

A FOUR-WAY MINISTRY COVENANT

Among

_____	<i>(Local Church or Membership)</i>
_____	<i>(Authorized Minister)</i>
_____	<i>(Ministry Setting)</i>
_____	_____
<i>(Association)</i>	<i>(Conference)</i>

INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR-WAY COVENANT

When an Authorized Ministry and Ministry Setting, beyond the Local Church, enter into a season of laboring together, the expectation of employment (such as scope of work and compensation) are detailed in a **call agreement or contract** between the Authorized Minister and the ministry setting.

The sacred nature of the shared ministry between the ministry setting, the Authorized Minister, the Local Church of membership and the Association for the purpose of God's mission and the relationship expectations of all covenantal partners should be made explicit in writing with a **four-way covenant**.

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

Four-way covenants outline expectations of an Authorized Minister, 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-way covenants are written to further the mutual ministry of all ministry partners (Association, Local Church, ministerial setting and the Authorized Minister) in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ.

While the specific responsibilities in four-way covenants can vary according to Associations and the Local Church, 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 Authorized Ministers;

faithfulness to remuneration as set forth in the call agreement; Public recognition of the Authorized Minister in all ministry settings; regular meetings of Church Council and Pastoral Relations if and when appropriate.

- **AUTHORIZED MINISTERS RESPONSIBILITIES** include maintenance of ministerial standing, 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 Authorized 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-way covenant on file?

As the landscape of Authorized ministry changes and evolves, the Ministerial Excellence Support and Authorization Team along with Committees on Ministry are observing the increasing value of four-way covenants. The four-way covenant is meant to be a record, kept at the Association or Conference, the covenantal relationships for those ministers serving beyond the Local Church. This would include, but not be limited to: all judicatory staff, military chaplains, chaplains serving in hospitals and hospice settings, pastoral counselors, seminary teaching staff etc. In other words, all Authorized Ministers serving in specialized ministerial settings beyond the Local Church should have a four-way covenant on file with the Committee on Ministry.

Four-way covenants, because of their very nature of engaging a ministerial setting beyond the Local Church, may require intentional work and conversation when being crafted. Often an Authorized Minister will be called to a setting where preaching and teaching of the Gospel, performance of rites and conducting the Sacraments of baptism and communion (elements desired for an authorizable call) may not be a part of the call agreement or the contract of employment. In such cases the four-way covenant is an excellent vehicle to broaden the scope of the Authorized Minister's ministry. The Authorized Minister is encouraged to work with the minister of his/her Local Church of membership to broaden her/his responsibilities and contributions to the ongoing ministry of the Local Church to include opportunities to teach and preach as well as perform the rites and sacraments of the Church.

Occasionally, some ministry settings are unable to sign a formal four-way covenant. In those situations, it can still be possible to create a four-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-WAY COVENANT

The United Church of Christ advises that, in instances where Authorized Ministers are called to non-parish employment, a covenantal relationship be established among the Authorized Minister, the calling body, the United Church of Christ as represented by an Association or Conference, and the Local Church where the Authorized Minister is a member. This relationship is known as a four-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 Authorized Minister.

COVENANTS OF MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

_____, **as an Authorized Minister of the United Church of Christ covenants:**

To _____ United Church of Christ in _____,
_____:

- Membership in good standing with _____, 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 _____ 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 _____ ministry.

To the _____, _____

- 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 _____:

- 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 _____ ministry and fidelity to the tasks of _____ employment, as given in _____ job description from the _____ (attached), so long as _____ serves as _____ with _____. Obligations of compensation and employment exist exclusively between _____ and the _____.

United Church of Christ, as the Local Church of

Membership covenants:

To _____:

- Prayers for _____ work with the _____;
- Inclusion of materials written by _____ in the congregation's newsletter and Annual Report;
- Public recognition of _____ 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 _____:

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

To the _____, _____:

- Appropriate documentation of _____ as an Authorized Minister with Authorized 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.

The _____ of the United Church of Christ covenants:

To _____:

- All of the rights and responsibilities of an Authorized 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.
- 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 supplemental to the Manual on Ministry that have been established by this Association/Conference; those requirements are:

_____ (boundary training)

_____ (continuing education)

_____ (other)

_____ (other)

To _____, *United Church of Christ*:

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

To the _____:

- Inclusion of written updates from _____ regarding _____ work for the _____ in the annual meeting of the Association.

The _____ covenants:

To _____:

- 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 _____ *United Church of Christ in* _____, _____:

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

To the _____, _____

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

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

Authorized Minister Signature	Authorized Minister Typed Name	Date
_____ Representative Signature		Date
President Signature _____, _____, _____		Date
Association Representative Signature, _____ UCC		Date
Received by _____ Conference		Date