



**Summer Distance  
Master of Divinity  
Program**

**Program Information and  
Handbook**

**2021–2022 Academic Year**

United Church of Canada Students and Anglican students should refer to  
their specific Handbook.

**A Field-Based Degree Program**

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## Table of Contents

### **Program Information**

Introduction	4
AST and the Summer Distance M.Div. Program	4
Program Description	4

### **Summer Distance M.Div. Handbook**

Field-Based Learning	6
Supervised Ministry Requirements	6
The Learning Site	6
Educational Supervisor	7
Lay Supervision Team	8
Who is a Member of an LST?	8
Lay Supervision Team Role and Responsibilities	9
Evaluation and Reporting	9
Site Visits	10
Termination and Leave of Absence	10
Withdrawal from Program and Appointment Status	10
Transfer between Summer Distance and On Campus Program	10
Learning Covenant and Portfolio	11
Theological Reflection	11

### **Appendices**

A	Setting up your Supervised Ministry Practicum	13
B	Formation Credit	16
C	Creating a Learning Covenant and Learning Goals	19
D	A Model for Theological Reflection	22
E	Giving and Receiving Feedback	24
F	Beginning the Learning Process:	26
	Suggestions for Lay Supervision Teams	

## **Program Information**

### **ATLANTIC SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND THE SUMMER DISTANCE M.DIV. PROGRAM**

Atlantic School of Theology (AST) was founded in Halifax in 1971 by the amalgamation of three antecedent institutions: Pine Hill Divinity Hall (United Church of Canada), Kings College Faculty of Divinity (Anglican Church of Canada), and Holy Heart Seminary (Roman Catholic Church). Its primary mission has been training ministers and priests for the United, Anglican, and Roman Catholic Churches and it is fully accredited by the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada.

AST's **Summer Distance Master of Divinity Program** ("the Program"), with its six-week summer session in Halifax and internet/hybrid courses in the fall and winter terms, offers a very high level of accessibility to participants. It also offers the church a unique opportunity to benefit in an immediate way from the active service of ministers-in-training and to participate in practical ways in their preparation as faithful and effective leaders for the church.

### **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

The Summer Distance MDiv program is comprised of 30 credits (90.0 credit hours), taken over a minimum of four years, including 4 or more summers on campus in Halifax. Each Summer Term runs from mid-June to the end of July, for a total of 6 full weeks. Up to 3 credits may be taken each summer. Normally 15 credits (and not less than 12 credits) must be taken on campus in Halifax. The remaining credits are taken online through AST.

The Program strikes a balance between the academic and pastoral practice dimensions of a field-based program of education for ministry. A well-rounded theological education integrates academic rigour and practical ministerial formation in dialectical ways. Field-based education for ministry offers students significant opportunities to integrate study and practice, and to reflect seriously on both while engaged in pastoral ministry.

The following outline of courses is the standard program of study. Elective requirements may vary depending on the specifications of a student's denomination. There is a specific Handbook for United Church of Canada students and Anglican students.

#### Foundations Courses (7 credits)

RM 1000	Research Methods and Practices
BF 1001	Biblical Foundations HB/OT
BF 1002	Biblical Foundations NT
PF 1001	Pastoral Foundations
PF 1002	Preaching Foundations
TF 1000	Theological Foundations
WF 1000	Worship Foundations

Supervised Ministry Practicum (Supervised Field Education) (2 credits) \*  
 SMP 1000  
 SMP 2000

Formation Program (1 credit) \*\*  
 DF 3000

Graduate Project and Seminar (taken in the final year of studies) (2 credits)  
 GS 3000A  
 GS 3000B

Electives (18 credits) †

- 4 - Pastoral Theology courses (PT)
- 2 - Hebrew Bible/Old Testament courses (HB/OT)
- 2 - New Testament courses (NT)
- 1 - Ethics course (ET)
- 6 - Systematic Theology, Church History, or Ethics courses (ST/CH/ET)
- 3 - Unrestricted electives (any area)

\* SMP credits: These two courses require a paid or unpaid ministry placement, under supervision, with a minimum of 10 hours/week of service from September to April for two years. They can be undertaken in one site for both years (preferred), or a different site in each year. They must be taken sequentially. If you are seeking ordination, the denominational authority to which you relate (district, synod, region, credentialing board, etc.) should be consulted about appropriate sites. You cannot normally do your placement in your home congregation/parish. We actively discourage full-time appointments, as time must be reserved for studies.

**See Appendix A – Setting up your Supervised Ministry Practicum.** This must be in place no later than August 30<sup>th</sup>

\*\* Formation credit: This credit is to be done under the supervision of your denomination's designated authority. This credit provides you with an extended opportunity to explore your identity as a minister, pastor, or priest within your tradition. It is recorded at AST as a Directed Study, and the supervisor of this credit is paid by AST. **See Appendix B – Formation Credit**

† Elective credits: Some denominations have specific requirements that may restrict the electives available to students.

**Students are encouraged to contact their denominational authorities and their faculty advisors to inquire about Formation requirements and denomination-specific courses necessary for their pastoral or ordination goals.**

## **Summer Distance M.Div. Handbook**

Students in a field-based M.Div. program engage in an action-reflection model of learning that incorporates ministry practice with intensive academic and integrative reflection. Questions arising from ministry practice can frame attention to academic learning, at the same time that academic learning can inform pastoral experience.

### **FIELD-BASED LEARNING**

- This document will refer to “Field-Based Learning” to designate a program that includes:
  - Supervised Ministry Practicum appointments in Learning Sites
  - Academic courses
  - Emphasis on integration of field-based and academic learning

### **SUPERVISED MINISTRY REQUIREMENTS**

To sustain full correspondence between the Program and the on-campus M.Div., SMP 1000 and 2000 fulfill the Supervised Field Education (SFE) requirement. Students require a Learning Site, Educational Supervisor and Lay Supervision Team

### **THE LEARNING SITE**

A Learning Site for SMP 1000 and 2000 is most often a congregation. However suitable sites can also be a faith-based Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) or a chaplaincy / spiritual care position. The student is appointed for either volunteer or paid, accountable ministry. This placement must be approved as a learning site by AST as a learning site. An educational supervisor must also be approved by AST. This practicum agreement should be completed no later than August 30<sup>th</sup>

### **See Appendix A – Setting up your Supervised Ministry Practicum**

Learning Sites should see themselves as partners in a student’s learning process, encouraging and supporting the student’s full participation in academic courses, as well as providing time for educational leave and holidays.

A parish approved for a student appointment (paid) provides an environment for a student in field-based learning. There is a dual expectation of the site and the student. The parish has agreed to be a Learning Site for someone in an educational process, yet they look to that person for worship leadership, spiritual support, and pastoral care.

The student has agreed to be appointed with responsibilities as laid out in a Ministry Position Description yet is also engaged in an educational program that requires time to study and space to explore ministry issues. Patience and flexibility are useful as Learning Site and student sort out their relationship and clarify

expectations.

**NOTE: All students in the Program must send a copy of an up-to-date Police Records Check (which includes a vulnerable Persons Check/Level II) to AST prior to the commencement of SMP placement.**

Students in the program establish Learning Covenants, reviewing and renewing them each year. Learning Covenants include learning goals, which provide a framework for the year.

### **See Appendix C – Creating a Learning Covenant and Learning Goals**

Evaluations are an important part of the process. At the end of each academic year, evaluations by the student, educational supervisor and LST are required. Evaluation forms for SMP 1000 and 2000 are designed by AST and incorporated into the course work. These are shared with judicatories as appropriate.

### **EDUCATIONAL SUPERVISOR**

For SMP 1000 and 2000, an Educational Supervisor must be approved by the Coordinator of the Program.

Students and Educational Supervisors will meet for an equivalent of one (1) regular hour of supervision each week for the duration of each SMP course (September through April), with meetings occurring at no less than two-week intervals. The Educational Supervisor will often be an off-site supervisor at a distance from the Learning Site. Students and Educational Supervisors are encouraged to continue meeting throughout the summer months, as possible.

An Educational Supervisor may function, at various times, as mentor, friend, colleague, model, coach, consultant, and co-learner, but the primary task is one of education. Being a supervisor requires, among other things:

- Self-awareness and awareness of one's learning style
- Commitment to mutuality in ministry
- Willingness to participate fully in an action-reflection learning process
- Ability to work with the student's identified goals
- Desire to cultivate the art of theological reflection

This adventure in intentional learning is rooted in relationship. Therefore, the Educational Supervisor will need to focus not only on the various tasks of ministry but also on relationship with the student. Such a goal is not easily achieved. There is always the pressure of urgent tasks to be done. Indeed, the Learning Site has legitimate expectations in this regard.

Yet, if the experience of vocational formation is to be truly *educational*, it must provide breathing space for these relational and reflective dimensions as well. Using situations brought by the student, a supervisor draws on all the intuitive, emotional, analytical, and theological understanding that he or she has developed over the years and encourages a student to do the same. When each person sees the other as a resource, then learning can be truly enriching and fulfilling.

An Educational Supervisor is expected to:

- Meet with the student to clarify what she or he hopes to learn during the year in ministry (focusing on the period, September to April).
- Meet with the student for the equivalent one (1) hour each week to discuss, analyze, theologically reflect, and engage in shared reflection on ministry experiences that emerge in the students Learning Site. Meetings can take place every other week for two (2) hours or other equivalent as mutually arranged. Meetings may be conducted by telephone or digital technology, but students and supervisors should plan for as many face-to-face meetings as possible.
- Work with the student to establish a mutually agreeable time and place for reflection sessions and work out with the student how data for reflection will be provided (e.g. narrative reporting, verbatim, journal writing, recordings).
- Be available to meet with the Lay Supervision Team upon invitation. The Educational Supervisor is not a regular member of the group.
- Explore with the student ways of analyzing and reflecting theologically on concrete experiences in ministry.
- Develop a mutually agreeable process for feedback and evaluation.
- Provide written evaluations as required by AST or the denomination.

## **LAY SUPERVISION TEAM**

**A Lay Supervision Team (LST)** is comprised of 3-6 people from the Learning Site who agree to meet monthly, from September through April, for approximately ninety minutes to two hours. The purpose of the LST is to meet for conversation and mutual reflection.

The student is a catalyst in forming this group, yet the focus is not primarily the student. It is an opportunity for the student to listen to the faith, views, contexts, values, and wisdom of a smaller group within a larger community, a microcosm of the parish.

The role of the LST is to accompany the student through the process of formation for the practice of ministry. This accompaniment will include commitment to regular meetings for exploration, discussion, and implementation of assigned work within the SMP online seminar, as well as theological reflection and evaluation of all learning experiences. A successful group will have a sense of mutuality in sharing and discussion and a sense that everyone is learning.

### **Who is a Member of a LST?**

When a congregation or NGO agrees to become a learning site, it provides the names of at least three persons willing to be members of an LST. Some members of the group may be chosen because of their knowledge of or connection to the student.

A family member or partner of a student is not an appropriate member of the group. Ideally, the group will be balanced with such qualities as age, gender, skill, cultural or ethnic background, and experience in the faith community. An Educational Supervisor may function as a consultant where necessary but is not to be involved in an ongoing basis.

Members are expected to make a commitment to serving on the LST for one year with the possibility of continuing as participants in the following year.

Normally, the student will take the initiative to invite people to be part of the LST in consultation with the Educational Supervisor and key congregational leaders. These members may include those initially assigned to the LST by the Learning Site.

One person from the group may be designated as Chair to work alongside the student in preparing for regular meetings. For ease of communication between the Learning Site and AST, designate one member of the group as a contact person for sharing evaluations and further program information.

When the membership has been established, it is helpful to have a covenanting liturgy during a worship service to recognize and celebrate the ministry of this group and the student. This celebration could include the Educational Supervisor, if possible. In this way, members of the Learning Site are made aware of the role of the LST in the learning process.

### **Lay Supervision Team Role and Responsibilities**

A Lay Supervision Team:

- Supports vocational formation of someone preparing for the practice of ministry.
  - Offers personal perceptions of the ministry setting (sharing stories / histories).
  - Reflects on and struggles with important issues in the practice of ministry and function as partners in the teaching-learning process.
  - Develops a fuller understanding of the nature of Christian vocation for all God's people through conversation about their lives of faith.
  - Offers feedback to the student and AST on the traditions in their setting.
- See Appendix D on Giving and Receiving Feedback**
- Understands and acknowledges differences of viewpoint and conviction and is willing to work through situations of disagreement or conflict.
  - Provides written evaluations as required by AST or the denomination

**See Appendix E: Beginning the Learning Process** for suggestions on group process.

### **EVALUATION AND REPORTING**

In SMP 1000 and 2000, the evaluation is provided by the course instructor and submitted back to the course instructor and kept in the students file where it will be

shared with the appropriate judicatory.

### **SITE VISITS**

The Coordinator or another representative of AST will normally visit students in SMP 1000 and those who have moved from one Learning Site to another. The Coordinator or representative will meet with students, their Educational Supervisor, and, if possible, their LSTs. These visits provide an opportunity for all the partners in a student's learning to meet together. The representative will offer guidance in the application of the Program's processes and gather first-hand impressions of the learning site. Site visits may be conducted in person or through digital technology.

Attendance at these events may be helpful, especially to students serving in remote areas, and is especially recommended by AST in the first year of the Program. In order to participate fully in the Program and all courses, a student requires an up-to-date computer and access to a high-speed internet connection at the Learning Site. As students often perform secretarial duties on the Learning Site, a computer is essential to the student's ministry.

### **TERMINATION AND LEAVES OF ABSENCE**

At any point, a student may withdraw or be withdrawn from the program. Resuming studies will require another application process.

A one-year leave of absence upon written request is permissible under extraordinary circumstances; however, such action will delay completion of the program for up to four years, in order to complete the cycle of course work.

If a student's appointment at a Learning Site is terminated through no fault of the student, the appropriate courts and committees of their denomination, in consultation with AST, will identify a second site or an alternative method for field-based learning and the accumulation of the required ministry experience.

### **WITHDRAWAL FROM PROGRAM AND APPOINTMENT STATUS**

If a student is withdrawn, suspended, or terminated from the academic program, AST will notify the student's denominational judicatories. Students who withdraw from the academic program while under appointment may be eligible to continue in their appointment at the discretion of the appointing bodies.

### **TRANSFER BETWEEN SUMMER DISTANCE AND ON-CAMPUS M.DIV. PROGRAMS**

Summer Distance Program students who wish to transfer to the on-campus M.Div. program, or on-campus students who wish to transfer to the Summer Distance M.Div. Program are directed to contact the Academic Dean before the end of the current academic year.

## LEARNING COVENANT AND PORTFOLIO

Beginning in SMP 1000, each student will develop a Learning Portfolio that will include:

- **The Learning Covenant established for each year of SMP**, including Learning Goals for that year.

A student's first-year goals may include some that the student suggests based on their own perceived needs or those recommended by denominational bodies, referees, and other mentors.

The Learning Covenant should be reviewed each year and amended as necessary (e.g. with names of new members of the LST; changes in the intended pattern for Educational Supervision; etc.).

As a living document, the Learning Covenant will be updated when feedback and evaluation are offered through self and peer assessment, as well as input from LST, Educational Supervisor, church courts, the Co-Coordinator of the Summer Distance Program, and instructors. All this information will shape future directions for learning.

- **Copies of all evaluation forms.**
- **Copies of academic transcripts provided by the Registrar each year.**
- **Other documents as required by the student's Formation Director/Judicatory.**

**Format:** The Learning Portfolio may be contained in a three-ring binder, a portable file carrier, an expandable file with closure, or a computer memory stick.

Students should review their portfolio on a yearly basis with the appropriate judicatory overseeing their educational process.

## THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Theological reflection upon ministry experiences is the heart of ministry practice. Despite academic courses, books read, wisdom shared, or experiences accumulated, ministry offers continual surprises. Grounding all ministry practice is the simple question of where God's Spirit is leading the people of God. This question becomes more complex through analysis of experiences through the lens of theology, pastoral ministry, biblical witness, church history, faith, contextual frameworks, denominational polity, and so on. Theological reflection will be a constant aspect of all learning.

During supervision, theological reflection offers an opportunity to examine both the theological foundations of practice and the theological questions arising from practice. Meetings with the Lay Supervision Team will include theological reflection

as a process of discernment of the meaning and purpose of ministry.

One of the Educational Supervisor's tasks is to engage with the student in shared theological reflection. The Educational Supervisor must also feel free to challenge the student to go deep, to pursue serious questions, and to question any easy answers the student may quickly grasp.

Theological reflection within a group such as the LST often begins with personal storytelling. First responses to questions such as "Where is God in this?" or "What is the Spirit saying to us?" are often expressive of deep feelings. Genuine theological reflection values affect and experience as first steps on a deeper journey of questioning and exploration. Students will often be initiators and leaders of theological reflection or will provide a model for lay leaders. Every member of the group must feel free to speak, and to ask of anyone else, "Tell me more. I don't understand." A leader must not be afraid to ask of any and all, "Now that we have discerned this, what do we do?"

It may be helpful to have in mind what is sometimes called "Wesley's Quadrilateral." The *experience* that often first shapes our reflection is but one tool of discernment. As Christians we also look to *scripture*, *tradition*, and *reason* as we discern meaning and trace the Spirit's movement.

**See Appendix C: A Model for Theological Reflection on Experience** for one suggested model.

## Appendix A

### Setting up your Supervised Ministry Practicum 1000 & 2000

The Supervised Ministry Practicum requirements in **Years 1 & 2 (SMP 1000 and 2000)** meet the field education requirements for the MDiv degree. The student must have a paid or unpaid ministry placement, under supervision, with a minimum of 10 hours/week from September to April for two years. SMP can be undertaken in one site for both years (preferred) or a different site in each year. You cannot do your placement in your home congregation or parish. The student will develop learning goals and all parties (student, supervisor and lay resource team) will complete evaluations at the end of the winter term. The educational supervisor will be appointed by AST in consultation with the appropriate Judicatory and with the student.

If the ministry placement is **a paid parish appointment**, then the appropriate judicatory must approve the appointment. Full-time appointments are strongly discouraged, as time must be reserved for studies. Annual evaluations will be shared with the appropriate judicatory.

### Setting Up Your Placement

In SMP 1000 and 2000, agreements are arranged between AST and the site to facilitate student learning. It is important to begin this process well in advance of the start date for the course.

- Step 1:** Read the Summer Distance Handbook and schedule a conversation with the program coordinator to discuss the process and the options available.
- Step 2:** Research potential placement sites - either unpaid or as a pastoral appointment - and a possible education supervisor. Make sure that any judicatory which needs to provide approval is kept in the conversation.
- Step 3:** Email your suggested placement to the SD coordinator who will contact the site and speak to the potential supervisor about what the placement entails and the role of the Supervisor.
- Step 4:** Once the site and supervisor have been approved the student is responsible to complete the Practicum Agreement Form and submit it to the program coordinator, Susan MacAlpine-Gillis at AST (smacalpinegillis@astheology.ns.ca) The student must also have a Police Records Check on file at AST.

**Atlantic School of Theology Supervised Ministry Practicum Site Agreement  
SMP 1000/2000**

The site agreement must be completed, signed by both the student and the Site Supervisor and submitted to AST before your placement can begin. Please email the completed form to Susan MacAlpine-Gillis ([smacalpinegillis@astheology.ns.ca](mailto:smacalpinegillis@astheology.ns.ca))

Student Name:

Judicatory Contact:

Judicatory Email:

Placement Name:

Placement Address:

**Placement Details**

Is this a Paid Student Appointment or a Volunteer Position?

How many hours? (Minimum required is 10 per week)

Are you in a team ministry or solo position?

**Supervisor Name:**

**Email:**

**Phone:**

## General Agreements

We hold the following understanding for our work together in SMP 1000 / 2000

- If the placement is as a volunteer, the student commits a minimum of 10 hours a week to the placement for 13 weeks each term, to be planned in consultation with the supervisor.
- Normally the student and the educational supervisor will meet weekly for an hour, or biweekly for two hours. This time is dedicated primarily to theological reflection on current pastoral experiences arising from the student's experience and connected to the student's learning goals
- The student will meet two to three times each term with the LST
- The student and the supervisor agree to prepare evaluations for submission to AST as outlined in the syllabus for the course using the evaluation form provided by the instructor.
- Should conflict or difficulty which threatens the learning potential for the student at their site, all parties agree to first work together to resolve or clarify the situation. If a situation cannot be resolved on site, then either the student or the educational supervisor or both together will approach the SMP Instructor and one of the co-coordinators of the Summer Distance Program for consultation and assistance.
- A Learning Covenant with agreed upon learning goals will be submitted to the instructor of SMP 1000 / 2000 prior to Oct 15<sup>th</sup>

### Signatories:

Student:

Date:

Supervisor:

Date

## Appendix B

### Guidelines for Developing a Formation Program for individual students or small groups

The MDiv program at Atlantic School of Theology, as a whole, is taught in an ecumenical, multi-denominational context. However, in partnership with AST, denominations provide programs of learning and development for MDiv students that is tradition-specific. The Formation credit is a requirement of the MDiv program at AST. Some denominations appoint Formation Directors who have a multi-year relationship with students and judicatories. In some cases, individual students or small groups receive oversight and training from a person appointed by their denomination or judicatory (“the supervisor”).

Formation programs are intended:

- v to provide for-credit programs of learning to MDiv students
- v to nurture, develop, and integrate students’ spiritual maturity, personal growth, and practical learning *en route* to serving in ministry after graduation
- v to help shape students’ self-understanding and identity in ministry, as well as their understanding and knowledge of their own specific traditions or denominations
- v to encourage learning and growth in the context of community

### The Goals of Formation Programs

AST recognizes and encourages individual denominations to identify the specific formational goals and needs that are best suited to its tradition. Thus, each program will have distinctive elements and objectives.

At the same time, most Formation Programs connected with AST will seek to achieve some common goals, such as:

- v Developing competence and wisdom in one’s own tradition
- v Strengthening knowledge and skills in the practice of ministry, including such things as
  - leading liturgies and administering a parish
- v Developing skill in sharing one’s own faith with others, as well as articulating and practising the gifts and inheritance of one’s own tradition
- v Becoming appreciative of the value of working and growing in community and with colleagues
- v Encouraging personal spiritual growth
- v Providing a sense of belonging and being “at home” on one’s own tradition

- v Developing wisdom and skill in critiquing, affirming, and appreciating one's own tradition, as students become stewards of their shared heritage
- v Developing skills in theological reflection
- v Cultivating familiarity with the denomination's understanding of ministry
- v Developing a sense of one's own identity as minister within the denomination
- v Growing in the specific skills, abilities, knowledge, and wisdom that are expected of persons exercising ministry in one's own tradition

### **Modes of Learning**

Formation programs adopt a number of modes of learning to achieve the goals noted above.

None of the following are specifically prescribed, but are recommended as effective ways to learn:

- v Maintaining a portfolio or log book of experiences, with reflections on what is learned within the Formation program
- v Participating in and leading worship/mass
- v Reflection papers (e.g. "my identity as a minister in my tradition")
- v Interviewing ministry practitioners and others in the community (such as social workers, justice workers, law enforcement, and anti-racism advocates) about their experience
- v Field trips, such as hospital, funeral home, long-term care home, religious centres of other faiths, and centres for various cultural groups (e.g. Black Cultural Centre, Indigenous Friendship Centre)
- v Small group learning
- v Drafting, writing, or assembling liturgies
- v Reading, studying, and discussing denominational statements, policies, and liturgies
- v Practice in leading prayer (written and extemporaneous)
- v Exposure to a range of spiritual practices, and practice in leading them
- v Reading books and articles, then discussing or writing about them
- v Attending conferences, workshops, and webinars
- v Theological reflection on case studies

### **Duration**

AST recommends that a Formation program be followed for the full duration of a student's MDiv degree. On-campus Formation programs currently comprise as much as 200 hours. At a minimum, a Formation program should take place over 12 months.

**Assessment**

At the successful conclusion of a Formation program, students receive one graduate credit that is reflected on their transcript. (The MDiv is comprised of a total of 30 “credits,” equivalent to 90.0 “credit hours” in other academic institutions.)

AST asks the Formation supervisor to certify in writing that the Formation program has been completed to the supervisor’s satisfaction, and to indicate a grade of Pass or Fail. In addition, we ask that the following be provided to the Academic Dean and to the judicatory body or official that has oversight of the candidate (as applicable):

- v A one-page template that indicates learning outcomes and how they have been measured (provided by AST and completed by the director/supervisor)
- v A 1-2 page written commentary, noting the student’s growth and learning in the program, and areas for further growth and training (written by the director/supervisor)
- v A 4-5 page summative essay reflecting on what has been learned in the Formation program (written by the student)

**Conclusion**

Thank you for your efforts in developing and delivering a Formation program for the student(s) under your care. Please contact AST’s Academic Dean for further information or support. You are also welcome to contact AST’s Anglican, Roman Catholic, or United Church of Canada Formation directors for guidance.

## Appendix C

### Guideline for Developing a Learning Covenant And Learning Goals

The Learning Covenant clarifies for AST, the student; the supervisor and the LST the specific commitments and responsibilities undertaken during a field education placement. This statement, to be signed by all parties, is a way of holding each other accountable during the time spent working together in relation to the ministry site. Although many other aspects of learning will occur for all involved, the goals and undertakings named in the learning covenant are those around which evaluation will be focused in order to meet the curricular goals of SMP 1000 and 2000 as part of the students' Master of Divinity program.

Because each student has unique areas of experience and inexperience, learning goals tailor the curriculum emphases to the particular student and site. Clarifying specific learning goals intends to help the student develop pastoral skills, one's pastoral identity and confidence in the ministry the student plans to pursue. Goals, drafted by the student, are discussed with the educational supervisor and the LST in the fall and should be reviewed in January to clarify if a new goal has emerged, given the experience of the fall term. Following are some guidelines and examples to assist the student in preparing learning goals and the supervisor and LST in clarifying those goals and ways of working towards them.

Learning Goals are most helpful when they:

- Are concrete and specific
- Include the opportunity for observation by both self and others
- Are intentional, time limited and invite specific feedback and evaluation
- Address both pastoral identity and skill development
- Are realistic in a given context and time frame.

The action plans for learning goals

- Name concrete and specific occasions, functions, and programs through which named objectives may be tried, experienced over time, or practiced
- Are developed in consultation with others at the ministry site, taking into consideration the planning and permission that may involve other people or groups
- Propose the nature of supervision, consultation and evaluation which will help the student to measure progress on the goal
- Include the kind of tool/s to be used for reporting or reflecting on events

Evaluation of learning goals should

- Be able to be experienced, worked at, and reflected on in a particular context by both self and others
- Take place at agreed times and in previously agreed ways
- Be undertaken in a spirit of trust, openness and mutual respect, knowing that learning is a lifelong process and perfection is not a measure for ministry.

## Sample Learning Goals

**Learning Goal:** to develop my leadership skills and confidence in facilitating learning for adults in a small group setting.

**Action Plan:** I will

- Identify with my supervisor skills I already have and skills I want to work on
- Lead a session on the value of pastoral care with my lay resource team this fall
- Lead an adult Bible study group for four 1.5 hr sessions in February, based on the course I'm doing in NT this fall
- Test different educational methods in the bible study and ask participants to evaluate which methods work for them
- Talk with my supervisor about my own comfort in using the educational methods, after journaling my response to the Bible study sessions

**Evaluation:** I will

- Identify the changes in my skills in my journal and with my supervisor
- Invite members of the LST and the Bible study group to reflect on my confidence using different educational methods
- Video at least one of the group sessions and watch it in order to hear how I present information and respond to questions

**Resources:** books on adult education methods and Bible studies, Ms X B a teacher in my LST group, course notes and texts from Biblical courses, class discussion on educational design

\*\*\*\*\*

**Learning Goal:** to offer pastoral care to people I don't know very well, facing situations outside my experience and overcome my shyness to pray out loud

**Action Plan:** I will

- Be assigned specific individuals with whom to connect and visit
- Practice active listening skills and asking open ended questions
- Talk with my LST about their experiences of pastoral prayer and how they pray themselves and with others
- Talk with my supervisor about when and why I feel shy and do theological reflection about what I believe about God' healing
- Write up verbatim reports on my visits to discuss with my supervisor
- Talk with my formation director about expectations around prayer and pastoral care in my church

**Evaluation:** I will

- Request feedback from my supervisor and LST about the prayers I lead
- Request feedback from those whom I visit
- Get feedback on a case study from one of my visits presented in class
- Get feedback from classmates on my prayer leadership in chapel

**Resources:** books on pastoral care, my formation director, supervisor, LST, classmates and pastoral faculty at AST.

### **SMP Learning Covenant**

Please submit the completed learning covenant including learning goals to your SMP instructor no later than October 15<sup>th</sup>.

Student:	Email:
Learning Site:	
Supervisor:	Email:
Contact for LST:	Email:

We hold the following understanding for our work together

- If the placement is as a volunteer, the student commits a minimum of 10 hours a week to the placement for 13 weeks each term, planned in consultation with the supervisor. In a congregational site, participation weekly in worship is expected.
- Normally the student and the supervisor will meet weekly for an hour, or biweekly for two hours, for supervision / theological reflection on current pastoral experiences arising from the student's experience and connected to the students' learning goals.
- The student will meet two to three times each term with the lay supervision team.
- The student and the supervisor agree to prepare evaluations for submission to AST as outlined in the syllabus for the course using the evaluation form provided by the instructor.
- Should conflict or difficulty which threatens the learning potential for the student on the site, the parties agree first to work together to resolve or clarify the situation. If a situation cannot be resolved on site, then either the student or the supervisor or both together will approach the coordinator of the Summer Distance Program for assistance.

#### **Signatories:**

Student:	Date:
Supervisor:	Date:
LST Representative:	Date:

## Appendix D

### A Model for Theological Reflection

Adapted from the work of the Rev. Dr. Abigail Johnson

#### Introduction

Briefly describe the ministry in which you are engaged.

#### Name the Experience.

Think of several experiences/events/situations in your current situation in which you have played a significant role. Select ONE, preferably one with which you were challenged or about which you have some questions or concerns.

#### Reflect on the Experience

- What happened?
- Who was involved?
- What was my role?
- What were my reactions?
- How did others respond?
- Where did it leave me?

#### Analyze the Experience.

- What factors were at work in the situation? (attitudes, emotions, assumptions, social and cultural issues, power dynamics, etc.)
- What was at stake for me? (how does it connect with my own history, family and/or life experience, convictions, values, etc.)
- How was I enriched or challenged by it?
- What did I discover about myself?
- What do I want to remember or forget about it?
- What questions or concerns remain with me?

#### Make some Theological Connections.

- What images/symbols/concepts of God does it evoke?
- Who/where is God in this situation, for you and for others? Where does God appear absent?
- What biblical, historical, literary or other stories does it call to mind?
- What Christian doctrine or practice is relevant?
- What learning from our faith tradition is applicable?
- How does it relate to other faiths/cultures/traditions?

#### Reflect on your Learning.

- How has my understanding of Christian discipleship been enriched or challenged?
- What have I learned or discovered about the practice of ministry?
- How does all this relate to my learning goals?

#### Pray

As you conclude your reflection on this situation, take time to pray, giving thanks for the learning arising from this situation, letting go of hurts and concerns, greeting new opportunities for pastoral depth and sensitivity.

**Conclusion and Discussion**

Using this experience and your reflections on it, suggest some open-ended themes or questions that might open up a broader discussion of the theology and practice of ministry for discussion in a group or with a mentor.

**Resources for Theological Reflection**

Johnson, Abigail. *Reflecting with God: Connecting Faith and Daily Life in Small Groups*. Herndon, VA: Alban, 2004; Killen, Patricia O'Connell and John de Beer. *The Art of Theological Reflection*. New York: Crossroad, 1994.

## **Appendix E**

### **Giving and Receiving Feedback**

by the Rev. Dr. Abigail Johnson

Giving and receiving feedback can be one of the most challenging areas of community learning. Offering feedback can feel invasive, treading on tender areas of self-esteem. People often say, "Who am I to offer my thoughts to another person?" In particular, people in ministry settings feel reluctant to offer feedback to ministry Candidates because they feel less able to speak about theology, faith or God. However, each person has unique insights, life experience and observations that offer valuable input in the learning journey.

Receiving feedback can be just as challenging. Hearing feedback from others might challenge assumptions or create concerns about whether we are loved, appreciated or valued. Some feedback is not useful or the timing is not right, so it can catch us off balance creating confusion. On the other hand, feedback is a valuable learning tool giving us insight about our actions, our context, and our selves. The process of feedback is to learn how to hear, receive and act on what we are being offered in order to gain self-awareness and deeper insights about ministry.

The following are a few suggestions to assist the purpose and process of giving and receiving feedback.

#### **Timely**

Choosing the right time to offer feedback is helpful. Beginning an in-depth analysis of the sermon while you are shaking hands with the minister at the door after worship, is too close the event for effective conversation and feedback. Having a conversation at a pre-arranged time when the immediacy of an event has passed is a good time to look back and reflect on what took place.

#### **Useful**

Following a teacher evaluation, I received the feedback, "If only you were a little taller, you would offer a better presence to the class." Since I could not do anything about my 5 feet of height, I did not find this to be useful feedback. Finding ways to offer constructive suggestions for improvement gives useful ways for someone to improve.

#### **Descriptive**

Offering feedback may take a little effort to think about what you did and did not like and why you responded in the way you did. For instance, saying, "I just didn't like it," does not give any clear indications of where another person might improve or increase awareness of actions. More description is helpful, such as "When you stood in the pulpit at the beginning of worship, your voice was so soft and you looked down at your notes. I did not feel welcomed into worship."

**Positive and Growing Edges**

In giving feedback, it is often helpful to name gifts and positive areas as well as identifying areas for improvement. However, do not fall into the formula of saying, "You were great . . . but". Often people will not hear the positive comments and will await the "real" feedback or learning edge comments.

**Intentional**

In looking for feedback it may be helpful to arrange or organize ways to solicit feedback. For instance, handing out feedback forms prior to a service is a proactive way to encourage response from the congregation about preaching. Asking for feedback can be difficult because it is a vulnerable moment. Yet seeking feedback helps us to focus on areas where we want to improve in relation to others. Often feedback is given in a general way such as, "I really enjoyed your sermon." While it is wonderful to have such affirmation, you may want to hear more specific comments about a particular area. Learn to ask specific questions such as, "I was attempting to make a connection between the biblical story and our daily lives? How did I do?" Or, in asking for specific feedback it might be helpful to ask people your question ahead of time so they can be sensitive to and aware of the area you are trying to improve. Be careful not to ask questions that only require a "yes" or "no" answer, such as "Did you enjoy my sermon?" Perhaps you can rephrase the question to ask, "What did you enjoy about my sermon?"

**Negotiate**

It may be useful to discuss, as a group, how we wish to receive and offer feedback. Feedback may be easier to hear when it has been requested rather than hearing unsolicited advice. When someone has clearly stated, "I want to hear your thoughts about my presence in the hospital as I visit," it is easier to jump in with thoughts.

**No Surprises**

Offering thoughts, insights and feedback as time and opportunity present itself is very important in the learning relationship. Saving up feedback until the end of a learning experience does not give time for trying different styles, skill, or methods. Offering feedback along the way is preferred, with a final evaluation being a summing up of the whole experience.

**There must be no surprises in the final evaluation.**

## Appendix F

### **Beginning the Learning Process: Suggestions for LSTs**

by the Rev. Dr. Abigail Johnson

In this small group process, begin by creating a Group Covenant. Share stories of groups that have been effective and groups that have been less effective. What values and common understanding is important as you form a group that is respectful, mutual, and confidential? Other aspects of the group covenant may be as follows:

- clarify the purpose of the group
- agree to respect personal confidentiality
- be supportive of each other in ministry and learning
- be willing to offer constructive feedback (see Appendix C)
- be faithful in attendance at the meetings

### **Suggestions for a First Meeting**

- Allow time for introductions, saying "hello" and "storytelling"
- Share a significant early-life experience of church either negative or positive
- Invite each participant to explain why they agreed to become a member of the group
- Clarify the purpose and the process of a LST using this Handbook
- Invite members to bring and share with the group an object or symbol that is personally meaningful and explain why

### **Suggestions for Subsequent Meetings**

- Spiritual enrichment through readings, prayer, bible study, an opening or closing or centering ritual, and times of silence
- Discussion of experiences and issues in ministry brought by the student or other members
- Reflections on each person's understanding of ministry
- Use of a story or an event to focus discussion about a particular ministry issue including issues arising from the student's weekly reflection reports or classroom presentations
- Use of a book, article, current event, or issue in the news
- Theological reflection - individual or group sharing using the appended model (Appendix B) or other available models
- Sharing and exploration of ministry issues and themes relevant to the student's learning goals
  
- Exploration of important and relevant themes in ministry, such as the meaning of faith, styles of leadership, the power of prayer, boundaries in relationships, dealing with grief and loss, anger at God, challenges of justice-making, etc.
- Use of resource materials - books, articles, videos on ministry issues
- Closure - celebration is an important part of community life. So is saying goodbye! Be intentional about it.

## Suggested Meeting Format

An outline for a meeting may be as follows:

- Opening prayer, reading, or hymn
- Check-in (How are people doing since the last meeting?)
- Presentation of a theme or issue for discussion (*which may be assigned in the Student's SMP course*)
- Time for discussion
- Wrap-up (How did you feel about this meeting? What was helpful or not helpful? What would we do differently next time?)
- Closing prayer, reading, or hymn

## Group Facilitation

To encourage a sense of shared responsibility for the group, the LST is encouraged to rotate leading or facilitating a session although there could be one continual chairperson to oversee the entire year's process. Using the above meeting outline, the role of the facilitator is to monitor discussion. Discussion should be a blending of voices with time to hear from everyone. Invite quieter people to speak and gently suggest that more eager speakers become aware of those who are quieter. Some ways to do this:

- Have speaking go around the circle so everyone has a turn. If someone has nothing to say, they can say "pass."
- Have a few minutes discussion in pairs, with pairs bringing thoughts and ideas back to the group. This allows quieter people to offer their thoughts.
- Have a time of silence for a minute or so for people to reflect and gather their thoughts. This allows introverts a few moments to collect their thoughts.

Remember **that this is a learning experience for everyone** where mutuality means being able to hear from everyone. Also, the student needs to learn to listen to the faith, values, and concerns of others to learn how to walk with people as a spiritual leader.