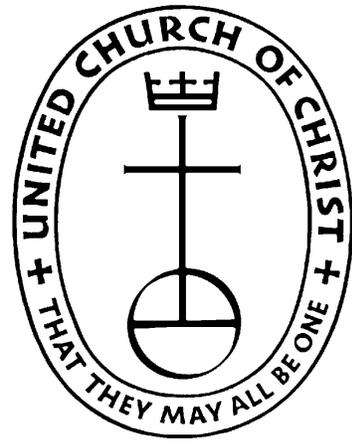


# The Church Educator's Code



**United Church of Christ**

# **The Church Educator's Code**

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Adapted from codes for ordained, licensed, and commissioned ministers

*United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry:*

*Perspectives and Procedures for Ecclesiastical Authorization of Ministry*

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18-25

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Local Church Ministries

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# **The Church Educator's Code: Purpose and Use**

The Church Educator's Code is modeled on and follows the spirit of the codes for ordained, commissioned, and licensed ministers from the *United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry: Perspectives and Procedures for Ecclesiastical Authorization of Ministry*. It is offered for use by local churches, associations, conferences, and other United Church of Christ calling bodies, other settings, and educators.

## **The Purpose of Code**

The primary purpose of The Church Educator's Code, like the codes in the *United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry: Perspectives and Procedures for Ecclesiastical Authorization of Ministry*, is to give expression to and facilitate conversations about the commonly held values and expectations of the church in relation to those involved in educational ministries in the United Church of Christ.

The code addresses issues of commitment, ethics, and etiquette. It recognizes that the church ascribes significant meaning and value to behavior in the realm of each item in the code. While there may be significant diversity within the Church in relation to any specific item, that item does represent an arena in which church people and groups have values and make judgments about the actions of educators and churches.

The code seeks to recognize and express the experience of the church and to name those understandings and behaviors which are valued by the Church.

The Church Educator's Code is provided for educators and churches to discuss with each other their values and expectations. The emphasis is on relationships in settings in which educators are called to ministry.

## **The Use of the Church Educator's Code**

The Church Educator's Code may be used pastorally by any setting of ministry to which a church educator is called.

The code may be used as a teaching tool to help newly-called educators to identify the many spheres in which behavior is viewed, valued, and assessed. It may be used by conference staff when they work with a local church to develop a position for a church educator. It may be used by groups of educators for study, guidance, and reflection.

The code may be used in times of conflict to enable persons to talk with one another about the underlying assumptions and unspoken expectations they have, which are producing suspicion or alienation, so that reconciliation may occur. The code may help conference staff provide assistance to a ministry setting about issues related to educators who do not have ordained, commissioned, or licensed ministry standing.

The code may be used in settings where an educator, local church, calling body, and/or conference staff are exploring the call of a church educator (e.g. interviewing, negotiating the terms of a call, etc.).

The code, or an adaptation of it, may be used in liturgical settings to provide content to the vows covenantal partners make to one another.

The code may be used in any setting in dealing with accountability for church educators to clarify the values, assumptions, and expectations they are making about the commitments and actions of one another.

# **The Church Educator's Code**

## **The Ministry of Church Education**

I believe that God calls the whole church and every member to participate in and extend the ministry of Jesus Christ; that the privilege and responsibility 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 and servant of Jesus Christ in a ministry of education in the United Church of Christ, a church attentive to the Word, inclusive of all people, responsive to God's call, and supportive of one another.

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

I will faithfully and diligently perform the work of ministry to which I have been called.

## **Partnership in Ministry**

I will nurture and offer my gifts for the teaching ministry of the church. I will seek to call forth and nurture the gifts of others for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ.

I will seek to understand, support, and interpret the diverse ministries of the United Church of Christ and its members as carried out throughout the world.

I will work cooperatively and collegially with those with whom I serve in ministry.

I will stand in a supportive relationship with, and for the rights of, my staff colleagues, offering and receiving counsel and support in times of need.

I will be an advocate for fair and just employment standards for all employees of the church, particularly in the place where I serve.

I will be a responsible participant in the life and work of the local church, association, conference, and national settings of the United Church of Christ.

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

I will seek the counsel of the appropriate body and persons in local, conference, or association settings should divisive tensions threaten my relationship with those with whom I minister.

## **The Ethics of Ministry**

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

I will honor all confidences shared with me with the exception of times when I am legally bound to share information.

I will honor my legal and moral obligations where appropriate to disclose and report to civil and/or ecclesiastical authorities situations of actual or pending harm to myself or others.

I will not use my position, power, or authority to exploit or harass any person for sexual, financial, or other personal gain.

I will adhere to my setting's policy statements concerning appropriate and ethical behavior.

I will diligently care for the health and safety of those in my charge.

I will not misuse the finance of the institution which I serve.

I will deal honorably with the record of my predecessor.

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 seek to grow in faith, knowledge, and the practice of educational ministry through intentional continuing education, study leave/sabbatical, membership in relevant professional organization(s), ongoing study, and worship and devotional life.

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

I will cooperate with the appropriate certifying and/or authorizing bodies in the periodic review of my ministry.

### **Commitments to Self and Family**

I will honor my commitments to my family and to myself.

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 as well as my own need for privacy.

I will be a responsible steward of my personal and family finances. I will honor and accept responsibility for all debts which 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 Church Educator's Code: A Guide for Conversation and Planning

Gather a representative group from your setting and/or a group of colleagues for conversation about The Church Educator's Code.

**Do the following steps alone.**

1. Quickly read The Church Educator's Code.
2. Read it again, marking it as directed below.
  - a. What seems most important to you? Put a star before 1-3 items that catch your attention as critical points.
  - b. What is a new idea? Put a check mark before 1-3 items that are new to you.
  - c. What could be the greatest challenge for your setting? Circle 1-3 items that might create challenges.
3. Take a close look at the item(s) you marked. Have you marked any more than once? Why?

Answer the following questions for each of those items.

- a. **Why** did you mark it?
- b. **Which one or two** would you like to emphasize first in your setting?
- c. **By when** would you like to stress this?
- d. **Who** will be involved? Think of people of all ages. Think of boards, committees, church officers, other groups, and individuals.
- e. **How** will you begin your work with this item? Who will need education about this? What will they need to learn? What publicity will be needed? What specific steps will need to be taken? When will each be taken?
- f. What **leadership** will be needed?
- g. What **space, resources and/or supplies** will be needed?

**Share your ideas with others in the group.**

**Together, decide on the first things(s) to be emphasize or done. Answer the questions in "3" together to develop a plan for what will be done.**



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