

Partners in Authorizing Ministry

Section 1 of 10

United Church of Christ

MANUAL ON MINISTRY

Perspectives and Procedures for
Ecclesiastical Authorization of Ministry



Parish Life and Leadership Ministry
Local Church Ministries
A Covenanted Ministry of the United Church of Christ

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Manual on Ministry is published in ten separate sections or booklets. Each section is available separately or as part of the complete *Manual* that includes all ten sections in a single binder. The ten sections are:

1. Partners in Authorizing Ministry

An overview of the covenantal relationships and underlying assumptions about authorized ministry, including the ministerial codes.

2. Student in Care of Association

Commentary, processes, and procedures for those preparing to enter the Ordained Ministry of the United Church of Christ.

3. Ordained Ministry

Commentary, processes, and procedures for Ordained Ministry, including Ordained Ministerial Standing.

4. Dual Standing and Privilege of Call

Commentary, processes, and procedures for those ordained ministers of denominations other than the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who seek to serve in the United Church of Christ or who seek to enter the Ordained Ministry of the United Church of Christ. Ordained ministers of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) should see section 5, "Ordained Ministerial Partner."

5. Ordained Ministerial Partner

Commentary, processes, and procedures related to the reconciliation of ministries with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

6. Commissioned Ministry

Commentary, processes, and procedures for Commissioned Ministry, including Commissioned Ministerial Standing.

7. Licensed Ministry

Commentary, processes, and procedures for Licensed Ministry.

8. The Oversight of Ministries Authorized by the United Church of Christ

Commentary, processes, and procedures for the nurture and accountability of the ministries of the Church.

9. Ecclesiastical Endorsement

Commentary, processes, and procedures for those seeking to serve as chaplains in professional organizations and military or other U.S. government agencies.

10. Supplemental Materials

Commentary, appendices, and a glossary related to multiple sections of *Manual on Ministry*.

PARTNERS IN AUTHORIZING MINISTRY CONTENTS

Covenantal Partners in Authorizing Ministry	2
The Local Church	2
The Calling Body	4
Association and Conference	5
The Person	9
Other Roles and Responsibilities in Authorizing Ministry	10
The General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ	10
Office of General Ministry	11
The Parish Life and Leadership Ministry Team	11
Introduction to the Codes	11
The Purpose of the Codes	11
The Use of the Codes	12
The Organization of the Codes	12
The Ordained Minister’s Code	14
The Commissioned Minister’s Code	16
The Licensed Minister’s Code	18
The Local Church in Relation to Its Pastor	20

This *Manual on Ministry* concerns itself with the preparation and authorization processes for ordained, commissioned, and licensed ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ. In these processes, the Church has identified roles for itself in recognizing the call to specific forms of ministry to which members believe themselves to be called. Among those roles are helping persons clarify for themselves the nature of their call, guiding and supporting them as they prepare to respond faithfully and effectively to the call, examining them to determine their fitness for a particular ministry, reviewing them and their setting for ministry, and disciplining them when necessary.

In fulfilling these roles, the Church has designated specific responsibilities to various “partners.” These partners include persons, local churches, Associations and Conferences, calling bodies, and national agencies. The charts in the *Manual* are designed with columns to identify the specific responsibilities of each partner in each process for preparation, authorization, and review.

This section of the *Manual* seeks to describe the roles and responsibilities of the various partners in recognizing and authorizing persons for ministry in accordance with *The Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ*.

Paragraphs 20 and 21 of *The Constitution of the United Church of Christ* are concise statements reflecting the way the United Church of Christ understands “call” to ministry. In paragraph 20, it is affirmed that every member is called to participate in and extend the ministry of Jesus Christ. This paragraph gives expression to the theological conviction that every member of the Church is a “minister” of Jesus Christ by virtue of the member’s baptism and participation in the Body of Christ. Baptism, thus, is the act of “authorizing” all members as ministers of Jesus Christ. The usual terminology for describing this ministry is “the ministry of the laity” or “the ministry of the whole people of God.”

Paragraph 21 of the *Constitution* follows this statement about the ministry of every member with the statement that “God calls certain of its members to various forms of ministry in and on behalf of the Church for which ecclesiastical authorization is required by the Church.” This paragraph points explicitly to the ministry of some members or certain members for whom additional preparation and authorization are required. In the United Church of Christ, these “forms of ministry” are ordained, commissioned, and licensed ministry.

In 1983–1984, amendments to *The Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ* introduced new language of “covenantal relationship” to describe the manner in which the partners are to work with one another. *The Constitution and Bylaws* now provide for a three-way covenantal relationship—among the person, the local church, and the Association—when persons are called to ordained ministry in a local church of the United Church of Christ. Also, there is now provision for a four-way covenantal relationship—among the person, the local church in which the person is a member, the calling body, and the Association—when persons are called to ordained ministry in other than a local church setting.

The language of “covenant” is important in the United Church of Christ. It points to the relationship God has initiated and maintained with the Church and is based on mutual respect, trust, promises made to one another, and faithfulness. When *The Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ* and this *Manual* speak of a covenantal relationship among various partners, they imply that the relationship has a sacred character. It grows out of the covenant God has entered into with the Church. The promises made to one another are sacred.

The foundational covenantal document of the United Church of Christ is its *Constitution and Bylaws*. Here it is affirmed that (1) all ministry is the ministry of the Church; (2) ministry is carried out in and through persons; (3) ministry is authorized by the Church; and (4) the persons, the Church, and the settings for ministry are accountable to one another within the provisions of *The Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ*.

When the covenantal relationship among the partners is being worked out, the discussion focuses on the promises each will be making to the others. Since the covenantal relationship is liturgically celebrated, the promises each is making to the others are expressed within the service of installation or recognition.

Following is an introduction to and explication of the roles and responsibilities of the covenantal partners in the authorizing of ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ.

COVENANTAL PARTNERS IN AUTHORIZING MINISTRY

The Local Church

There are important roles for the local church to play throughout the procedures for the recognition and authorization of ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ. These roles are the result of certain principles.

First, local churches are primary places in which the gifts of persons for ministry are observed, called forth, nurtured, and celebrated. The *Constitution* states: “The United Church of Christ seeks to undergird the ministry of its members by nurturing faith, calling forth gifts, and equipping members for Christian service” (paragraph 20). Local churches are instrumental in helping their members hear and clarify their call to ordained, commissioned, or licensed ministry. The ongoing and future leadership of the Church and its mission are dependent on local churches being very intentional and sensitive to this role.

This principle results in the requirement that a person must be a member of a local church of the United Church of Christ in order to seek and maintain recognition and authorization as an ordained, commissioned, or licensed minister of the United Church of Christ. The only exception is the case of a United Church of Christ ordained minister serving a local church not affiliated with the United Church of Christ. This person may retain ordained ministerial standing as long as his or her Association approves. (See paragraphs 114 and 115 in the *Bylaws*.)

Second, the local church has firsthand experience with and knowledge of persons who may feel themselves called to or who currently are engaged in ministries for which ecclesiastical authorization is required. This principle results in the following procedural requirements:

- A person desiring to prepare for ordained, commissioned, or licensed ministry applies through his or her local church to the Association of which that local church is a member.
- A student in care applies through his or her local church to its Association for approval as a candidate for ordination.
- Ordination, commissioning, and licensing always are done “in cooperation with a local church.”

While the local church is a basic source of information to the Association Committee on the Ministry, it is the committee that seeks to determine the fitness and qualifications of candidates for ordained, commissioned, or licensed ministry. The local church is asked to recommend members for the various ministries in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ. While the local church is one source of information, the Association will rely on a variety of sources of information in reaching its decisions about persons.

Third, the local church is a covenantal partner in the call to a person to an ordained, commissioned, or licensed ministry position. For example:

- When a local church calls an ordained minister to be its pastor or to be on its staff, when it calls a commissioned minister to be on its staff, or when it agrees with a licensed minister to be served by that minister, it recognizes the interest and participation of the entire United Church of Christ in the call or agreement. While the terms are being worked out, the local church issuing the call or entering into the agreement invites the Association, representing the United Church of Christ, to share its perspective about the call or agreement and what should be included in it. A Conference or Association staff person normally carries out this task.
- When an ordained minister or commissioned minister is called to a non-parish ministry, the local church where that ordained or commissioned minister holds his or her membership becomes a covenantal partner in that call. At an appropriate time early in the person’s new ministry, the local church where the person is a member explores and commits itself to ways in which it can be supportive of the ministry of that ordained or commissioned minister.
- When an ordained, commissioned, or licensed minister and a local church are experiencing difficulty so that their relationship is threatened, it is the responsibility of the local church to seek the guidance and counsel of the wider church as represented by the Association Committee on the Ministry, the Conference minister, or a staff person delegated this responsibility.

- When an ordained or commissioned minister has accepted a call to a local church or a licensed minister has agreed to serve a local church, the local church and the person request the Association to arrange for a service of installation or recognition. A service for installation may be found in the *Book of Worship*. (See Appendix E in the supplemental section of this *Manual*.)
- When an ordained or commissioned minister leaves a position, the local church recognizes the closure of that person's ministry in that place through a service of closure. A service appropriate for this occasion, called "Order for Times of Passage," may be found in the *Book of Worship*. (See Appendix E in the supplemental section of this *Manual*.)

Fourth, the local church is a primary community for the support of persons preparing for or engaged in ordained, commissioned, or licensed ministry. This principle results in the following:

- Local churches will keep in close contact with their members who are students in care. This is especially important in those cases where the student in care may be away at school for several years. The local church will provide support and encouragement for the student in care, opportunities for participation in the life of the local church when possible, and counsel about the nature and requirements of ordained ministry.
- Local churches will be especially sensitive to the needs of the ordained, commissioned, and licensed ministers who serve them.
- Local churches will maintain a close relationship with their members who are ordained, commissioned, or licensed ministers serving in ministry settings other than in that local church. The local church will develop methods for staying in close contact with these members with whom they have entered into covenant, provide support and encouragement for them and their ministries, and provide opportunities for them to participate in the life of the local church.

THE CALLING BODY

"Calling body" is a reference to a local church of the United Church of Christ or to any agency, organization, institution, or local church of another denomination that calls an ordained minister to an ordained ministry position or a commissioned minister to a commissioned ministry position. In addition to local churches, for example, calling bodies would include the United States government, which calls certain chaplains, such as military chaplains; Conferences and national agencies, which call staff persons; seminaries, which call faculty members and administrators; and ecumenical agencies, which call staff persons.

There are certain principles in this provision that result in specific responsibilities of the calling body.

First, all ministry of the United Church of Christ for which ecclesiastical authorization is required is in and on behalf of the Church. One implication of this principle is that the calling body must be recognized by the Association as an appropriate setting for ordained or commissioned ministry. This means that the calling body is subject to the same scrutiny that the person is in determining whether ordination, commissioning, or ordained ministerial standing is to be granted. In other words, not only must the person meet the requirements for ordained or commissioned ministry, but the setting for the ministry also must meet the requirements for ordained or commissioned ministry as established by the Association.

Minimally, the calling body should be able to state clearly how the ministry to be performed within the calling body is seen to be a ministry in which the presence of an ordained or commissioned minister of the United Church of Christ is valued. In the case of an ordained minister, the calling body will indicate the opportunities the ordained minister will have for preaching and teaching the gospel, administering the rites and sacraments of the Church, and exercising pastoral care and leadership. The calling body also will indicate how it will hold the person accountable for his or her performance of ministry in that setting.

Second, the calling body becomes a partner in a covenantal relationship with the person and the Association on behalf of the Church. When an ordained minister or commissioned minister is called to a ministry position other than in a local church of the United Church of Christ, a four-way covenantal relationship is established among the person, the calling body (agency, organization, or institution), the Association on behalf of the United Church of Christ, and the local church where the person is a member.

Thus, the calling body needs to recognize that the ministry of the ordained or commissioned minister is a ministry of the United Church of Christ and not just a ministry of the person. The ministry of the United Church of Christ is embodied in the ministry of the ordained or commissioned minister in that setting. The calling body will indicate its willingness to enter into a covenantal relationship with the person and the Church in behalf of this ministry. Initially, it will name representatives who will meet with the Association Committee on the Ministry to explore the basis for the covenantal relationship and, later, who will meet periodically to discuss and review the ministry. The calling body also will indicate its willingness to provide the time necessary for the person to participate in the life of the wider church.

Association and Conference

It is clear that in the polity of the United Church of Christ, the Association is that part of the Church to which is delegated the function of recognizing, authorizing, and maintaining ordained, commissioned, and licensed ministry. Within Associations, the responsibility for these functions usually is lodged with the Association Committee on the Ministry. Specific functions for the Conference Committee on the Ministry are described in the *Bylaws*: to cooperate with the Association Committee on the Ministry in examining applicants for student in care (Bylaw 102), in examining candidates for

ordination (Bylaw 106), in examining applicants for privilege of call (Bylaw 141), in examining applicants for commissioning (Bylaw 145), and in examining applicants for licensing (Bylaws 152).

In this *Manual*, it is assumed that the Association Committee on the Ministry is the authoritative body in dealing with authorizations for ministry. In those cases in which the Bylaws specify that both the Conference and Association Committees on the Ministry “cooperate” in examining candidates for ministerial authorization, this *Manual* names only the Association Committee on the Ministry. This reflects the normative practice within the United Church of Christ for Conferences to delegate responsibility for dealing with authorizations for ministry to their Association Committees on the Ministry.

The Constitution of the United Church of Christ provides for Conferences to exercise the functions of Associations (paragraph 52). In those cases where the Conference Committee on the Ministry has been delegated the responsibilities of the Association Committees on the Ministry, it will be necessary to substitute “Conference” for “Association” in this *Manual*.

Many Conferences have their Conference Committee on the Ministry coordinate the work of the Association Committees on the Ministry in order to evolve Conference-wide criteria, standards, and procedures to be used by the Association Committees on the Ministry.

The responsibilities of the Association in the ecclesiastical system fall into several distinct categories, as follows:

- The Association, acting for the whole of the United Church of Christ, ordains, commissions, and licenses persons for ministry; grants and maintains student in care status, ordained ministerial standing, and dual ordained ministerial standing; grants privilege of call; installs ordained and commissioned ministers; and reviews and disciplines its ordained, commissioned, and licensed ministers.
- Each Association, guided by this *Manual*, establishes its own criteria and processes by which it examines and authorizes persons for ministry. The Association’s criteria and processes must be consistent with the provisions of *The Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ*.

This is an ongoing task that requires regular study, review, and revision. As the makeup of the Committee on the Ministry changes, it is necessary to have a regular plan for orienting new members to the provisions related to ministry in *The Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ*, to the provisions of this *Manual*, and to the policies and procedures of the Association and its Committee on the Ministry.

Most Association Committees on the Ministry formally adopt the guidelines and procedures of this *Manual*. Use of this *Manual* is growing throughout the United Church of Christ, which will ensure greater consistency of policy and practice from Association to Association. Although standardization needs to exist throughout the Church, each Association also has unique needs and problems that it needs to address.

Greater consistency of policy and practice in the Associations will occur as Associations keep themselves informed about and participate in shaping the normative criteria that exist in the United Church of Christ in relation to student in care, ordination, ordained ministerial standing, privilege of call, commissioning, licensing, and review and discipline.

- Each Association establishes its own criteria and processes by which it examines and recognizes those settings other than local churches for ordained and commissioned ministry.
- Each Association establishes its own standards and processes by which it conducts periodic review of its authorizations for ordained ministerial standing, dual standing, privilege of call, commissioned and licensed ministry, and leave of absence.
- Each Association establishes its own standards and processes by which it receives and participates in the support, counsel, and preparation of its students in care.
- The Association is the convener of the partners when an ecclesiastical covenantal relationship is established. Thus, when a local church calls an ordained or commissioned minister, the Association convenes (1) the ordained or commissioned minister, (2) representatives of the local church, and (3) its own representatives to review and recognize the terms of the call and explore the basis of the covenantal relationship among the partners.

Also, when an ordained or commissioned minister is called to a ministry other than in a local church, the Association convenes (1) the ordained or commissioned minister, (2) representatives of the calling body, (3) representatives of the local church where the ordained minister or commissioned minister is a member, and (4) its own representatives to review and recognize the terms of the call and explore the basis of the covenantal relationship among the partners.

- Each Association cooperates with other Associations and with ordained and commissioned ministers in the orderly and responsible transfer of ordained ministerial standing and commissions from one Association to another.
- Each Association is responsible for the oversight of all ordained, commissioned, and licensed ministers whom it has currently authorized for ministry.
- Each Association is responsible for reporting all of its actions regarding authorizations for ministry to its Conference and for ensuring that these actions also are reported to the Office of General Ministries and to the Parish Life and Leadership Ministry Team in Local Church Ministries.
- Each Association keeps careful records of all authorizations for dual standing, leave of absence, and privilege of call and reviews these authorizations periodically to keep them current.

In fulfilling its responsibilities in the ecclesiastical system, the Association delegates many of its tasks to its Association Committee on the Ministry. It is important for the Committee on the Ministry to be clear about which decisions and actions have been delegated to it and which must be referred to the Association for action. However, final decisions about any matter rest ultimately with the Association; any decision by the Committee on the Ministry is subject to appeal to, review by, and subsequent decision on by the Association.

Because the decisions of the Association Committee on the Ministry are crucial and affect the lives of persons and the quality of ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ, it is important for the committee to have sound decision-making procedures. Following are some suggestions to guide the committee in its decision-making:

- Be clear about what the committee is being asked to decide. Make sure that everyone on the Committee understands the nature of the decision.
- Be clear about the provisions of *The Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ* and the provisions of this *Manual* related to the decision.
- Identify the kinds of information needed to make an informed decision. The charts in this *Manual* specify much of this. The committee will need to consider what additional data it may want to secure.
- Allow time for everyone to become familiar with the information and to ask questions about it. Maximum involvement of committee members is important.
- Remember that the decision will have impact on the United Church of Christ as a whole and on the person.
- Identify the possible decisions. For example, there are at least four possible decisions that can be made in regard to a candidate for a ministry for which ecclesiastical authorization is required:
 - a. “Yes.” The committee accepts and authorizes the candidate unconditionally and implies that the committee believes she or he will be an effective and faithful leader in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ and an asset to its ministry.
 - b. “Yes, but . . . ” The committee accepts and is prepared to authorize the candidate for ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ with the provision that certain conditions be met or additional information be provided within a specified time.
 - c. “No, but . . . ” The committee does not believe the candidate, at present, meets the standards for ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ. If certain conditions are met (e.g., additional study, experience, maturing, etc.), the application may be reconsidered by the Committee at some future time.

- d. “No.” The committee does not believe that the candidate is qualified or fit for ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ.
- Establish a time framework for the discussion. Periodically check on progress in moving toward the decision and determine when the committee is ready to make the decision.
 - Be clear about reasons for the decision. Weigh the implications of each decision for the person and for the Church.
 - Give specific feedback to the candidate about the decision and the reasons for it.
 - Keep careful records of all decisions, relevant information, and procedures.

The Person

“The United Church of Christ recognizes that God calls certain of its members to various forms of ministry in and on behalf of the Church for which ecclesiastical authorization is required”—this statement from the Constitution of the United Church of Christ (paragraph 21) is the foundation on which the system for examining and authorizing persons for ministry is built.

The procedures contained in this *Manual* recognize that persons are called to various forms of ministry for which ecclesiastical authorization is required. Within these procedures are a variety of roles and responsibilities for persons seeking such authorizations:

- Persons are responsible for developing an accurate perception of the gifts they have for ministry. An individual’s perception of her or his gifts needs to be tested with the discernment by the Church of the individual’s gifts.
- Persons are responsible for being open and sensitive both to God’s call and the Church’s call to ministry, including the call to one of the forms of ministry in and on behalf of the Church for which ecclesiastical authorization is required. An individual’s sense of call needs to be tested with the discernment by the Church of the individual’s call.
- Persons who have responded to God’s call and the Church’s call to ministry have a responsibility to prepare themselves to be effective in that ministry. This is particularly true as students in care and applicants for commissioned and licensed ministry fulfill the educational and training requirements for their respective ministries. Persons need to be open to the guidance of the Church in determining the nature of the preparation they need.
- Persons who have responded to God’s call and the Church’s call to ministry and are preparing for ordained, commissioned, or licensed ministry have a responsibility to know and participate in the established authorization procedures of their Association. Persons need to meet the requirements of the Association for the particular authorization they are seeking.

- Persons who have responded to God’s call and the Church’s call to ministry need to develop familiarity with and clarity about the settings in which their ministries may take place.
- Persons who are ordained, commissioned, or licensed are responsible for having a broad understanding of the history, ethos, theology, polity, and practice of the United Church of Christ.
- Persons who have been authorized for ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ are responsible for fulfilling the terms of the calls they receive, the agreements they make, and the covenantal relationships into which they enter.
- Persons who are ordained, commissioned, or licensed are responsible for participating in a periodic review of their ministries conducted by their Association.
- Persons who have been authorized for ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ are responsible for being a representative of and supporting the wider mission of the United Church of Christ and the Church Universal and for participating responsibly in the wider settings of the United Church of Christ and the Church Ecumenical.
- Persons who have been authorized for ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ are responsible for being aware of and cultivating those personal characteristics, spiritual disciplines, and ministerial ethics valued by the United Church of Christ.

OTHER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN AUTHORIZING MINISTRY

The General Synod is the policy-making body of the United Church of Christ and adopts the Constitution and Bylaw provisions for ministry.

Paragraph 3 of the Constitution of the United Church of Christ affirms the free and voluntary relationships that the local churches, Associations, Conferences, and ordained, commissioned, and licensed ministers sustain with the General Synod and with one another. There are a number of persons and bodies that represent the General Synod in these relationships. The Collegium of Officers, including the general minister and president and the Covenanted Ministries of the United Church of Christ. Within the covenanted ministries, specific responsibilities with regard to these relationships are carried out by the Office of General Ministries and the Parish Life and Leadership Ministry Team of Local Church Ministries.

The General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ

Bylaw 209 of the United Church of Christ designates the General Minister and President to be “the spiritual leader and pastor of the United Church of Christ, the Minister of the United Church of Christ; [and] the chief executive officer of the General Synod.” As such the General Minister and President represents the whole Church as it seeks to acknowledge and relate to its ordained, commissioned, and licensed ministers. The General Minister

and President, on behalf of the Church, signs all certificates of ordination, privilege of call, and commissioning.

Office of General Ministries

The Office of General Ministries, as record keeper of the United Church of Christ, keeps the official listing of all authorizations for ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ. The Office of General Ministries publishes these official listings annually in the *United Church of Christ Yearbook*.

The Parish Life and Leadership Ministry Team

The Parish Life and Leadership Ministry Team acts on behalf of Local Church Ministries as the advocate and agent for leadership in the United Church of Christ and provides interpretation of the provisions related to ministry in the *Constitution and Bylaws*. It facilitates the development and interpretation of policies and practices within the United Church of Christ related to the authorization for ministry. It nurtures the presence of faithful, usable, and valued norms related to the authorization for and practice of ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ. It provides ecclesiastical endorsement of ordained ministers for United States government chaplains and chaplaincy programs and provides for ecclesiastical endorsement and approval of ordained ministers for certification by professional organizations.

In these roles, the Parish Life and Leadership Ministry Team develops and publishes the *Manual on Ministry*, identifies seminaries approved for education for ordination, and works with Conference and Association Committees on the Ministry toward the development of consistent and Church-wide policies and procedures for the authorization of ministry in the United Church of Christ. The Parish Life and Leadership Ministry Team responds to requests for orientation and training from Association and Conference Committees on the Ministry.

Previous editions of the *Manual on Ministry* have contained “The Pastor’s Code” and the “Spirit of the Congregations.” The codes in this section follow in the spirit of these previous documents.

THE PURPOSE OF THE CODES

The primary purpose of the codes is to give expression to and facilitate conversations about the commonly held values and expectations of the Church in relation to the “Partners” described earlier.

The codes address themselves to issues of commitment, ethics, and etiquette. They recognize that, in the case of each item dealt with in the codes, there is significant meaning and value ascribed by the Church to behavior in that realm. While there may be significant diversity within the Church in relation to any specific item, that item does represent an arena

INTRODUCTION TO THE CODES

in which church people and groups have values and make judgments about the actions of ministers and churches.

The codes seek to recognize and express the experience of the Church, to name those behaviors that are not acceptable by the Church, and to name those understandings and behaviors that are valued by the Church.

The codes are provided for ministers and churches to discuss with each other their values and expectations. Thus, they are placed here in the “Partners in Authorizing Ministry” section of the *Manual*.

THE USE OF THE CODES

The codes may be used pastorally by any of the covenantal partners to identify and address specific areas of expectation they have of an ordained, commissioned, or licensed minister or local church of which the minister or local church may be unaware.

The codes may be used as teaching tools to help newly ordained, commissioned, or licensed ministers to identify the many different spheres in which behavior is viewed, valued, and assessed.

The codes may be used in times of conflict to enable persons to talk with one another about the underlying assumptions and unspoken expectations they have that are producing suspicion or alienation so that reconciliation may occur.

The codes may be used in settings where partners, such as a minister, local church, calling body, or Committee on the Ministry, are exploring the meaning of their potential covenantal relationship (e.g., interviewing, negotiating the terms of a call, etc.).

The codes or adaptations of them may be used in liturgical settings to provide content to the vows covenantal partners make to one another.

The codes may be used in review and disciplinary procedures to enable persons and groups to clarify the values, assumptions, and expectations they are making about the commitments and actions of one another.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CODES

Each of the codes has five subsections. Following is a brief warrant for each of the sections with a biblical passage.

The Ministry. God has always graced the Church with persons who are called by God and the Church to provide specific leadership and care for up building the Church. Much as the early Church made decisions about whom among its members would be designated and authorized for specific functions (Acts 1:21–26; 6:1–6), the United Church of Christ also sets persons apart for specific functions in the Church and on its behalf.

Partnership in Ministry. All ministry is the ministry of the Church and continues the ministry of Jesus Christ. The ministry of the whole people of God and the ministry of those set apart for specific functions is joined in partnership to witness to the unity of Christ’s Church and its mission. Through

the contribution of each, the whole body is equipped for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11–16).

The Ethics of Ministry. Christian faith is expressed by deed as well as by word. All those set aside for specific ministries in and on behalf of the Church, while among those who fall short in the fullness of God, are nonetheless called to live an exemplary life (1 Peter 5:1–11 and 1 Thessalonians 2:9–12) so that behavior is itself a witness to the faith and contributes to the health of the Church.

Growth in Ministry. The tasks of ministry are demanding and, as was a recognition in the early Church, the gifts for ministry need to be developed so that the Church can see their growth (1 Timothy 4:14–15).

Commitments in Ministry. Persons who serve in ministries in and on behalf of the Church are called, as are all Christians, to incarnate the love of God, neighbor, and self in all dimensions of their lives (Matthew 22:37–39).

SUMMARY

There is always tension between being too general and too specific in a code. The usefulness of a code is in making explicit those values and expectations that, when present but unspoken, lead to breakdowns in communication and community. The danger of a code is in using it as a guise to attack or impugn another.

The purpose of the codes is to facilitate building up the Body of Christ through mutual understanding, agreement, and reconciliation. When the codes are used to tear down, punish, divide, or alienate, they are being misused and violate the spirit in which they are offered to the Church.

THE ORDAINED MINISTER'S CODE

THE ORDAINED MINISTRY

I believe that God calls the whole Church and every member to participate in and extend the ministry of Jesus Christ; that the privilege of witnessing to the gospel in church and society belongs to every baptized Christian; that God empowers the ministry of the Church and its members by the Holy Spirit; that the Church nurtures faith, evokes gifts, and equips its members for service; and that God calls certain of the Church's members to various forms of ministry in and on behalf of the Church.

I have been called by God to be a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ and ordained by the United Church of Christ to preach and teach the gospel, to administer the sacraments and rites of the Church, and to exercise pastoral care and leadership.

I will seek to witness to the ministry of Jesus Christ.

I will preach and teach the gospel without fear or favor. I will speak the truth in love.

I will administer the sacraments and rites of the Church with integrity.

I will diligently perform the work of ministry that I have agreed to perform.

PARTNERSHIP IN MINISTRY

I will nurture and offer my gifts for ministry to the Church. I will seek to call forth and nurture the gifts of others in the Church and join their gifts with mine for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ and the health of the Church.

I will seek to understand, support, and interpret the diverse ministries of the Church and its members as carried out throughout the world. I will stand with those who risk personal well being because of actions taken in response to their Christian convictions.

I will work cooperatively and collegially with those whom I serve in the particular ministry to which I have been called.

I will stand in a supportive relationship with my colleagues in ordained, commissioned, and licensed ministry, offering and receiving counsel and support in times of need.

I will be an advocate for fair standards of compensation for all ordained and lay employees of the Church, particularly in the place where I serve.

I will be a responsible participant in the life and work of my Association, the Conference, and the United Church of Christ.

I will be a responsible representative of the Church Universal and participate in those activities that strengthen its unity, witness, and mission.

I will seek the counsel of the Conference or Association Minister or the Association Committee on the Ministry should divisive tensions threaten my relationship with those with whom I minister.

THE ETHICS OF MINISTRY

I will regard all persons with equal respect and concern and undertake to minister impartially.

I will honor all confidences shared with me.

I will not use my position, power, or authority to exploit any person.

I will not use my position for personal financial gain, nor will I misuse the finances of the institution that I serve.

I will not perform pastoral services within a parish or for a member of a parish without the consent of the pastor of that parish.

I will deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and successor.

I will not, upon my termination and departure from a ministry position, interfere with nor intrude upon the ministry of my successor.

GROWTH IN MINISTRY

I will encourage and participate in the regular evaluation of my ministry.

I will seek to grow in faith, knowledge, and the practice of ministry through intentional continuing education, study, and devotional life.

I will cooperate with my Association in the periodic review of my ordained ministerial standing.

COMMITMENTS TO SELF AND FAMILY

I will live a life that honors my commitments to my family.

I will honor my need for time for physical and spiritual renewal, recreation, and vacation.

I will honor my family's need for privacy and time together.

I will be a responsible steward of my personal and family finances. I will honor and accept responsibility for all debts that I incur.

I will attend to my physical well-being and avoid abusive behaviors and abusive use of substances.

Relying on the grace of God, I will lead a life worthy of the calling to which I have been called.

THE COMMISSIONED MINISTER'S CODE

THE COMMISSIONED MINISTRY

I believe that God calls the whole Church and every member to participate in and extend the ministry of Jesus Christ; that the privilege of witnessing to the gospel in Church and society belongs to every baptized Christian; that God empowers the ministry of the Church and its members by the Holy Spirit; that the Church nurtures faith, evokes gifts, and equips its members for service; and that God calls certain of the Church's members to various forms of ministry in and on behalf of the Church.

I have been called by God to be a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ and commissioned by the United Church of Christ for the specific Church-related ministry for which I have prepared.

I will seek to witness to the ministry of Jesus Christ.

I will diligently perform the work of ministry that I have agreed to perform.

PARTNERSHIP IN MINISTRY

I will nurture and offer my gifts for ministry to the Church. I will seek to call forth and nurture the gifts of others in the Church and join their gifts with mine for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ and the health of the Church.

I will seek to understand, support, and interpret the diverse ministries of the Church and its members as carried out throughout the world. I will stand with those who risk personal well being because of actions taken in response to their Christian convictions.

I will work cooperatively and collegially with those whom I serve in the particular ministry to which I have been called.

I will stand in a supportive relationship with my colleagues in ordained, commissioned, and licensed ministry, offering and receiving counsel and support in times of need.

I will be an advocate for fair standards of compensation for all ordained and lay employees of the Church, particularly in the place where I serve.

I will be a responsible participant in the life and work of my Association, the Conference, and the United Church of Christ.

I will be a responsible representative of the Church Universal and participate in those activities that strengthen its unity, witness, and mission.

I will seek the counsel of the Conference or Association Minister or the Association Committee on the Ministry should divisive tensions threaten my relationship with those with whom I minister.

THE ETHICS OF MINISTRY

I will regard all persons with equal respect and concern and undertake to minister impartially.

I will honor all confidences shared with me.

I will not use my position, power, or authority to exploit any person.

I will not use my position for personal financial gain, nor will I misuse the finances of the institution I serve.

I will not perform a service within a parish or for a member of a parish without the consent of the pastor of that parish.

I will deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and successor.

I will not, upon my termination and departure from a ministry position, interfere with nor intrude upon the ministry of my successor.

GROWTH IN MINISTRY

I will encourage and participate in the regular evaluation of my ministry.

I will seek to grow in faith, knowledge, and the practice of ministry through intentional continuing education, study, and devotional life.

I will cooperate with my Association in the periodic review of my commission.

COMMITMENTS TO SELF AND FAMILY

I will live a life that honors my commitments to my family.

I will honor my need for time for physical and spiritual renewal, recreation, and vacation.

I will honor my family's need for privacy and time together.

I will be a responsible steward of my personal and family finances. I will honor and accept responsibility for all debts I incur.

I will attend to my physical well being and avoid abusive behaviors and abusive use of substances.

Relying on the grace of God, I will lead a life worthy of the calling to which I have been called.

THE LICENSED MINISTER'S CODE

THE LICENSED MINISTRY

I believe that God calls the whole Church and every member to participate in and extend the ministry of Jesus Christ; that the privilege of witnessing to the gospel in Church and society belongs to every baptized Christian; that God empowers the ministry of the Church and its members by the Holy Spirit; that the Church nurtures faith, evokes gifts, and equips its members for service and that God calls certain of the Church's members to various forms of ministry in and on behalf of the Church.

I have been called by God to be a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ and licensed by the United Church of Christ to perform specified duties in a designated local church or within my Association—mainly preaching and conducting services of worship.

I will seek to witness to the ministry of Jesus Christ.

I will preach and teach the gospel without fear or favor. I will speak the truth in love.

If authorized to do so, I will administer the sacraments and rites of the Church with integrity.

I will diligently perform the work of ministry that I have agreed to perform.

PARTNERSHIP IN MINISTRY

I will nurture and offer my gifts for ministry to the Church. I will seek to call forth and nurture the gifts of others in the Church and join their gifts with mine for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ and the health of the Church.

I will seek to understand, support, and interpret the diverse ministries of the Church and its members as carried out throughout the world. I will stand with those who risk personal well being because of actions taken in response to their Christian convictions.

I will work cooperatively and collegially with those whom I serve in the particular ministry to which I have been called.

I will stand in a supportive relationship with my colleagues in ordained, commissioned, and licensed ministry, offering and receiving counsel and support in times of need.

I will be an advocate for fair standards of compensation for all ordained and lay employees of the Church, particularly in the place where I serve.

I will be a responsible participant in the life and work of my Association, the Conference, and the United Church of Christ.

I will be a responsible representative of the Church Universal and participate in those activities that strengthen its unity, witness, and mission.

I will seek the counsel of the Conference or Association Minister or the Association Committee on the Ministry should divisive tensions threaten my relationship with those with whom I minister.

THE ETHICS OF MINISTRY

I will regard all persons with equal respect and concern and undertake to minister impartially.

I will honor all confidences shared with me.

I will not use my position, power, or authority to exploit any person.

I will not use my position for personal financial gain, nor will I misuse the finances of the institution I serve.

I will not perform pastoral services within a parish or for a member of a parish without the consent of the pastor of that parish.

I will deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and successor.

I will not, upon my termination and departure from a ministry position, interfere with nor intrude upon the ministry of my successor.

GROWTH IN MINISTRY

I will encourage and participate in the regular evaluation of my ministry.

I will seek to grow in faith, knowledge, and the practice of ministry through intentional continuing education, study, and devotional life.

I will cooperate with my Association in the periodic review of my ministry.

COMMITMENTS TO SELF AND FAMILY

I will live a life that honors my commitments to my family.

I will honor my need for time for physical and spiritual renewal, recreation, and vacation. I will honor my family's need for privacy and time together.

I will be a responsible steward of my personal and family finances. I will honor and accept responsibility for all debts I incur.

I will attend to my physical well-being and avoid abusive behaviors and abusive use of substances.

Relying on the grace of God, I will lead a life worthy of the calling to which I have been called.

THE LOCAL CHURCH IN RELATION TO ITS PASTOR

THE MINISTRY

This local church recognizes itself as a part of the people of God and fulfills its purpose as it becomes a community for ministry and mission. We recognize our pastor as a person called by God who has attained particular skill and competence in leading our local church in fulfilling its mission and ministry.

We have called our pastor to preach and teach the gospel, to administer the sacraments and rites of the Church, and to exercise pastoral care and leadership. As we expect the pastor to be responsible in preaching and teaching the gospel and in administering the sacraments and rites, so will we be responsible for receiving and heeding the Word of God that comes through the proclamation of the gospel and the celebration of the sacraments and for responding to the pastoral care and leadership offered.

PARTNERSHIP IN MINISTRY

We believe that the ministry and mission of the Church are given to all baptized Christians. We will nurture and join our gifts for ministry with those of the pastor in the Church and in the world.

In all matters pertaining to the life, organization, and mission of this local church, we will work cooperatively and collegially with the pastor.

We recognize that our church and our pastor are part of the larger faith community that is the United Church of Christ, and we will be and will support our pastor in being responsible participants in our Association, the Conference, and the United Church of Christ.

We recognize that our church and our pastor are part of the Church Universal, and we will be and will support our pastor in being responsible participants in ecumenical activities in order to strengthen the unity, witness, and mission of the Church everywhere.

THE ETHICS OF MINISTRY

We will regard all persons with equal respect and concern and will support and expect our pastor to undertake to minister impartially. We will not discriminate against any person, group or organization on the basis of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, faith, nationality, ethnicity, marital status, or physical, mental, or emotional disability.

We recognize that we have called our pastor as the pastoral leader of this local church, and we will not invite other pastors to provide pastoral services within this church or to members of this church without our pastor's consent.

We recognize and respect that our pastor receives confidential and privileged communication.

We will establish policies regarding baptism, communion, marriages, funerals, and the use of church facilities and personnel in consultation with our pastor and will honor them in our life as a local church.

We respect the privacy of the pastor's family and the family's right to time together without interruption.

We do not expect the pastor's family to assume roles of leadership or levels of involvement beyond the family's wishes.

We recognize that conflict or tension between our pastor and the local church can arise. Should divisive tensions threaten our life together, we will seek the counsel of the Conference or Association Minister or the Association Committee on the Ministry.

COMMITMENTS IN MINISTRY

We recognize the many and diverse expectations we have of our pastor, and we will offer our support through prayer, encouragement, and partnership in the ministry of this church.

We recognize our responsibility to provide our pastor with adequate compensation and fringe benefits. We will make these decisions in consultation with our pastor and in light of the compensation guidelines established by our Conference. We will provide for an annual review of compensation that considers effectiveness, cost of living, ministerial competence, and years of service.

We recognize our pastor's need for physical and spiritual renewal, and we will provide adequate time and resources for study, devotion, leisure, vacation, and sabbatical.

Relying on the grace of God, we will lead lives worthy of the calling to which we have been called.