

Central Atlantic Conference – Catoctin Association Church and Ministry Commission

A guide to the process of applying for Lay Ministerial Standing to serve an Association congregation

There are instances when an Ordained Minister is not available to represent and serve the Church. In such circumstances and in the confidence of the priesthood of all believers, lay persons may be called to bring their gifts and graces to particular roles in which they represent the United Church of Christ and for which the United Church of Christ, through an Association, provides support and accountability in a formal ecclesial relationship of ministerial standing. (2018 Manual on Ministry, p. 67)

Lay Ministerial Standing is a temporary, accountable covenantal relationship between the Association, the lay member, and a Local Church of the UCC. It is granted to a lay member of the UCC for a season in one ministry setting, with the expectation that the Association or Conference, the ministry setting, the Lay Minister, and the Commission on Ministry will engage in collaborative conversations about the best options to meet the ministry setting's long-term needs for ordained ministerial leadership. Lay Ministerial Standing is renewed annually by the Commission on Ministry in order for the Lay Minister to continue service in the same ministry setting.

Lay Ministerial Standing is limited to a single setting and for a recommended maximum of seven years. For those who feel called to subsequent ministry settings, and/or who are called to serve for a period longer than seven years, it is recommended that the individual with Lay Ministerial Standing seek to enter the Member in Discernment process with the Commission on Ministry. One may, but is not required to, hold Lay Ministerial Standing while engaged in the MID process. Once in the MID process, it may be possible to receive Lay Ministerial Standing when a specific ecclesiastical need arises.

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 Lay Ministerial Standing 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 Lay Ministerial Standing. We suggest you spend time making notes about questions you may have and prayerfully considering 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.

January 2019

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Checklist of Requirements for Applying for Lay Ministerial Standing

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

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone: home _____ work _____ cell _____

E-mail: _____

Local Church: (name and location) _____

Pastor _____

Church and Ministry Advisor _____

Cell _____ email _____

Required Steps and Records:

Send these items to the Chair of the Church and Ministry Commission. Following approval of Lay Ministerial Standing these documents will be kept in the CAC office as official records.

- ___ Letter of recommendation from your pastor.
- ___ Letter from the governing body of the endorsing congregation.
- ___ Letter from the individual requesting Lay Ministerial Standing
- ___ Transcript from most recent educational institution
- ___ Completion of Psychological Evaluation (The report will be sent directly to the Commission Chair and after review by the Chair will be kept in a confidential file.)
- ___ Verification of successful completion of approved Boundary Training
- ___ Verification of completion of the Background Check process.
- ___ Verification of successful completion of an approved polity course.
- ___ Signed Pastoral Sexual Misconduct Form.
- ___ Approval of status by Church and Ministry Commission
- ___ Signed Statement of Agreement and Understanding

Catoctin Association Process for Lay Ministerial Standing

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 seek Lay Ministerial Standing 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 you, your pastor, and your Consistory should 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 Lay Ministerial Standing 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. See [Guidelines for Your First Meeting with the Church and Ministry Commission](#).
3. Complete the following required steps: (Proof of completion is required for each item and will be recorded on the [Checklist of Requirements](#).)
 - 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. Approved course on UCC polity, history, theology and ministries.
 - d. Obtain a routine [Background Check](#).
 - e. Sign the [Pastoral Sexual Misconduct Form](#).
4. Once you have been approved, review and sign the Statement of Agreement and Understanding. Please return a signed copy of the form to the Church and Ministry Commission Chair within two weeks of your approval for Lay Ministerial Standing. See [Statement of Agreement and Understanding](#).
5. You are encouraged and expected to follow the following guidelines to keep key groups and individuals informed about your ministry:
 - a. Meet with the Church and Ministry Commission once a year to review your ministry, to seek support, and to ask questions about next steps.
 - b. Touch base with your assigned Lay Ministerial Standing Supervisor quarterly.

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 Lay Ministerial Standing 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 Lay Ministerial Standing. 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:

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

_____ 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 Lay Ministerial Standing status. Your letter should include the following information:

- Your sense of call
- Your gifts for ministry
- Your educational record
- 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 talk with the Commission members about your plans.

The Chair of the Commission will contact you regarding the date, time, and location of the meeting. Notify 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 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 the 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.

The Commission will assign a Lay Ministerial Standing Supervisor to mentor you as you serve a congregation.

Statement of Agreement and Understanding For a Lay Minister Serving a Local UCC Congregation

Please read the following as it outlines the requirements and limits of your status as a Lay Minister:

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 Lay Ministerial Standing 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.
- I understand that I may not wear a clerical collar or stole.
- I understand that my service is limited only to the congregation for which I have been granted Lay Ministerial Standing.
- 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 Lay Ministerial Standing

Date

Chair, Church and Ministry Commission

Date

January 2019

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 Lay Minister of the United Church of Christ.

The Catoctin 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 Lay Ministerial Standing are responsible for arranging their appointments. Payment for the evaluation is 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 Catoctin Association and sent to the Association Treasurer. The treasurer will issue a check in the required amount directly to the service provider. You will not be required to make any payment at the time of your assessment.

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 you and the Commission Chair. The report of the evaluation process is held in confidence, with circulation limited to the Chair of the Commission and persons most directly providing guidance and mentoring for you in this process.

Boundary Training

The purpose of boundary training is to make an 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 in 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 Lay Ministerial Standing to enroll in boundary training provided by the Conference and the Association as early as possible in the process of applying for Lay Ministerial Standing.

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.

The report of the Background Check should be sent via USPS to Associate Conference Minister Rev. David Popham in the NJ Association Office.

Address: 195 Ridgewood Avenue,
Glen Ridge, New Jersey, 07028

Telephone: 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 Lay Minister 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 Lay Minister. This misconduct violates all ethical boundaries.

Regardless of the behavior of other persons, Lay Ministers are 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.

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.

3. Rape or sexual contact by force, threat or intimidation.
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 Lay Minister, inappropriate situations have occurred beyond the religious professional relationship. An example of this is a Lay Minister engaging in an extra-marital sexual relationship with a person who is not a client or member of the parish.

Statement of Affirmation

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 me as a Lay Minister in the United Church of Christ.

Candidate for Lay Ministerial Standing

Date

January 2019