



You have been approached to invite you to be part of The Explorer Project, during the summer of 2018. You have been approached because of your demonstrated commitment to The United Church of Canada, your enthusiasm for growing in your faith, and your willingness to offer leadership to others. We see in you gifts that we believe will serve you and the church well if you discern a call to ministry. We'd like to invite you to experience a new adventure in ministry by becoming one of our project's Explorers.

You are invited to spend approximately 3 months during the summer of 2018 in a different part of our church and country, participating and leading within the ministry of a particular community. We will plan your adventure with particular attention to new experiences of ministry, and to utilize the leadership gifts you have already demonstrated. There will be a "matching" process between invited Explorers and the Host Sites which will take interests and possibilities into account.

Here is some background and explanation of **The Explorer Project**: An initiative to encourage young adult United Church members to consider ministry as a vocation.

## **Background**

In September 2014, sparked by conversations about recruitment for future ministry leadership, Toronto Conference Executive approved a new initiative to encourage young adults to consider a ministry vocation. The Project was designed to involve people who have demonstrated leadership in our Church but who have not yet discerned a call to ministry or begun the candidacy process or theological education. The Project does not replace or substitute any part of the candidacy process.

## **The Project**

The Project has grown over the past several years and in 2018 we anticipate participating Conferences will include British Columbia Conference, the Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario, London Conference, Alberta and Northwest Conference, Saskatchewan Conference and Newfoundland and Labrador Conference as well as Toronto Conference. Participation will be confirmed by the end of November, 2017. They will share in providing the necessary financial resources. Each participating Conference will also be asked to identify host sites which would offer an exciting experience of contemporary church identity, mission and ministry.

Each selected Explorer is given an honorarium and their round trip expenses to their site are covered. The Host Sites create a Host Committee and appoint a Mentor.

While not completely age restricted, the plan for this project is to involve people who are in their early twenties. This will be a 3 month experience over summer months. Exact dates may vary from site to site but the common pattern is May through July. A site might involve more than one ministry or mission unit. For example a larger congregation might "twin" with a smaller, healthy ministry or a congregation might "twin" with an outreach ministry. Each participating Conference will select 1 or 2 excellent Explorers for this experience because the Conference will know of their past involvement within the United Church, their leadership and experience to date and their suitability for this experience. Each Explorer will be placed outside his/her home Conference in one of the other participating Conferences. Each Conference will decide upon its selection process.

We will ask Host Sites to recruit a small group of excellent lay leaders with the charism to mentor and guide and accompany the Explorer; this will be the Host Committee. Each Explorer will have a Mentor for that

Host site. We will require the Explorer's "home" community to sponsor them, and to provide a similar small group who would help prepare the Explorer for the experience, stay in contact throughout, and welcome them back, helping them find ways to reflect on their experience and share their story; this will be the Home Committee. The Conference will work with the host site to design a rich experience of broad engagement and leadership with as many dimensions of ministry as possible. Explorers will have many gifts but will not be trained or in formal education for ministry at this time.

## **1. Hoped for results**

We believe that all of these components will expand the benefits of this experience, and provide opportunities for both service and leadership to all involved. In fact, one of our original Project task group members lifted up the acronym "S.A.L.T." which has been used by other churches, groups and at least one university; "Serving and Learning Together". That certainly describes our vision.

The Project will work toward the following outcomes:

- Younger adult United Church members will be encouraged to consider ministry as a vocation. They will be affirmed as people who are valued and appreciated by their Church and as individuals who have gifts for this vocation
- Ministry sites will have the benefit of meeting these people, benefitting from their shared experience, and being affirmed as healthy communities who can help develop and mentor future leadership. They may be assisted in their own ministries to develop something new and they will experience the service of this healthy spirited young person.
- Committee members will experience the privilege of relationship with vibrant younger members of our Church and be encouraged by their commitment to discipleship.
- Whether the experience leads to a sense of vocation to the orders of ministry or not, we trust it will deepen the sense of joy in discipleship for all who are involved.
- All involved will have an expanded sense of The United Church of Canada, gaining insight into the diversity and distinctiveness of ministry in other parts of the body.
- We know of twinned pastoral charges that have worked together in the past to provide internship sites and who have experienced continued benefits through the increased sense of relationship. We believe that could be another gift of this project to the host sites.

While we cannot guarantee that we will find the right match for you this year, we invite you to express your interest by completing the accompanying information sheet. We need you to approach your home congregation to see if they are willing to support you in this adventure and create a Home Committee, a small group of people who will meet with you in advance of the summer to help you prepare, stay in touch over the summer, and welcome you back, helping you debrief and share your learnings. You will be asked to prepare a set of learning goals once you have been matched with a site, and you will have a conversation with the Host Site Committee and your Mentor long before you arrive, to discuss those goals. You can expect to have an average "workload" for your weeks there, but you are not summer staff, and learning and reflection will be an important part of your experience. You will be encouraged to live a balanced life.

To express your interest, please return the enclosed form to your Conference's Lead Staff no later than November 30, 2017. It is our plan to match Explorers and Sites in December.

**Explorer Participant Information Form 2018**

**[If you are selected for the program, this information will be shared with your Host Site and Mentor]**

Name

Home Address

Home Phone

Cell

Work

Email Address(es)

Emergency Contact Information: Name:

Home Phone:

Cell Phone:

Email:

Relationship to Emergency Contact

Date of Birth

Home Congregation/Pastoral Charge

Education

Current Work/Occupation/Study Programme

When would you be available to begin the Project in 2018?

Please describe your involvement with the United Church and leadership you have given:

We have described the objective of the Explorer Project as follows: To give an opportunity to young adults who have already demonstrated leadership within the United Church of Canada to now broaden their experience and explore the possibility of a vocation in ministry through summer field experiences in active healthy pastoral charges and mission units.

Please tell us what most interests you about the Explorer Project? How do you see this helping your vocational discernment?

Please describe your background that you believe equips you for this Project:

What opportunities would you most like to have in order to expand your experience within the United Church of Canada?

What skills would you most like to offer to your Host Site?

For example:

- Helping with Sunday worship
- Working with children
- Youth
- Music leadership
- Summer camp
- Vacation Bible School
- Prayer leadership
- Pastoral visitation
- Social media/technology
- Working with outreach ministries/projects
- Other

The sites for the Project will vary widely. Do you have any particular needs/restrictions that we need to know in order to match you to an appropriate site?

Accommodation will be arranged by the Host Site for you; any needs/restrictions that we need to know about?

You are asked to submit at least two letters of reference with this form, with one of those coming from your Home Congregation or Pastoral Charge. Are they attached?

The Project requires your Home Congregation or Pastoral Charge to create a Home Committee that will support you in your preparation for the Project, keep in touch with you during your Project experience, and help you debrief and share your experience at the end. Please provide contact information for the members of that Committee with the coordinator or convenor identified.

- 
- 

Do you have a current Driver's License? [A License is not required but this is useful information when we are matching Explorers with Sites]

Do you have a current Vulnerable Sector Police Records' Check? [If you are approved for a site, you are required to have one, and provide a copy to your Conference Lead Staff, no later than March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018.

It is your responsibility to ensure you have adequate Medical Insurance Coverage. Please indicate you accept this responsibility: \_\_\_\_\_Yes

Anything else you would like us to know?