

CENTRAL ATLANTIC CONFERENCE – CATOCTIN ASSOCIATION CHURCH AND MINISTRY COMMISSION

An Introduction to the process of becoming a MEMBER LICENSED TO SERVE AN ASSOCIATION CONGREGATION

On behalf of the United Church of Christ, the Church and Ministry Commission of the Association is charged with the responsibility of guiding persons who are not ordained, but feel called to obtain a license to serve a UCC congregation. The process outlined below will assist you in discerning whether you are well-suited to this ministry and equipped to carry out that function. A variety of requirements and procedures are used to fulfill the Commission's responsibility.

Being accepted for licensure means that you are deemed to have the potential to serve a congregation in the United Church of Christ. If accepted, we will be in covenant together, asking the Holy Spirit to give us the guidance and wisdom to validate your personal call to service.

Please review the sequential steps required before applying for licensure. We suggest you spend time making notes about questions you may have, prayerfully processing what will be expected of you. This is a crucial step in your spiritual development.

If you have taken the initial steps 1 and 2 as outlined in the attached checkoff list, ask your Pastor/President of your congregation to call the Chair of the Church and Ministry Commission to start the process. We are excited to join with you on this journey!

Peace and blessings to you.

August, 2017

CENTRAL ATLANTIC CONFERENCE, CATOCTIN ASSOCIATION LICENSURE REQUIREMENTS CHECKLIST

Contact information: Please complete and forward to the Church and Ministry Chair.

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone: home _____ work _____ cell _____

E-mail: _____

Local Church: (name and location) _____

Pastor _____

Church and Ministry Advisor _____

Cell _____ email _____

Required paperwork:

Items will be sent to the chair of the Church and Ministry Commission who will forward documents to the CAC office for official records.

- _____ Letter of recommendation from your pastor.
- _____ Letter from the governing body of the endorsing congregation.
- _____ Letter from the individual requesting licensure
- _____ Transcript from most recent educational institution
- _____ Signed candidate Statement of Agreement and Understanding
- _____ Approval of status by Church and Ministry Commission
- _____ Proof of completion of Psychological Evaluation (to be kept in a confidential file.)
- _____ Verification of approved Boundary Training
- _____ Verification of having completed the Background Check process.
- _____ Verification of successful completion of an approved polity course.
- _____ Verification of signature on Pastoral Sexual Misconduct Form.

August, 2017

Catoctin Association Process for Licensure

1. If, after a minimum of one year of active membership in a local UCC parish in the Catoctin Association, you should sense a call to be licensed to serve a local church, discuss this with your local pastor and Consistory. If it is mutually agreed that you pursue this calling, letters supporting this decision from your pastor, your Consistory and yourself need to be submitted to the Association Church and Ministry Commission, along with a request to meet with the Commission. See [Guidelines for Letters of Endorsement](#).
2. Your pastor or the Consistory President where licensure is being sought will accompany you to the meeting with the Church and Ministry Commission to discuss your sense of call, education plans and any questions you might have. Following this meeting, you will be notified of the Commission's decision regarding your designation as a candidate for licensure. See [Guidelines for Your First Meeting with the Church and Ministry Commission](#).
3. Once you have been approved, review and sign-off on the Candidate Statement of Agreement and Understanding. Please return a signed copy of both forms to the Church and Ministry Commission Chair within two weeks of your licensure approval. See [Statement of Agreement and Understanding](#).
4. You are encouraged and expected to follow the following guidelines to keep key groups and individuals informed of your progress:
 - a. Meet with the Church and Ministry Commission once a year to update the group on your progress, to seek support, and to ask questions about next steps.
 - b. Touch base with your Church and Ministry Commission mentor quarterly.
5. **Complete the following requirements: (Proof of completion required for each item.)**

If not ordained, working to enhance theological understandings, preferable at an accredited UCC Theological Seminary.

- a. A psychological evaluation, early in your journey, to assess suitability for ministry.
See [Psychological Evaluation Procedure](#)
- b. [Boundary Training](#) approved by the Church and Ministry Commission.
- c. Course which includes UCC polity, history, theology and ministries.
- d. Obtain a routine [Background Check](#).
- e. Sign the [Pastoral Sexual Misconduct Form](#).

Guidelines for Letters of Endorsement

Once you, your pastor and your church leadership decide to move forward, you should submit letters supporting your decision to the Association Church and Ministry Commission. The letters of support should specify that you are seeking licensure status in the United Church of Christ. The letters from the pastor of your congregation and your leadership body should be on the church's letterhead. Samples follow:

1. The letter from your pastor should include an understanding of your sense of call and experience. It must also include the following recommendation and disclaimer statements:

I _____ as pastor of _____ church, recommend _____ to the Church and Ministry Commission of the Catoctin Association of the United Church of Christ as candidate for licensure. I do so without reservations and know of no reason why _____ should not be able to fulfill this responsibility.

2. The letter from your leadership body should include:

Dear Chair of the Catoctin Association Church and Ministry Commission:

On behalf of the congregation of _____ Church,

we recommend _____ to the Church and Ministry Commission as a candidate for licensure to serve a UCC congregation. We do so without reservations, and we know of no reason why _____ should not be a candidate for licensure.

_____ has been a member of this congregation since _____ and has participated in the life of the church by _____.

President of the Consistory (or equivalent)

Date signed.

Chairperson of the Board of Deacons (or equivalent)

Date signed.

3. In addition, you should submit a personal letter seeking consideration for *MID* status. Your letter should include the following information:

- Your sense of call
- Your gifts for ministry
- Your academic achievements
- Past and present church and community involvement.
- Request for a meeting with the Commission.
- All letters should be sent to the Chair of the Catoctin Association Church and Ministry Commission before your scheduled meeting. Your pastor will supply the address for your letter.

Guidelines for Your First Meeting with the Church and Ministry Commission

In a relaxed atmosphere, this meeting provides an opportunity for the commission to get to know your sense of call and the person behind what you have submitted in writing. You will have an opportunity to meet and talk with the Commission members and have a dialog about your plans.

The chair of the commission will contact you regarding the date, time, and location of the meeting. Alert your pastor about the meeting and confirm with the chair that you both are available.

During the meeting, you will be asked to speak for ten minutes, helping the Commission members understand why you are taking this step. Members of the commission will ask questions, and you may ask questions of them as well. As you prepare your 10 minute overview, include your answers to the following questions:

- What triggered your sense of call?
- What are your plans for continuing your theological education?
- To what congregation (if you know at this time) are you being called?

You might ask your Pastor/President of your congregation to review your presentation with you before the meeting.

As the meeting draws to a close, the commission will lay hands on you and pray with you as a sign of blessing and as symbol of your calling to serve as a licensed individual in a local UCC congregation.

The commission will assign a commission member to mentor you as you serve a congregation.

Licensed Member Serving a Local UCC Congregation
Statement of Agreement and Understanding

Please read the following as it outlines the boundaries of your licensed status:

I understand that my status will be reviewed annually and may be suspended or terminated without giving cause at any time either by myself or the Church and Ministry Commission.

- I understand that clear boundaries are important in any dealings I have with churches and/or church members. See [Boundary Training](#)
- I understand that the requirements for licensure in the Catoclin Association are determined by the Church and Ministry Commission on behalf of the Catoclin Association and that said Commission has the sole authority to do so.
- I understand that I may not use titles such as Pastor or Reverend until ordination.
- I understand that until I am ordained, I may not use a clerical collar, wear stoles or serve Communion.
- I understand that my service is limited only to the congregation for which I am licensed.
- I attest that information I give, both written and oral, to the Church and Ministry Commission is true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for the termination of my status.

I understand and agree to the conditions stated above.

 Candidate for Licensure

 Date signed

 Chair, Church and Ministry Commission

 Date signed.

Psychological Evaluation Procedure

The purpose of a psychological evaluation is to discern whether an individual is temperamentally suited to deal with the varied stresses and complexities encountered in leading the work of the church. Confidentialities, the rites of the church, maintaining boundaries and the many unknown demands of the work require an individual to possess confidence and maturity. This evaluation may find that some consultations or counseling is needed, a beneficial aspect of the process that may prove salutary for a more fulfilling life and tenure as a licensed member of the United Church of Christ.

The Catoclin Association has arranged with the following provider for psychological evaluations:

Samaritan Counseling Center
Kristine Campion, Administrative Manager
1803 Oregon Pike
Lancaster, PA 17601
717 560-9969 <http://scclanc.org/>
Cost: \$1,500

Persons working toward licensure are responsible for arranging their appointments. The payments are divided equally between the three responsible parties: the local church, the Church and Ministry Commission, and the individual.

You are responsible for submitting 1/3 of the payment and contacting the local church to request 1/3 of the payment. All checks are to be made payable to Catoclin Association and sent to the Association Treasurer. The treasurer will issue a check in the required amount to the service provider.

It is recommended that the request for checks be made two months in advance of the appointment (whenever possible).

After the initial session and the feedback session, a final report will be sent to both the Commission Chair and the licensee. The report of the evaluation process is held in confidence, with very limited circulation beyond the Chair of the Commission and persons most directly providing guidance and mentoring for the individual under consideration.

Boundary Training

The purpose of boundary training is to make the individual aware of the need for care in dealing with the children, young people and adults that comprise the membership of our churches. Ethics in dealing with individuals are important—our conduct as persons working toward leadership in ministry must be above reproach. A leadership position and the aura of authority that position conveys, must never be misused in personal relationships with people with whom one comes in contact. Sexual harassment in any form is not tolerated. Messages on social media should be considered carefully before being sent to others.

The Church and Ministry Commission urges all seeking licensure to enroll in boundary training provided by the Conference and the Association as early in one's journey as possible.

Background Check

A background check is required for every person working with parishioners in local congregations. This is a routine matter that makes everyone comfortable understanding that an individual has nothing in his or her background that could cause later difficulties.

The procedure via computer is as follows:

Go to: <http://oxforddoc.com/> Follow the commands from there.
Client Number: 2521
Position Code: 1
Click: Continue
Click: Yes
Follow instructions. Cost: \$160.

This is sent via USPS to Associate Conference Minister Rev. David Popham in the NJ Association Office.

Address: 195 Ridgewood Avenue, Glen Ridge, New Jersey, 07028
Office: 973-748-7772; Cell: 973-558-0620.

Pastoral Sexual Misconduct Form¹

The Impropriety of Sexual Misconduct

Sexual misconduct by any religious leader includes a range of behaviors such as verbal or physical sexual harassment, sexual advances, sexual contact and/or other sexualized behavior between a licensed or commissioned person and his or her parishioners. Such behavior crosses appropriate professional boundaries and is an abuse of the trust placed in and the responsibilities and privilege of the role of a licensed church leader. This misconduct violates all ethical boundaries.

Regardless of the behavior of other persons, the licensed minister is responsible for maintaining professional boundaries. They are accountable within the United Church of Christ for living out with integrity the promises they have made. This includes the codes detailed in the "Partners in Authorizing Ministry" section of *Manual on Ministry* which state: "I will not use my position, power or authority to exploit any person."

Sexual Harassment ²

Sexual harassment is generally defined to include sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to such is made either explicitly or implicitly a term of an individual's employment (paid or volunteer) or his or her continued status in an institution.
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting such individuals.
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment based on the declared judgment of the affected individual.
- Such conditions create an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment for another individual regardless of the specific setting or circumstances or the relationship between the two individuals most directly involved.

Sexual Misconduct Defined

Sexual misconduct includes any of the following:

1. Sexual contact with a minor.
2. Sexual harassment.
3. Rape or sexual contact by force, threat or intimidation.

¹ Guidelines for Response Teams; September, 2000, Local Church Ministries Parish Life and Leadership Ministry Team, page 36

² Definition adapted from the policy of sexual misconduct by the Iowa Conference, UCC. The definition of work is based on the federal law on sexual harassment.

4. Sexual malfeasance, defined as a breach of trust from sexual contact (in any area covered by a modest bathing suit) within a professional relationship. This definition does not cover spousal relationships or respectful social and/or marital relationships.
5. Unwelcome or offensive behaviors include winks, leers, suggestive comments, crude language, pinching or tickling a person or inappropriate hugs and kisses.
6. In addition to misconduct on the part of licensed or commissioned individuals, inappropriate situations have occurred beyond the religious professional relationship. An example of this is a licensed individual engaging in an extra-marital sexual relationship with a person who is not a client or member of the parish.

I affirm that I have read this document (adapted from *Guideline for Response Teams*, pages 36 and 37, from the September, 2000 Local Church Ministries Parish Life and Leadership Ministry Team {3 above} and the Iowa Conference policy {4 above}).

I fully understand this document and accept its authority for my ministry as a licensed leader in the United Church of Christ.

Candidate for licensure

Date Signed