

Title: BOARD AND OFFICE OF VOCATION ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

**Origin: The Reverend Norm Seli, chair of the Board of Vocation, and
the Reverend Marlene Britton, Director, Policy and Programs for Ministry Personnel**

Date: January 21, 2024

INTRODUCTION

God has guided the Office of Vocation into completing its fifth year of life! A review of the Office of Vocation will be undertaken by the General Council Office, and even before that is done it can be said that the work of ensuring that the Church is served by faithful, well equipped, effective ministry personnel has been done by this Team.

During the year under review, the Strategic Plan became fully operational, with all aspects of work at the General Council Office seeking to be aligned with this plan. Many of our team were intricately involved in areas of the plan, and involved in initiatives which were proving to be invigorating and innovative.

While this worked very well for many aspects of the work of the Office of Vocation, and for those who were engaged in specific activities, it was clear that this team is an operational one, doing the tasks that needed to be done on an ongoing basis, some of which did not find direct identification with the strategic plan as it existed. This was brought to the attention of those managing the plan, and assurances were given that this would be addressed.

STAFF

There were two changes in staff during the year, with one new program assistant and one new program coordinator being hired. The two new people have settled in well, and the staff team is currently working very well together.

In October an in-person training session was held for staff, the reviewers, consultants and investigators, and following that event the staff had the opportunity for a 2 day retreat. This time of reflection and learning was led by Revd. Dr. Jenny Stephens.

BOARD OF VOCATION

The Board of Vocation was kept busy during the year, utilizing all four meeting dates, all of which were 2-day, virtual events. There were some shifts in membership as the one vacant spot on the board was filled. At the same time, one person was hired by their Regional Council and had to step away, one person has been unwell and unable to attend and participate, and one person resigned. These shifts happened over the course of the calendar year, and the Board was able to manage these changes and to function well.

Highlights of the year included:

A meeting with the Moderator in November, with a rich discussion about what she was hearing from Ministry Personnel on the ground, and what the possibilities are for deepening spirituality and encouraging bold discipleship among our ministers.

The Board had no difficulty engaging in robust discussion and/or decision making on matters which were of critical import to the lives of ministers, including

- Designated Lay Ministry and the process for the way forward.
- Recording of interviews conducted by Candidacy Boards and other Boards and Committees of the Board of Vocation.
- Continuing Education standards for ministry personnel.
- The Publishing of the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary).

There were agonizing moments spent reviewing cases where ministers were being recommended to the Discontinued Service Lists. And moments when deep care and concern were offered for the morale of ministry personnel, leading to the penning of a letter by the Chair of the Board to all ministers in the United Church of Canada.

INDIGENOUS OFFICE OF VOCATION

The Indigenous Candidacy Pathway and Grandmothers' Circle

The Grandmothers Circle met only 3 times this year as the transition to a new National Indigenous Council has put some of the work on hold as it relates to their request for support to do policy development work with Indigenous Communities

This office also supports the Indigenous Mission and Support group as it relates to Ministry personnel salaries. In the fall, the Principles for the 2024 Budget and the final budget draft prepared by this office were adopted. In the work of this committee, there were some trends that were identified that affect leadership in the Indigenous Church.

- a. Indigenous specific Lay leadership training requests continue to increase as Indigenous communities shift to a less "Christian Tradition" only view. This is especially true in communities within or near urban centres. This continues to be an on-going trend from 2020 as the Residential School news continues to evolve.
- b. Pay equity among Indigenous Ministers has improved compared to the prior year, however, systemic challenges remain as northern or isolated communities remain without a COLA assessment, and the capacity to determine those values have been challenged as response from Band Councils have not come forth or denied outright.
- c. There remain very different practices and, in some cases, different policies by the Regional Councils that affect the timing and support of this office. The support is based upon the Regional Councils relationships with the Indigenous Communities and their own requests for support.

Recruitment has seen an increase in Ontario mostly, with a couple from Manitoba. On a very positive note, there are 2 recruits under the age of 40.

In response to the Leadership Counts (Ministry Personnel) Survey, there has been an increase of another 9 additional Ministers who have identified as being Indigenous and to be supported by the IOV. It should be noted that there are Indigenous Ministers that are choosing to remain with their Regional/OV supports. In 2023, there are Indigenous Ministers in all but one Region.

As this office is the liaison to Sandy Saulteaux Spiritual Centre, there has been 4 meetings between the Keepers of the Circle/Vision Keepers with the ICB to help address systemic challenges and gaps created by the restructuring of the Church. There has been a re-commitment to a better relationship and create a more seamless experience for potential Candidates who feel called to the Indigenous Church.

CANDIDACY PATHWAY

Ministry Formation

In addition to the work of the Candidacy Boards and Vocational Ministers in support of those in the candidacy pathway (see reports below), oversight of the candidacy pathway as a whole focussed on three main areas in 2023:

Candidacy Boards: a denominational team

While the objective of gathering candidacy board members over the first triennium of their mandate was largely for training purposes, the work in 2023 was strategically focussed. Regular gatherings of Candidacy Board Chairs and Vocational Ministers is building a denominational team across the Boards. These gatherings promote best practices in offering leadership to Candidacy Boards and has established a set of priorities for on-going maintenance of the pathway:

Interviews: The BOV policy on recording interviews (in response to proposal put forward by SWO CB) will be implemented at such time as technological issues are overcome that currently present obstacles to complex, simultaneous, multi-room recordings, create potential storage liabilities, and incur labour or software costs. In the meantime, policies for creating and storing written records are being followed.

Also concerning interviews, Candidacy Boards sought guidance on dual roles and perception of bias on the Board and interview teams. They continue to share best practices and pursue in-serving training for assessing their candidates' self-knowledge (EQi), ability to lead United Church equity aspirations, and commitment to life-long ministry leadership development.

The commitment to in-person interviews remains strong, this being a particular challenge for larger geographic Regions on limited budgets.

Vocational Assessments: The pause on exercising the current policy of mandating vocational assessments for all applicants allowed for a thorough review of the purpose, value, cost and use of assessments in the candidacy pathway. This review is on-going

and a proposal to the BOV is forthcoming in 2024. An objective is to keep in view the lifelong leadership development of ministers, rather than focussing on candidacy alone.

Relationship with UCC formation faculty: With distinct roles and responsibilities for formation delineated, both schools and Candidacy Boards desire a forum for conversation about areas of concern, communication and collaboration. This development promises fruitful relationships, beginning with a virtual gathering in spring 2024 of United Church formation faculty, Vocational Ministers, and Candidacy Board chairs.

Theological Schools: the testamur

Leading up to, and in light of, the proposal concerning the future of the Designated Lay Ministry program, the question of the testamur came into focus: where is it offered, how is it attained, and how accessible the path toward achieving it is.

Resources have been created for applicants, candidates, schools and Candidacy Boards outlining the various paths toward the testamur, including programs which DO NOT require undergraduate education for admission. These resources include the entrance requirements and the available accommodations/supports in each program leading to the testamur. Work continues across the schools to harmonize the cost and approach to assessing the testamur for those with degrees and diplomas from non-UCC schools.

Supervised Ministry Experience: pastoral charge realities

In response to feedback about the excessive demands on lay supervision teams, revisions were made to their responsibilities for support and evaluation of SME candidates. Assessment of the candidate's on-the-ground practice of ministry is now based on The Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice for Ministry with a practically focussed evaluation report. The Educational Supervisor's role continues to focus on skills for theological reflection, reflective practice on learning goals, and Competencies for Formation for Ministry and Lifelong Ministry Leadership.

Educational Supervisors benefited from regular virtual in-service gatherings hosted by Vocational Ministers.

In 2023, two SME moving grants were administered, seven salary grants were initiated and four were continued. The Operational Plan's stated priority for collaborative ministry spawned interest in developing collaborative ministry SME sites for 2024-2025, also to be supported partially by SME grants.

Progress was made on drafting Indigenous candidacy pathway resources, now in the hands of the Indigenous Candidacy Board for further development.

A Discernment Retreat (in collaboration with LeaderShift, Pacific Mountain Region), led by two Vocational Ministers, was held in-person in November 2023 with 12 participants from 5 Regions.

The reports which appear in the appendix give a numerical synopsis of the work of the Vocational Ministers and their Candidacy Boards, as well as a brief commentary summarizing trends which they have noticed over the last year.

ADMISSION

The number of ministers in the Admission process reached 200 people in 2022. This led to a shortage of accompaniers meaning that ministers expressing interest in admission were told there were dozens of ministers ahead of them waiting to speak with someone about applying for the Admission process. For those who reached the entrance or final interview stage, there was a queue of approximately three months before an interview slot was available.

Most significantly, the Admission Board noted an alarming reality: when it came time to seek an admission appointment, the process was not functioning equitably for racialized ministers. Consequently, we entered 2023 with the Admission process paused. Throughout 2023, the focus of admission work has been on addressing these bottlenecks and inequities.

One specific effort has been the work of the Admission Matching Pilot program. Five ministers willing to participate were easily selected in February 2023, but five Communities of Faith willing to participate were harder to come by. Evaluation of the struggle at the end of May yielded feedback that we needed to do a better job of inspiring and inviting, that search teams wanted the opportunity to interview the ministers, and that finances were a barrier for a few congregations unable to afford a category F minister full time. In response, the Matching Task Group sought a six month extension to their mandate.

During this time, they produced a video, which was circulated to 45 Communities of Faith with full time vacancies; and a shortened version later shared at the General Council recall meeting in October. The task group followed up with an Open House for search team members and pastoral relations liaisons in November for which registrations exceeded our zoom account's capacity of 99 people. We also agreed to a modified matching process presented by one Community of Faith who wanted to be able to interview the ministers; and expect an appointment will be made soon for one minister in the Matching group. Although three Task Group members have not been able to continue long term, those who remain have sought a second extension to continue their efforts into 2024.

Funding was sought to create an admission appointment for one minister who although unsuccessful for eight years in finding an admission appointment has gone ahead and planted a new Community of Faith that is thriving.

In anticipation of ministers who entered the Diaconal/Ordained Supply process in 2022 needing to seek admission in 2024, a process was created and approved by the Board of Vocation that allows them to do so without starting from the beginning of the Admission process. Admission related information on united-church.ca has been updated.

While we made great progress on getting the admission process ready to flow smoothly when it reopens for new applications, the reality remains that all of the ministers actively seeking admission appointments are racialized, many of whom have been searching for years. Their responses to our emails about whether they are still searching for an appointment are heart wrenching! Several people responded that they remain without an appointment after applying to “more than 30”, “80-90”, “130”, “300”, and even “500” churches. Despite these large number of applications, many indicated that they have had only between zero and four interviews. Some spoke of interviews canceled at the last minute or being told the search team doesn’t want to interview anyone from outside the country. Those who have had interviews, sometimes even after being asked for references and a sermon video, have often not heard anything more from search teams despite promises to be in touch. One person even asked if maybe he should give up because there must be a surplus of ministers in The United Church of Canada and clearly his help isn’t needed. All of them asked for any help we could offer because they feel called to minister with us.

This suggests that in addition to getting the process ready to run smoothly, two additional types of work must remain a priority.

- We need to help these ministers get their foot in the door. They have so many skills and gifts that The United Church of Canada has identified as needed in our strategic plan. One fifth of them are people who have or are currently working on PhDs. Almost all of them speak at least two languages, with many of their additional languages being those that newcomers to Canada also speak. All of them bring diverse theological backgrounds and life experiences that can enrich our denomination. Many of them have specialized experience in ministry such as youth ministry, church planting, chaplaincy, and ecumenical work.
- We need to continue working with congregations to confront xenophobia and racism; as well as making sure that support for search teams are well informed of the Admission process and the benefits of considering an applicant from another country. While the myth exists in our denomination that we have a shortage of ministers, the reality is that we have more than 50 who are available. They simply need our search teams to recognize that they are highly qualified, experienced ministers who are keen and feeling to called to serve in The United Church of Canada.

The appendix to this report contains more statistics related to Admission.

ONGOING VOCATIONAL SUPPORT, FORMATION, AND DEVELOPMENT

STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE

In 2023, the Standards committee met 8 times (last meeting was November 27, 2023).

During 2023, the Standards for Accreditation Committee worked hard to finish meeting its responsibility to set standards for the continuing education and professional development of ministry personnel (The Manual E.2.2.d). Following from learning from 2022 surveys with ministry personnel and Ministry and Personnel (M&P) Committees about the continuing education, the committee created a draft continuing education standard that wove together the [Competencies for Ministry Formation and Lifelong Ministry Leadership](#) and the calls to Deep Spirituality, Bold Discipleship, and Daring Justice. In the spring, the committee designed and implemented a consultation process to receive feedback on the standard from Office of Vocation and regional council pastoral relations staff, chairs of M&P Committees, staff of United Church theological schools who design continuing education programming, and groups of ministry personnel in two regional councils. In September, the committee recommended the continuing education standard to the Board of Vocation for their input and feedback. In November, the Board of Vocation approved a revised continuing education standard. In early 2024, staff will work to animate the standard with ministry personnel, M&P Committees and regional council pastoral relations staff.

Because of changes to the way that racial justice training is being delivered on ChurchX, including a mix of synchronous and asynchronous modules, and training designed for three distinct cohorts of people (Indigenous and Racialized Ministers in North America, White Ministers in North America, Ministers Applying for Admission from Outside North America), the committee consulted with staff about updating the Standard for [Online Racial Justice Training](#). The updated standard was approved by the committee in November.

CREDENTIALING COMMITTEE

The Credentialing Committee has been tasked with overseeing the process of Designated Lay Ministers seeking testamur towards commissioning or ordination. Some of the other work that the committee is involved in:

- a) the committee continues to provide support to intentional interim ministers;
- b) partnering with Office of Vocation staff to lead a community of practice for active educational supervisors;
- c) the committee reviewed three applications to the Interim Ministry Sabbatical Fund; and

The statistics included in the appendix to this report will give a detailed view of the work of the committee.

ENHANCING EFFECTIVENESS, OVERSIGHT AND DISCIPLINE OF MINISTRY PERSONNEL

This area represents a significant portion of the work of the Office of Vocation, and is managed by staff, elected members who sit on the response and remedial committees, along with consultants, reviewers and investigators. There was one staff change during the year, with a new person being hired in the summer to replace one who departed in the spring of 2023, while membership on the committees remained stable throughout the year.

There was a training event held in person over 5 days for 39 Consultants, Investigators, Reviewers and Staff of the Office of Vocation in October, including the revisions made to the *Sexual Misconduct* and *Workplace Discrimination, Harassment and Violence Response Policies & Procedures* and *Office of Vocation: Structure & Responsibilities, Appendix A*.

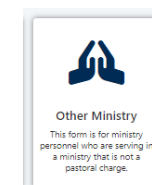
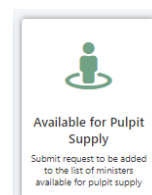
The statistics presented in the Appendix to this report will reveal the magnitude of this work.

CHURCHHUB

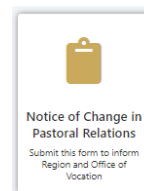
ChurchHub.ca is now entering its 6th year since it was launched Jan 1 2019 – fulfilling the intended function of gathering data and storing documents about ministers and communities of faith into one virtual space.

There have been several enhancements/improvements to ChurchHub (and all its related entities – such as Dynamics and Sharepoint) over the past year. Here are a few examples:

1. Most Regional Councils have provided the list of names available for pulpit supply and this information is stored in Dynamics and Communities of Faith can access the pulpit supply list via ChurchHub.
2. Ministers can make the request to be available for Pulpit Supply via their ChurchHub pages. In order to be added to the pulpit supply list they must be “On the Registry” and they are requested to indicate the “name of the pastoral charge with which they have a formal association”. Each year (on June 30th – after annual declarations have been submitted), the updated list of pulpit supply ministers is sent to Regional Council staff for information.
3. Ministers are invited to complete this form if they are serving in ministries other than pastoral charges (chaplaincies, community ministries, etc.). This information is entered into their assignment table in Dynamics.



4. In order to improve the accuracy of assignment information, this form providing notice of change in pastoral relations is available to ministers on ChurchHub. The form is forwarded to the relevant Regional Council and the proposed end date is entered into their assignment table in Dynamics.



5. New fields have been added to the database:

- a field with “anniversary year” number that is easily viewable by all staff and helpful in planning for anniversary letters
- a field indicating if a minister entered UCC via Admission
- a field indicating if minister is Indigenous

The screenshot shows a minister profile for Debra Kiger. The 'Minister Entry Date' is 5/28/11. The 'Anniversary' field is circled in red and contains the number '12'. The 'Entry via Admission' field is circled in red and contains a checkmark. The 'Indigenous Minister' field is circled in red and contains a checkmark. Other fields include 'Minister Type' (Diocesan Minister), 'Minister Status' (Retired), 'Minister Date Recommended' (4/05/07), 'Minister Entry Date' (5/28/11), 'Minister License' (5/01/22), 'Minister License End Date' (5/01/23), 'Minister Comment' (Commissioned by Hamilton (2011) - Settled), 'Retirement Start Date' (7/01/18), 'Not in Covenant End Date', 'Current Assignment' (General Council Office), 'In Search of Call/Appointment' (No), 'Educational Supervisor' (No), 'Educational Supervisor Start Date', 'Intentional Interim Designation' (No), 'Intentional Interim Designation Start Date', 'Intentional Interim Designation End Date', 'Sacrament License' (Yes), 'Sacrament License Start Date' (5/01/22), and 'Sacrament License End Date'.

In 2023 ChurchHub use has expanded beyond ministry personnel, communities of faith (Administrators, Treasurers and Search Teams), and General Council volunteers. Users now include 100s of volunteers on many of our Regional Council committees. This new group of ChurchHub users has of course increased requirements for support from staff at Regional and General Council levels.

ChurchHub is in continuous improvement as all users share feedback, identify glitches and request enhancements.

Table 3: ChurchHub Use 2023

Record of Call/Appointment forms created	727
Record of Call/Appointment Approved by Regional Councils	552
Annual Declarations completed by May 30 th deadline	2216
Annual Declarations completed after May 30 th deadline	250
Ministers requested to be approved for search	542
Ministers on the Available Ministers list as of December	225
Communities of Faith Submitted Positions new in 2023	132
Available Positions list as of December	194
Total number of ministers in Calls	1093
Number of ministers in appointments as of Jan 1 st 2024	446

Number of visits to ChurchHub	5557
Number of ChurchHub users	9257

CONCLUSION

The Board of Vocation is grateful to the staff of the Office of Vocation, and to all the elected members across the country who have enabled this work to continue in this way. The Board appreciates that this work is holy, and hard, and commits, along with the Holy Spirit, to being partners in the journey.

APPENDIX TO THE BOARD OF VOCATION ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

January 21, 2024

Origin: Director, and the Staff Team of the Office of Vocation.

Contents of the report:

The report follows the arc of the vocational life of ministry personnel.

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|------|---|---|
| i. | Ministry formation: | Candidacy Boards |
| ii. | Welcoming other leadership: | Admission Board |
| iii. | Investment in vitality and specialisation: | Standards for Accreditation
Committee
Credentialing Committee |
| iv. | Enhancing effectiveness: | Response Committee
Remedial Committee
Boundaries Training |
| v. | Discontinued Service Lists and Readmission: | Board of Vocation |

i. Ministry Formation

Indigenous Candidacy Board – Tim Hackborn

Type of Interview	Number of Interviews	Outcome of Interviews
Promise	3	Confirmed
Suitability	2	deferred
SME		
Ready for Appointment	4	
Ready for Ordination	4	confirmed for ordination
Ready for Commissioning		
Mid SME	1	
Benchmark		
Check-ins	12	5 completed
Progress	1	status confirmed
Switch Programs		
Final	4	4 confirmed
Termination of Candidacy	3	2 confirmed
Total Number of Interviews	24	
Total Number of Candidates as of December 31, 2023	14	
Total Number of Inquirers	9	Confirmed
Trends:		
<p>Some meetings that were not included in the numbers above:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> There were 11 meetings that ICB had to address the administrative and policy work that included the review of the Indigenous Testamur and working with Janet Gear on the development of the Indigenous Candidacy Pathway resource. Other meetings included: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The planning and attending of the National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering in Edmonton The orientation and onboarding of three new Candidacy Board members in September. In 2023, The Indigenous Candidacy Board met with Rev. Dr. Ray Aldred of VST to build a relationship with the Indigenous M.Div program to strengthen the overall Spiritual Formation of Indigenous Candidates who want to pursue Formal Education. 		

Atlantic Candidacy Board –Andrew Richardson

BOV report for 2023-Atlantic Candidacy Board

Type of Interview	Number of Interviews	Outcome of Interviews
Promise	5	
Suitability	1	
SME	8	
Ready for Appointment	1	
Ready for Ordination	3	
Ready for Commissioning		
Ready for Recognition	1	
Mid SME		
Benchmark	3	
Check-ins	1	
Progress		
Switch Programs		
Final		
Termination of Candidacy	1	
Total Number of Interviews	24	
Total Number of Candidates as of Dec. 2023	28	
DLM Candidates	5	
Diaconal Candidates	1	
Ordained Ministry Candidates	22	
Inquirers	13	
Trends:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are 17 female candidates, 10 males, and 1 trans candidate • I have had contact with 40 people who are applicants or considering applying-this without any effort at recruiting • Applicants remain overwhelmingly over 50 with the oldest applicant being 72 • I have three in process who are in the military and are looking to becoming CAF chaplains • Almost all candidates in the ordained stream choose AST with only 1 at Emmanuel. The majority of those at AST are in the distance program. 		

Quebec & East Ontario Candidacy Board – Caroline Penhale

Type of Interview	Number of Interviews	Outcome of Interviews
Promise	9	Promise – 1 “not yet”
Suitability	9	1 Found not to be suitable
SME	8	All ready
Ready for Appointment	1	Ready
Ready for Ordination	7	7 Found for Readiness
Ready for Commissioning	1	Ready for Commissioning
Mid SME	7	All acceptable
Benchmark	2	Continue on Pathway
Check-ins	0	N/A
Progress	0	N/A
Switch Programs	0	N/A
Final	9	8 Successful; 1 left the Pathway
Termination of Candidacy	2	2 voluntary withdrawals – one with interview; one without
Total Number of Interviews	44	**Some interviews were for Promise and Suitability on the same day
Total Number of Candidacy Profiles as of Dec 31, 2023	40	11 are applicants (6 of whom are Francophone)
Total Number of Candidates at Dec 31, 2023	29	
Trends:		
<p><i>2023 was a very busy year for the Quebec and East Ontario Candidacy Board! We experienced more transition on the Board, welcoming new members and panel interviewers and saying farewell to one of our Co-Chairs. In terms of its work, the Board participated in EDA training and managed to conduct 44 applicant or candidate interviews! This resulted in the completion of 8 Candidacy Pathways: 6 ordinations and 2 by voluntary withdrawal. We had 11 applicants as of December 31, 2023 and over half of these are Francophone which continues to highlight the growing importance of Ministry in French, mostly in Quebec, but also in other areas in Canada. Also, SMEs were a big focus in 2023: with 8 individuals being found ready for SME and 7 interviewing at the mid-SME point. At times, it is proving difficult to find either an SME site or an Educational Supervisor for an SME, especially if the SME needs to be served in French or if there are accommodations required. I anticipate that this will be an ongoing challenge in 2024.</i></p>		

Mountain Candidacy Board – Brenda Fawkes

Type of Interview	Number of Interviews	Outcome of Interviews
Promise	7	
Suitability	6	
SME	6	
Ready for Appointment		
Ready for Ordination	4	
Ready for Commissioning		
Mid SME		
Benchmark		
Check-ins		
Progress		
Disciplinary	1	
Termination of Candidacy	0	
Total Number of Interviews	24	
Total Number of Candidates as of Dec 31, 2023	37	There were 3 candidates for ordination or commissioning who were also serving as DLMs
Trends:		
<p>Having 14 board members makes a huge difference.</p> <p>The majority of our students attend VST, however, more and more are considering the in-community program at AST.</p> <p>Diversity: 3 in 20s, 9 in 30s, 10 in 40s, 9 in 50s, 6 in 60s. There are 10 of the 37 who would self-identify as LGBTQ2S+</p> <p>The opportunity for in-person discernment event this fall put real faces on the call to ministry.</p>		

North & Central Ontario Candidacy Board – Kellie McComb

Type of Interview	Number of Interviews	Outcome of Interviews
Promise	14	1 found not yet ready
Suitability	4	
SME	1	successful
Ready for Appointment	1	
Ready for Ordination	3	Successful, 2 additional not ready for interview so will be interviewed in February.
Ready for Commissioning	1	successful
Mid SME	0	successful
Benchmark	4	successful
Check-ins	3	successful
Termination of Candidacy	1	
Total Number of Interviews	32	
Total Number of Candidates as of December 31, 2023	29	
Applicants	10	
Diaconal Candidates	1	
Ordained Candidates	28	
Inquirers	8	
Trends:		
<p>The number of individuals interested in ministry, continues to grow. We continue to see more and more diversity in those who are applying to the candidacy pathway process and more individuals who already have a theology degree of some type and want to be ordained. More and more people are engaging within 6 months of the initial contact. The board continues to need to be nimble and flexible.</p>		

Prairie Candidacy Board – Laura Fohse

Type of Interview	Number of Interviews	Outcome of Interviews
Promise	2	all affirmed
Suitability	2	all affirmed
SME	4	all approved
Ready for Appointment	2	all approved
Ready for Ordination	6	all approved
Ready for Commissioning	2	all approved
Ready for DLM	2	all approved
Mid SME	4	all affirmed
Benchmark	5	all affirmed
Total Number of Interviews	29	
Total Candidates as of December 31, 2023	22	
Trends:		
<p>We currently have 7 applicants who will be interviewed in 2024 for Promise/Suitability. We have two candidates searching for SME sites. We anticipate approving 3 candidates for ordination in 2024. We have a full and diverse board representing all three regions. The Board met in person in Saskatoon in January. We also met in January, March, May, September and November on Zoom.</p>		

Southwestern Ontario Candidacy Board – Tanya Cameron

Type of Interview	Number of Interviews	Outcome of Interviews
Promise	6	5 yes; 1 no
Suitability	3	3 yes
SME	3	3 yes
Ready for Appointment	3	3 yes
Ready for Ordination	4	2 yes
Ready for Commissioning / Recognition	2	1 yes Com / 1 yes Rec
Mid SME / Benchmark	3	
Benchmark		
Check-ins	4	
Progress		
Switch Programs	1	Discerned Indigenous CB
Final		
Termination of Candidacy	3	1 Termination, 2 Withdrawals
Total Number of Interviews	32	
Total Number of Candidates as of December 31, 2023	34	
Trends:		
<p>Many are in ministry-based programs requiring SME sites; similar to 2022, the 2023 calendar year had 15 SMEs running at December 31, 2023. This means heavy investment of evaluations, training, Educational Supervisors and ongoing support via Pastoral Relations (meeting with CoF as they discern to become an SME site; appointing charge supervisors when a candidate is appointed etc.). In addition to the 15 candidates in SME appointments, there are 5 candidate in supply appointments not under supervision (diaconal; in 5th year of AST integrated program; or are about to complete 3rd year in non-integrated MDiv program and will interview for SME Readiness in 2024.)</p> <p>As in past years, some candidates have a very linear process and some are very casual about proceeding through formation. The Candidacy Board began to be more direct with the expectation that formation requires continuous engagement and 2023 brought 4 candidates who requested a pause of up to one year in Candidacy Pathway (2 related to parental leave and 2 to discern if paid accountable ministry is their calling.) The liaison approach that the SW Ontario CB adopted (each board member has up to 4 assigned candidates that they do a phone call/Zoom at least 2x times a year) continues to be a benefit to formation that allows the entire CB to gain clarity about their process and how the CB can support them in continued suitability for ministry.</p> <p>During initial discernment calls with the Vocational Minister, there is a trend of individuals discerning the best/optimal education model rather than the specific call to diaconal or ordained. For example,</p>		

when I offer during that conversation that “what I am hearing you say about your call is more reflective of Diaconal ministry” the individual often acknowledges that, but affirms that the integrated model of education and formation is a better fit for their current life situation.

Within the Candidacy Board, we had 3 members resign from the committee in 2023. One member resigned only after a few months as they discerned their skills were better suited to continuing to serve as an Educational Supervisor, and both of our lay members resigned as they could no longer dedicate the time necessary (they each performed volunteer roles in other areas of their church and private lives). It is true that there is an exceptional time requirement needed to serve competently on a Candidacy Board. The SWON CB meets monthly on the third Thursday (no July/August unless exceptional/urgent meeting) and interviews 6x per year (the Thursday afternoon and Friday mornings of 6 different months). This does not include ad hoc meetings or interviews related to urgent matters such as termination. From speaking with other VMs, it can be difficult for all Board members to be present due to other ministry demands and occasionally requires us to find last-minute alternate interviewers to ensure a full complement available for the candidate.

ii. Welcoming Other Leadership

ADMISSION BOARD – Sarah Bruer

An intentional effort was made to clear up spots where we knew ministers were getting stalled in the Admission process as follows:

- The Admission Board conducted 16 final interviews for ministers who completed the Admission process in 2023.
- 17 ministers who are in or seeking appointments participated in one of two Admission Orientation Circles offered in 2023.
- Legal support was sought for four ministers who encountered challenges with immigration.
- Staff checked in with more than 50 ministers who are seeking appointments, almost all of whom confirmed that they are actively searching, struggling, and wanting help.
- 11 ministers not yet in appointments accepted an opportunity through the Admission Board to complete their Intro to Boundaries training.
- 21 ministers seeking appointments registered for a zoom call that will take place in January 2024 about using ChurchHub effectively.
- The Admission Board conducted 13 entrance interviews for admission ministers.
- The Ministry Vocation team approved 11 completed admission applications.
- More than 50 ministers previously approved to apply who hadn't completed their applications were contacted by staff to determine if they still planned to do so, and if so get them moving forward in the process.
- 4 new accompaniers were recruited, trained, and have started offering accompaniment.
- More than 50 ministers in or awaiting accompaniment were contacted to determine continued interest, with those who responded having all been matched with an accompanier.

The following chart depicts where we are at now as a result of these efforts compared to where we were 18 months ago.

Step in the process	# of Ministers (May 2022)	# of Ministers (December 2023)
Waiting for accompanier	27	3
In accompaniment	46	22
Application in process	53	30
Ready for credentialing	3	1
Awaiting interviews	14	1
Seeking appointments	41	53
In appointment	15	16
CURRENT # IN ADMISSIONS PROCESS	199	126
Admitted each year	6 in 2022	15 in 2023

iii. Investment in Vitality and Specialization

CREDENTIALING COMMITTEE – Adam Hanley

In 2023, the Credentialing committee met 7 times (last meeting was December 8, 2023).

During the year, the committee has completed the following for the designation of intentional interim ministers:

- 1 minister interviewed and approved for initial designation as an intentional interim minister (after completing interim ministry training);
- 3 ministers interviewed and approved for continuing designation as an intentional interim minister (after completing their first intentional interim appointment);
- transition team reports, exit interviews and self-evaluations reviewed for 7 intentional interim ministers and their gifts were affirmed for continuing designation (for intentional interim ministers who have been serving in intentional interim ministry for a number of years); and
- transition team reports, exit interviews and self-evaluations reviewed for 1 intentional interim minister and the committee is seeking a conversation in early 2024 with the minister about their continuing designation.

The committee has completed the following for the designation of educational supervisors:

- 11 individuals interviewed and approved for designation as an educational supervisor (after completing the ministry of supervision training program).

The committee has completed the following with applicants for readmission:

- 1 individual interviewed for readmission and recommended to the Board of Vocation to be readmitted to the order of ministry

The committee also undertook conversations with ministry personnel called to chaplaincy:

- 1 individual interviewed to provide a letter of denominational support for their call to voluntarily serve as a police chaplain; and
- 1 individual interviewed to provide a letter of denominational support for their continued service as a hospital chaplain and accredited by the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care (CASC).

The Office of Vocation currently (including those who were previously designated or approved by Conferences) has:

- 57 designated intentional interim ministers (11 currently serving in intentional interim ministry appointments)
- 456 designated educational supervisors (both lay people and ministry personnel)

iv. Enhancing Effectiveness

Response Committee – Karen Valley, Lisa Giffin

- Meets monthly, more regularly as needed. During this reporting period, they met 11 times plus 3 Administrative Leave Hearings were held.
 - Two placed on full Administrative Leave
 - One had restrictions put in place
- Membership on the Committee stayed stable throughout the year, with one loaned to the Remedial Committee at the request of the Board of Vocation for a particular case.
- 17 new formal cases:
 - 14 Ordered ministry personnel and 2 Candidates for ministry
 - 13 cases were alleged breaches of ethical standards
 - 2 cases came through the Sexual Misconduct Response Policy & Procedures
 - 2 cases came through the Workplace Discrimination, Harassment & Violence Policy & Procedures
- 9 investigations ordered (6 completed, 3 in progress at end of year) with the reports provided to the Remedial Committee.
- 2 reviews ordered and completed, and reports provided to the Remedial Committee.
- 2 cases deemed not eligible as per criteria of Appendix A.
- 1 case required more information, carried over to 2024.
- 1 case the minister chose DSL-V before any process began.

Themes and Opportunities

1. Increased information sharing regarding what informal measures have been attempted/considered before it is received by the Response Committee.
2. Case conferences with regional council colleagues during both informal and formal phases of cases were regularized and fruitful.
3. Communities of Practice for Consultants and Investigators/Reviewers will get underway in 2024.

Remedial Committee – Karen Valley, Marg Szilassy

- During this reporting period, they met 29 times in addition to the small group preparation for interviews; regularly meeting twice per month.
- Due to the need to recuse three of the seven members for one case, the Board of Vocation appointed three additional members for the duration of that one case only.
- 8 new cases and 8 cases carried over from 2022
 - 8 cases were for alleged breaches of ethical standards
 - 7 of these successfully completed directed programs, were returned to standing and deemed effective
 - 1 exited ministry through Minutes of Settlement and placed on the DSL-V

- 1 case was resolved through a Formal Hearing, which placed the minister on the DSL-D
- 1 case was recommended to the Board of Vocation to establish a Formal Hearing Committee to consider placing the minister on the DSL-D
- 1 minister was returned to standing with no remedial work necessary
- 4 cases are in progress into 2024
- 1 case was for alleged sexual misconduct
 - Unfounded
- 7 Effectiveness Support Committees in 2023
 - 1 new committee established
 - 6 committees continued their work
 - 6 committees completed their work

Themes and Opportunities

1. Ministry Personnel comprising the 16 cases this year:
 - a. 1 – Retired
 - b. 7 – served 20+ years
 - c. 3 – served 10+ years
 - d. 4 – served less than 5 years
2. One remained on partial suspension until the resolution of the case and was returned to standing. Five were suspended pending successful completion of Directed Programs and/or outcome of the Office of Vocation processes. One remained suspended until the DSL-D and Formal Hearing process was completed. One remains suspended pending a Formal Hearing process taking place in 2024. Two suspensions were lifted after the ministers successfully completed their Directed Program.
3. As with past years, the themes arising in the remedial work are
 - a. emotional intelligence (self-awareness and relationship management);
 - b. boundaries power dynamics;
 - c. awareness of polity and procedures;
 - d. isolation in ministry practice;
 - e. relationships with persons served and
 - f. concerns related to social media use.

Newer themes emerging relate to understanding of, and compliance with, oversight responsibilities; those in long-term pastoral relationships, and those who have not utilized their full study leave, vacation and sabbatical opportunities

The Remedial Committee is hoping to seek out additional resources for Directed Programs, particularly learning what other denominations find effective in similar remedial matters, in 2024.

Personal and Professional Boundaries for Church Leaders Training – Karen Valley

- Throughout 2023 there were 16 *Personal and Professional Boundaries* sessions offered by staff of the Office of Vocation. Approximately 556 ministry personnel, candidates, applicants for ministry, Admissions applicants and Licenced Lay Worship Leaders attended these sessions:
 - 3 *Introduction to Boundaries* sessions
 - 4 *Social Media* refresher sessions
 - 4 *Finances and Gifts* refresher sessions
 - 4 *Retiring With Grace* refresher sessions
- A mix of weekday and Saturday sessions were offered; Saturdays were much less popular.
- *Finances and Gifts* refresher sessions were the least popular of the offerings.
- The curriculum transitioned fully to the new CHURCHx platform, with some asynchronous training pieces offered alongside the group sessions.

Themes and Opportunities

1. In addition to the Remedial Committee's experience and the past year's sessions, self-care; dual relationships; where to find policies and resources (human and other), and understanding of a minister's power and influence remain top discussion items in these sessions.
2. Users easily made the switch to the CHURCHx platform, providing opportunity to expand the use of the features it offers.
3. A refresh of the curriculum content was implemented, with a full redesign beginning in late 2024.
4. Utilizing a core group of facilitators to deliver the sessions has proven beneficial than spreading it out amongst a larger team, for consistency.

v. Discontinued Service Lists and Readmissions

The Office of Vocation is responsible for administering and maintaining the following lists:

- a) the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary);
- b) the Discontinued Service List (Voluntary); and
- c) the Discontinued Lay Ministry Appointment List. (The Manual E.2.9).

Readmission is the process by which people who were previously ministry personnel within The United Church of Canada and are on the Discontinued Service List are restored to good standing and service. A net loss of 3 ministry personnel.

Discontinued Lay Ministry Appointment List.	Discontinued Service List (Voluntary)	Discontinued Service List (Voluntary)	Discontinued Service List (Voluntary)	Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary)	Re-admission – removed from DSL.
By their request.	By their request.	Serving another denomination.	through Memorandum of Agreement.		
	2		1	1	1