

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS RELATED TO MINISTRY ISSUES

Proposed Changes to the Constitution Affected Articles VI and VIII

ARTICLE VI. THE MINISTRY

20 The United Church of Christ recognizes that God calls the whole Church and every member to participate in and extend the ministry of Jesus Christ by witnessing to the Gospel in church and society. 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.

21 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. Recognizing God's call, the ecclesiastical authorization is granted by an Association through the rite of ordination, through commissioning, licensing, granting either ordained ministerial standing or ordained ministerial partner standing and other acts of authorization.

22 Ordination is the rite whereby the United Church of Christ through an Association, in cooperation with the person and a Local Church of the United Church of Christ, recognizes and authorizes that member whom God has called to ordained ministry, and sets that person apart by prayer and the laying on of hands. By this rite ordained ministerial standing and status as an Ordained Ministerial Partner is conferred and authorization given to perform the duties and exercise the prerogatives of ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ.

23 An Ordained Minister of the United Church of Christ is one of its members who has been called by God and ordained to preach and teach the gospel, to administer the sacraments and rites of the Church, and to exercise pastoral care and leadership.

24 ~~Ordained ministerial standing is ongoing recognition as an Ordained Minister of the United Church of Christ and provides ongoing ecclesiastical authorization to perform the duties and exercise the prerogatives of ordained ministry. Ordained ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ is granted by and held in an Association and confers voting membership in the Association. Ordained ministerial standing is an ongoing covenant of mutual accountability, as described in Paragraph 25, which recognizes and continues the authorization of that person to perform the duties and exercise the prerogatives of ordained ministry. Ordained ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ is granted by and held in an Association in cooperation with a local church and confers voting membership in the Association.~~

25 The Call of an Ordained Minister or Ordained Ministerial Partner to a Local Church establishes a covenantal relationship among the Ordained Minister or Ordained Ministerial Partner, the Local Church, and the United Church of Christ as represented by an Association ~~or a Conference~~. The Call of an Ordained Minister or Ordained Ministerial Partner to other forms of ministry recognized by an Association ~~or Conference~~ of the United Church of Christ establishes a covenantal relationship among the Ordained Minister or Ordained Ministerial Partner, the calling body, the United Church of Christ as represented by an Association ~~or Conference~~ and the Local Church where the Ordained Minister or Ordained Ministerial Partner is a member.

~~26 A Student in Care of Association is a member of the United Church of Christ who has been called by God and who, under the care of the member's Association, is preparing for the ordained Christian ministry.~~

26 Commissioning is the act whereby the United Church of Christ through an Association, in cooperation with a person and a Local Church of the United Church of Christ, recognizes and authorizes that member whom God has called to a specific church-related ministry which is recognized by that Association, but not requiring ordination or licensing. By this act the status of

Commissioned Minister is conferred and authorization granted to perform duties necessary to and for the specific ministry, and voting membership in that Association is granted.

27 A Commissioned Minister in the United Church of Christ is one of its ~~lay~~ members who has been called by God and commissioned for a specific church-related ministry.

28 Licensing is the act whereby the United Church of Christ through an Association, in cooperation with a person and a Local Church of the United Church of Christ, recognizes and authorizes that member whom God has called to perform specified duties in a designated Local Church or within that Association, mainly preaching and conducting services of worship, for a designated time ~~under the supervision and guidance of that Association. The license may be renewed. Voting membership in that Association may be granted.~~ within a covenant of mutual accountability that includes appropriate supervision and guidance of that Association. The license may be renewed. Voting membership in that Association is granted.

29 A Licensed Minister of the United Church of Christ is one of its ~~lay~~ members whom God has called and who has been recognized and authorized by an Association to perform specified duties in a designated Local Church or within that Association, mainly preaching and conducting services of worship, for a designated time ~~under the supervision and guidance of that Association.~~ within a covenant of mutual accountability that includes appropriate supervision and guidance of that Association. The license may be renewed.

30 A Member in Discernment is a member of the United Church of Christ who has been called by God and who is, in covenant with that member's Local Church and Association, engaging in a time of discernment of that call and preparation for ministry in response to that call.

ARTICLE VIII. ASSOCIATIONS AND CONFERENCES

37 Associations and Conferences are bodies organized on a territorial basis to perform functions in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and the Bylaws of the United Church of Christ.

Associations

38 An Association is that body within a Conference of the United Church of Christ which is composed of all Local Churches in a geographical area, all Ordained Ministers holding standing or ordained ministerial partner standing therein, all Commissioned Ministers of that Association, and those Licensed Ministers who have been granted voting membership in that Association.

39 Subsequent to the initial organization of Associations in the United Church of Christ, the boundaries of any new Association, or any adjustment of boundaries between Associations, shall be determined by the Associations concerned with the approval of the Conference or Conferences involved. The standing of an Association as a body of the United Church of Christ is determined by the Conference in which it is located.

40 An Association is that body which determines, confers, and certifies to the standing of the Local Churches of the United Church of Christ within its area.

41 An Association is that body which grants, certifies to, transfers and terminates ordained ministerial standing or ordained ministerial partner standing in the United Church of Christ.

42 An Association may retain or secure its own charter, and adopt its own constitution, bylaws and other rules which it deems essential to its own welfare and not inconsistent with this Constitution and the Bylaws of the United Church of Christ.

43 An Association is related to the General Synod through its Conference.

44 When an Association meets, its voting membership includes the lay delegates selected by and representing the Local Churches of that Association, all Ordained Ministers holding standing or ordained ministerial partner standing therein, all Commissioned Ministers ~~of that Association~~ and ~~those~~ Licensed Ministers ~~who have been granted voting membership in~~ of that Association.

45 Meetings of the Association are held annually and at such other times as may be necessary for the discharge of its responsibilities.

Conferences

46 A Conference is that body of the United Church of Christ which is composed of all Local Churches in a geographical area, all Ordained Ministers holding standing or ordained ministerial partner standing in its Associations or in the Conference itself when acting as an Association, all Commissioned Ministers ~~in its Associations~~, and ~~those~~ Licensed Ministers ~~who have been granted voting membership~~ in its Associations.

47 Subsequent to the initial organization of Conferences in the United Church of Christ, the boundaries of any new Conference, or any adjustment of boundaries between Conferences, shall be determined by the Conferences concerned with the approval of the General Synod. The standing of a Conference as a body of the United Church of Christ is determined by the General Synod.

48 A Conference may retain or secure its own charter, and adopt its own constitution, bylaws and other rules which it deems essential to its own welfare and not inconsistent with this Constitution and the Bylaws of the United Church of Christ.

49 A Conference is related to the General Synod as described in the Bylaws of the United Church of Christ.

50 When a Conference meets, its voting membership includes lay delegates selected by and representing the Local Churches of that Conference, all Ordained Ministers holding standing or ordained ministerial partner standing in its Associations or in the Conference itself when acting as an Association, all Commissioned Ministers in its Associations, and those Licensed Ministers who have been granted voting membership in its Associations.

51 Meetings of the Conference are held annually and at such other times as may be necessary for the discharge of its responsibilities.

Conferences Acting as Associations

52 A Conference may exercise the functions of an Association when they are delegated to it by an Association or where no Association exists.

Proposed Changes to the Bylaws: Affected Articles BYLAWS OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Affected Articles: Article I The Ministry

PREAMBLE

100 These Bylaws, consistent with the Constitution of the United Church of Christ, further define and/or regulate the General Synod and its relationships with the Covenanted, Affiliated, and Associated Ministries and Other Bodies which are related to the General Synod, and the Executive Council, and describe the free and voluntary relationships which the Local Churches, Associations, Conferences, and ordained, commissioned and licensed Ministers sustain with the General Synod and with one another. The pattern of relationships and procedures so described is recommended to Local Churches, Associations, Conferences, and ministers to enable them more effectively to accomplish their tasks and the work of the United Church of Christ.

ARTICLE I. THE MINISTRY

~~Students for the Ministry~~ **Members in Discernment**

~~101 A person desiring to prepare for the ordained ministry applies to be received as a Student in Care of an Association. Application is made to the Association through the student's pastor and the Local Church of which the student is a member.~~ A member of a United Church of Christ wishing to explore God's call to ministry, and the potential of that call leading to authorized ministry (ordained, commissioned or licensed), requests, along with the member's local church, to enter a Covenant of Discernment with the Association.

~~102 The Committees on the Ministry of the student's Conference and Association cooperate in examining the applicant with respect to fitness, aptitudes, Christian experience, and commitment. If found to be qualified, the applicant is received into the care of his or her Association. A student is expected to be in care for at least one year prior to ordination.~~ The Committee on the Ministry of the member's Association interviews the member to decide whether to join with the member and the local church in a covenant of discernment. The goal of discernment is to determine whether the member is called to authorized ministry, what the specific character of that ministry might be, and, if authorization is appropriate, what steps are to be taken toward authorization. Normally a covenant of discernment leading to authorization is expected to be for not less than two years.

~~103 The Association extends fellowship, counsel, and assistance to the student during the time of the student's academic preparation for the ministry. The student is responsible to the Association.~~ The Association and the local church are in a mutual covenant with the Member in Discernment to offer support, counsel, and direction during this time of decision making and preparation.

~~104 A student preparing for the ordained ministry is expected to pursue a course of study leading to a bachelor's degree, or its equivalent, and a Master of Divinity degree, or its equivalent, from a theological seminary approved by Local Church Ministries.~~ A Member in Discernment who is called to authorized ministry will follow a plan of preparation for that ministry which has been prepared with the Association Committee on the Ministry.

Ordained Ministry

~~105 Not more than six months prior to the completion of theological training, a student preparing for the ordained ministry applies through his or her Local Church to its Association for approval as a candidate for ordination. If the service of ordination is to be performed within an Association other than that of the student, the procedure, including that described in the following paragraph, is initiated by that Association and its Conference after consultation with the Association which holds the student in care.~~ Not more than six months prior to the completion of preparation for authorization, a Member in Discernment preparing for the ordained ministry applies with his or her Local Church to its Association for approval as a candidate for ordination. If the service of ordination is to be performed within an Association other than that of the Member, the procedure, including that described in the following paragraph, is initiated by that Association after consultation with the Association which is in covenant with the Member in Discernment.

~~106 The Committees on the Ministry of the Conference and Association cooperate in examining the candidate to determine ability; reasons for seeking the office of the ordained Christian ministry; educational and theological attainments; knowledge of the history, polity, and practices of the United Church of Christ; and growth in Christian faith and experience; and make their recommendation of fitness to the Association. If upon acceptance of the recommendation or upon further examination and decision by the Association itself, the candidate is found to be qualified, ordination thereby is authorized, subject to a call recognized by the Association.~~ The Committee on the Ministry of the Association examines the Member in Discernment to determine ability; reasons for seeking the office of the ordained Christian ministry; preparation to meet the responsibilities of the office; knowledge of the history, polity, and practices of the United Church of Christ; and growth in Christian faith and experience; and makes their recommendation of fitness to the Association. If upon acceptance of the recommendation or upon further examination and decision by the Association itself, the Member in Discernment is found to be qualified, ordination thereby is authorized, subject to a call recognized by the Association.

107 Ordination by an Association of the United Church of Christ, in cooperation with the Local Church, confers ordained ministerial standing as an Ordained Minister of the United Church of Christ and status as an Ordained Ministerial Partner of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
108 After the ordination or in anticipation of it, a certificate is issued bearing the signatures of the proper officers of the Association and the General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ.

Ordained Ministerial Standing

109 An Ordained Minister moving from the bounds of one Association to another applies for a transfer of ordained ministerial standing to the new Association.

110 An Ordained Minister engaged in ~~parish~~ local church ministry has standing in the Association in which the Local Church served has standing. An Ordained Minister engaged in other than ~~the parish~~ local church ministry has standing in the Association where his or her Local Church membership is held.

111 An Ordained Minister engaged in a ministry requiring prolonged absence from the United States, or one that does not permit a fixed residence, is entitled to have ordained ministerial standing in the Association of his or her choice.

112 An Ordained Minister who withdraws from active service in the ordained ministry prior to retirement applies to his or her Association for leave of absence. The Association may grant such leave of absence for one year at a time. Except in special cases such leave of absence is not granted for more than five years in succession.

113 An Ordained Minister retiring from active service by reason of age or disability retains ordained ministerial standing in the Association of his or her choice.

114 An Ordained Minister of the United Church of Christ serving a Local Church not affiliated with the United Church of Christ or the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or serving a local church of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) without ordained ministerial partner standing retains ordained ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ so long as his or her Association approves.

115 A pastor's church membership is in the Local Church which he or she serves, but such membership shall not affect his or her standing in the United Church of Christ or disqualify that pastor from serving as a delegate to the General Synod or holding elective office in that body.

Ordained Ministers from Other Denominations

116 A person has ordained ministerial partner standing in the United Church of Christ only when serving a United Church of Christ calling body.

117 Upon demonstrating knowledge of, and appreciation for, the history, polity, and practices of the United Church of Christ to the Association in which the person resides, an Ordained Ministerial Partner may seek a call in the United Church of Christ.

118 An Ordained Ministerial Partner who accepts a call in the United Church of Christ applies for ordained ministerial partner standing to the Association in which Local Church membership is held.

119 When an Ordained Ministerial Partner accepts a call to a Local Church, the Partner and the Local Church join in requesting the Association to arrange for a service of installation.

120 A person who holds ordained ministerial partner standing in an Association shall hold membership in a Local Church of the United Church of Christ.

121 A person who holds ordained ministerial partner standing in an Association shall maintain ordained ministerial standing within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Region in which the United Church of Christ calling body is located.

122 A person who has ordained ministerial partner standing in the United Church of Christ, and who accepts a call in another Association, shall apply for a transfer of ordained ministerial partner standing to the new Association.

123 When a disciplinary review is instituted in relation to a person holding ordained ministerial partner standing in the United Church of Christ, the Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in which the person's ordained ministerial standing is maintained shall be informed and invited to participate in the procedures.

124 A person who holds ordained ministerial partner standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall maintain ordained ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ. Ordained ministerial standing shall be held in the Association in which local church membership is held.

125 A person who holds ordained ministerial partner standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall hold local church membership in a local church of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

126 A person who holds ordained ministerial partner standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall relate to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for his or her primary support and accountability in ordained ministry.

127 A person who holds ordained ministerial partner standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is subject to periodic review by the Association in which ordained ministerial standing is maintained.

128 When a disciplinary procedure is instituted by a Region in relation to a person holding ordained ministerial partner standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the United Church of Christ Association in which standing is held shall be informed and invited to participate. The Association may accept the procedures and outcome of the Region or utilize its own procedures to determine the person's ongoing standing in the United Church of Christ.

129 When a person no longer has ordained ministerial standing in either the United Church of Christ or Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), that person is no longer an Ordained Ministerial Partner and ordained ministerial partner standing is nullified.

130 An ordained minister of another denomination who desires to enter the ordained ministry of the United Church of Christ applies for Privilege of Call to the Association within whose bounds he or she resides.

131 ~~The Committees on the Ministry of the Conference and Association cooperate in examining~~ **The Committee on the Ministry of the Association examines** the applicant as to his or her abilities, reasons for desiring to enter the ordained ministry of the United Church of Christ, educational and theological attainments, knowledge of the history, polity, and practices of the United Church of Christ, and Christian faith and experience. If the applicant is found to be qualified, the Association grants Privilege of Call, thereby commending said applicant for placement in the United Church of Christ. Privilege of Call shall be granted for a period of one year and may be renewed. After accepting a call, the Ordained Minister applies for ordained ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ to the Association of which the Local Church extending the call is a part.

132 A certificate granting Privilege of Call is issued bearing the signatures of the proper officer of the Association and the General Minister and President.

133 An ordained minister of another denomination other than the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who wishes to retain ordained ministerial standing in that denomination and who has become pastor of a Local Church of the United Church of Christ, or serves in a Covenanted, Affiliated or Associated Ministry of the United Church of Christ, or has become pastor of a yoked charge or a federated church one part of which is affiliated with the United Church of Christ, or has been called to an ecumenical ministry one constituent of which is the United Church of Christ, may apply to the Association for dual ordained ministerial standing which is limited to duration of that pastorate or that responsibility, and during that period may have all the rights and privileges of such membership.

Commissioned Ministers

134 ~~A person seeking initial recognition and authorization as a Commissioned~~

~~Minister applies through his or her Local Church to the Association of which that church is a member.~~ A Member in Discernment seeking initial recognition and authorization as a Commissioned Minister applies with his or her Local Church to the Association of which that church is a member.

~~135 The Committees on the Ministry of the Conference and Association cooperate in examining the applicant with respect to Christian faith, character, ability to do the work expected, and as to education and training to meet the responsibilities of the office to be filled.~~ The Committee on the Ministry of the Association examines the Member in Discernment with respect to Christian faith, character, ability to do the work expected and preparation to meet the responsibilities of the office to be filled, and make their recommendation of fitness to the Association. If upon acceptance of the recommendation or upon further examination and decision by the Association itself, the applicant is found to be qualified, commissioning thereby is authorized.

136 A certificate designating the applicant as Commissioned Minister is issued bearing the signatures of proper officers of the Association and the General Minister and President.

137 A Commissioned Minister is listed separately from Ordained Ministers and from Licensed Ministers on the rolls of the Association which has commissioned him or her. A Commissioned Minister is eligible for service only in ~~the category of laymen or laywomen~~ lay categories for all positions referred to in the Bylaws.

138 A Commissioned Minister moving from the bounds of one Association to another and who continues in the specific church-related ministry, applies for a transfer of the commission to the new Association.

139 A Commissioned Minister seeking to be commissioned for a new or different church-related ministry applies to the Association for commissioning for the new ministry.

140 A Commissioned Minister who ceases to function in the specific church-related ministry to which he or she was commissioned resigns the commission or applies to the Association for leave of absence. Leave of absence is granted for one year at a time, but not more than three consecutive years.

141 A Commissioned Minister who retires from service as a Commissioned Minister may be recognized by the Association as a Retired Commissioned Minister of the United Church of Christ. Voting membership in that Association is thereby granted. Such recognition is regularly reviewed.

Licensed Ministers

~~142 A person seeking recognition and authorization as a Licensed Minister applies through his or her Local Church to the Association in which that church is a member.~~ A Member in Discernment seeking recognition and authorization as a Licensed Minister applies with his or her Local Church to the Association of which that church is a member.

~~143 The Committee on the Ministry of the Association examines the applicant with respect to Christian faith, character, ability to do the work expected, and knowledge of the history, polity, and practices of the United Church of Christ. If the applicant is found to be qualified, a license is granted by the Association for not more than one year at a time to serve in a designated Local Church or within that Association. Following a review by the Committee on the Ministry, the license may be renewed.~~ The Committee on the Ministry of the Association examines the Member in Discernment with respect to Christian faith, character, ability to do the work expected, preparation to meet the responsibilities of the office, educational and theological attainments, and knowledge of the history, polity, and practices of the United Church of Christ. If the applicant is found to be qualified, a license is granted by the Association for not more than one year to serve in a designated Local Church or within that Association. Following a review by the Committee on the Ministry, the license may be renewed annually for two more years after which the Association may grant the license for a time determined to be appropriate.

~~144 In special cases and at the request of the Local Church which the person serves, the Association may grant the Licensed Minister the right to administer the sacraments and rites of~~

~~the Church for this Local Church.~~ At the request of the Local Church which the person serves, the Association may grant the Licensed Minister the right to administer the sacraments and rites of the Church for this Local Church.

145 A Licensed Minister is listed separately from Ordained Ministers and from Commissioned Ministers on the rolls of the Association which has licensed him or her. A Licensed Minister is eligible for service only in ~~the category of laymen or laywomen~~ lay categories for all positions referred to in the Bylaws.

146 A Licensed Minister who retires from service as a Licensed Minister may be recognized by the Association as a Retired Licensed Minister of the United Church of Christ. Voting membership in that Association is thereby granted. Such recognition is regularly reviewed.

Calling, Installing and Terminating a Pastor

147 It is the responsibility of a committee of the Local Church to seek a candidate for a vacancy in the office of pastor.

148 In filling a vacancy or in securing pastoral services during the period of a vacancy, the committee of the Local Church, ~~through its Conference Minister,~~ seeks the counsel of the ~~placement committee. This placement committee consists of the~~ Conference Minister ~~and other officers elected or appointed by the Conference.~~

149 The committee of a Local Church requests the Conference Minister to secure relevant information about any ~~Ordained Minister or Ordained Ministerial Partner whom it wishes to consider for the vacancy~~ Ordained Minister, Ordained Ministerial Partner, or Licensed Minister whom it wishes to consider or who requests to be considered for the vacancy.

150 ~~Any Ordained Minister or Ordained Ministerial Partner~~ Any Ordained Minister, Ordained Ministerial Partner, or Licensed Minister may confer with the Conference Minister concerning a pastoral vacancy. At the Ordained Minister's request or at the request of the Ordained Ministerial Partner, his or her name shall be submitted by the Conference Minister for consideration by the committee of any Local Church where there is a pastoral vacancy.

151 All vacancies within the Conference shall be reported promptly to the Office of General Ministries by the Conference Minister.

152 The Committee of the Local Church presents to the church the name of a candidate it recommends to fill the vacancy. The Local Church determines whether or not it wishes to call the person recommended.

153 In the call the terms of the pastoral relationship are stated, including the agreement of the Local Church to participate in the pension fund on the pastor's behalf. The pastor, the Local Church, Association Committee on Ministry, and the Conference Minister should each receive a copy of the call. The Conference Minister shall inform the Office of General Ministries when the call has been accepted.

154 When an Ordained Minister ~~or Licensed Minister~~ accepts a call to a Local Church, the ~~Ordained~~ Minister and the church join in requesting the Association to arrange for a service of installation or recognition.

155 Report of the service of installation or recognition is signed by the proper officer of the Association and by the Conference Minister, and is forwarded to the Office of General Ministries.

156 When a pastor or a Local Church decides to terminate the pastoral relationship, notice of the decision is sent to the Conference Minister and the Association. The Association takes action appropriate to the dissolution of the pastoral relationship. The Conference Minister promptly informs the Office of General Ministries of these actions.

~~Ordained Ministers from Other Denominations~~ [See paragraphs 116-133.]

~~Commissioned Ministers~~ [See paragraphs 134-141.]

~~Licensed Ministers~~ [See paragraphs 142-146.]

Discipline of Ministers Ministerial Accountability

157 All authorized ministers of the United Church of Christ are active partners in a covenant of mutual accountability with their Association of standing, their Local Church, and, in the case of

those serving in settings other than a local church, with their calling body. Such a covenant includes, but is not limited to, mutual support and care, continued discernment of call, and lifelong learning.

~~The discipline of Ordained Ministers, persons with ordained ministerial partner standing, Commissioned Ministers, and Licensed Ministers is the responsibility of the Association in which their current ecclesiastical authorization is held.~~

158 All authorizations for ordained ministerial standing, for ordained ministerial partner standing, and for commissioned and licensed ministry granted by an Association are subject to ~~periodic review~~ oversight by that Association, including periodic consultation and review.

159 The discipline of Ordained Ministers, persons with ordained ministerial partner standing, Commissioned Ministers, and Licensed Ministers is the responsibility of the Association in which their current ecclesiastical authorization is held.