

PROCESSES FOR ECUMENICALLY ORDAINED MINISTERS

The United Church of Christ has a rich history within the ecumenical movement. The current composition of clergy serving UCC churches represent a wide diversity of faith traditions. All ministers serving UCC churches are encouraged to hold UCC Ministerial Standing.

The Manual on Ministry describes the process for granting Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing, Privilege of Call, or Dual Standing for ministers who have been ordained by other bodies.

Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing is the appropriate form of standing for clergy originating from the Disciples of Christ or The United Church of Canada while serving in a UCC context.

Dual Standing is the appropriate form of standing for clergy temporarily serving in a UCC context while retaining standing in their denomination of origin.

Privilege of Call is the appropriate status for ordained ministers who wish to relinquish their ties with their denominations of origin and desire to be granted on-going UCC ministerial standing.

The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers are a tool for discernment and assessment for all persons seeking ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ. Such an individual also is required to complete a UCC Ministerial Standing application form, as well as share additional documentation required by the Committee on Ministry.

When an ecumenically ordained minister seeks Privilege of Call, Dual Standing, or Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing with a Committee on Ministry, the COM has a number of avenues to engage this process faithfully. Section 2, Article 2 of the Manual on Ministry articulates some of the documentation that is required in each case, including a current criminal background check, a letter of good standing from one's originating denomination, letters of reference, a letter indicating why the minister is seeking such standing, etc. All of this information should be shared prior to consideration of standing in the UCC, in addition to engagement with the Marks and deep consideration of why the candidate is seeking standing in the United Church of Christ.

The questions below may assist the COM in determining which standing or status option is most appropriate.

Questions (Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing) :

- **Is the minister ordained?**
- **Does this minister have current standing in The United Church of Canada or the Disciples of Christ?**
- Does the minister wish to continue to maintain standing in their denomination of origin?

- Does the minister have a call (or is currently seeking a call) to a UCC ministry context?

*If yes to all of the above, then **Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing** is the most appropriate option.*

If the minister is not ordained, entering through the UCC MID process may be the most appropriate next step.

Ministers requesting UCC Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing must be in good standing in the Disciples of Christ or The United Church of Canada in order to seek OMPS. If they have lost standing or are not current on the standing requirements of their denomination of origin, they cannot qualify for UCC Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing. Clergy applying for UCC OMPS should be able to demonstrate an appreciation and capacity for the polity of the United Church of Christ and familiarity with the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers.

If a DOC or UC Canada Minister wishes to relinquish their standing with their denomination of origin and solely retain UCC Ministerial Standing then Privilege of Call is the most appropriate avenue.

Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing is exclusively offered to ordained ministers in the DOC and UC Canada while serving in a UCC ministerial context. If the minister is not currently in a UCC ministerial setting or actively searching for a UCC setting (seeking-OMPS) then they should not be granted Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing.

Questions (Dual Standing, Formula of Agreement):

- Is this minister ordained?
- Does the minister currently hold standing within a denomination within the Formula of Agreement? (Presbyterian Church USA, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Reformed Church in America)
- Is this minister currently serving in a UCC context?
- Will the minister retain standing in their denomination of origin?

*If yes to the questions above, then **Dual Standing** is the most appropriate avenue.*

The Formula of Agreement allows for the mutual recognition of ministers as well as orderly exchange of clergy. Formula of Agreement candidates for Dual Standing should be able to demonstrate both good standing in their denominations of origin as well as the capacity to faithfully minister within a UCC context including familiarization with the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers.

If an individual from a Formula of Agreement communion is not ordained, entering through the UCC Member in Discernment Process would be the most appropriate avenue.

Dual Standing is only viable when a minister is serving in a UCC context.

If a minister from a Formula of Agreement church wishes to relinquish standing in their denomination of origin, Privilege of Call would be the most appropriate avenue.

Questions (Dual Standing, no-full communion agreement):

- Is this minister ordained?
- Does the minister currently hold ministerial standing within a broadly recognized denomination?
- Does this minister currently serve in a UCC context and wish to retain standing in their denomination of origin?

*If yes to all of the above, then **Dual Standing** is the most appropriate avenue. Candidates for Dual Standing from denominations who do not have full communion agreements with the UCC should be able to demonstrate that their formational and educational processes were akin to the UCC authorization process, as well as articulate an understanding of the Marks of Faithful and Effective UCC Authorized Ministers.*

If the minister is not ordained, then entering through the UCC Member in Discernment Process or applying for Lay Ministerial Standing may be the more appropriate avenue.

If the individual is ordained through a single local church, an on-line entity, or a loosely affiliated entity without a denominational structure, then the Member in Discernment Process or Lay Ministerial Standing may be more appropriate at this juncture.

Notes:

Several traditions, including Baptists, ordain within the context of a local church, however, the ordination is recognized more broadly and the minister is likely able to obtain a letter of good standing from the wider church structure.

The United Church of Christ maintains several denominational partnerships with churches outside of the United States. If a candidate is authorized through one of our partner churches (a complete list can be found on the Global Ministries web-site) and will be serving in a United Church of Christ context for a limited duration then Dual Standing may be the most appropriate avenue. The Wider Church Ministries staff is able to assist Committees on Ministry in understanding the specific relationships and ministerial expectations with overseas partners and should be contacted when the request for standing is initiated.

Questions (Privilege of Call):

- Is this minister ordained?
- Is this minister seeking to relinquish their standing with their denomination of origin?

*If yes, then **Privilege of Call** may be the most appropriate avenue, keeping in mind the notation above regarding single congregation, on-line or loosely affiliated entity ordinations.*

Privilege of Call is a status generally achieved through a discernment process which concludes with an Ecclesiastical Council. Privilege of Call allows the candidate to seek a call to a UCC ministerial context. Once a call is received and recognized by the COM the candidate may be granted UCC Ordained Ministerial Standing. Relinquishment of standing in the prior denomination should be documented at that time. If a candidate seeking POC is currently serving in a UCC context the COM may vote to grant the minister Privilege of Call and at the same meeting determine that the candidate has an authorizable call in the UCC and be granted UCC Ordained Ministerial Standing on the same day.

Four Important Points:

- *Not all ordained ministers can provide a letter of good standing from their denomination of origin.* It is incumbent on all Committees on Ministry to do their due diligence in verifying any ecclesiastical history of a candidate for UCC ministerial standing. The COM may retain the right to waive the requirement of a letter of good standing if the situation warrants such an exception. (e.g. If disclosing the minister's sexual orientation or gender identity will compromise good standing in the denomination of origin, the COM can waive said requirement while still ensuring that there were no other issues of ministerial fitness which would hinder receiving UCC standing).
- *The UCC has a unique relationship with The Fellowship of Affirming Ministers (TFAM).* Ministers in TFAM represent a wide diversity of traditions, and individual's circumstances should be considered when determining which avenue for receiving UCC standing is most appropriate. Additional information on TFAM is included in MOM Section 2, Article 2.
- Any individual from an ecumenical body may approach a Committee on Ministry to inquire about UCC Ministerial Standing. *The COM is at no time obligated to consider a candidate for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing, Dual Standing or Privilege of Call.* Likewise, the COM can determine at any time during the discernment process to end the relationship with the candidate.
- The UCC Endorsement Office should be consulted when a request for UCC standing is received by any minister who is currently endorsed in their denomination of origin (government or professional endorsement).