

A resource for search committees considering an **Atlantic School of Theology** student appointment.

The Summer Distance Master of Divinity degree at Atlantic School of Theology offers students, who have been approved by their candidacy Board for an appointment outside of SME (Supervised Ministry Education), to work part time in a community of faith while studying for their degree. This integrated model of theological education is perfect for the community of faith that is excited about joining a student on this journey of learning and discovering the joy that comes from having a learner in their midst.

Not all communities of faith are suitable for a student minister.

Here are a few questions to ask if your Community of Faith is considering a 1st or 2nd year student to be your minister...

- Are we ready to be a partner in a student's learning process? *It is a partnership between your site, the student, and Atlantic School of Theology as we work together to educate the student for ministry.*
- Do we have the financial and human resources to be a healthy place for a student to learn? *Students should not need to worry if there is enough money to pay them or people to support the work.*
- Will we be encouraging and open to the student as they try new things? *If you are inclined to say, "We've never done it like this before." as an excuse not to try something new, you should not have a student as your minister.*
- Will we help the student fulfill school expectations by participating in learning events or providing feedback and evaluations? *Students need to understand how their ministry is being experienced; what they are doing well and where improvements could be made.*
- Will we be forgiving when a student makes mistakes? *You need to be able to offer grace when mistakes happen, and they will.*
- Do we have people who will serve on the Lay Supervision Team and commit a couple of hours every month to intentionally work with and reflect on the ministry you share? *Make sure you have people in place who are excited to do this work, not just duty bound, before the appointment is finalized.*
- Will we increase the amount of study leave from 3 weeks to 6, so that the student can attend summer school at AST and not have to use their vacation? *Please confirm with M&P, your treasurer and make sure that 6 weeks of study leave is put in the terms of appointment in addition to the month of vacation. School is not vacation!*

- Will we encourage the student to manage their time so that they can balance school and work? *Students need time for their academic course work, time for family and time for self.*

These are important considerations to explore before you offer an appointment to an AST student.

We value the partnerships that we have developed with hundreds of pastoral charges over the 20 years of this program and would be happy to work with you if this program is a good fit.

Every year there is an updated handbook that outlines the program, resources for the Lay Supervision team and an orientation event that takes place in the fall. Often in-person site visits are arranged so that someone from AST can visit you, the educational supervisor, and the student to offer support and make sure things are going well.

Please reach out to me if you have any questions.

Susan MacAlpine-Gillis

Rev. Dr. Susan MacAlpine-Gillis
Coordinator of the Summer Distance MDiv Program
Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax, NS
smacalpinegillis@astheology.ns.ca