**Policies and Procedures for Commissioned Ministry**

**Pacific Northwest Conference, United Church of Christ**

**Introduction**

Commissioned ministry is ministry specifically authorized by the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ (“the Conference”). A commissioned minister has commissioned ministerial standing in the Conference and is entitled to vote at all regular and special meetings of the Conference.

Commissioned ministry is church-related ministry that does not require either licensing or ordination. It is ministry in which the Conference has an interest and investment. Commissioning requires demonstration of both general educational attainments and specific education, training, or experience for the specific ministry for which a person is commissioned. A commissioned minister is in covenant with the Conference Committee on Ministry and is responsible to the Conference in the same way as a person with ordained ministerial standing.

Commissioning authorizes the person commissioned to engage in the specific ministry to which she or he is commissioned. It is not general authorization for other ministry in the United Church of Christ.

Commissioned ministry is a called ministry. The candidate for commissioning, the candidate’s local church, the Conference, and any other involved calling body must all be satisfied that the candidate has been called by God to the specific ministry for which commissioning is sought.

Candidates for commissioned ministry are urged to read and consider the section “The Church’s Expectations of Its Candidates for Commissioned Ministry” in Section 6 of the United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry.

**Types of Commissioned Ministry**

The Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ recognizes the following types of ministry as generally suitable for commissioning:

1. Spiritual direction.
2. Christian education.
3. Church administration.
4. Church music.
5. Missionary work related to the United Church of Christ.
6. Conference and denominational staff work.
7. Ecumenical staff work.
8. Ministries of advocacy or community change related to an institution that can act as a calling body.

The Conference, through the Committee on Ministry, may recognize other types of ministry as eligible for commissioning if such ministry is one in which the Conference has an interest and investment and if there is a local church or other entity that can act as a calling body.

**Educational and Ability Requirements for Commissioned Ministry**

Commissioned ministry requires that the candidate for commissioning demonstrate education, training, and experience that qualifies the person for the specific ministry for which commissioning is sought. The candidate shall demonstrate both general education and knowledge relevant to ministry in the United Church of Christ and specific education, training, experience, and knowledge relevant to the specific ministry to which the person is commissioned. Educational, training, experience, and knowledge requirements may include:

1. A bachelor’s degree or equivalent.
2. Basic knowledge about the Bible, theology, church history, and the history, polity, and practice of the United Church of Christ.
3. Basic skills working with people and groups. This skill may be demonstrated through letters of reference that address this issue.
4. Specific qualifications for the specific ministry for which commissioning is sought.

Each candidate for commissioning shall demonstrate completion of a course in ministerial ethics and boundaries approved by the Committee on Ministry prior to commissioning.

**Procedures for Commissioning**

Commissioned ministry is a covenant between the person commissioned, the person’s local United Church of Christ church, the Pacific Northwest Conference, and, if the calling body for the ministry is not the person’s local church, a calling body for the specific ministry. Each of these persons and entities is involved in the process of commissioning a person for ministry. The procedures for commissioning are as follows:

1. The candidate for commissioning seeks approval for commissioning from her or his local church. The person’s local church provides to the Conference Committee on Ministry the following materials:
2. The candidate’s letter of application for commissioning, which must include the specific type of church-related ministry for which the candidate seeks commissioning.
3. Verification of the candidate’s membership in a local United Church of Christ church.
4. Three (3) letters of recommendation, which include one letter from the candidate’s local church pastor.
5. All materials the candidate provided to his or her local church’s governing board and/or pastor as part of the application process.
6. A description of the process the local church used in interviewing and recommending the candidate.
7. The Conference Committee on Ministry receives and reviews the materials required in Paragraph 1 above. The Committee on Ministry determines whether or not the proposed ministry meets the requirements for commissioning.
8. The Committee on Ministry may decide that the candidate for commissioning needs a further period of preparation to attain the education, training, or experience necessary for commissioned ministry. If the Committee on Ministry makes that determination it works up a preparatory program of education and training that the candidate must complete before being eligible for commissioning. If such a preparatory program is required the Committee on Ministry appoints an advisor to the candidate to work with the candidate to assure that the candidate complies with the preparatory program and to assist the candidate with the commissioning process.
9. If the Committee on Ministry authorizes the candidate to proceed toward commissioning the candidate submits to the Committee on Ministry:
10. A report on the person’s education and training relevant to the ministry for which commissioning is sought, including, if appropriate, a report on the person’s completion of a required preparatory program.
11. A “Commissioning Paper,” to include consideration of the following areas:
12. The candidate’s personal faith journey, theological perspective, sense of call, and grasp of historic Christian faith.
13. A brief discussion of the candidate’s understanding of the history, theological roots, polity, and practice of the United Church of Christ.
14. The candidate’s understanding of ministry.
15. A discussion of ministerial ethics relevant to the ministry for which the candidate seeks commissioning.
16. Verification of the candidate’s membership and participation in a local United Church of Christ church.
17. Certification of the candidate’s educational attainments, to include:
18. A bachelor’s degree or equivalent.
19. Documentation of specialized education and training.
20. Documentation of skills, ability, and knowledge for the specific ministry for which the candidate seeks commissioning.
21. At least four letters of reference, to include at least one from a person closely involved in the candidate’s education and one from the candidate’s commissioning advisor if one was appointed.
22. Completion of Sections 1 (Basic Information), 2 (Statement of Consent), 3 (Personal History), and 6 (Background Disclosure) of the United Church of Christ Ministerial profile, with a copy provided to the Conference Committee on Ministry.
23. A completed psychological evaluation from a psychologist approved by the Conference Committee on Ministry.
24. A statement of where the candidate is in the process of seeking or holding a call.
25. The Committee on Ministry reviews the materials the candidate has submitted and decides whether or not to interview the candidate for commissioning.
26. If the Committee on Ministry decides to interview the candidate, the interview covers the following areas:
27. The candidate’s Christian faith.
28. The candidate’s character.
29. The candidate’s ability to do the work of the ministry for which the candidate seeks commissioning.
30. The candidate’s education and training for the work of the ministry for which the candidate seeks commissioning.
31. The candidate’s knowledge of the history, polity, and practices of the United Church of Christ.
32. The candidate’s personal qualities.
33. The candidate’s preparation and fitness for the call to commissioned ministry.
34. The Conference Committee on Ministry decides whether or not to approve the candidate for commissioned ministry.
35. If the Committee on Ministry approves the candidate for commissioning a commissioning service is held. The Conference, the candidate, the candidate’s local church and, if applicable, another calling body participate in the commissioning service.

**Requirements of The Commissioned Minister After Commissioning**

A commissioned minister in the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ shall comply with the following requirements.

1. Report annually to the commissioned minister’s local church on the commissioned ministers work in the commissioned ministry.
2. Report annually to the Conference Committee on Ministry on the commissioned minister’s work in the commissioned ministry.
3. Comply with the ethics and boundary training requirements for persons with ordained ministerial standing in the Conference, namely, complete a course in ministerial boundaries and ethics approved by the Committee on Ministry every three years.
4. Attend the Annual Meeting of the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ unless excused by the Committee on Ministry.
5. Comply with all professional ethical standards applicable to the commissioned minister’s ministry.

**Termination of Commission**

A commissioned minister’s commission is terminated when any of the following events takes place:

1. The commissioned minister ceases to be actively engaged in the ministry to which the commissioned minister was commissioned.
2. The commissioned minister ceases to be a member of a local United Church of Christ church that is part of the ordained minister’s ministerial covenant.
3. The Conference Committee on Ministry revokes the commissioned minister’s commission. The Conference Committee on Ministry may revoke the commissioned minister’s commission on the following grounds:
4. The commissioned minister is found not to be engaging in the specific ministry for which she or he was commissioned.
5. The commissioned minister ceases to be a member of a local United Church of Christ church that is part of the ordained minister’s ministerial covenant.
6. The Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ no longer has an interest or investment in the ministry to which the commissioned minister was commissioned.
7. The commissioned minister is found to have engaged in unethical behavior in the conduct of the minister’s commissioned ministry. Unethical behavior may consist of:
8. Violation of the provisions of the United Church of Christ’s Ordained Minister’s Code applicable to the ministry for which the commissioned minister is commissioned and/or
9. Violation of specific ethical requirements for the commissioned minister’s ministry.
10. Unethical behavior may also consist of other improper or unethical behavior which in the opinion of the Conference Committee on Ministry justifies revocation of the commissioned minister’s commission.
11. The commissioned minister fails to comply with any of the requirements listed herein for a commissioned minister after commissioning.