



# Learning Plans

Notes:

- See also the section on “Setting Up the Field Placement” in the Field Kit

# LEARNING PLAN AND LEARNING GOALS

## Introduction

The CCS Educational Stance states...

Learning is a process and discipline that encompasses the whole person. Learners need to be intentional, taking responsibility for engagement, reflection, self-direction and goal setting.

Setting learning goals and developing a learning plan is a process that requires:

- mature intentionality
- commitment to personal growth and professional development
- the motivation and abilities related to self-directed learning
- openness and willingness to receive feedback.

There is a difference between *learning* goals and *doing* goals. If your learning plan looks like a list of duties and tasks to accomplish, you have created *doing* goals. While in the CCS program, we are looking for you to concentrate on learning. Please state your goals in terms of what you want to learn.

## Overview of Stages for Goal Setting

### 1) Self-Assessment

In this beginning period one is invited to:

- reflectively take stock
- identify one's strengths and weaknesses
- articulate areas to work on
- focus on places for improvement

It requires self-awareness and self-discipline. (see "Stage 1: Self Assessment")

### 2) Consultation

It is possible to misjudge one's own talents or to fool oneself about ability and failings, therefore we need to:

- check with others
- review expectations and guidelines
- examine professional statements re: competencies and outcomes.

(see "Stage 2: Consultation")

### 3) Articulation

After these steps, one puts the goals into words. This part of the process encourages:

- focused thinking
- careful articulation
- clear communication

(see "Stage 3: Writing Learning Goals")

### 4) Creative Options

Once the goals are identified, the next stage allows for:

- brainstorming possibilities

- imagining strategies
- generating ideas

which address your goals.

*(see "Stage 4: Creative Options")*

#### 5) Organize a Plan

From these options, one develops a plan. The plan needs to be:

- Concrete
- Specific
- Do-able

There is a certain art to setting small, short term limits with times and dates (e.g. frequency, deadlines, ending period, specific tasks and areas of engagement).

*(see "Stage 5: Organizing a Plan")*

#### 6) Evaluation

One's progress toward achieving goals needs to be assessed. As one works on accomplishing the goals, plans should be put in place to answer such questions such as:

- What will I notice in myself related to each goal?
- What will others notice in me related to each goal?
- What will I be able to "show and tell"?
- What proof will I have?
- How will I report?
- How will I be accountable?
- How will I get supported?

*(see "Stage 6: Evaluation")*

#### Conclusion

CCS students are required to develop a learning plan for each theme year.

The model that follows in the subsequent pages is intended to help in the development of learning goals and areas of work for:

- the field placement
- the learning circles
- external courses
- personal or spiritual exploration
- assignments.

Students are to work on their goals prior to the theme Year and before approaching potential field placements. Consultation with CCS staff is encouraged throughout the process.

# Learning Plan

## STAGE 1: SELF ASSESSMENT

### Step 1 Long Range Goals

- What vision do you have for yourself in ministry?
- Where and what would you like to be at a given time in the future?  
examples:
  - working in a congregational setting sharing the responsibilities for education and worship with lay people;
  - educating church members about social justice issues;
  - working in a presbytery/conference/diocesan position

### Step 2 Present Gifts and Skills

- Identify the gifts, qualities, skills and knowledge you are aware you have now.  
examples:
  - good communication and educational skills;
  - passionate about others' exploration of spirituality;
  - some experience with social justice networks

### Step 3 Areas for Development

- List the gifts, qualities, skills, knowledge you need to develop which at this time seem crucial for your journey.  
examples:
  - deepening an understanding of youth ministry;
  - investigating various models for developing lay visiting teams;
  - learning how to engage middle class church members, congregations and courts of the church with social justice issues

### Step 4 Blocks

- List the fears and difficulties that you might block you from achieving your goals.  
examples:
  - fear that youth will not relate to someone older;
  - personal lack of experience with pastoral visiting;
  - resistance or indifference within a middle class church to prophetic witness

### Step 5 Gathering Goal Areas

- After you have worked through these steps, record your:
  - areas of strong interest
  - gaps in knowledge, skill, or experience
  - sections that feel scary or challenging
- save these notes for Stage #3

# Learning Plan

## STAGE 2: CONSULTATION

### Step 1: Check with Others

Enlist the support of people you trust. Ask them about their impressions of you:

- What do they think you do well?
- What gifts and skills for ministry do they see in you?
- What areas do they feel you need to work on?

### Step 2: Review Expectations and Guidelines

Read the following documents in the CCS field placement kit *or* on the CCS website:

- “Theme Year Curriculum”
- “Guidelines for Readiness”
- “CCS Statements and Stances on Faith, Theology, Education and Justice”

### Step 3: Identify Areas for Exploration

After you have consulted with others (step #1) and reviewed the documents (step #2), record your:

- areas of strong interest
- gaps in knowledge, skill, or experience
- sections that feel scary or challenging

Remember these for Stage #3.

Learning Plan  
**STAGE 3: WRITING LEARNING GOALS**

In this stage, you start with:

- areas of strong interest
- gaps in knowledge, skill, or experience
- sections that feel scary or challenging

identified in Stages 1: Step # 5 and Stage 2: Step #3.

Use the following guidelines to write 4 or 5 learning goals for your year in the CCS program.

Please be conscious that we are looking for *learning* goals and not *doing* goals. i.e. Your goals should identify what areas of growth you are wanting to work on; the goals should not be a list of tasks.

### **Structure of a Learning Goal**

Although questions are helpful in the focusing goals, questions are not goals. A few words that describe a theme or a subject or a topic area are not goals. Goals:

- begin with “to”,
- are followed by a carefully selected verb and,
- end with the naming of what you want to learn/accomplish.

Examples:

- to integrate my passion for justice into my preaching in an appropriate and accessible way
- to grow in my ability to listen in situations of grief and loss
- to enhance my skill in theological reflection and knowledge

### **Verb Choice**

The verb is crucial in stating a learning goal. Verbs such as 'understand', 'realise' and 'be aware of' should be avoided since they describe behaviour which is not observable. Vague or ambiguous verbs should also be avoided; substitute more precise words.

Examples of verbs to use:

- in enhancing knowledge:  
-recall, define, repeat, list, name, restate, recognize, identify, report
- in doing analysis:  
-distinguish, differentiate, analyze, calculate, compare, contrast, criticize, relate
- in tackling synthesis:  
-compose, propose, design, formulate, construct, organize
- in applying theory:  
-interpret, apply, employ, demonstrate, interpret, illustrate
- in developing skills  
-demonstrate, perform, determine, use, point out, practice
- in working on attitudes  
-show consideration, appreciate/respect, express point of view

### **Focus**

Each goal should be concise.

- Keep to one learning goal per statement. This makes for clearer statements.
- Aim for a goal that it is possible to achieve and where the results are observable.
- The touchstone is clarity. The goal must be intelligible to those with whom you are communicating.

*(Adapted from [www.tedi.uq.edu.au/teaching/assessment/learningGoals.html](http://www.tedi.uq.edu.au/teaching/assessment/learningGoals.html))*

## Learning Plan

### STAGE 4: CREATIVE OPTIONS

Once the goals are identified, stage 4 allows for your imagination to create possibilities which address your goals. This stage provides the opportunity to broaden your thinking and dream about the many options.

#### 1) Where?

Consider the following areas as places to concentrate on your learning for the year:

- field placement
- learning circles
- external courses
- personal or spiritual work
- assignments.

#### 2) Who?

Imagine the people with whom you might work:

- learning facilitators
- diaconal/vocational mentors
- local committees
- CCS staff
- learning partners
- student colleagues
- members of the congregation/parish/agency
- larger church participants (e.g. Presbytery, Diocese)

#### 3) What?

Brainstorm possible activities and events to be involved in, such as:

- one-to-one connections
- interviews and surveys
- group discussions
- study groups
- community development
- capacity building
- training sessions
- educational workshop
- retreats
- research and reading
- curriculum writing
- worship leadership
- designated journaling
- spiritual disciples

#### 4) When?

Think about several ways to organize your time commitments or focus on an activity or learning goal.

Examples:

- daily
- weekly
- monthly
- seasonally
- in series for a limited period
- one time only

Learning Plan  
**STAGE 5: ORGANIZING A PLAN**

- In this stage you will narrow your learning plan by developing a shape and schedule for the year. You will need to prioritize, choosing amongst the many options and opportunities generated in Stage 4. You will also need to be consultative. Examples:
- Ask your proposed learning facilitator and local committee what is do-able in your field placement.
  - Check out your assignment schedule (Student Kit page \_\_\_) to see what CCS projects might be an appropriate match for your learning goals.
  - Invite your proposed diaconal/vocational mentor to help you be specific and concrete.

A. Learning Plan Chart  
 Then develop a chart like the one below:

| Goals<br>(from stage 3)  | Specific Tasks or Activities which will help you to work on your learning goals<br>(choosing from the options generated in stage 4) |  |   |  | Evaluation<br>(to be completed in stage 6) |
|--|---|--|---|--|--|
|  | Where?  | Who  | What?   | When?  |  |
| (example)<br>1. to integrate my passion for justice into my preaching in an appropriate and accessible way | a. Assignment   | -primary staff person<br>-learning partner | -focus research and reading on homiletics scholars who write from and justice perspective | -fall research assignment due November 30                    |  |
|  | b. Field Placement  | -learning facilitator<br>-local committee  | -preach in field placement and distribute feedback forms                                  | -once in Advent<br>-once in Epiphany season<br>-once in Lent |  |
|  | c. Learning Circle  | -staff and student colleagues              | -focus sermon on justice perspective  | -March learning circle requirement                           |  |



| Goals<br>(from stage 3) | Specific Tasks or Activities which will help you to work on your learning goals<br>(choosing from the options generated in stage 4) |     |       |       | Evaluation |
|-------------------------|---|-----|-------|-------|------------|
|                         | Where?  | Who | What? | When? |            |
| 1.                      | a.  |     |       |       |            |
|                         | b.  |     |       |       |            |
|                         | c.  |     |       |       |            |
| 2.                      | a.  |     |       |       |            |
|                         | b.  |     |       |       |            |
|                         | c.  |     |       |       |            |
| 3.                      | a.  |     |       |       |            |
|                         | b.  |     |       |       |            |
|                         | c.  |     |       |       |            |

| Goals<br>(from stage 3) | Specific Tasks or Activities which will help you to work on your learning goals<br>(choosing from the options generated in stage 4) |     |       |       | Evaluation |
|-------------------------|---|-----|-------|-------|------------|
|                         | Where?  | Who | What? | When? |            |
| 4.                      | a.  |     |       |       |            |
|                         | b.  |     |       |       |            |
|                         | c.  |     |       |       |            |
| 5.                      | a.  |     |       |       |            |
|                         | b.  |     |       |       |            |
|                         | c.  |     |       |       |            |

Learning Plan  
**STAGE 6: EVALUATION**

This stage involves the principles of accountability. You are being asked to develop the habit of reporting on your progress and soliciting response from others in relation to your preparation for ministry. As an institution of theological education, CCS hopes that evaluation becomes a normative practice characterized by:

- Openness
- Commitment to one's own and other's growth
- Nurturing and supportive approaches
- Willingness to challenge and "speak the truth in love."

Several formal evaluative processes are structured into the CCS program every year:

- Fall Learning Circle Student Led Session
- Fall Learning Circle Review of Learnings
- Comments from Primary Staff on Assignments
- Comments from Learning Partner on Assignments
- Field Placement Mid Term Review
- Spring Learning Circle Student Led Session
- Spring Learning Circle Review of Learnings
- Field Placement Final Review.

As well as these formal venues for feedback, other possibilities are available such as:

- Learning Facilitation sessions
- Mentoring sessions
- Local Committee sessions
- Learning Circle small groups (e.g. case study groups)

For this stage of the learning plan you are to intentionally identify your feedback plan.

- Who will give you feedback?
- What kind of feedback will you invite?
- How will that feedback be collected or received?
- Where?
- When?

*Go back to the chart in Stage 5 and fill in the column re: Evaluation.*

## Learning Plan DISTRIBUTION

### A. Submit to Staff

Send a version of your learning plan to your CCS primary staff person for comment and consultation.

- *Theme Year and Reflection Year students by **May 15.***
- *Leadership Development Module students by **August 1.***

Please include a summary of the work that you did for stages 1-4 as well as the chart for stages 5 and 6. Expect to revise and refine your plan following staff comments and responses.

### B. Specific Versions of the Chart

Then, take this chart and re-work it, twice.

- **Field Placement**
  - Make a new, but similar, chart focusing on the field placement aspects of your plan.
  - Identify the Goals and Specific Tasks and Activities related *only* to the field placement.
  - Bring copies of this chart to the Field Placement Orientation (*see Field Kit*).
  - Use this chart in the early weeks of the Field Placement as you and your learning facilitator refine your plan for the year and as you develop your Field Placement Learning Covenant (*see Field Kit*).
  - Review this chart regularly with your
    - Learning Facilitator
    - Diaconal/Vocational Mentor
    - your Local Committee .
  - Bring this chart to your Mid-Term Review, for any necessary adjustments.
  - Bring this chart to your Final Review, for assessment and evaluation.
- **Learning Circle**
  - Make a new, but similar, chart focusing on the learning circle aspects of your plan.
  - Identify the Goals and Specific Tasks and Activities related *only* to the learning circle.
  - Make 5-6 copies of this chart and bring it to the Learning Circle.
  - Share this chart with your student colleagues who are in your Review of Learnings group.
  - Share this chart with your learning partner and your primary staff person.

## Centre for Christian Studies Learning Guidelines

### **Introduction**

The Centre for Christian Studies uses the “Learning Guidelines” as a means of determining whether a student demonstrates increasing competence in each of the areas identified as essential for functioning effectively in ministries of education, pastoral care, and social justice. These guidelines are used by student colleagues and Program Staff in the Review of Learnings/Assessment process at the end of the Leadership Development Module, during each of the Learning Circles in the theme years, and in the Integrating Year. They are also used by Program Staff in the final year-end review for the Theme Years and Integrating Year. We believe that an acceptable degree of competence is essential in each category of the guidelines in order for a student to progress from one year to the next and to complete the program. Students will normally be assessed on their individual competence for ministry based on a combination of institutional expectations as stated in these guidelines, their own learning goals, and demonstrated cumulative progress from year to year. We believe that every person always has more to learn.

The Centre for Christian Studies has a particular responsibility to certify to The United Church of Canada that, upon graduating from CCS, a student has met the testamur/educational requirements for commissioning as a Diaconal Minister as prescribed in *The Manual of The United Church of Canada*. These Guidelines are the primary resource used for making that determination.

### **Guidelines**

#### **A Spirituality**

- Understands and tends one’s own spirituality.
- Lives out of a sense of gratitude and hope.
- Respects a variety of spiritual understandings and practices.
- Encourages others in their spiritual journeys.
- Articulates one’s own understanding of prayer and how that is related in ministry.
- Accepts different understandings of prayer.

#### **B Theology**

- Explores and articulates one’s theology.
- Demonstrates understanding of Christian doctrines.
- Discerns how doctrine is integrated into one’s faith.
- Respects a variety of theological perspectives.
- Facilitates others in reflecting on their own theological beliefs.
- Sustains a theology of hope and vision in a variety of situations.

#### **C Faith and Church Tradition**

- Understands the history and diversity of the Christian tradition, both denominationally and ecumenically.
- Can identify one’s own theological, spiritual, and cultural roots in Christian tradition.
- Understands how theology informs one’s faith and relates to one’s worldview.
- Demonstrates skills in biblical interpretation and theological reflection.
- Demonstrates theological beliefs which confront hierarchy, sexism, heterosexism, ageism, classism, racism, ableism, militarism, religious and cultural discrimination, and anthropocentrism<sup>1</sup>.
- Demonstrates a theology and spirituality of respect for creation.
- Values a variety of theologies of the church and understands the strengths and limitations of each.
- Understands the polity and the ethos of one’s own denomination.
- Functions effectively within church structures.
- Is familiar with the basic structures of both the Anglican Church of Canada and The United Church of Canada.

#### **D Self Awareness/Self Understanding**

- Has a realistic sense one’s strengths and weaknesses.

<sup>1</sup> a perspective/assumption that human beings are more important than the rest of Creation

- Is gracious toward oneself and practices self-care.
- Stretches and challenges oneself appropriately.
- Understands and accepts of one's own sexuality.
- Acknowledges the diversity of one's gifts in ministry.
- Is able to be self-directed in one's work.
- Discerns when to be serious and when to be playful.

## **E Self in Relation to Others**

- Holds others with respect and positive regard.
- Recognizes, and appropriately monitors, one's own privilege, power, and vulnerability.
- Develops and sustains respectful relationships in a variety of ministry contexts.
- Works effectively in a variety of team configurations.
- Is aware of differences of race, class, age, sexual orientation, gender, culture, language, abilities and religion and understands the implications for ministry.
- Demonstrates interpersonal skills for ministry.
- Understands, and is committed to, appropriate boundaries in ministry.
- Exercises good judgment and understands how one's words and actions affect others.

## **F Learning**

- Understands learning as a life long process and commitment.
- Approaches learning as an educator/co-learner.
- Knows and understands one's own preferred learning style.
- Understands a variety of learning styles and their implications for ministry.
- Values self-directed learning and is able to learn as a self-directed learner.
- Sets and articulates intentional goals for learning.
- Demonstrates skills in, and appreciates the value of, effective research.
- Integrates theory and experience for effective ministry.
- Assesses and evaluates one's growth and performance.
- Seeks and utilizes support for learning.
- Learns from positive and critical feedback.

## **G Group Process**

- Understands self as leader/facilitator.
- Demonstrates awareness of how one's needs and behaviour affect group dynamics.
- Analyzes context, process, and dynamics in order to help groups function more effectively.
- Utilizes a variety of leadership styles.
- Envisions, initiates, designs, plans, implements, and evaluates in a variety of group contexts.
- Nurtures spiritual health in group life in a variety of ways.
- Facilitates the participation and leadership of others.

## **H Leadership**

- Demonstrates ability to provide leadership that is visionary, prophetic, spiritually grounded and compassionate.
- Discerns what kind of leadership is necessary in various contexts, to take appropriate initiative, and to encourage and support others in taking leadership.
- Understands transition in the context of ministry and is able to offer effective leadership.

## **I Communication**

- Demonstrates ability to listen attentively and with comprehension.
- Gives and receives feedback appropriately.
- Deals with conflict effectively and engages others appropriately in conflict situations.
- Speaks with confidence in small and large groups.
- Communicates clearly orally and in written form.
- Understands the importance of context in communication.
- Demonstrates an ability to use oral and written communication that is appropriate.

## **J Diversity**

- Appreciates a variety of cultural, social, political and religious perspectives.

- Has knowledge of and understands denominations and faith traditions other than one's own.
- Willing to enhance ecumenical and interfaith relations.
- Acknowledges and respects cultures other than one's own.
- Demonstrates a readiness for nurturing intercultural connections.
- Understands the historical place of aboriginal peoples in Canadian society and the impact of colonialism, racism and residential schools, and demonstrates a willingness to respectfully engage these concerns.

## **K Organizational and Administrative Skills**

- Understands and values administration as an aspect of ministry.
- Plans, organizes, sets priorities and manages time effectively.
- Demonstrates a consistent ability to meet deadlines.
- Demonstrates administrative skills such as budgeting, organizing meetings, and supervision.

## **L Diaconal Identity**

- Understands and values the history of diaconal ministry - biblically and within Church tradition.
- Is familiar with diaconal networks - denominationally, regionally, and internationally.
- Understands and is committed to diaconal perspectives on education, pastoral care, and social justice.
- Identifies and articulates one's own role and identity in diaconal ministry.

## **M Integrated Understanding of Ministry**

- Is grounded and centred in one's own value and worth, perspective and world view, faith and vision.
- Acknowledges one's own gifts and skills for ministry.
- Understands one's vocation as related to the whole church.
- Demonstrates an understanding of the importance of accountability in ministry.
- Integrates one's knowledge, understanding, attitudes, skills, and self-awareness in ministry.
- Demonstrates the ability to integrate theologically and theoretically; prophetic, pastoral, educational, spiritual, administrative and liturgical elements of the practice of ministry.
- Understands oneself as minister and can relate to others within that role.
- Understands the significance of global perspectives for ministry and for the life and work of the church.
- Understands how life transitions affect self and others and is able to implement personal strategies to cope effectively with transition and change, including developing support networks.

## **N Pastoral Care**

- Has an awareness and acceptance of one's roles and responsibilities in pastoral care.
- Is a non-anxious, compassionate presence.
- Understands the theory and theology of pastoral care.
- Offers effective and appropriate pastoral care in a variety of situations.
- Works effectively in pastoral situations that may be stressful and uncomfortable.
- Demonstrates analysis and understanding of diversity and its implications for pastoral care.
- Demonstrates understanding of, and commitment to, responsible pastoral ethics.
- Understands how pastoral care can be offered and experienced through worship and advocacy.
- Understands the differences and connections amongst pastoral care, pastoral counselling, and spiritual direction.
- Understands one's own expertise/limitations in pastoral counselling, when to refer, and how to set up a network of qualified people for referrals.
- Understands how dynamics of power and vulnerability affect pastoral care.
- Understands an appropriate attention to one's own and others' spiritual needs as essential in pastoral care.
- Encourages others to offer their gifts and skills in pastoral care.
- Is committed to pastoral care as an essential part of the ministry of the faith community.

## **O Social Ministry**

- Understands the historical and contemporary mission of the church in the context of justice.
- Understands social analysis, is able to use different models of social analysis, and can facilitate others in doing social analysis.
- Understands structures and their impact on people's lives.
- Functions in a variety of institutional structures.
- Understands how socialization and ideological perspectives influence worldviews, theology, and perceptions of injustice/justice.

- Has an analysis of, and can make connections amongst sexism, heterosexism, racism, ageism, ableism, classism, militarism, and environmental degradation,
- Understands globalization, its impact, and the implications for ministry.
- Understands the similarities and differences between social service and social change.
- Understands the complexities of, and is committed to, solidarity.
- Demonstrates skills in developing strategies for transformation using community and church networks.
- Understands advocacy and is able to advocate for self and others, individually and systemically.
- Understands spirituality as an integral element of social ministry and spiritual health as a source of hope.
- Encourages others to offer their gifts and skills in social ministry.
- Is committed to social ministry as an essential part of the ministry of the faith community.

**P Education in the Faith Community**

- Understands educational theory and has educational skills grounded in theology and ministry.
- Determines and applies educational theories appropriate to various situations.
- Plans learning experiences relevant to life issues and the global context.
- Finds, creates, adapts resources and curriculum.
- Nurtures the faith of others and facilitates their learning.
- Enables others to deal with differences within a faith community.
- Encourages others to offer their gifts and skills in educational ministry.
- Is committed to educational ministry as an essential part of the ministry of the faith community.

**Q Liturgical Ministry**

- Provides liturgical leadership, being aware of one's own gifts, strengths/weaknesses, and preferred leadership styles.
- Understands the connections in liturgy with education, pastoral care, and social ministry.
- Demonstrates understanding and appropriate sensitivity of diversity and its implications for liturgical ministry.
- Demonstrates an appreciation for ritual in relation to life experiences.
- Designs and leads liturgy that is responsive to a diversity of spiritual needs and expressions.
- Supports others in identifying their liturgical and ritual needs.
- Develops, finds, and adapts liturgies and rituals to meet different needs.
- Prepares sermons that are appropriate to a variety of contexts.
- Supports and empowers others to create and lead in liturgy.
- Demonstrates an understanding of the theology of sacraments and is able to offer leadership in the sacramental ministry of the church.