction, mentoring, accompaniment
- informal discernment of Call
- the Discernment processes of The United Church of Canada
- the Candidacy and Internship process of The United Church of Canada
- continued life-long learning and continuing education for ministry

Within the time spent at AST in a formal program of theological education, Candidates for ministry in The United Church of Canada are required to participate in the United Church Formation Program.

The **purpose** of United Church Formation at AST is:

To contribute to the spiritual maturity and personal growth of students as they prepare themselves for the work of ministry in the church and to assist the United Church Faculty to determine readiness for ministry in granting Testamur.

The **goals** of United Church Formation at AST are as follows:

- 1: to nurture and develop one's personal and professional identity as a member of the order of ministry of the United Church of Canada,
- 2: to explore the context of ministry within the United Church of Canada today and to prepare people for that context,
- 3: to provide and enable spiritual and faith development for ministry in the United Church of Canada.

*"United Church Formation Program" 1995*

**The United Church Formation Program** includes a number of components:

1. Out of the 30 credits of the Master of Divinity at AST, certain elective credits may be designated by the denomination of the student. For United Church Candidates studying at AST, the following six courses are required:
  - United Church Worship
  - United Church Theology and History
  - United Church Polity and Ethics
  - Introductory preaching elective
  - Advanced preaching elective
  - Denominational Formation, a credit granted in the final year upon completion of all other denominational requirements.

2. Wednesday afternoon at AST is set aside for denominational activities. For United Church Candidates at AST, this includes:
  - a. Worship of approximately one half-hour, planned and led by students, with occasional participation by faculty. Innovation and use of United Church resource materials is encouraged. Communion is celebrated approximately once per month, presided over by licensed faculty or guests.
  - b. Plenary gatherings (examples from the current year)
    - Information and materials of particular interest and use within the present circumstances of The United Church of Canada. Resource people from Conference and General Council staff and committees are a welcome addition to our gatherings. (More Voices, Ministry in Changing Times, Anglican/United Dialogue, General Council Executive)
    - Knowledge and information of benefit to those in preparation for ministry. (MBTI, Theological Worlds, Family Systems, physical fitness, identity and self care)
    - Spiritual practices and approaches to spiritual direction. (Sue Reid, Beth Benjamin, Kim MacAulay)
    - Forms and expressions of ministry within The United Church of Canada. (military chaplaincy, prison chaplaincy)
  - c. Formation Groups: Based on the United Church resource, "Rooted in the Divine: Nurturing Our Faith through Small Group Ministry," small groups meet for mutual support and encouragement, and to more intensively examine questions of personal identity and faith as they relate to the practice of ministry in The United Church of Canada. Formation groups may also be used as task groups during Plenary gatherings. (This year, recordings of the radio play, "The Dudley Chronicles: The Seven Dudley Sins," were used as discussion starters.)
3. United Church Committees: under the oversight of a Steering Committee, the United Church community includes the Nominations Committee, the Worship Committee, the Day Away Committee and the Hospitality Committee. Opportunities also exist for student representation on Pine Hill Committees, AST Committees and Conference/District/Presbytery Committees.
4. One Day Away will be held each academic year. The content and the format of the Day Away varies from year to year as planned by the Day Away Committee. The Day Away is often located off campus and usually involves a full day rather than our usual afternoon time slot.
5. An Integrative paper, in three parts:
  - a) In the first year, 3 pages on "What is the distinctive Calling of The United Church of Canada within the Christian Church?"
  - b) In the second year, 3 pages on "Who am I as a person of faith?"
  - c) In the third year, 3 pages on "What is my theological and ecclesiological understanding of the ministry to which I am Called?"

Students are encouraged to use this assignment to integrate their learning, reflection and experience, especially in preparation for the many and varied interviews required by the United Church Candidacy process. Relevant research, reading and course-work may be included with sources identified. The paper is not graded, but is commented upon by the Faculty Advisor and the Formation Director. Each part is due on January 15 and is to be considered "a work in progress." Each part should inform and support the next and students are encouraged to adapt, revise, and/or replace previous parts as necessary.