

STEPS TOWARD MINISTRY

Practical Information and suggestions for becoming a candidate for the diaconal or ordained ministry in The United Church of Canada

January 1987

This paper is designed to give you further information on ordained and diaconal ministry in the United Church and to help you focus your thinking about your own plans. It explains the different opportunities open to you, and indicates what steps to take.

Before reading the information, spend a few minutes answering for yourself the following questions:

- * What do you see yourself doing with the rest of your life?
- * What do you think ministry is? How do your ideas about ministry fit into that future?
- * What invited you to think about the ministry? Work? Hobbies? Studies? A particular person? Other experiences?
- * What have you done so far to explore your interest in the ministry? Talked with a diaconal or ordained minister? Volunteer work? Church and community involvement? Other ways?
- * Are you interested in the world around you? Your own community? Canada? World events?
- * Do you think you can help to change the world? If so, how? How would becoming a diaconal or ordained minister help?
- * What strengths would you bring to the church?
- * Have you seriously tried to understand the Gospel? How does the Gospel relate to your thinking about the ministry?
- * Have you thought about whether or not you are prepared to be placed by the church anywhere in Canada for your first appointment after commissioning or ordination? Unless you are over the age of fifty at the time you anticipate being ordained or commissioned you will be required to undergo the process of transfer and settlement which attempts to match the needs of the church with the skills of ordinands and commissionands available.

The following describes the educational qualifications for the ministry and the steps you can take to explore your interest more fully:

YOUR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME

Preparation for ministry is offered in the theological schools listed below. Educational requirements are of three types:

- * A university degree (preferably in Arts) followed by three years of theological education leading to the Master of Divinity degree for ordination.
- * A shorter course of preparation for ordination open to mature persons (over 31) for whom an undergraduate degree seems unattainable because of age or family responsibilities. This

course consists of five full-year university credits in Arts within a two-year period plus the regular three years of theological education.

- * A university degree followed by two years of theological education leading to the Master of Religious Education (M.R.E.) at Emmanuel College for commissioning.
- * A university degree or mature student standing (based on prior training and work experience plus entrance to the undergraduate programme at the University of Toronto) followed by three years of theological education at the Centre for Christian Studies in preparation for commissioning.

UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES

Since you are planning to study theology for several years, your undergraduate programme should also provide a broad understanding of the world, its systems, and its people. Courses such as English, History, Sociology, Psychology, Philosophy, Economics, Anthropology, Political Science and Creative Arts would be helpful. Natural Sciences are also valuable. Some basic course in religious studies is recommended, but concentration on Biblical and Theological studies should come later.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Education doesn't end with the completion of a theological course. Effective ministry requires a balance of involvement and reflection, activity and study. Through the continuing education programme of the church you will be helped to improve your skills, examine your experience in a theological context, and delve into new forms of religious expression appropriate to contemporary society.

CANDIDATE PROCEDURES

When you have decided to work toward preparation for diaconal or ordained ministry, you will need to have the approval, guidance, and support of the church. Here are the steps you take:

1. Find out more about the various expressions of ministry: Word, Sacrament, Education, Service, and Pastoral Care, Lay ministry and the work of Staff Associates. Talk about this with an ordained, diaconal, lay supply and staff associate minister. (Ordained and Diaconal Ministers are part of the Order of Ministry in The United Church, Lay Supply Ministers and Staff Associates are lay persons employed by the church.) Or, write to the registrar of the theological schools listed.
2. Discuss with the ordained or diaconal minister in your local congregation and with other members of your church Board

the possibility of your becoming a candidate. If they encourage you to proceed they will provide the necessary application and medical forms and will recommend you to the Presbytery.

3. The Education and Students Committee of the Presbytery will meet with you to discuss your motivation and personal aptitude for ordained or diaconal ministry.
4. This committee will recommend your acceptance as an "intended candidate". Often this will take place while you are still working through your undergraduate studies. The committee will keep in touch with you, taking a personal interest in your progress.
5. About the time you are ready to enter a theological school, the Presbytery will arrange for you to meet with the Conference Interview Board. This group helps to assess your emotional, psychological and vocational suitability for ordained or diaconal ministry.
6. At any time after meeting the Interview Board, you may ask the Presbytery to receive you as a "full candidate". This must be done at least twelve full months before you anticipate being commissioned or ordained.
7. While you are preparing for the ordained ministry you will be required to have completed two summer internships or one year-long internship.
8. When you are within a few months of completing your academic and other requirements to the Presbytery's satisfaction, you will be recommended to the Conference Committee on Education and Students.
9. The Conference Education and Students Committee will interview you during the final months of your preparation. If you receive a recommendation to be ordained or commissioned a representative(s) of the Conference Settlement Committee will also meet with you during February or March.
10. The Conference, at its annual meeting, will receive the recommendations of its Education and Students Committee, and commission you as a diaconal minister or ordain you as an ordained minister.
11. Upon ordination or commissioning you will be placed by the church for your first diaconal or ordained appointment somewhere in Canada unless you are over the age of fifty at the time of your ordination/commissioning. (Transfer and Settlement)
12. At the time of ordination/commissioning you will be required to sign a covenant to participate in the Pension Plan and Group Insurance Plan, as a condition of employment in The United Church.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

As you consider this time of preparation for ministry you will be concerned about meeting financial obligations. Some financial assistance is available to candidates and intended candidates through the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education and from theological schools. Church summer employment also carries reasonable remuneration. Your Presbytery Committee on Education and Students may have further information about possible financial assistance from other organizations and sources.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Information on courses of study in preparation for diaconal or ordained ministry in the United Church may be obtained from:

Atlantic School of Theology

640 Francklyn Street, Halifax, NS B3H 3B5

United Theological College

3521 rue Universite, Montreal, PQ H3A 2A9

Queen's Theological College

Queen's University, Kingston, ON K7L 3N6

Centre for Christian Studies

77 Charles Street West, Toronto, ON M5S 1K5

Emmanuel College

75 Queen's Park Crescent East, Toronto, ON M5S 1K7

St. Andrew's College

1121 College Drive, Saskatoon, SK S7N 0W3

Vancouver School of Theology

6000 Iona Drive, Vancouver, BC V6T 1L4

The Candidature Committee

The Division of Ministry Personnel & Education

The United Church of Canada

85 St. Clair Avenue East, Toronto, ON M4T 1M8

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