

## A FOUR- OR FIVE-WAY MINISTRY COVENANT

### Among

Authorized Minister seeking Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing

Calling Body / Employer

Local Church of Membership

United Church of Christ Association / Conference

Judicatory of Original Authorization

## INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR- OR FIVE-WAY COVENANT FOR ORDAINED MINISTERIAL PARTNER STANDING

All United Church of Christ Ordained Ministers who maintain their Ministerial standing are Ordained Ministerial Partners with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Canada. Likewise, all ordained ministers who maintain their standing requirements in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or the United Church of Canada are Ordained Ministerial Partners with the United Church of Christ. Being an Ordained Ministerial Partner is an expression of the close relationship and full communion agreements between these denominations.

Ordained ministers in good standing with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or in The United Church of Canada may apply to the United Church of Christ for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing (OMPS). Ordained ministers in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) should apply for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the Association where they are geographically located. Ordained ministers in The United Church of Canada should apply for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing to a United Church of Christ Association where they are anticipate seeking a call. The United Church of Christ has requirements for all ministers seeking Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing.

During the process of meeting the requirements for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing, the minister may be granted Seeking Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing status by the Committee on Ministry to which the person has applied. Once all requirements are met and a call is extended, the Committee on Ministry votes on

whether to grant the minister Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing. Only a United Church of Christ calling body or a UCC-affiliated ministry setting may serve as an authorizable call for ministers seeking Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing. Once granted Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing, ministers hold standing in their denomination of origin as well as in the UCC Association, including membership in a UCC Local Church. To clarify these relationships, ministers with Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing should have four- or five-Way Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing Covenants for their ministry positions.

When an Ordained Minister, from the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ or The United Church of Canada, secure an authorizable call and is granted Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing, the expectation of employment (such as scope of work and compensation) are detailed in a **call agreement or contract** between the Ordained Minister and the ministry setting.

The sacred nature of the shared ministry between the ministry setting, the Ordained Minister (with Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing), the Local Church of membership, the denomination of origin and the UCC Association (where standing is held) is for the purpose of God's mission and the relationship expectations of all covenantal partners should be made explicit in writing with a **four- or five-way covenant**.

Accountability for healthy relationships, good communications and mutual concern for all participants should be built into the fabric of the four- or five-way covenant in order to strengthen and encourage the ministry. The authority and power of the covenant rests in the understanding and respect for mutual accountability on the part of each participant.

The four- or five- way covenant, for ministers with Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing, outline the expectations of an Ordained Minister with OMPS, the original denomination of Ordained Standing, the Local Church of membership, the ministerial setting and the Association all in relationship to one another. Covenant – not only in writing but in all forms – is meant to secure the well-being of God's community and the Body of Christ; covenants are not crafted for the purpose of prioritizing needs or the wants of an individual. In the United Church of Christ, four- or five-way covenants are written to further the mutual ministry of all

ministry partners (Association, Local Church, ministerial setting and the Ordained Minister) in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ.

While the specific responsibilities in four- or five-way covenants can vary according to the Association, origin of the minister's ordination, and the Local Church of membership, some basic expectations are important to foster healthy relationships and communications among the covenantal partners and with God:

- **LOCAL CHURCH RESPONSIBILITIES** include participation in the Association and Conference Annual Gatherings; support for its members who are Ordained Ministers; faithfulness to remuneration as set forth in the call agreement; Public recognition of the Ordained Minister in all ministry settings; regular meetings of Church Council and Pastoral Relations if and when appropriate.
- **DENOMINATION OF ORIGINAL ORDINATION** is expected to be an integral participant in the four- or five-way covenant with a minister who has been granted **Ordained Minister Partner Standing**. All expectations for maintaining standing in the United Church of Christ and the originating denomination are to be clearly articulated in the **Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing** covenant.
- **ORDAINED MINISTER RESPONSIBILITIES** include maintenance of ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ and the denomination of the minister's original ordination, participation in the life of the Church of the United Church of Christ, faithfulness to the Ministerial Code of Ethics, fidelity to the terms of the Call Agreement; faithfulness in preaching and teaching the Gospel.
- **ASSOCIATION RESPONSIBILITIES** include appropriate documentation of the Authorized Minister as Authorized with ministerial standing; fidelity to the covenants of mutual accountability; concern and respect for the health and vitality of the Authorized Minister and the Local Church.

- **MINISTRY SETTING RESPONSIBILITIES** include fair terms of call to an Ordained Minister, written in proportion to the position's scope of work; affirmation as the Local Church as the locus of ministry and mission in the United Church of Christ.

### **Who should have a four- or five-way covenant on file?**

As the landscape of ordained ministry changes and evolves, the Ministerial Excellence Support and Authorization Team along with Committees on Ministry are observing the increasing value of four- and five-way covenants. These covenants are meant to be a record, kept at the Association or Conference, of the covenantal relationships for those ministers serving in United Church of Christ settings with ordinations originating in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or the United Church of Canada.

As a United and Uniting Church in partnership with other communions throughout the globe, the United Church of Christ is an important partner in mission and ministry with many different denominations. There are several other ecumenical agreements between the UCC and other denominations, both domestically and internationally. If an ecumenical agreement does not specifically articulate mutual recognition of ministries and orderly exchange of ministers, then persons from those communions work with Committees on Ministry for authorization through the Dual Standing process when appropriate.

Four- and five-way covenants, because of their very nature of engaging a ministerial setting beyond the ordained minister's denomination of origin, may require intentional work and conversation when being crafted. To clarify these relationships, a minister with Ordained Ministerial Partnership Standing should maintain a covenant with their ministerial setting. Ministers with Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing have primary oversight from the United Church of Christ, in collaboration with the judicatory where their Disciples of Christ or The United Church of Canada ministerial standing is held. All expectations for maintaining standing in the United Church of Christ and the originating denomination are to be clearly articulated in the Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing covenant.

Occasionally, some ministry settings are unable to sign a formal four- or five-way covenant. In those situations, it can still be

possible to create a four- or five-way covenant that outlines support and accountability for both the minister and the ministry setting. In many cases Committees on Ministry are satisfied with a detailed job description from the ministry setting acknowledged or initial by a representative from Human Resources.

## ABOUT THE FOUR- OR FIVE-WAY COVENANT

The United Church of Christ advises that, in instances where Ordained Ministers are seeking Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing or are serving in ministerial settings that requires Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing, that a covenantal relationship be established among the Ordained Minister, the calling body, the United Church of Christ as represented by an Association or Conference, the Local Church where the Ordained Minister is a member and the judicatory responsible for the Ordained Minister's original authorization. This relationship is known as a four- or five-way covenant. The purpose of this covenant is:

1. to strengthen, support and sustain the ministries of all the partners that share in this covenant;
2. to encourage mutual participation and accountability of and for the life of each by the others;
3. to observe, nurture, celebrate and call forth the ministry of the Ordained Minister.

## COVENANTS OF MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

[Ordained Minister seeking or granted Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing, as an Authorized Minister of the United Church of Christ covenants:](#)

*To Local Church United Church of Christ in City/State:*

- Membership in good standing with a **Local Church**, including financial support for the general ministries of this church, participation in the worshiping life of the church whenever possible, and a commitment to earnest prayer for the well-being of this congregation and its ministry;
- Submission of articles for the newsletter or other publications regarding **his/her** ministry;

- An annual meeting with the Church Council or other representative to support one another in mutual ministry;
- A commitment to preach annually at the request of the pastor;
- Public recognition of membership in this Body of Christ in duties related to [her/his](#) ministry.

*To the [United Church of Christ Association/Conference](#):*

- Participation in Association Annual Meetings, Ministerium gatherings, Conference Annual Meetings and other events whenever possible;
- Adherence to Oversight by the Association Committee on Ministry, including the annual Information Review and the triennial Periodic Review.

*To the [Calling Body/Employer](#):*

- Faithfulness in the preaching and teaching of the Gospel, the exercise of pastoral functions, the administration of rites and sacraments of the Church, and in adherence to the Minister Codes of the Manual on Ministry;
- Fidelity to the terms of [her/his](#) ministry and fidelity to the tasks of [her/his](#) employment, as given in [her/his](#) job description from the [Calling Body/Employer](#) (attached), so long as [Authorized Minister](#) serves as [Title and Position](#) with [Calling Body/Employer](#). Obligations of compensation and employment exist exclusively between [Authorized Minister](#) and the [Calling Body/Employer](#).

*To the [Judicatory responsible for Minister's original authorization](#):*

- Maintain standing in the denomination of origin to include all requirements for standing and adherence to all requisites and obligations for accountability and oversight.

Local Church United Church of Christ, as the Local Church of  
Membership covenants:

*To Authorized Minister seeking or granted Ordained Ministerial  
Partner Standing:*

- Prayers for her/his work with the Calling Body/Employer;
- Inclusion of materials written by Authorized Minister in the congregation's newsletter and Annual Report;
- Public recognition of Authorized Minister as a Minister sent into the world on behalf of the congregation;
- An annual meeting with the Church Council or other representative to support one another in mutual ministry.

*To the Calling Body/Employer:*

- Collection of an offering contributing to the work of the Calling Body or a similarly related ministry.

*To the Association/Conference*

- Appropriate documentation of Authorized Minister as an Authorized Minister with ordained ministerial standing;
- Annual contributions to Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) in recognition of the role of the wider church in the formation and oversight of authorized ministers in the United Church of Christ.

*To the Judicatory of Original Authorization:*

- To support and care for the Authorized Minister seeking Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing or ministering in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ.
- To create a Pastoral Relations Committee for ongoing support, accountability and oversight.

The Association of the United Church of Christ covenants:

*To Authorized Minister seeking or granted Ordained Ministerial  
Partner Standing:*

- All of the rights and responsibilities of an ordained minister in this Association.
- Clear communication of this Association’s/Conference’s requirements for good ministerial standing (including but not limited to boundary training and continuing education) and of any policies and procedures supplemental to the Manual on Ministry that have been established by this Association/Conference.
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those requirements are:

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*(boundary training)*

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*(continuing education)*

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*(other)*

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*(other)*

*To Local Church of membership, United Church of Christ:*

- Appropriate support and oversight of all ministers in four- or five-way covenants with your congregation;

*To the Calling Body/Employer:*

- Inclusion of written updates from **Authorized Minister** regarding **her/his** work for the **Calling Body/Employer** in the annual meeting of the Association.

*To the Judicatory of original authorization:*

- To maintain communication in order to provide a healthy climate for ministry and collaboration.

- To care for and support the Ordained Minister with Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing while serving in a United Church of Christ ministerial setting.

The Calling Body/Employer covenants:

*To Authorized Minister seeking or granted Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing:*

- Belief in God’s call that has led you to this particular place of ministry;
- Adherence to remuneration as set forth in the call agreement, common personnel policies and current job description.

*To Local Church United Church of Christ in City/State:*

- Belief in the local church as the locus for all ministry in the United Church of Christ and thankfulness for your support of Authorized Minister.

*To the Association of Conference:*

- Fidelity to the covenants of mutual accountability as articulated in this document.

*To the Judicatory of original authorization:*

- To be available, to the judicatory of original authorization, and supportive of the Ordained Minister seeking or granted Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing.

We trust in God’s presence with us as we seek to be faithful to this covenant:

\_\_\_\_\_ Authorized Minister, Name Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Representative, Name of Calling Body Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ President, Local Church, City/State Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Representative, Association UCC Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Representative, Judicatory of Original Authorization Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Received by \_\_\_\_\_ Conference Date: \_\_\_\_\_