

# Office of Vocation Bulletin

## Guidance for Ministry Personnel During Elections

**March 21, 2025** (revised March 31)

This bulletin provides guidance to ministry personnel who are seeking public office. Guidance is also provided to ministry personnel engaging in public witness during an election campaign.<sup>1</sup>

### *Theological Grounding*

A New Creed declares that, “We are called to be the Church...to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil.” Ministry personnel live out their calling to ministries of compassionate service and justice-seeking in different ways. Some ministry personnel discern that their ministry calling may be to public office. Other ministry personnel feel called to engage in a public witness during an election.

### *Best Practices*

The Human Resource policy of the General Council Office and regional council offices system is not applicable to ministry personnel in a pastoral relationship or serving a regionally recognized ministry. However, the policy does provide some best practices for ministry personnel who are seeking public office, including:

- Ministry personnel planning to seek public office should not wait until the last minute to inform their M&P Committee about their plans, so that there’s time to find pastoral coverage and appoint a pastoral charge supervisor;
- Ministry personnel seeking election to public office (to the Parliament of Canada, or to a provincial legislature, or to a municipal or school board position) should take an unpaid leave of absence or vacation for the duration of the campaign;
- Ministry personnel seeking election should set up a separate social media account for their campaign and be clear that their election campaign is in no way connected with their employer or community of faith or The United Church of Canada;
- If elected to a full-time position in a provincial or federal election, ministry personnel should request a change to end their pastoral relationship;
- Ministry personnel elected to a part-time position in municipal politics, like a mayor, councillor, or school trustee, should discuss with their M&P Committee about a possible reduction in time of their call/appointment because of the time devoted to their municipal service or whether unpaid time off to attend council or board meetings is feasible.

For ministry personnel who are not seeking public office but are continuing to lead their communities of faith during an election period, there are also important best practices to follow:

- As a registered charity regulated by Canada Revenue Agency, the United Church must remain non-partisan. This includes your local community of faith.

- A charity that provides a platform for the public to comment on and discuss issues (for example, a website or blog) must monitor these platforms and remove messages that support or oppose a political party or candidate for public office. We strongly recommend adding a notice to your community of faith social media platforms saying that messages that support or oppose a political party or candidate will be removed.
- Ministry personnel are free to speak out on issues requiring a faithful witness, while avoiding explicitly supporting or opposing any candidate or party's platform.
- Ministry personnel should keep their partisan political activities separate from their ministry within the community of faith to maintain a clear distinction between the two.
- Acknowledging the diversity in communities of faith, ministry personnel should be aware of the need to balance their prophetic voice and pastoral sensitivity.

Further guidance for ministry personnel and communities of faith on faith-based political engagement is available on the [Faith and Politics webpage](#).

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<sup>i</sup> Proposed changes to the charitable status of churches have [raised worry](#) about the way the United Church engages with political activity in Canada, particularly for ministry personnel.