

2 Ministerial Authorization

ARTICLE 2: ORDAINED MINISTERS FROM ECUMENICAL BODIES

WELCOMING ECUMENICALLY ORDAINED MINISTERS

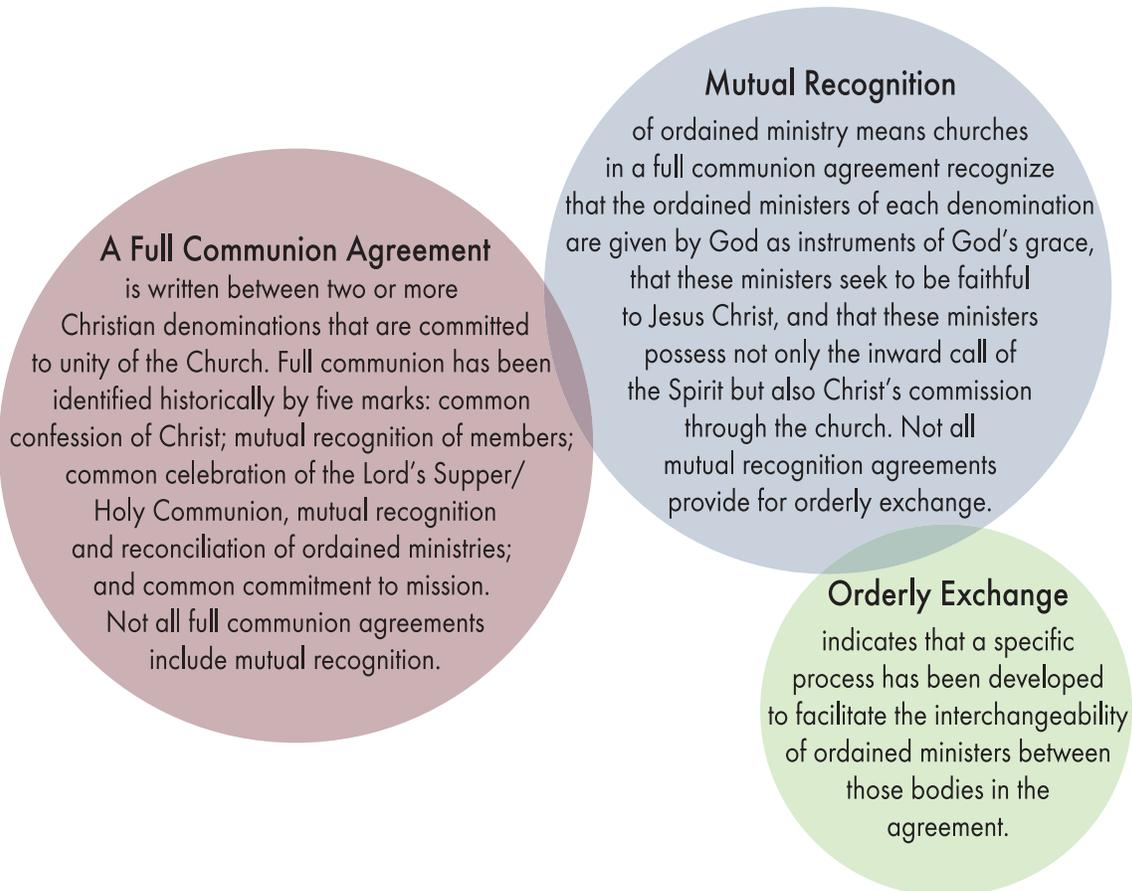
Born of the spirit of ecumenism, the United Church of Christ celebrates the diversity of the Body of Christ and appreciates the many gifts of ordained ministers from ecumenical bodies. Through formal agreements, it is possible for ecumenically ordained ministers to bless the United Church of Christ and the Church Universal through service in a UCC ministry setting. In these instances, UCC ministerial standing may be granted to ecumenically ordained ministers by a Committee on Ministry on behalf of an Association. Extravagant welcome and Spirit-filled discernment undergird the processes of considering and forming such relationships, even as those processes may vary according to the particular ecumenical body from which a minister comes and their preparedness for ministry on behalf of the United Church of Christ according to the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers.

An ordained minister from another ecclesiastical body who expresses a sense of call to a United Church of Christ ministry setting—or into the United Church of Christ itself—will follow this basic discernment process:

- conversation with a UCC Conference staff person regarding the sense of call, professional opportunities, Local Church membership, eligibility for search and call, and appropriate steps to connect with a Committee on Ministry;
- relationship-building with a Local Church, recognizing that membership may not be possible until a call to a UCC ministry setting is received and/or until UCC ministerial standing is granted;

- UCC Ministerial Standing application form²⁵ completed and submitted to a Committee on Ministry;
- additional documents as required by the Committee on Ministry according to the type of ministerial standing requested and to demonstrate engagement with the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers.

For ministers whose ordinations were granted by a congregation, ecumenical body, community of faith, or denomination with which the United Church of Christ does not have a full communion agreement, Committees on Ministry determine the most appropriate process—whether Member in Discernment, Dual Standing, or Privilege of Call—depending on the particular call in



²⁵ See Section 3 for the UCC Ministerial Standing application form.

a UCC ministry setting and the person's preparedness according to the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers.

The numerous ecumenical agreements of the United Church of Christ must be considered when a person approaches a Committee on Ministry with a request for ministerial standing. Several of the United Church of Christ's ecumenical agreements include the mutual recognition of ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament, meaning that the credentials, formation, and authorization process of the originating ordination are seen as valid by the receiving denomination. In addition to mutual recognition, these agreements may also include orderly exchange, meaning that a specific process has been developed to facilitate the interchangeability of Ordained Ministers between the denominations in the agreement.

Aside from formal ecumenical agreements, there are also processes by which ordained ministers from other Christians communions can either fully join the United Church of Christ (Privilege of Call) or hold temporary ministerial standing (Dual Standing).

CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) AND THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

All United Church of Christ Ordained Ministers who maintain their ministerial standing are Ordained Ministerial Partners with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and The United Church of Canada. Likewise, all ordained ministers who maintain their standing requirements in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or The United Church of Canada are Ordained Ministerial Partners with the United Church of Christ. Being an Ordained Ministerial Partner is an expression of the close relationship and full communion agreements between these denominations.

Ordained ministers in good standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or in The United Church of Canada may apply to the United Church of Christ for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing (OMPS).²⁶ Ordained ministers in the Disciples

²⁶ Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing is specific to ordained ministers of the United Church of Christ, The United Church of Canada, and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who serve in ministry settings affiliated with one another's denominations.

of Christ should apply for OMPS in the Association where they are geographically located. Ordained ministers in The United Church of Canada should apply for OMPS to a United Church of Christ Association where they anticipate seeking a call. The United Church of Christ has requirements for all ministers seeking Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing, including:

- demonstrated knowledge of United Church of Christ history, theology and polity;
- a current criminal background check;
- a letter of good standing from originating denomination;
- a letter articulating why the minister is seeking OMPS in the United Church of Christ;
- three letters of reference.

During the process of meeting the requirements for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing, the minister may be granted Seeking OMPS status by the Committee on Ministry to which the person has applied. Seeking OMPS is an ecclesial status that is renewable annually and can be removed at any time by the Committee on Ministry granting this status. Seeking OMPS allows a minister to circulate a UCC Ministerial Profile within the UCC's search and call system. Additionally, on a case-by-case basis a Conference staff person may submit a Disciples of Christ or The United Church of Canada profile to a United Church of Christ ministry setting. If called, the minister is required to seek Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing.

Once all requirements are met and a call is extended, the Committee on Ministry votes on whether to grant the minister Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing. Only a United Church of Christ calling body or a UCC-affiliated ministry setting may serve as an authorizable call²⁷ for ministers seeking OMPS. Once granted Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing, ministers hold standing in their denomination of origin as well as the UCC Association,

A Committee on Ministry always retains the option of denying OMPS or removing Seeking OMPS status even if employment is offered by a UCC Local Church. Local Churches are encouraged to review their constitution and bylaws as well as insurance coverage to verify whether ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ is required for their pastor and/or ministerial staff.

²⁷ See Section 2 Article 5 on authorizable calls.

including membership in a UCC Local Church. To clarify these relationships, ministers with Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing should have Four- or Five-Way OMPS Covenants for their ministry positions.²⁸ Ministers with OMPS have primary oversight from the United Church of Christ, in collaboration with the judicatory where their Disciples of Christ or The United Church of Canada ministerial standing is held. All expectations for maintaining standing in the United Church of Christ and the originating denomination are to be clearly articulated in the OMPS covenant.

Certain ministry positions exist in service to more than one denomination. If a Disciples of Christ or The United Church of Canada ordained minister is serving in an authorizable call,²⁹ Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing may be granted for the duration of that call.

Ordained ministers from the Disciples of Christ or The United Church of Canada with OMPS may have full access to the UCC search and call process while serving in a United Church of Christ ministry setting. If a new call is found in another UCC ministry setting while the Ordained Minister still holds OMPS, then their Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing may transfer to the Association in which the new UCC call is located. When a minister with OMPS is no longer serving in a UCC ministry setting, then OMPS is removed; the minister may reapply for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing at another time to seek and serve in a UCC ministry setting.

For those in the United Church of Christ seeking to serve in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or The United Church of Canada, Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing is applicable only for Ordained Ministers. Thus, positions in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or The United Church of Canada are not typically available as ordainable calls for Members in Discernment. Ordained Ministers in the United Church of Christ

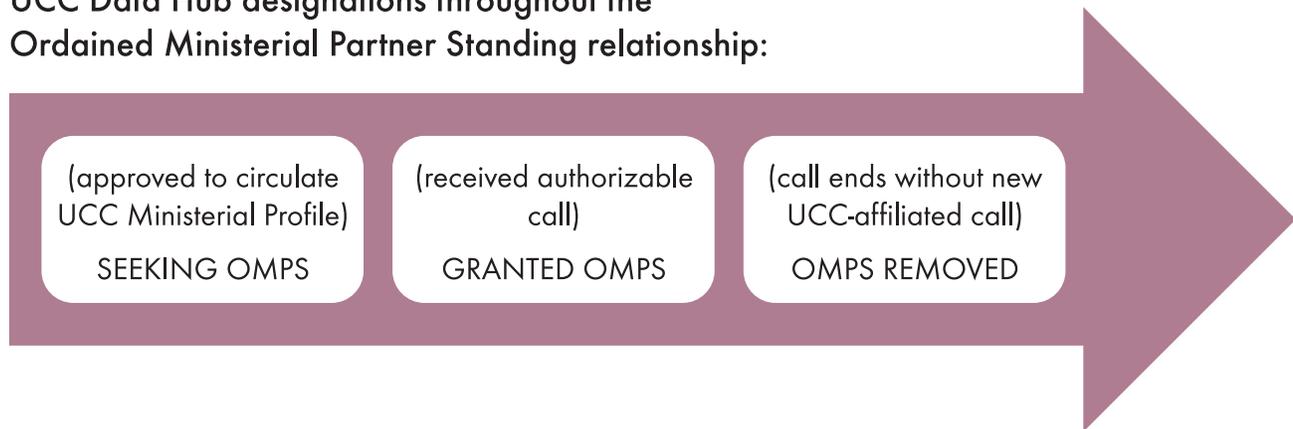
²⁸ See Section 3 for sample Four- and Five-Way OMPS Covenants.

²⁹ See Section 2 Article 5 on authorizable calls.

should refer to the Disciples of Christ or The United Church of Canada for procedures on how to seek calls and apply for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in those denominations.

UCC Ordained Ministers who hold Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing maintain membership in a Local Church of the United Church of Christ and ministerial standing in the corresponding Association. UCC Ordained Ministers with OMPS also hold standing in the appropriate The United Church of Canada Presbytery or Disciples of Christ Region. Oversight for UCC Ordained Ministers with OMPS is primarily exercised by the denomination of the ministry setting that the Ordained Minister serves, in collaboration with the Committee on Ministry where the Ordained Minister holds standing. UCC Ordained Ministers with OMPS should have a covenant³⁰ with their Local Church of membership, Association of standing, The United Church of Canada or Disciples of Christ ministry setting, the related judicatory, and themselves to articulate expectations for continued standing in both the denomination being served and the United Church of Christ.

UCC Data Hub designations throughout the Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing relationship:



³⁰ See Section 3 for sample Four- and Five-Way OMPS Covenants.

FORMULA OF AGREEMENT

The United Church of Christ is a partner in a multi-lateral Full Communion agreement called the Formula of Agreement³¹ with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the Reformed Church in America. The Formula of Agreement includes mutual recognition and a process for orderly exchange. Orderly exchange differs from the agreements with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and The United Church of Canada. Formula of Agreement ministers do not have access to the UCC Ministerial Profile system. Formula of Agreement applies only to ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament.

On a case-by-case basis, a Conference staff person of the United Church of Christ may include the profile of a PC(USA), RCA, or ELCA minister in the pool of candidates for a Local Church search process. If called, the minister must apply for Dual Standing for the duration of that call. Because the Formula of Agreement includes mutual recognition, a full examination of the minister's original ordination credentials is not necessary. It is expected that the minister can verify good standing with their originating denomination, can articulate the history, theology and polity differences between the two denominations, can demonstrate capacity to function in and appreciate the United Church of Christ, and is adequately familiar with the UCC Ministerial Code and the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers. These expectations are to be demonstrated to the Committee on Ministry during the Dual Standing application process.

KIRCHENGEMEINSCHAFT

In 1981 the United Church of Christ entered into a full communion agreement with the Evangelical Church of the Union in Germany (EKU). In this relationship the term "Kirchengemeinschaft" is used rather than "full communion." This term is a German word expressing a broad range of meaning around "full church

³¹ See Section 3 for the Formula of Agreement Orderly Exchange.

community/communion.” This relationship has been expressed both through a national working group and through regional/Conference partnerships. In 2003 the General Synod reaffirmed Kirchengemeinschaft as the EKU itself became a larger body of reformed and union churches called the Union of Evangelical Churches (UEK). This agreement does not include mutual recognition or orderly exchange of ministers. A UEK pastor who wishes to gain ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ applies for either Privilege of Call or Dual Standing.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF AFFIRMING MINISTRIES

The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries (TFAM) is a trans-denominational, theologically diverse fellowship and therefore does not fall within the protocols of mutual recognition or orderly exchange related to full communion agreements. General Synod approved an affirmation of the relationship between the United Church of Christ and The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries, saying:

A unique relationship exists between the United Church of Christ and The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries. There are United Church of Christ congregations and clergy who are active participants in The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries. There are also congregations and clergy within The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries that have a desire to become affiliated with the UCC, and still others that value and support the relationship between the United Church of Christ and The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries but choose not to become a part of the United Church of Christ.
— General Synod 29

Ministers from The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries who approach a Committee on Ministry for ministerial standing to serve in a UCC ministry setting may have a wide variety of ecclesiastical histories and expressions.

- A TFAM minister may request Dual Standing while serving in a UCC ministry setting for a limited time. The application process for Dual Standing is followed.
- A TFAM minister may request Ordained Ministerial Standing in the United Church of Christ to serve and to seek calls to UCC ministry settings, and to access the UCC search and call system with a UCC Ministerial Profile. After an initial interview and assessment, the Committee determines if the appropriate avenue for the person is the Member in Discernment process or the Privilege of Call process, based on demonstration of the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers. After the Committee determines the appropriate process, that process is followed with the understanding that a TFAM minister is not required to relinquish their relationship, office, or title with The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries in order to seek or maintain ministerial standing within the United Church of Christ.

MINISTERS FROM OTHER COMMUNIONS

As a United and Uniting Church³² in partnership with other communions throughout the globe, the United Church of Christ is an important partner in mission and ministry with many different denominations. There are several other ecumenical agreements between the UCC and other denominations, both domestically and internationally.³³ If an ecumenical agreement does not specifically articulate mutual recognition of ministries and orderly exchange of ministers, then persons from those communions work with Committees on Ministry for authorization

³² United and Uniting Church: Churches and denominations around the world that have historically and/or are currently working to unite with other Christian churches and denominations are called "united and uniting churches." These churches and denominations collaborate through the World Council of Churches, and they offer a distinct witness and response to Jesus' prayer "that they may all be one" (John 17:21).

³³ Individual Conferences may have specific ministry agreements with domestic or international ecumenical partners that do not extend beyond the boundaries of that single Conference and therefore are not included in the UCC Manual on Ministry.

through the Member in Discernment, Privilege of Call, or Dual Standing process as appropriate, using the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers as the standard for assessment and appreciating diverse paths of formation and diverse ways of knowing.

LOCAL AND ONLINE ORDINATIONS

Persons who identify themselves as ordained by the authority of single congregations, online organizations, and/or independent faith communities, and who seek ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ, may be extravagantly welcomed by a Committee on Ministry for a time of mutual discernment and formation assessment. The Committee uses the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers as the standard for assessment, appreciating diverse paths of formation and diverse ways of knowing. Many persons whose ordinations are not granted by a representative Body of Christ on behalf of the Church Universal will be most appropriately considered for the Member in Discernment process.

PRIVILEGE OF CALL

At times, ordained ministers from other Christian denominations seek to affiliate their lives and ministries with the United Church of Christ. The process of Privilege of Call is designed for an ordained minister who desires to leave their denomination of original authorization and become an Ordained Minister in the United Church of Christ.

Ordained ministers seeking to relinquish standing in their denomination of origin and to maintain exclusively UCC Ordained Ministerial Standing are generally routed through the Privilege of Call discernment process when they belong to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), The United Church of Canada, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, or other ecclesial organizations whose ministerial formation process is similar to the United Church of Christ. There are times when it is appropriate for a Committee on Ministry

There are rare cases in which a letter of good standing from the current denomination is not available to the Committee on Ministry. In these instances, it is incumbent upon the Committee to verify that there are no prior or ongoing ecclesiastical proceedings that would deem the minister unfit for standing in the United Church of Christ. Efforts in this regard should be well-documented and maintained in the minister's file.

to grant Member in Discernment status rather than Privilege of Call status, particularly if the person's previous ordination is granted by a non-denominational entity (e.g. local congregation or online organization) and/or if the person does not adequately demonstrate the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers.

Ministers seeking Privilege of Call apply to a Committee on Ministry, submitting a completed UCC Ministerial Standing application form.³⁴ Additional documentation may be required by a Committee on Ministry at the outset or throughout the Privilege of Call discernment process, such as:

- statement of the person's spiritual journey;
- statement of the person's understanding of their call into the United Church of Christ;
- letter of good standing from the ordained minister's current denomination;
- successful completion of an approved UCC History, Polity and Theology course;
- resume or portfolio, written with reference to the Marks;
- documentation of educational and professional training (such as transcripts), recognizing multiple paths of ministerial formation and appreciating diverse ways of knowing;
- psychological assessment;
- criminal background check;
- three written references of support for the person's application for ministerial standing.

The Committee completes an interview and an initial assessment based on the Marks, criminal background check, and psychological assessment. The Committee then determines if the minister should (1) move forward with the Privilege of Call process, (2) become a Member in Discernment, or (3) be declined

Committees on Ministry that receive requests for Privilege of Call from ordained ministers from other Christian denominations who hold governmental or professional endorsements should first contact the Endorsement Office of the UCC National Setting.

³⁴ See Section 3 for the UCC Ministerial Standing application form.

The use of Ecclesiastical Councils varies by Association. Although discernment processes are delegated by an Association to a Committee on Ministry, the purpose of an Ecclesiastical Council is for an Association to exercise its authority to approve (or not) a person for ordination and ministerial standing in the UCC.

from further exploration of Ordained Ministerial Standing in the United Church of Christ.

If the Committee affirms the continued discernment for potential Privilege of Call, the ordained minister is granted the ecclesial status of Seeking Privilege of Call, and the minister's status as "Seeking Privilege of Call" is recorded in the UCC Data Hub. The Committee outlines further steps for discernment, including required documentation, additional preparation specific to ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ, and ongoing reflection with the Marks. Once the Committee on Ministry is satisfied by its discernment and the completion of its requirements, the Committee recommends an Ecclesiastical Council for the final decision regarding ministerial standing.

The Ecclesiastical Council is a gathering of delegates on behalf of an Association to decide, on behalf of the United Church of Christ, for or against granting Ordained Ministerial Standing to an ecumenically ordained minister (pending the receipt of an authorizable call³⁵) following the affirmative recommendation of a Committee on Ministry. Those seeking Privilege of Call who receive negative recommendations (a *No* decision) from Committees on Ministry are not considered by Ecclesiastical Councils. An affirmative vote by an Ecclesiastical Council grants Privilege of Call status to the ordained minister.

Once Privilege of Call status is granted, membership in a Local Church of the United Church of Christ is recommended, recognizing that some ecumenically ordained ministers will not be able to join a Local Church until Ordained Ministerial Standing is granted. Privilege of Call allows an ecumenically ordained minister to complete and circulate a UCC Ministerial Profile; the status is renewed annually by the Committee on Ministry for a recommended maximum of four years, is not transferable, and can be removed at any time by the Committee based on (1) lack of ecclesial call and/or (2) unsatisfactory demonstration of the

³⁵ See Section 2 Article 5 for additional reflection on authorizable calls.

Marks or of the Ministerial Code while holding Privilege of Call status.

Once a minister with Privilege of Call receives an authorizable call³⁶ within a UCC ministry setting, as determined by the Committee on Ministry, then the Committee votes to grant Ordained Ministerial Standing. With standing granted, the status of Privilege of Call ends and the person relinquishes their standing in any other denomination. Ordained Ministerial Standing is then held exclusively in the United Church of Christ. If the calling body/ Local Church is located outside of the Association that oversaw the Privilege of Call process and granted Ordained Ministerial Standing, the minister must then apply for a transfer of Ordained Ministerial Standing to the Association where the calling body/ Local Church is located.

UCC Data Hub designations during the Privilege of Call process:



DUAL STANDING

There are occasions when an ordained minister of another denomination is called to serve for a season in a ministry setting of the United Church of Christ. Ordained ministers of another denomination who receive a call to serve in a UCC ministry setting can apply for Dual Standing to the Committee on Ministry where the ministry setting is located. Dual Standing is

³⁶ See Section 2 Article 5 for guidance on an authorizable call.

Section 2:2 Ordained Ministers from Ecumenical Bodies

In the past Committees on Ministry have granted licenses to ministers whose ordinations and/or processes of formation are not recognized by the United Church of Christ while those ministers are serving in UCC settings. It is now recommended that Committees on Ministry grant Dual Standing to ecumenically ordained ministers whose ordination processes are not formally recognized by the United Church of Christ while those ministers serve in UCC settings, if those ministers are not seeking Ordained Ministerial Standing.

A Committee on Ministry always retains the option of denying or removing Dual Standing even if employment is offered by a UCC Local Church. Local Churches are encouraged to review their constitution and bylaws as well as insurance coverage to verify whether ministerial standing is required for their pastor and/or ministerial staff.

a temporary standing in the United Church of Christ, valid only for the duration of the call. The application to the Committee on Ministry should include:

- a current criminal background check;
- a letter of good standing from the original denomination;
- a demonstrated knowledge of United Church of Christ history, polity, and theology;
- a demonstrated capacity to function in and appreciate the polity of the United Church of Christ.

Committees on Ministry meet with applicants for Dual Standing and complete an initial interview. This interview, in dialogue with the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers, will determine the Committee's decision to say *Yes* to Dual Standing, *Yes, but* with additional requirements before granting Dual Standing, *No, but* with a decline but also an invitation to return after completing certain requirements, or *No* to Dual Standing. Once satisfied, the Committee on Ministry may grant Dual Standing for the duration of the call within the UCC ministry setting.

Oversight for ministers with Dual Standing is held primarily in the denomination of origin. A minister with Dual Standing is responsible for any requirements of maintaining standing in the United Church of Christ as established by the Committee on Ministry for its ministers (such as boundary awareness training, anti-racism training, and attendance at Association and Conference annual meetings). Not maintaining the requirements for standing may result in the removal of Dual Standing.

If a fitness concern is raised regarding an ordained minister with Dual Standing, the originating denomination must be made aware at the onset. Concurrent accountability processes by both denominations are not recommended, and all efforts for cooperation in such processes are encouraged. The choice of which denomination conducts such a review may be determined by such

factors including (but not limited to) the primary location of impact of the minister's actions, the capacity of either denomination to adjudicate the process, and the denominations' like-mindedness (or not) on whether the actions in question demonstrate a concern of ministerial fitness. A Committee on Ministry may receive the findings of an accountability process led by the denomination of primary standing, or it may undertake its own Fitness Review. Outcomes of a Fitness Review process by a Committee on Ministry can only affect ministerial standing within the United Church of Christ; a Committee may make recommendations but cannot mandate changes in standing for another denomination. If a fitness concern is raised and Dual Standing is removed without a UCC Fitness Review process, the UCC Data Hub record of the minister should be marked "standing removed with bias" and accurate records maintained within the minister's file.

Dual Standing can be removed by the Committee on Ministry at any time and is not transferable. Dual Standing does not grant an ecumenically ordained minister access to the UCC Ministerial Profile or to the UCC search and call system.