



**Summer Distance  
Master of Divinity  
Program**

**Program Information and  
Handbook**

**2018–2019 Academic Year**

**A Field-Based Degree Program**

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**Atlantic School of Theology**

660 Francklyn Street  
Halifax, NS B3H 3B5

902-423-6938 Switchboard  
902-492-4048 Fax

Academic Office                    [academic@astheology.ns.ca](mailto:academic@astheology.ns.ca)  
Academic Dean                    [rfennel@astheology.ns.ca](mailto:rfennel@astheology.ns.ca)

**Co-Coordinator, Summer Distance M.Div. Program**

Dr. David Csinos  
[dcsinos@astheology.ns.ca](mailto:dcsinos@astheology.ns.ca)  
902-496-7945

Rev. Dr. Susan MacAlpine-Gillis  
[smacalpinegillis@astheology.ns.ca](mailto:smacalpinegillis@astheology.ns.ca)  
902-462-5211

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## Program Information

### AST AND THE SUMMER DISTANCE M.Div. PROGRAM

*This Program Information and the Handbook that follows reflect the requirements of the United Church of Canada for Ministry-Based Education Programs for Ordination (MBEPO). The Summer Distance M.Div. Program is not limited to the United Church, but can be adapted to meet the requirements of other denominations, including AST's other founding partners, the Anglican Church of Canada and the Roman Catholic Church.*

Atlantic School of Theology (AST) was founded in Halifax in 1971 out of the amalgamation of three antecedent institutions: Pine Hill Divinity Hall (United Church), Kings College Faculty of Divinity (Anglican Church), 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"), formerly known in the United Church of Canada as the In-Ministry Program for Ordination (IMPO), was launched in response to an urgent request from Newfoundland and Labrador to develop an in-service education program for licensed lay pastoral ministers who were not able to participate in the three-year residential M.Div. program in preparation of ordained ministry. This program accepted its first eleven Candidates in the summer of 2001 and has been growing steadily since then. The first Program participants graduated in the spring of 2006.

On September 1, 2008, Candidates from the Ministry-Based Ordination Program (MBOP) of United Theological College in Montreal transferred to AST's Program.

The Program, with its six-week summer session in Halifax and internet 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 dedicated ministers-in-training and to participate in practical ways in their preparation as faithful and effective leaders for the church.

**Although the Summer Distance M.Div. was created for the structures and norms for the path to ordination within the United Church of Canada, students of all denominations are welcome into the Program. The vocabulary employed in this document reflects the structures and candidacy pathway that are still the norm in the United Church of Canada.**

**For other denominations or for those United Church conferences involved in the trial of the new Candidacy Pathway, appropriate amendments to terminology and adjustment of practices will be made according to each denominational judicatory or United Church conference.**

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Candidates normally complete the program in five years through participation in each of those years in a six-week Summer Term on the AST campus. They complete three courses each summer, an internet course in each of the Fall and Winter Terms, and a two-semester online supervised and credited ministry practicum (SMP) that will meet AST's Supervised Field Education expectations and the United Church's Supervised Ministry Education requirements.

The Program strikes a balance between the academic and pastoral practice dimensions of a field-based program of education for ministry. Half the required credits for the M.Div. are earned in on-campus courses, as is required in an accredited degree program. Yet it would not be correct to call these residency courses purely *academic*, and not *pastoral*. Similarly, the online courses are no less *academic* than the on-campus courses, or more *pastoral*, because they are taken while students are in ministry. A well-rounded theological education integrates academic rigour and practical ministerial formation in a mutually 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.

### Foundation and Required Courses in the M.Div.

The Summer Distance M.Div., like the on-campus degree program, begins with a set of Foundation Courses.

- BF1001 Biblical Foundations  
(Old Testament / Hebrew Bible)
- BF 1002 Biblical Foundations  
(New Testament / Christian Scriptures)
- PF 1000 Pastoral Foundations
- TF 1000 Theological Foundations
- WF 1000 Worship Foundations
- RM 1000 Research Foundations
- PF 1002 Preaching Foundations

In addition, first-year studies normally include

- SFE 1000 Supervised Field Education (On-campus Students)
- SMP 1000 Supervised Ministry Practicum (Summer Distance Students)

On-campus students take SFE 2001 and 2002 in year two. For Summer Distance students, SMP 1000 and 4000 are for the United Church's Supervised Ministry Education equivalencies while SMP 2000 and 3000 are equivalent to SFE 1000, 2000 and 2001.

## United Church of Canada Required Courses

The remaining courses for the degree are defined as electives, to be distributed across Biblical Studies, Pastoral Studies, and Theology/History/Ethics. Several elective credits are devoted to denominationally-required courses. United Church Candidates, both on-campus and Summer Distance, are required to include the following courses in their degree program:

- A Preaching Elective
- United Church Polity and Ethics
- United Church Worship
- United Church History
- United Church Theology
- **Two** Hebrew Bible Courses
- **Two** New Testament Courses
- **One** Course in Ethics
- **One** Course in Church History

## Denominational Formation

All AST M.Div. on-campus students participate in a program of Denominational Formation. Spread over three years this program is equivalent to one credit course. Summer Distance Program students participate in Denominational Formation activities during the Summer Terms, maintain a Portfolio of records of all relevant activities, and meet with the Formation Director as required. Participation in an online seminar is required in two years of the five-year program.

## Graduate Research Project

All AST M.Div. on-campus students complete a final-year Graduate Research Project, an exercise in qualitative research on a topic arising from the practice of ministry. The required foundation course in research methods, the project-related seminar, and the project presentation and paper accumulate three credits. Summer Distance Program students participate in the Graduate Seminar during Summer Term and online in Fall Term of their final year.

## Supervised Ministry Practicum

All Summer Distance Program students are enrolled in an online Supervised Ministry Practicum (SMP) in their first through fourth years, both Fall and Winter Terms. These seminars support students in both their pastoral ministries and their academic courses by offering an environment for the integration of theory and practice, with reflection on both. This course parallels the on-campus seminars in the Supervised Field Education component of the on-campus program. One credit is given for two semesters of participation in each SMP course.

In Year Five, students are enrolled in the Graduate Research Project Seminar.

## Summer Distance M.Div. Handbook

A Candidate for Ordered Ministry in a field-based M.Div. program is blessed with 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. Opportunities for intensive integrative reflection offer support and accountability, and intentional awareness of personal, spiritual, communal, and vocational formation.

### FIELD-BASED LEARNING

- This document will refer to “Field-Based Learning” to designate a program that includes:
  - o Supervised Ministry Education under Presbytery/District Student Supply appointment for each of five years of the program
  - o Academic courses
  - o Emphasis on integration of field-based and academic learning

All Candidates for Field-Based Learning have been examined by the church and by AST in the areas of life experience and maturity, leadership gifts, ability to be self-directed learners, and preference for this adult learning process. The challenge of this learning process will come from combining leadership responsibilities of the pastoral charge with intensive academic and integrative learning. Support and accountability, encouragement and gentle challenge, from the learning network of Educational Supervisor and Lay Supervision Team, will be helpful to Candidates.

### SUPERVISED MINISTRY EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

In order to sustain full correspondence between the Program and the more familiar on campus M.Div., two of the five years—the first and fourth—fulfill the Supervised Ministry Education (SME) requirements of the United Church. The remaining years of the program are counted as equivalent to AST’s Supervised Field Education requirement.

Candidates in the program are enrolled full-time at AST, complete courses, and participate in the university’s online Supervised Ministry Practicum. Candidates in the program are Ministry Personnel under Presbytery/District appointment, with salary, allowances, and benefits. Candidates in the program have a dual relationship of support and accountability in their pastoral charges. They work with Lay Supervision Teams on all matters relating to their learning. They relate to the congregation / pastoral charge Ministry and Personnel Committee on matters relating to their employment and working relationships. **(See Appendix F** for information about the respective roles of the LST and Ministry and Personnel Committee). They are under the oversight of both the Presbyteries / Districts in which they serve and the university.

Summer Distance M.Div. students receive the same, or equivalent, Educational Supervision as SME Candidates, in all five years of the program. Candidates in the program establish Learning Covenants, reviewing and renewing them each year. Candidates are subject to the same or similar reporting in all five years. (**Two** reports for year one, **one** report at the end of each succeeding year).

## THE LEARNING SITE

A Learning Site is a congregation or pastoral charge to which a Candidate is appointed to paid, accountable ministry. A congregation / pastoral charge is approved as a Learning Site by the Presbytery/District Education and Students (E&S) Committee in which it is located and the Conference Committee on Internship and Educational Supervision (CIES).

Presbytery / District Pastoral Relations Committees sometimes identify potential Learning Sites as they work with congregations and pastoral charges, especially those considering part-time ministry. Conversation about the feasibility of becoming a Learning Site, whether requested by the congregation/charge or initiated by Presbytery/District representatives should be part of the Joint Needs Assessment process. Congregations or pastoral charges must be fully informed of both the challenges and opportunities of becoming a Learning Site before any decision is taken. The Co-Coordinator are available as resource persons.

Please refer to the document SME223 "Process for Supervised Ministry Education for Candidates for Ordered Ministry" (download from [www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca)) for the process in detail, noting references to "Ministry-Based Ordination Programs" and "Appointments."

A Learning Site is a requirement for admission to, or continuation in, the Summer Distance M.Div. Program. Appointment to a site must be completed no later than September 30.

Candidates are appointed in the category "Student Supply", **at a minimum of one-half time and a maximum of three-quarters time**, allowing Candidates to engage intentionally in the integration of practice of ministry and personal discipleship with learning from academic courses. As Student Supply, Candidates are normally appointed for a term of one year, with the possibility for renewal with approval from the above-mentioned committees.

**Though Presbytery / District may appoint annually, the normal term of service of a Candidate in a Learning Site is two to five years.** In some situations and localities it is to a Candidate's advantage to work in two different Learning Sites during the five years of the Program. This is especially important if the initial appointment is to team ministry. Candidates should spend at least two years as pastoral leaders in their own right. Some Conferences mandate a change of Learning Site after two to three years in an initial appointment. However, there are circumstances in which a move from one Learning Site to another is not feasible, or would not provide a Candidate with a contrasting experience. In some rural

communities and smaller congregations, continuity of leadership for up to five years is one of the great benefits the Program can offer a pastoral charge.

The potential for a Candidate to continue to learn and grow in a Learning Site is paramount. Sometimes that leads to a change of sites. Sometimes that concern can be met in one place. This should be considered at the time of each year-end evaluation, and discussed among the Candidate, his or her E&S Committee, and the Co-Coordinators at least at the end of Year Two.

Learning Sites are encouraged to see themselves as partners in a Candidate's learning process, encouraging and supporting the Candidate's full participation in academic courses, as well as providing time for educational leave and holidays.

Candidates, Educational Supervisors, and Lay Supervision Teams (LST) will formulate an initial Learning Covenant, which will be updated throughout the learning process, and at least once annually for the duration of the Candidate's learning.

In addition to a Learning Covenant, the Candidate and pastoral charge will develop a position description in conversation with the Ministry and Personnel Committee and approved by the official board or council of the congregation. Communicating clear expectations of ministry and learning responsibilities will ensure smooth pastoral relationships.

Further, a Candidate's home E&S Committee is responsible for assessing the learning, leadership, and spiritual development of the Candidate. At times, the Presbytery/District in which the Learning Site is located will be different from the Presbytery/District from which the Candidate's candidacy is held. At such times, only the Presbytery/District in which the Candidate's candidacy is held has oversight of the Candidate's leadership and educational formation. In addition, the candidacy will remain with the same Presbytery/District no matter where the Learning Site is located.

A congregation or pastoral charge approved to be a Learning Site provides an environment for a Candidate in field-based learning. There is a dual expectation of the site and the Candidate. The congregation/pastoral charge has agreed to be a Learning Site for someone in an educational process yet they look to the Candidate for worship leadership, spiritual support, and pastoral care. The Candidate has agreed to be appointed as Student Supply minister 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 is useful as Learning Site and Candidate sort out their relationship and clarify expectations.

**NOTE:** All students in the SD MDiv program should 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.

## PASTORAL CHARGE SUPERVISOR

The Pastoral Relations Committee of the Presbytery / District in which the Learning Site is located is concerned for the ongoing welfare of the faith community and ministry personnel, and will assign a Pastoral Charge Supervisor to oversee the governance of the congregation or pastoral charge in accordance with *The Manual*.

## EDUCATIONAL SUPERVISOR

**An Educational Supervisor** approved by the appointing CIES and Co-Coordinator of the Summer Distance Program is required in years one and four of the educational program to fulfill SME equivalency.

**Some form of supervision is required in ALL years. In years 2, 3, and 5, a United Church approved Educational Supervisor is recommended by AST and required in some Conferences.** If an approved Educational Supervisor is not available or is not mandated in any of those years, Candidates will seek supervision in relation to their learning needs drawing upon other mentoring gifts in areas such as Canadian Association of Spiritual Care (CASC) supervision, spiritual direction, social justice, or counselling. Such alternative supervision in these years will be determined in conversation among the Candidate, the Co-Coordinator, and the Candidate's E&S Committee.

Candidates and Educational Supervisors will meet for an equivalent of one regular hour of supervision each week. The Educational Supervisor will normally but not necessarily be an off-site supervisor at a distance from the pastoral charge. (If some alternative supervision is arranged for years 2, 3, and 5, the time devoted to meetings will be established when approval of the arrangement is given by the Summer Distance Co-Coordinator.) Candidates 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 Candidate's identified goals
- Desire to cultivate the art of theological reflection

This adventure in intentional learning is rooted in relationship. Therefore, the Supervisor will need to focus not only on the various tasks of ministry but also on relationship with the Candidate. 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 Candidate, a Supervisor draws on all the intuitive, emotional, analytical, and theological understanding that he or she has developed over the years, and also encourages a Candidate 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 Candidate to clarify what she or he hopes to learn during the year in ministry (focusing on the functional church calendar year, September to May).
- Meet with the Candidate for the equivalent one hour each week to discuss, analyze, theologically reflect, and engage in shared reflection on ministry experiences that emerge in the Candidate's Learning Site. Meetings can take place every other week for two hours or other equivalent as mutually arranged. Meetings may be conducted by telephone or Skype but Candidates and Supervisors should plan for as many face-to-face meetings as possible.
- Work with the Candidate to establish a mutually agreeable time and place for reflection sessions and work out with the Candidate how data for reflection will be provided (e.g. narrative reporting, verbatim, journal writing, tapes).
- 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 Candidate ways of analyzing and reflecting theologically on concrete experiences in ministry.
- Develop a mutually agreeable process for feedback and evaluation.
- Provide written evaluations in a timely manner. (January 15 and March 31 for year one Candidates. March 31 for all other years.)

## **LAY SUPERVISION TEAM**

**A Lay Supervision Team (LST)** is comprised of 4-7 people from the pastoral charge or the pastoral ministry setting, who agree to meet regularly, September through May, for approximately ninety minutes to two hours. The purpose of the LST is to meet for conversation and mutual reflection. The Candidate is a catalyst in forming this group, yet the focus is not primarily the Candidate. It is an opportunity for the Candidate to listen to the faith, views, contexts, values, and wisdom of a smaller group within a larger community, a microcosm of the pastoral charge.

The role of the LST is to accompany the Candidate through the process of formation for ordination. 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.

Once established, membership of a LST is approved by the Official Board or Council (see SME Handbook).

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

**In a new Learning Site:** When a congregation or pastoral charge completes SME 208 ("Application by a Pastoral Charge to Be Approved as a Supervised Ministry Education Site"), names of at least three persons willing to be members of a LST are included in the form. In some cases, because conversations may begin early in the process, a Candidate will be aware of these persons and their willingness to serve. In other locations a LST may be in place before any conversations with Candidates. In some places those who offered their names for the purpose of the application will wait to be approached again to confirm their LST membership. In every situation there should be openness to change the initial membership, and to allow a Candidate to invite others to join the LST.

**In an established Learning Site:** A new appointment to an established site calls for the appointment of a new or intentionally renewed LST.

Some members of the group may be chosen because of their knowledge of or connection to the Candidate. A family member or partner of a Candidate 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 one year with the possibility of continuing as participants in subsequent years. Opportunities for congregation members to alternate participation in this group may offer lively learning for the pastoral charge. Whatever the nature of a particular group, a LST functions as an important part of the learning process.

Normally, the Candidate will take the initiative to invite people to be part of the LST in consultation with supervisor and key congregational leaders. These members may include those initially assigned to the LST in the congregation's learning site application form. One person from the group may be designated as Chair Person to work alongside the Candidate in preparing for regular meetings. For ease of communication between the pastoral charge and the College, designate one member of the group as a contact person for sharing evaluations and further program information.

When the membership has been established, it may be helpful to have a covenanting liturgy during a worship service or in some other way recognize and celebrate the ministry of this group and the Candidate. This celebration could include the Educational Supervisor, if possible. In this way, members of the pastoral charge are made aware of the particular 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 ordained 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 Candidate and AST on the traditions in their particular setting.
- Understands and acknowledges differences of viewpoint and conviction and is willing to work through situations of disagreement or conflict.
- Provides written evaluations in a timely manner (Year One: January 15, and March 31. In all other years: March 31).

**See Appendix E: Beginning the Learning Process** for suggestions on group process. (SME Handbook)

## EVALUATION AND REPORTING

During all years in a Learning Site, evaluations shall be completed and submitted by the Candidate, the Educational Supervisor, and LST. A timeline for reporting is found in Appendix A. A template for reports is at Appendix D.

Evaluation Reports are submitted to:

- 1)The **Education and Students Committee where the student is a Ministry Candidate**, to help the District/Presbytery carry out its ministry of oversight and support.
- 2)The **Co-Coordinator of the Summer Distance Program at Atlantic School of Theology**. These evaluations will be shared with the SMP instructor(s) and be considered in evaluation students in SMP 1000—4000.
- 3)The **Conference Committee on Internship and Educational Supervision (CIES)**, where the SME experience took place, to assist the committee in reviewing the effectiveness of the SME site and in making recommendations about future Candidates being placed there.

## SITE VISITS

The Co-Coordinator or another representative of AST will visit Candidates in their first year in the Program and those who have moved from one Learning Site to another. The Co-Coordinator or representative will meet with Candidates, their Educational Supervisor, and, if possible, their LSTs. These visits provide an opportunity for all of the partners in a Candidate's learning to meet. The representative will offer guidance in the application of the Program's processes and gather first-hand impressions of the learning site.

## **EXPECTATIONS OF SUPERVISED MINISTRY EDUCATION**

Expectations of the Candidate as ministry personnel will follow guidelines of the appointing Presbytery Pastoral Relations Committee in consultation with the Ministry and Personnel Committee/Council or Board of the pastoral charge and in conjunction with development of a Position Description. Other expectations will also be articulated and clarified by Presbytery/District E&S, CIES, and the Co-Coordinator, as well as family, friends and self. Balancing work, study, family, and personal time will be a challenge yet will also be helpful preparation for ongoing ministry life. Tensions that arise are useful signs indicating opportunities for learning to clarify issues such as expectations, boundaries, pastoral identity, communication, conflict styles, and so on. Although Candidates will plan their learning journey carefully in consultation with many learning partners, serendipitous learning will arise offering opportunities to be a reflective pastoral practitioner, responsive rather than reactive to pastoral issues.

In order to clarify expectations of the ministry site, it is useful for the Candidate to work with the Ministry & Personnel Committee to establish a Ministry Position Description. This document will outline work that may be part of congregational needs such as worship, sermon preparation and delivery, pastoral visiting, Christian education, administration, committee meetings, Presbytery/District meetings, Conference Annual meetings and so on. In a ministry position, time will fly in attending to all that needs to be done. Work in a pastoral charge is endless. There is always more tweaking of a sermon, always more people to visit, always another meeting to attend. Responsibilities need to be determined reasonably so that Candidates have time to study as well as develop spiritually and vocationally. Being run ragged and over-extending time and energy will not be fruitful in a demanding yet satisfying program.

Balancing work and study carefully will benefit a holistic approach to life that encompasses time with family and time for spiritual disciplines such as prayer. God's call encompasses our whole lives and includes our emotional, intellectual, and spiritual development, time with family and friends, as well as our leadership responsibilities. Balancing time also includes planning time away from the pastoral charge for holidays, and for the annual Summer Term on the AST campus in Halifax. Field-Based learning is demanding and encompasses academic courses (online and on-campus) and ministry responsibilities during the year.

Taking time away from pastoral charge responsibilities requires long-range planning and preparation, ensuring that pastoral care and leadership is in place to fulfill ongoing needs of the pastoral charge. Opportunity to collaborate with colleagues throughout the year will assist in finding resources and insights in how to do this planning.

**Candidates are required to attend the six-week Summer Term on the AST campus. The Candidate and the pastoral charge, through the Ministry and Personnel Committee, must negotiate the use of Continuing Education and vacation time. Three weeks of Continuing Education and one month of**

**vacation are the MINIMUM required terms of the Candidate's appointment as Student Supply. Learning Sites are encouraged to offer six weeks of continuing Education in order that the Candidate can fulfill on-campus class responsibilities and still have one month of vacation. Creativity and genuine compromise are required in order to provide all the time a Candidate needs for both study and vacation.**

Additional time away from the pastoral charge may be required for the Candidate to attend such Conference-sponsored events as annual orientation gatherings for those fulfilling their SME requirements and Supervisors. Attendance at these events may be helpful, especially to Candidates serving in remote areas. Attendance in the first year is recommended by the Summer Distance Program. Attendance in other years may be mandated by Conference CIES.

In order to participate fully in the Program and all courses, a Candidate requires an up-to-date computer and access to a high-speed internet connection at the Learning Site. As Candidates often perform secretarial duties on the Learning Site, a computer is essential to the Candidate's ministry.

## **THE PRESBYTERY / DISTRICT EDUCATION AND STUDENTS COMMITTEE**

The E&S Committee of the Presbytery / District in which the Candidate's candidacy resides will receive evaluations in order to affirm candidacy each year, and in the final year of the program to recommend the Candidate for ordination. Prior to starting the program, a Candidate will have been approved as having the capacity for ministry leadership. In year one, this capacity will be reviewed and affirmed. In year four, a Candidate may be recommended for ordination by E&S and thus interviewed by Conference in year five.

A Candidate's Presbytery/District E&S Committee will receive a yearly report from AST about each candidate concerning their academic and vocational formation (CAN 217 "Annual College Report to Presbytery/District Education and Students Committee Regarding Candidates for the Order of Ministry") by March 31 of each year, as well as an academic record. (Please access the most current forms on the UCC website.)

Toward the end of the five-year learning process, upon determination of successful completion of all programs required by the university and the church, AST will issue a certificate of *testamur*, and report to the home Presbytery/District and Conference Education and Students Committees using CAN 218.

A Candidate's home Presbytery/District will make recommendations regarding a Candidate's readiness to be ordained upon successful completion of all requirements. (CAN 218) The Candidate's Conference Education and Students Committee interviews the Candidate in the winter (some Candidates will know this as "Final Interview") and makes a recommendation to her/his Conference. The

Candidate's home Conference makes a decision regarding ordination at the Conference Annual Meeting. (Newfoundland and Labrador Conference follows a different path in years when Conference does not meet as one body.)

## **TERMINATION AND LEAVES OF ABSENCE**

At any point, a Candidate 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 course work. In addition, during the intervening time prior to resuming studies, a Candidate must be involved in supervised and evaluated learning.

If a Candidate's Supervised Ministry Education is terminated through no fault of the Candidate, the appropriate courts and committees of the Church, 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**

In the event that a Candidate is withdrawn, suspended, or terminated from the academic program, AST will notify the appointing Presbytery/District Pastoral Relations Committee, the Candidate's home Presbytery/District E&S Committee, the appointing CIES Committee and the appropriate General Council Working Unit. Candidates who withdraw from the academic program while under appointment may be eligible to continue in their appointment at the discretion of the appointing Presbytery/District Pastoral Relations Committee and only with the approval of the Candidate's E&S Committee.

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

Summer Distance Program Candidates 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 Year One, each Candidate will develop a Learning Portfolio that will include:

- **First-Year Learning Covenant**, including Learning Goals for that year.
  - A Candidate's first-year goals may include some suggested in her or his Supervised Ministry Education application form, or recommended by Presbytery/District E&S Committee, referees, and other mentors.
  - the United Church's SME Handbook is recommended as a useful guide.
  - For the purposes of the Program a new Learning Covenant is only required at the beginning or each placement in a Learning Site and/or a new relationship with an Educational Supervisor.
  - The Learning Covenant must 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.
  - Amendments must be documented in the Portfolio.
- Annual Learning Goals, including any that are carried over from a previous year.
  - Along with a plan for fulfilling a goal that has been carried forward, a rationale for continuing to work toward that goal should be recorded.
- Student copies of all evaluation forms.
- Copies of academic transcripts provided by the Registrar each year.

**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.

Candidates will review the Learning Portfolio with a Program Co-Coordinator in each Summer Term.

## 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 Candidate in shared theological reflection. The Educational Supervisor must also feel free to challenge the Candidate to go deep, to pursue serious questions, and to question any easy answers the Candidate 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. Candidates 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 "The Wesleyan 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 B: A Model for Theological Reflection on Experience** for one suggested model.

## Appendix A

### Timeline for Evaluations

All students in the Program are to be evaluated by their Educational Supervisor and LST at least once annually. **These guidelines are the requirements of AST; denominational judicatories may have other requirements for evaluation.**

Students who are Candidates for Ordered Ministry in the United Church of Canada are required to be evaluated by submission of the completed form SME 225 (available at [http://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/form\\_sme225.pdf](http://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/form_sme225.pdf)) by January 15 and March 31 in **year one**.\* United Church Candidates are required to be evaluated according to Appendix D by March 31 in **years two through five**.

Students of other denominations are evaluated by submission of the completed Appendix D by January 15 and March 31 in **year one** and March 31 in **years two through five**.

The following chart clarifies reporting requirements and deadlines.

	United Church of Canada Candidates		All other students	
	Report Dates	Form	Report Dates	Form
Year 1	January 15 and March 31	SME 225	January 15 and March 31	Appendix D
Year 2	March 31	SME 225	March 31	Appendix D
Year 3	March 31	SME 225	March 31	Appendix D
Year 4	March 31	SME 225	March 31	Appendix D
Year 5	March 31	SME 225	March 31	Appendix D

\* Education and Students Committees of the United Church may expect to receive a mid-term evaluation in year four. This is not mandatory for AST, but students are encouraged to forward this mid-term evaluation to the university.

## Appendix B

# 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 United Church 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 C

# 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 to 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.**

In a relationship of trust and honesty, it is hoped that all participants are able to be frank and open in what they need to say.

## Appendix D

# Atlantic School of Theology Summer Distance Master of Divinity Program

## Report Form for Evaluating Supervised Ministry Education (SME) Experiences

**United Church Candidates are to use SME 225** (available at [http://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/form\\_sme225.pdf](http://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/form_sme225.pdf)) **for evaluations in year one (mid-term and final) and year four (final). In years two, three, and five, they may choose to use Appendix D or SME 225 for final evaluations.**

Attached is a copy of the suggested questions for evaluating the Supervised Ministry Education (SME) experience and its associated course units. This is an important part of the Summer Distance M.Div. Program and an evaluation **should be completed both at the half way point (January 15) and at the conclusion (March 31) of the participant's first SME year and at the conclusion (March 31) of each of the four subsequent SME years.**

Supervised Ministry Education (SME) experiences are based on the learning principle of action and reflection. This means that throughout each year there has been on-going feedback about:

- the Candidate's emerging identity as a minister,
- interpersonal skills,
- ability to reflect theologically,
- spirituality and self-care, and
- her/his practice of ministry; skill development.

While the primary focus of the SME experience is on the ministry Candidate's learning needs, some time should be permitted for feedback and reflection on the learning goals which the various parties to the learning covenant have name.

Each section of the evaluation format includes a number of questions to guide your thinking. The questions are meant to be helpful for reflecting on your experience. You may not feel fully qualified to answer all questions. Answer as is appropriate to your knowledge and role in the process. The completed evaluation should have four parts:

1. The Ministry Candidate's Self-Evaluation
2. The Educational Supervisor's Evaluation
3. The Lay Supervision Team's Evaluation, and
4. A copy of the latest Learning Goals.

Early in each of the five SME years, the Lay Supervision Team, the Educational Supervisor and the Ministry Candidate should discuss how they will conduct and complete the evaluation. This evaluation is considered a part of the SME experience. It does take some time to complete the form thoughtfully and so quality time should be given both during and at the end of the SME period. It may be helpful to have a more formal assessment session every two months in which some of the questions on this form are considered, notes taken for later consultation and feedback is given. Most people have trouble remembering what happened three or four months ago, so note-taking is important to identify progress and growth.

**In some Conferences a Consultant is appointed to oversee the completion of all evaluations. This is not a requirement of AST and may cause some confusion, especially with the LST. If required by Conference, this must be completed.**

It is required that all parties to the learning covenant (Lay Supervision Team, Educational Supervisor, and Ministry Candidate), read each other's evaluative comments and sign the evaluation, noting that it has been read. If in sharing the evaluative comments, there is some disagreement about wording or an observation, it may be changed by mutual agreement of all involved, or a comment can be added by the person signing, indicating their disagreement.

**When the evaluation form is complete you will need to make copies and mail them as follows:**

- 1) The Education and Students Committee where the student is a Ministry Candidate**, to help the District/Presbytery carry out its ministry of oversight and support.
- 2) The Co-Coordinator of the Summer Distance Program at Atlantic School of Theology.**
- 3) The Conference Committee on Internship and Educational Supervision (CIES)**, where the SME experience took place, to assist the committee in reviewing the effectiveness of the SME site and in making recommendations about future Candidates being placed there

The many committees of the church rely on the clarity and descriptive nature of the evaluation reports to assist the Candidate in future learning goals and programs. Upon ordination or commissioning, all the material related to the SME are removed from the file and destroyed.

**Atlantic School of Theology: Summer Distance MDiv Program  
Report Form for Evaluating  
Supervised Ministry Education Experiences**

For use by: Ministry Candidates, Educational Supervisors, Lay Supervision Teams

<p><b>Name of Candidate being supervised</b></p> <hr/>
<p><b>Name/location of Learning Site</b></p> <hr/>
<p><b>Person(s) completing this report</b></p> <hr/>
<p><b>Evaluation period – from (mm/yy)_____ to (mm/yy)_____</b> The usual period for this evaluation is the church pastoral year: September to April.</p>
<p><b>Date of completion for this form:</b></p> <hr/>

**Limit response to not more than 6 typewritten pages.**

**1. To All:** Describe the Ministry Candidate's ministerial context and range of ministry experiences during the period of this evaluation. Describe the pastoral relationship with the congregation.

**Candidate and Educational Supervisor:** Describe the relationship between the Ministry Candidate and the Educational Supervisor in respect of where theological reflection has taken place and what formats for theological reflection were used.

**2.** One of the primary expectations of a SME experience is that it will offer the Candidate minister an opportunity to practice and develop basic ministerial skills. Please evaluate this Candidate as a minister in training in each the following areas as appropriate.

- (a) **Pastoral care:** home/hospital visiting and follow-up; counselling; communications; pastoral presence with people; adaptability to local cultural context (learning local history, culture, and traditions; entering into the community); crisis intervention (awareness, objectivity, ability to refer); etc.
- (b) **Worship leadership:** service presiding skills (preparation, presence, appropriateness); preaching (preparation, delivery, clarity, theological and pastoral appropriateness); presiding at other ceremonies (baptism, marriage, funerals); etc.
- (c) **Pastoral administration:** organizing and planning ministerial tasks; working with committees and boards; dealing with conflict; etc.
- (d) **Educational leadership:** bible study or other small group work (preparation, attention to process); etc.
- (e) **Personal qualities:** time management (balancing commitments, dealing with competing agendas, meeting deadlines); dealing with stress; taking time for self-care; etc.
- (f) **Interpersonal relationships:** with members of Pastoral Charge, with key congregational leaders, with staff (i.e. office administrator, custodian).
- (g) **Ability to receive feedback in the above areas.**

**3.** Over the five years of SME, participants will carry out an initial orientation year focusing on congregational analysis and four years of focus on broad skill development in ministry. Please answer only the appropriate question set for your Candidate's place in this schema.

**A. During Year One of the Summer Distance MDiv Program,**

Candidates are expected to develop in the ability to engage in experiential learning, to focus on the development of pastoral identity, to learn how to engage in congregational analysis, and to reflect theologically on these experiences.

- Does this Candidate demonstrate a capacity for learning from her/his ministry experiences?

- How has this Candidate identified and worked on issues of personal/professional identity?

- How has this Candidate exercised her/his analytical skills in coming to understand the life, story, and structure of the local congregation in which the SME unit was carried out?
- How has this Candidate reflected theologically on these researches and experiences?

**B. During the ministry focus years of the Summer Distance MDiv Program**, Candidates are expected to develop in the ability to engage in experiential learning, to focus on the development of pastoral identity, to deepen their pastoral competence, and to reflect theologically on these experiences.

- Does this Candidate demonstrate a capacity for learning from the range of ministry experiences outlined in #2 above?
- How has this Candidate analyzed and reflected theologically on these experiences?
- How has this Candidate identified and worked on issues of personal/professional identity?

**4.** In addition to the wide range of experiential learnings that are expected by both the Church and the university, the goals of SME are also determined by the Candidate's self-identified Learning Goals that are articulated in her/his initial Learning Covenant and revised or replaced each year. Comment, with reference to the attached Learning Goals, on how these goals have been addressed, achieved, or are still in progress. Evaluative comments may also be made in regard to any Learning Goals prepared by Educational Supervisors and Lay Supervision Teams. Respond as appropriate.

**5.** What further educational experiences or opportunities would be helpful as part of a SME experience for this Candidate? What further understandings or skills need to be developed by the Ministry Candidate, by the Educational supervisor, by the Lay Supervision Team?

**6.** Does this Ministry Candidate continue to demonstrate suitability for ministry in the United Church of Canada? Does she/he show evidence of increased readiness for ordained ministry?

## Appendix E

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

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 centring ritual, and times of silence
- Discussion of experiences and issues in ministry brought by the Candidate 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 Candidate'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 Candidate'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 Candidate'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**

In order 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 chair person 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 Candidate needs to learn to listen to the faith, values, and concerns of others in order to learn how to walk with people as a spiritual leader.

**Appendix F**

## **Roles of Ministry and Personnel Committee and Lay Supervision Team**

Peter Kingsbury, Conference Personnel Minister, London Conference  
September 2009

	<b>M &amp; P Committee</b>	<b>LST</b>
<b>Purpose</b>	Facilitates healthy pastoral relationship to maximize ministry.	Helps the student learn from the ministry experience.
<b>All about . . .</b>	. . . job performance	Learning, Education, Vocational Formation
<b>Accountable to</b>	Church Board → Congregation	Educational Participants → UCC through reporting and Education & Students process
<b>Prime Functions</b>	Recommends actions → maximizes ministry “Does the doing”	Provides reflection and feedback → maximizes learning “Facilitates learning”
<b>Receives input from congregation and . . .</b>	. . . recommends action, addresses problems.	... helps student reflect on and learn from it, serves as a catalyst for growth.
<b>Role</b>	Part of governance structure making ministry happen in this context.	Part of educational structure helping student reflect on and learn from how ministry happens in this context.