

## Board of Vocation Report 2025 Regional Meetings

In 2024, the Board of Vocation met three times for two-day virtual events. In addition to our regular work, we engaged in two appeals and 1 formal hearing. Two Board members also sit on the Standards Committee and one on the Nominations Committee. The following is a summary of work that has been completed or is in process within the Office of Vocation.

### Candidacy Boards

A major revision was made to the resources prepared for Supervised Ministry Education lay teams. Post-pandemic capacity for lay people to support SME is significantly diminished and expectations for both role and reporting needed adjusting. These are available on the national website.

### Admissions Board

We still have 40 ministers from other denominations and counties approved to seek an Appointment within a United Church congregation, with a possible 15 other ministers who are earlier in the process. This is despite a nearly 2 year long pause on new Admission applications.

### Ministry Personnel Mandatory Trainings

The 43<sup>rd</sup> General Council (2018) proposed additional mandatory training for ministry personnel on topics like mental health, anti-homophobia/anti-transphobia, and the Kairos Blanket Exercise. The Board of Vocation decided to encourage the Executive of the General Council to take no action on these proposals for additional mandatory training. Instead the Standards for Accreditation Committee is working on encouraging ministers to develop a deeper knowledge of these issues through the continuing education standard. In addition, non-mandatory courses such as an Affirming course is being developed in partnership with Affirm Canada and other bodies.

### Pastoral Relationships -Thriving with Equity Research Project:

The project report and summary were presented and discussed by the Board of Vocation. The research was intended to identify current patterns of inequity within pastoral relationships between ministry personnel and communities of faith, seek ways to prevent and mitigate inequity, incite and foster positive change in our church and beyond. The sections below I found particularly poignant.

*“Equity-seeking identities named by participants included Indigenous, racial and ethnic identities; language and citizenship; age and disability; gender, gender identity, and sexuality; regional council; ministry streams and years of service; as well as relationship status, parenting role, and mental health/neurodiversity.”*

*“Many participants particularly mentioned feeling underappreciated, unrecognized, or devalued in comparison to their teammates. An incongruence between a minister’s and community’s expectations of “how well a community will get to know its minister” leads some to feel invisible and others to feel over exposed.”*

*“When asked about their Ministry and Personnel Committee (or board/council), only 45 percent of participants found them supportive and effective. Many reported that coaching M and P committees is seen as part of their ministry, and a number wondered whether M and P is really the best system for addressing personnel issues.”*

*“A question emerges: Who holds the communities of faith accountable for their behaviour? The answer seems to be no one. Also, why do we, as The United Church of Canada, continue to approve pastoral relationships where there is a pattern of abuse and conflict? And if we do place people in those positions, who would be best suited to be there?”*

Revised Statement on Ministry – Draft

This revised statement was presented to the Board of Vocation in March 2025. It expands on and uplifts the ministry of laity in the church, which acknowledges the ministry leadership that happens within a community of faith even in the absence of paid accountable ministers. The statement acknowledges those called to enter into ministry while also valuing the contributions of those who minister in voluntary and informal ways. This statement should be finalized and released in the next year.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Natasha Pearen". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Rev. Natasha Pearen  
Board of Vocation Member