

# Guidelines for Courses on UCC Identity and Traditions

The United Church of Christ Polity Teachers' Network offers the following recommendations for those teaching UCC History, Polity, Theology, Ministry, and Ethos courses. These guidelines have been put together by a process of discernment among Polity Teachers that we believe cover the most important bases of our formation. This document is also offered to Committees on Ministry, to frame what those seeking authorization in the UCC might need for demonstrating knowledge of and appreciation for the UCC.

## Polity/Ecclesiology

- How UCC polity is distinct from other denominational polities
- Covenantal polity as a reflection of God's covenant of grace
- The meaning of accountability and autonomy in our covenantal polity
- Practical implications of ministry carried out in a covenantal polity
- Our covenantal polity in concrete practice among various expressions of the UCC
- Constituent expressions of the United Church of Christ as described in the national Constitution and By-Laws and their roles and relationships to one another (especially Article III of the UCC Constitution)
- Manual on Church (2005 draft and more recent versions)

## History

- The founding of the United Church of Christ,
- Origins, development, significant documents, major events, important persons, and spiritual / piety legacies in the historic merged traditions (Congregational, Christian, Evangelical, Reformed, Afro-Christian)
- Origins, development, significant documents, major events, important persons, and spiritual legacies in the additional traditions, pre and post missionary contact, and groups that made up and make up the United Church of Christ (especially, but not necessarily limited to, Hungarian Reformed, American Indian, Pacific Islander, Asian American, Hispanic, Pentecostal)
- Developments in social witness of the United Church of Christ from 1957 to the present
- Our UCC evolution in the broader context of ecumenism and world faith traditions
- Relationship of local church histories to the broader United Church of Christ

## Theology

- The affirmation of Jesus Christ as the Head of the Church
- The UCC Statement of Faith and other theological documents and texts (e.g., paragraph 2 of the Preamble to the Constitution, Prism articles, services of ordination and installation, ecumenical documents, pronouncements of General Synod, etc.)
- Emphasis on "testimonies of the deeds of God rather than on tests of faith"
- Worship resources (e.g., *Book of Worship*, *New Century Hymnal*, various on-line materials from the wider UCC, etc.)

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- Historic creeds and confessions of our antecedent traditions (e.g., Heidelberg Catechism, Kansas City statement of Faith)
- Theological discussion and engagement with diverse perspectives within the UCC

## Ministry

- The foundational role of the UCC Manual on Ministry (2018) and the Ministries Pronouncement of 2005
- Understandings of authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ (e.g., embodiment, empowerment models; authorized to represent); forms of authorized ministry; and relationship of authorized ministry to ministry of all the baptized
- Ministerial ethics (The UCC Ministerial Code; boundary training, diversity and anti-racism training, and lifelong learning expectations)
- Structures and expectations of authorization and accountability (e.g., ordination, standing, discipline, role of Committee on Ministry)
- Ministerial partnership with Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Canada, and mutual recognition of ministry via the Formula of Agreement
- Basics of the United Church of Christ Search-and-Call process (e.g., Ministerial Profile, UCC Employment Opportunities)
- The current and future status of the denomination (e.g., from CARDD)
- Implication of the mutuality of ministry among the pastor and congregation and the implication of ministry and covenantal accountability in other settings (e.g., 4-way covenant)
- The impact of the histories of colonialism and the reality of racism in the structures of the church on the ministry of the Church
- Stewardship and Financing our various ministries and settings (e.g., funding local, Conference, and national settings; Our Church's Wider Mission and UCC special offerings)
- Learning about the local and regional context in which one is serving as an aspect of preparedness for ministry

## The Ethos of the UCC

- Being a “United and Uniting Church” and our ecumenical vocation (including the Formula of Agreement, United Church of Canada, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Evangelische Kirchengemeinschaft, and The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries), including various structural arrangements (e.g., federated, union, dually-aligned churches)
- Current purpose, vision, and mission statements of the denomination
- Core values of the United Church of Christ: continuing testament, extravagant welcome, changing lives, Broad Tent Diversity and its implications
- Core commitments of the United Church of Christ: multi-cultural, multi-racial, antiracist, open and affirming, just peace, accessible to all
- The evolving shape of mission via our Global Ministries partnership with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and with other global and local partners

## **Appendices (under construction)**

- Identity and Traditions Resources
- Recommendations for Creating an Effective UCC Identity and Traditions Class