

**Penn Central Conference
Church and Ministry Commission
Manual for Associations**

Table of Contents

- I. Purpose of the Church and Ministry Commission
- II. Conference-wide Issues
 - A. Annual Meeting Reporting and Anniversary Recognition
 - B. Clergy Compensation Guidelines
 - C. Boundary Awareness Training
 - D. Denomination Withdrawal
- III. Members in Discernment/Students in Care
 - A. General Procedures
 - B. Counseling Services
- IV. Changes in Standing/Authorization
 - A. Transfer of Standing
 - B. Reporting Changes in Authorization
- V. Fitness Reviews
 - A. Response Training
 - B. Fitness Review Process of Conference Staff
- VI. Support for Pastors and Churches
 - A. Periodic Support of Pastors
 - B. Situational Support of Congregations
 - C. Special Interviews
 - D. Liaisons to Churches in Pastoral Transition
 - E. Continuing Education of Pastors
 - F. Clergy Transition to Retirement
- VII. Search and Call Information
 - A. Criminal Background Checks
 - B. Non-UCC Candidates
- VIII. Record-keeping
 - A. Psychological Assessments of Members in Discernment
 - B. Fitness Review Records
- IX. Resources
 - A. Samaritan Counseling Center Correspondence
 - B. Situational Support Consultation Format
 - C. Guidelines for Conducting Pastoral Elections
 - D. Statement of Consent for Pastoral Candidates
 - E. Statement of Consent for Persons Seeking Privilege of Call, Dual Standing or Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing
 - F. Transfer of Standing Form
 - G. Monthly Statistical Report from Associations
 - H. Listening to Our Churches
 - I. Guidelines for Conference Minister Fitness Review
 - J. Guidelines and Covenants for Retiring Pastors

I. PURPOSE OF THE COMMISSION

According to the Conference Faith and Order Documents (June 2005), the Church and Ministry Commission shall be a delegate commission of the conference comprised of two representatives from each association's corresponding committee. In addition:

- 1. The Church and Ministry Commission shall cooperate and counsel with the similar Committees of the Association regarding the admission of churches and ministers to membership in the Association and Conference.*
- 2. The Church and Ministry Commission shall cooperate and counsel with the similar Committees of the Associations regarding the examination of candidates for the status of Students In Care (Members in Discernment) and applicants for commissioning, licensing, ordination and privilege of call as provided in the Bylaws of the United Church of Christ.*
- 3. The Conference Minister (or his/her designee) shall promptly notify the Secretary of the United Church of Christ (currently the Office of General Ministries) and Local Church Ministries (United Church of Christ) regarding commissioning, licensing and ordaining of ministers and changes in standing of such ministers.*
- 4. The Conference Minister (or his/her designee) shall promptly notify the Secretary of the United Church of Christ (currently the Office of General Ministries) and Local Church Ministries (United Church of Christ) when a pastor or a local church has decided to terminate the pastoral relationship, and promptly report all such vacancies to the Secretary of the United Church of Christ (currently the Office of General Ministries).*

The commission usually meets five times a year: September, November, January, March, and May at the conference office in Harrisburg. A chairperson is selected from among the members. Support from conference staff is assigned by the Conference Minister.

The contents of this manual have been developed by the commission with the intent of creating some common understandings and procedures for our work within the Penn Central Conference. In some situations, the processes could be defined as "best practices" and still in process. The expectation is that additions will be made as conversations within the commission continue. It is important to note that final authorization decisions still remain within associations.

II. CONFERENCE-WIDE ISSUES

A. Annual Meeting Reporting and Anniversary Recognition

The Church and Ministry Commission chairperson or secretary writes a report to be part of the Advance Reports for the Conference Annual Meeting. This Advance Report includes a listing of churches celebrating special anniversaries (25 year increments) and clergy with significant anniversaries. Clergy celebrating 5 to 20 years of ordination (in five-year increments) are listed by name. Clergy celebrating 25 or more years of ordination are listed by name with biographical information.

At the Annual Meeting, a verbal report includes recognition of churches and clergy celebrating special anniversaries, new clergy to the conference, and Members in Discernment. Certificates are presented to representatives of churches with special anniversaries (25 year increments). Clergy with 25 years of service or more are invited to the stage. Recognition usually includes a certificate, red carnations for clergy, white for spouse, and a luncheon during the Annual Meeting.

B. Clergy Compensation Guidelines

Penn Central Conference Clergy Compensation Guidelines are reviewed annually by a subcommittee of the Church and Ministry Commission. The commission approves the guidelines in May and sends them as information to the conference Board of Directors. Copies are also distributed at the conference Annual Meeting, included in the August Monthly Mailing, and posted on the conference website.

C. Boundary Awareness Training

All authorized ministers are required to complete six credits of boundary awareness training every five years. Exemptions from this requirement are at the discretion of the association committees on ministry.

Associations will work through the conference Church and Ministry Commission to see that boundary awareness training is offered periodically and publicized throughout the conference. A Basic Boundary Awareness Course will be offered at each Penn Central Conference Annual Meeting. For those who have completed this basic course, a four-credit Advanced Boundary Awareness Course, as well as two-credit courses on selected topics, will be offered at various dates and locations.

Registration will be done by the Conference who will maintain a list of training completed by each pastor. Clergy are responsible to maintain documentation that they have completed the required credits. Instructors will provide a certificate to the minister and the appropriate Association upon completion of each aspect of training. Instructors will also send a list of participants that have completed training to the Conference. A copy of the certificate is kept on file by the Association Committee on Ministry who is responsible for informing ministers when they need to “renew” their training and verify that training has been taken.

In addition, associations are responsible for informing authorized ministers new to the conference about the boundary awareness training requirement and determining if they have had comparable training.

D. Denomination Withdrawal

When a congregation votes to withdraw from the denomination without notification to the association or conference, the Committee on Ministry shall send a letter to the Consistory or Council requesting confirmation or denial of the vote and request a written reply within 60 days of the letter or the congregation's standing will be dropped. The 60-day time period may be extended an additional 60 days by the committee.

A pastor serving a congregation(s) that withdraws from the denomination shall be invited to meet with the Committee on Ministry to defend why she or he should be allowed to retain ministerial standing. If the pastor does not appear, she or he shall forfeit her or his standing. A deadline of 60 days is suggested. (Adopted by the Church and Ministry Commission March 2007)

III. MEMBERS IN DISCERNMENT / STUDENTS IN CARE

A. General Procedures

1. Notification: Associations shall notify the conference when an individual is received as a Member in Discernment (Student In Care) on the monthly authorization form (See Resource Section)

2. UCC Pension Board's annual request for seminary graduates: The Pension Boards will contribute to the beginning of a new pastor's pension upon application by senior seminarians. At the March meeting of the commission, members of Committees on Ministry will be asked to provide a list of graduating seniors for the Pension Board.

3. UCC Book of Worship: The conference will provide a UCC Book of Worship to each person received as a Member in Discernment (Student In Care).

4. Circulation of Ministerial Profiles: Each association's Committee on Ministry determines when a student's ministerial profile may be circulated. As of November 2008, Harrisburg, Lebanon, Mercersburg and York Associations normally allow their Members in Discernment to circulate profiles in January of their senior year at seminary (although the committee may decide to delay a profile release on an individual basis). Lancaster Association requires that the ordination interview be completed by the Committee on Ministry and the candidate be approved for an ecclesiastical council. Northern Association requires that the ordination paper be approved by the committee. Central and Gettysburg Associations require that their Members in Discernment be approved for ordination pending call by an ecclesiastical council before circulating profiles.

B. Counseling Services

Psychological testing for Members in Discernment and those being considered for Privilege of Call is usually conducted through the Ministry Assessment Program of the Samaritan Counseling Center (1803 Oregon Pike, Lancaster, PA 17601; 717-569-9969). Another resource for committees to consider for more in-depth assessment is the Princeton Seminary.

When an association refers a Member in Discernment for the Ministry Assessment Program, a letter is sent to the counseling center with a copy to the conference office. (A sample copy of the letter is located in the Resource Section.) The conference will pay the invoice and then bill the proper association and home congregation. The cost of the testing for Members in Discernment is shared equally by the association, the conference, and the person's home congregation, each paying one-third. The cost of those seeking Privilege of Call will be paid completely by the individual.

Counseling may be recommended by a Committee on Ministry for an authorized minister or required as a result of a Fitness Review. In either case, the Committee on Ministry will need to clarify who is bearing the cost of the counseling. When the counseling is required, it is suggested that the association share the cost with the minister. The Committee on Ministry will need to have the authorized minister sign a release form to receive information from the Counselor. A sample letter to send to the counseling center is found in the Resource Section of this manual.

IV. CHANGES IN STANDING / AUTHORIZATION

A. Transfer of Standing

"An Ordained Minister moving from the bounds of one association to another applies for a transfer of ordained ministerial standing to the new association (UCC Manual on Ministry)." The Parish Life and Leadership Team clarifies: When an ordained minister moves, he or she should request the new association to contact the former association for verification and comment. The new association follows the process detailed in Section 3 of MOM, pages 32-34. When the transfer of standing is complete, the new association notifies both the former association and the Penn Central Conference office of the change in authorization. A sample of the Transfer of Standing form is located in the Resource Section.

B. Reporting Changes in Authorization

Persons in each association responsible for reporting changes in authorization to the conference office are:

- Central: Registrar of Association
- Gettysburg: Secretary of Association
- Harrisburg: Chair of Committee on Ministry
- Lancaster: Assistant to Pres. of Association
- Lebanon: Chair of Committee on Ministry
- Mercersburg: Chair of Committee on Ministry
- Northern: Chair of Committee on Ministry
- York: Chair of Committee on Ministry

(A sample form for changes in authorization is located in the Resource Section.)

V. FITNESS REVIEWS

Fitness Reviews of authorized ministers are conducted by the appropriate association's Committee on Ministry. When information arises that may lead to a Fitness Review, conference staff and the association Committee on Ministry work together to make sure the Fitness Review process is followed and documentation gathered.

A. Conference Response Team and Training

The conference-wide Response Team is a group of individuals trained to perform the information-gathering stage of a Fitness Review. The conference-wide team includes a minimum of two responders (one male and one female) and ideally at least four, from each association. The intent is to have at least one, and preferably two, meetings each year for support and training. A list of Response Team members will be maintained by the conference office and made available to associations when needed. Conference staff will work with associations in choosing appropriate individuals to assist the committees in conducting fitness reviews.

B. Fitness Review Process of Conference Staff

When a question is raised concerning the fitness for ministry of the Conference Minister or a member of the ordained conference staff, the *Guidelines for a Conference Minister Fitness Review* will be followed. These guidelines are located in the Resource Section of this manual.

VI. SUPPORT FOR PASTORS AND CHURCHES

A. Periodic Support Consultations for Pastors

The Manual on Ministry recommends that Committees on Ministry conduct Periodic Support Consultations every three years. Associations have done these in different ways: one-on-one conversations with a pastor and member of the committee; group lunches with three pastors after ministerium gatherings; three pastors attend a meeting and the committee divides into three groups to interview the pastor; gatherings of peer groups of pastors (i.e. pastors in their first five years of ministry, retired ministers, chaplains, etc.).

B. Situational Support Consultations with Congregations

Situational Support Consultations are typically conducted at the request of a local church and/or pastor when there are issues to be addressed. However, times of pastoral transition are also significant in the life of a congregation. Therefore, some Committees on Ministry provide “listening teams” to interview members of congregations when a pastor leaves to allow church members to do some reflection. In addition, committees conduct exit interviews with departing pastors. A suggested format for a Situational Support Consultation is provided in the Resource Section of this Manual.

C. Special Interviews

1. Interim Pastors

It is recommended that the appropriate Committee on Ministry interview an interim minister at the beginning of the interim period. The purpose of this interview is to verify the credentials of the interim minister and to confirm the association where the interim minister’s standing is held. The committee should also seek to discern the interim minister’s understanding of his/her role regarding:

- a. Dealing with grief concerning the departure of the pastor
- b. Strengthening ties to the denomination through the association and conference
- c. Strengthening the identity of the congregation as a part of the UCC
- d. Improving communication within the congregation
- e. Defining the purpose/identity and goals of the congregation
- f. Defining the major issues facing the congregation

The interview should conclude with the development of a rough timeline for addressing and measuring progress on the above items. This timeline should be a guide for progress reports (to be prepared at three- to six-month intervals) and for subsequent interviews. Written reports by interim pastors and congregational leaders should be provided to the Committee on Ministry and a copy should be forwarded to the conference so that appropriate conference staff can be kept informed of issues during the transition period.

A final interview with the interim minister is recommended at the conclusion of the interim period. This interview should be a summary of the interim minister's ministry to the parish, noting accomplishments and highlighting lingering issues.

2. Settled Pastors

It is recommended that the appropriate Committee on Ministry interview a settled pastor **prior** to the election by the local congregation. The purpose of this interview is to verify credentials, discern the interests and experiences of the candidate, review the Call Form, and encourage the candidate to articulate a vision for ministry in the new setting.

It is also recommended that the Committee on Ministry interview a settled pastor as he or she prepares to leave a congregation. This exit interview provides an opportunity for the pastor to summarize the time of ministry in that parish. It should be an occasion to celebrate the goals achieved and to articulate the disappointments experienced. The purpose of this interview is to affirm the positives experienced and to enable the pastor to let go of the tasks yet undone—there will be another to serve in this setting to build upon the foundations laid!

D. Liaison to Churches in Pastoral Transition

A liaison expresses the association's care, concern, and support to the congregation during this crucial time of transition. A liaison should be appointed when a pastor announces his/her resignation and should continue for at least six months after a new pastor begins serving the congregation. A Committee on Ministry liaison should not fulfill this function with his/her own congregation.

An effective liaison provides:

- **Presence** – The liaison represents the association, serving as a personal connection between an individual congregation and the congregations of the association.
- **Support** – The liaison conveys support to the congregation through the contact with the congregation's president, consistory/council, Search Committee, etc.
- **Encouragement** – The liaison offers encouragement that hard work will produce good fruit, that others have been in a similar situation before, and that they are not alone in the struggles and in their joys.

After initially meeting with the consistory/council and conference staff person following the announcement of the pastor's leaving, most support provided by the liaison is through periodic phone calls or emails to the president of the congregation, interim minister, and chair of the Search Committee. The purpose of these contacts is to provide support and encouragement. If there are issues that are shared concerning dynamics in the church, the liaison should report them to the Committee on Ministry and the conference staff person to ascertain if there are ways the association or conference staff person can be helpful. If there are questions concerning the search process, the liaison should encourage the person to contact the conference staff person directly. Additionally, it is helpful for the liaison to check in with the conference staff person periodically.

The liaison should arrange for a member or representative of the Committee on Ministry to meet with the consistory/council and go over the Call Form, responding to any questions that arise. It is recommended that this meeting occur while the Local Church Profile is being written as some information is duplicated. This meeting provides an opportunity to discuss sabbatical policies, vacation, and other terms of call. The liaison should meet with the Search Committee and final pastoral candidate to review the completed Call Form.

As the search process concludes, the liaison works with the president of the congregation to set the date of the candidating weekend for the congregational election of the new minister. The liaison will contact the conference office for ballots and copies of the Call Forms to be signed immediately after the election. If the liaison is unable to be present for the election, s/he will arrange for another member of the Committee on Ministry to attend. The liaison or alternate are to return the signed Call Forms and any unused ballots to the conference office after the election.

After a new pastor is called, the liaison continues periodic contact with the president of the congregation and the new pastor for about six months after the new pastor has begun serving the congregation. During this time, the liaison continues to offer support and encouragement as the congregation and new pastor begin ministry together. The liaison might want to worship at this church occasionally or attend other church events if Sunday worship is not possible.

The liaison should **not** be seen as “an expert” in the Search and Call process or a substitution for conference staff.

If a change in liaison is needed, this should be communicated promptly to the established contacts in the congregation and to conference staff.

E. Continuing Education for Pastors

It is expected that all clergy engage in regular continuing education through courses, seminars, workshops, and other events, as well as through regular reading of books and journals. Committees on Ministry are encouraged to develop processes for reporting and accountability.

F. Clergy Transition to Retirement

1. Retiring Pastor

- a. Schedule an exit interview with the pastor near the retirement date.
 - 1) Review the pertinent items in the Pastor’s Code of Ethics.
 - 2) Discuss retirement in terms of a “call” to something new and explore what that “new calling” might be.
 - 3) Appoint a mentor, a recently retired colleague who has “retired well,” to walk with the new retiree for the first year.
- b. Offer the committee as a source of pastoral care to the retiree/family during the next year or until the retiree has settled in a new congregation or established a relationship with a new pastor.
- c. Create a “Retirement Issues Seminar” (perhaps in conjunction with the Commission on Ministry) to present each year or as needed.

2. Congregation

- a. Create a written covenant of closure to be signed by the retiring minister and congregation, include items of congregational responsibility.
- b. Review MOM suggestions regarding Pastor Emeritus issues.

- c. Suggest when it is appropriate to invite the retired pastor such as when the retired pastor is honored by the conference for a significant ordination anniversary or at times of congregational celebrations/anniversaries.
 - d. Publish a newsletter article on theme of how to relate to our departing pastor.
- 3. Interim Pastor at Initial Interview with Committee on Ministry**
- a. Encourage a conversation between interim and retiree early in interim period.
 - 1) Clarify understanding of boundaries.
 - 2) Discuss how to deal with grief issues during early part of interim period.
There are “loss issues” present for the member families when a family member dies and they do not know the interim. There are “loss issues” at work for the retiring pastor. Deal with these issues **BEFORE** the call to assist/do a funeral.
- 4. Settled Pastor**
- a. Encourage a conversation with the settled pastor and retiree early on.
 - 1) Clarify understanding of boundaries.
 - 2) Establish clear policy of non-involvement by retired pastor in life of congregation at times of controversy/weddings/funerals.
 - 3) Offer pastoral services to retiree and family.
 - b. Committee on Ministry – alert newly settled pastor when a retiree’s widowed spouse/partner is a member of the congregation so adequate pastoral care is extended.
 - c. When there are issues/tensions between settled pastor and retiree, it is suggested that they have a direct conversation. If that fails, the COM can work as a mediator. If that fails, all parties should be aware that there may be issues for a fitness review.

VII. SEARCH AND CALL INFORMATION

A. Criminal Background Checks

The Search and Call process of the United Church of Christ provides the means to help UCC congregations require a nationwide search among UCC clergy for pastoral leadership. The process also helps UCC clergy who are seeking a call to service within the United Church of Christ. It is expected that both clergy and local churches will work closely with UCC conferences and associations while engaged in the Search and Call process.

To participate, clergy prepare a Ministerial Profile while congregations prepare a Local Church Profile. Clergy need to request a criminal background check through Oxford Document Management. The criminal background check will be attached and circulated with the Ministerial Profile. The United Church of Christ and affiliated organizations have historically been very proactive in combating sexual misconduct within our Church. To facilitate the completion of certain screening recommendations that appear in the “Parish Leadership: Safe Churches Policy Guide” and “Making Our Churches Safe for All” document, the leadership of the UCC have chosen to work in cooperation with Oxford Document Management (ODM) a Minneapolis, Minnesota based screening company with a proven track record of service to the broader religious community. Churches are urged to reimburse the cost of the criminal background check as part of the compensation package when calling a pastor.

For Interim Ministers: An individual coming into the Penn Central Conference for the first time to serve as an interim pastor will need to have a UCC national criminal background check.

For Licensed and Commissioned Pastors: Prior to being licensed, a candidate will complete at least the PA State Sheriff's Background Check. Some Committees on Ministry may require the UCC national criminal background check.

B. Non-UCC Pastors and the Search and Call Process

When a non-UCC pastor contacts a staff member and requests that his/her resume be shared with a search committee, the person is referred to the Committee on Ministry in the association in which they are located to apply for Privilege of Call. This is the normal process articulated in the UCC Manual on Ministry. In other circumstances, these procedures will be followed:

- 1. A non-UCC pastor from a denomination that is part of the "Formula of Agreement" (ELCA, RCA, PCUSA) and living within the conference wants to be considered by search committees**
 - a. The conference staff person will have a verbal conversation with the individual and contact the denominational reference to verify standing.
 - b. Conference staff will refer the pastor to the appropriate Committee on Ministry who interviews the person to determine if they would grant Dual Standing to the minister if he/she was called to a church and required documents were provided.
 - c. If a particular search committee is having difficulty finding an appropriate match among UCC candidates, conference staff will inquire whether the search committee would like to receive the individual's resume/profile. If so, the resume/profile is sent.
 - d. If the search committee chooses the person as the final candidate, conference staff will work with the search committee to add particular expectations to the Call Form requiring the maintaining of Dual Standing and participation in association/conference activities.

- 2. A Search Committee informs conference staff that they want to seriously consider a non-UCC pastor in the search process**
 - a. The conference staff person will have a verbal conversation with the individual and contact the denominational reference to verify standing.
 - b. Conference staff will refer the person to the appropriate Committee on Ministry who will interview the person to determine if they would grant Dual Standing if the person was called and required documents were provided.
 - c. If the search committee chooses the person as the final candidate, conference staff will work with the search committee to add particular expectations to the Call Form requiring the maintaining of Dual Standing and participation in association/conference activities.

- 3. A German pastor contacts a staff member and requests that his/her resume be shared with search committees**
 - a. The conference staff person will verify standing and obtain comment from the German Synod of the pastor.
 - b. If a search committee is having difficulty finding an appropriate match among UCC candidates, conference staff will inform the search committee of the interest of a German pastor and will ask if the search committee would like to receive his/her resume.
 - c. The Committee on Ministry will interview the person when they are in the United States to determine if the committee would grant Dual Standing if called and required documents were provided.
 - d. If the search committee chooses the person as the final candidate, conference staff will work with the search committee to add particular expectations to the Call Form requiring the maintaining of Dual Standing and participation in association/conference activities.

VIII. RECORD-KEEPING

Generally, Committees on Ministry are responsible for maintaining the records of pastors and local churches in their association. Even if a pastor moves to another association, the records of the pastor remain within that association. In two circumstances, regarding psychological assessments and Fitness Reviews, special record-keeping guidelines apply:

A. Psychological Assessments of Members in Discernment (Students in Care)

The purpose of the psychological assessment is to assist in the process of discernment toward authorization. The assessment results are to be considered confidential and kept in a locked file by the particular Committee on Ministry. After five years, they are to be destroyed, unless a Committee on Ministry determines that discernment is still continuing and the assessment should be kept for a longer time period.

B. Fitness Review Records

Because the information gathered and the outcome of Fitness Reviews are confidential and have legal ramifications, and because of the transitory nature of committee membership and staff, at the conclusion of a Fitness Review conducted by an association Committee on Ministry, the original documents that were gathered, copies of correspondence with the minister and persons raising concerns, decisions of the Committee on Ministry, and any expected growth plan will be maintained in a locked file at the conference office. The association Committee on Ministry will place a page in the association clergy file indicating that there was a Fitness Review on a particular date and refer to the locked file at the conference office.

In Fitness Reviews involving conference clergy, the conference staff will place a page in the conference clergy file indicating that there was a Fitness Review on a particular date and refer to the locked file at the conference office.

IX. RESOURCES

A. Samaritan Counseling Center Correspondence

(This is a sample letter to the Samaritan Counseling Center requesting psychological testing for a potential Member in Discernment. A letter regarding a person seeking Privilege of Call should indicate that the individual will pay the cost of the testing and the bill should be sent directly to that person.)

Perry Hazeltine, Ph.D
Ministry Assessment Program Director
Samaritan Counseling Center
1803 Oregon Pike
Lancaster, PA 17601

Dear Dr. Hazeltine,

This letter serves as notification that the individual named below has met with and been recommended by the Committee on Church & Ministry of the _____ Association of the Penn Central Conference to undergo the Ministry Assessment Program of the Samaritan Counseling Center as a step toward being received as a Member in Discernment of the Association in preparation for Ordained or Licensed Ministry:

Name: _____
Local church: _____
Address: _____

You will be receiving a call from this person, requesting an appointment for testing. Upon completion of the testing and receipt of a signed “Authorization for Release of Information” you are requested to send the results of the testing to the Association’s Committee on Ministry in care of the following person:

(Name and address) _____

(Signature) _____ (Date) _____

It is our expectation that the testing will take place within 30 days of initial contact by the candidate and that results will be made available to the committee within 30 days of testing. If it appears that either of these time frames will not be met, for whatever reason, we ask that the Samaritan Center contact the above association representative.

The integrity of the discernment process depends upon the cooperation and appropriate sharing of information among association committees, the individual seeking in-care status, and organizations engaged in the testing process. The Samaritan Counseling Center’s role is vital and greatly appreciated.

As always, billing for testing should be sent to the Penn Central Conference offices in Harrisburg.

Sincerely,

cc: Penn Central Conference and the local congregation

B. Situational Support Consultation Interview Outline (York Association)

This process is used with congregations in transition and those experiencing difficulties. Reports are presented to the Consistory/Council, along with some suggested comments for next steps. Everyone in the congregation is invited to a 30-minute interview. These are offered over two to three days at different times of the day. Listening Teams are trained members of churches (not necessarily members of the Committee on Ministry). Questions are shared in advance of the interviews.

Before Interview:

1. Rooms should have several chairs arranged around a table.
2. Team members are asked to have name tags, **first name only**.
3. Determine who will be the time-keeper; one/both may make notes, also who will explain, offer prayer, ask questions, etc.

Interview session:

1. Welcome and begin with prayer:

Most holy and gracious God, we praise you and give thanks for the freedom and the oneness we share together through Jesus Christ, our Lord. You have called us to be brothers and sisters in the covenant community of the church. Hear our desire to live in covenant with one another that together we may look to your divine guidance, share your forgiving love, and follow your vision to build up the body of Christ in this community and the world. Through Christ our Lord we pray, Amen.

2. Explain process:

- a. From Manual on Ministry: This process is designed to address periods of transition in a congregation or to deal with concerns that have arisen in relation to an authorized minister or a ministry setting. This occurs whenever a request is made by any of the covenantal partners associated with the ministry setting including the congregation, the authorized minister or the local Association. The task of setting up and conducting the consultation is part of the responsibility of the Committee on Ministry of the association.
- b. We accomplish this by providing “Listening Teams” to help congregations reflect upon their current situation and to identify the concerns, the hopes, and the joys that its members are experiencing as they look toward their future as a congregation.
- c. This interview is anonymous. We will not be asking your name.
- d. We have several questions we will ask you to respond to and then give you the opportunity to share anything more you want to add. We will be recording your general ideas/concerns in order to present a summary response to the church Consistory/Council. *Example: 50% of the people we spoke to would like more of the older hymns in worship.*
- e. We ask you to speak for yourself and not provide hear-say.
- f. If more than one person, assure them you want to hear from everyone.
- g. We are here to listen, **not to give answers or advice**.
We may ask questions for clarification.

3. Do you have any questions before we begin?

4. Interview questions:

- a. As a congregation, what do you feel you do well?

What do you feel you could do better?

- b. In terms of pastoral leadership, what have been/are the strengths?

What were/are the weaknesses (or areas in need of growth)?

- c. What are the strengths of lay leadership in this church?

What are the weaknesses?

- d. What is your hope for this congregation?

- e. Is there anything else you would like to share?

- f. Would you be willing to tell us:

Approximately how long have you been a member: _____

Would you describe your participation in the life of the congregation as:
somewhat involved; moderately involved; or highly involved?

Number of people in interview: _____

C. Guidelines for Conducting Pastoral Elections (Lebanon Association)

Conducting the election is a very important part of the Search and Call process. It is a special time in the life of the calling church and in the life of the candidate. For this reason it should not be handled lightly or without thought and respect for both parties.

The election is carried out by one or two members of the Committees on Ministry.

1. Upon receipt of the call package from the conference office, open it to confirm receipt of ballots, five copies of the Call Form, and a pre-addressed return envelope.
2. Sometime during the week preceding the election, contact the church consistory president to confirm readiness of the church and the need for the presence of the designated persons to sign the Call Forms **after** the election and candidate's acceptance of the call.
3. If possible, plan to attend the worship service prior to the congregational meeting. Arrive at the church at least fifteen minutes before the worship service to introduce yourself to the consistory president and the candidate. Ask if they have seen and approved the Call Form. If not, show them the Call Form (which should be as agreed upon and previously submitted to conference office).
4. After the worship service:
 - a. The consistory president opens the official congregation meeting. At the appropriate time he/she turns the meeting over to the representatives of the Committee on Ministry.
 - b. Greet the congregation on behalf of the association Committee on Ministry. Express your joy in being there for this "big day in the life of their congregation, and the candidate". If necessary, request the pastor and family leave the sanctuary.
 - c. Explain the ballots and election process.
 - 1) Those voting must be an official member of that congregation.
 - 2) There are no absentee ballots or votes permitted.
 - 3) Return only the half of the ballot that expresses their vote.
 - d. Request ushers distribute and collect ballots.
 - e. Adjourn with the consistory president and one church member to a private place to count ballots. Usually the president observes, while others count.
5. Before the election, ask the consistory president for a head count of eligible members.
 - a. Know the percentage of votes acceptable to the candidate and congregation.
 - b. After observing and double checking the vote count, record the results.
 - c. Go to the candidate, relate the results of the vote, and ask if he or she will accept the call. If yes, congratulate him/her and all return to the sanctuary.
6. Introduce their new pastor. Announce the vote results.
7. Encourage words from pastor and consistory president.
 - a. If you feel led to do so, ask the pastor, his or her family, and the congregation to join you in a prayer for the ministry, life, and future of all concerned.
 - b. When a church calls a pastor, they also welcome his or her spouse and family, relate that to the congregation.

8. Upon dismissal of the congregation by the consistory president, adjourn to a private place to sign all copies of the Call Forms.
 - a. Check that all signatures and dates are in correct spaces.
 - b. Place forms, extra ballots and count sheet into the conference addressed envelope and mail to the conference office.

**D. Statement of Consent for Members in Discernment (those seeking ordination),
Licensed Minister Candidates, and Commissioned Minister Candidates**

The United Church of Christ Constitution recognizes that God calls the whole church and every member to participate in and extend the ministry of Jesus Christ [paragraph 17]. God also calls certain of the church's members to various forms of ministry in and on behalf of the church [paragraph 18].

Persons beginning a ministry authorization process with their UCC conference or association bring unique gifts, skills, and experiences. The integrity of the in-care process in the United Church of Christ depends upon supportive cooperation and considerate and appropriate sharing of information among national offices, conference and/or association personnel, search committees, local churches, other ministry settings, educational institutions and those persons in discernment about ordination, licensure or commissioning.

We are called to speak the truth in love. Our primary goal is, in all circumstances, to build up the body of Christ. Relationships between church bodies and persons seeking ministerial authorization require honesty, integrity, and truthfulness for the health of the church. In that spirit:

I attest that the information shared with the Committee on Ministry is true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of consideration for, or termination of, the ministerial authorization process or ministerial authorization itself after that authorization is approved.

An open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for continuing and healthy relationships between calling bodies and persons seeking a ministry position. In that spirit:

I authorize any member of the Committee on Ministry or the appropriate staff person of the conference to make inquiries regarding all statements contained in the information provided to the Committee on Ministry. I also authorize all persons, entities, former employers, committees on the ministry and their agents, courts, and law enforcement, educational institutions and other public agencies to respond to inquiries concerning me, and to supply verification of the information provided to any member of the Committee on Ministry or the appropriate staff person of the conference. I understand that such persons may comment on and state their opinions regarding my background and character to any member of the Committee on Ministry or the appropriate staff person of the conference. To encourage such persons to speak openly and responsibly, I hereby release them from all liability arising from their responses and comments made in good faith and without malice.

Signature _____ Date _____

E. Statement of Consent for Persons Seeking Privilege of Call, Dual Standing, or Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing

The United Church of Christ Constitution recognizes that God calls the whole church and every member to participate in and extend the ministry of Jesus Christ [paragraph 17]. God also calls certain of the church's members to various forms of ministry in and on behalf of the church [paragraph 18].

Persons seeking Privilege of Call, Dual Standing or Ordained Partner Standing with a UCC conference or association bring unique gifts, skills, and experiences. The integrity of this discernment process in the United Church of Christ depends upon supportive cooperation and considerate and appropriate sharing of information among UCC national offices, UCC conference and/or association personnel, search committees, local churches (UCC and otherwise), other ministry settings, the individual seeking standing's current denomination, educational institutions and those persons seeking Privilege of Call, Dual Standing or Ordained Partner Standing.

We are called to speak the truth in love. Our primary goal is, in all circumstances, to build up the body of Christ. Relationships between church bodies and persons seeking Privilege of Call, Dual Standing or Ordained Partner Standing require honesty, integrity, and truthfulness for the health of the church. In that spirit: I attest that the information shared with the Committee on Ministry is true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of consideration for, or termination of, the ministerial authorization process or ministerial authorization itself after that authorization is approved.

An open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for continuing and healthy relationships between calling bodies and persons seeking a ministry position. In that spirit: I authorize any member of the Committee on Ministry or the appropriate staff person of the conference to make inquiries regarding all statements contained in the information provided to the Committee on Ministry. I also authorize all persons, entities, former employers, committees on the ministry and their agents, current denominational representatives, courts, and law enforcement, educational institutions and other public agencies to respond to inquiries concerning me, and to supply verification of the information provided to any member of the Conference Committee on Ministry or the appropriate staff person of the conference. I understand that such persons may comment on and state their opinions regarding my background and character to any member of the Committee on Ministry or the appropriate staff person of the conference. To encourage such persons to speak openly and responsibly, I hereby release them from all liability arising from their responses and comments made in good faith and without malice.

Signature _____ Date _____

F.

Transfer of Ordained Ministerial Standing United Church of Christ

This is to certify that _____

is an ordained ministerial member in good standing in the _____

Association, _____ Conference, and is recommended

for ministerial standing in the _____ Association,

_____ Conference.

Date _____

Registrar _____

Address _____

Signature of Registrar _____

.....

(Please fill out and mail to the association of origin.)

This is to certify that _____

was received in full ordained ministerial standing in the _____

Association, _____ Conference.

Date _____

Registrar _____

Address _____

Signature of Registrar _____

G. MONTHLY STATISTICAL REPORT FROM ASSOCIATIONS

Penn Central Conference, UCC
Report for month of _____

ASSOCIATION: _____

A. Received - Ordinations, Commissionings, Granting of Standing, Licensing, Privilege of Call, Transfer of Standing, Ordained Ministerial Partner

1. Name _____ Date received _____

Action _____

Received from (indicate name of body) _____

Classification _____ Position _____

2. Name _____ Date received _____

Action _____

Received from (indicate name of body) _____

Classification _____ Position _____

B. Removed – Resigned or dropped for cause, transferred to another conference or denomination, or other change of status

1. Name _____ Date removed _____

Action _____

Transferred to (indicate name of body) _____

2. Name _____ Date removed _____

Action _____

Transferred to (indicate name of body) _____

C. Students in Care / Members in Discernment – Newly received or renewed

1. Name _____ Date _____

Address _____ Received _____ (or) Renewed _____

Home church _____ College/Seminary & Year _____

2. Name _____ Date _____

Address _____ Received _____ (or) Renewed _____

Home church _____ College/Seminary & Year _____

Please complete and return, even if there are no changes, by the 5th of each month to Brenda Waleff at the Penn Central Conference office.

H. Listening to Our Churches (Northern Association)

Purpose: Provide an occasion for reflection and feedback on the practice of ministry to support the ministry of a local church and its pastor and strengthen the relationship among the church, pastor, and Northern Association.

Goal: Visit each congregation/charge within the Northern Association once every three or four years using the questions that follow as a guide.

Procedure

- Visits are made by members of the Church & Ministry Committee in ordained/lay teams whenever possible.
- Committee members determine the visitation schedule during the committee's spring organizational meeting.
- Charges may determine whether visits should be combined or separate.
- Each team is responsible for contacting the congregation/charge and the pastor to arrange a meeting time and for sending the questions prior to the visit for their preparation; it is best to hold a combined meeting with the pastor and representatives of the congregation/charge
- The visitation team reflects what is heard immediately follow the discussion. Each visit will take approximately one hour.
- Send a thank you note to the church/es and the pastor for their time and sharing.
- Reflect, briefly, on your visit with the C&M Committee.

Suggestions for preparation

- Use first names on name tags to individually address participants.
- Decide which team member will take notes.
- This is a time for listening, not to solve problems, offer solutions, or seem judgmental in any way. These visits are to affirm connections with the association. If conflict seems to be present, or further outside help or intervention may seem appropriate, that information should be shared with conference staff.

Welcome and opening prayer

Most gracious God, we thank you for the gift of freedom and unity that we share together through Jesus Christ, our Savior. You have called us to be sisters and brothers in the covenant community of the church. Hear our desire to live in covenant with one another so that together we may look to your divine guidance, share your forgiving love, and follow your vision to build up the body of Christ in this community and the world. Bless our sharing in this time with one another that it may be a witness to our oneness in you. Through Christ our Lord we pray. Amen

Explain the process

1. You are there as a "listening ear – or team" to help the congregation reflect on where they are in the present and to identify the hopes and joys the members are experiencing. The questions are based on an approach called "Appreciative Inquiry" and are designed to focus on the areas of their lives that are life-affirming and lead to positive opportunities for growth and change.
2. Ask each one to speak only for him/her self. Ask further questions to clarify, if necessary.

Closing

1. Thank them for sharing and for the opportunity to visit.
2. Summarize as best you can, briefly, what you heard during the conversation. Look for the positives!
3. Assure them that the association and the Church & Ministry Committee stand ready to assist in any way possible.
4. Close with prayer.

Interview questions

What are some of the times you remember in your congregation that have given you a sense of joy or satisfaction?

What characteristics of your church do you feel stand out as real gifts of your congregation that you'd like to share with others?

How have you and your pastor worked together to enable these events, experiences, programs and feelings of positive good to take place?

What important gifts do members of the congregation have to share that contribute to the life and health of the church?

What gifts has your pastor brought to your life together?

What gifts do you think the wider association of the congregations of Northern Association could bring to support the work you are doing through your congregation?

In what ways have changes in the community surrounding your church brought new challenges or opportunities to the life of your congregation?

Are there ways you'd like to see your ministries become more effective?

Would any of the following be helpful in supporting the work your congregation is doing or would like to be doing?

- Training for pastor/congregation leaders in evangelism, stewardship, planning/visioning, church vitality, hospitality (welcoming outsiders), or other topics
- Situational support consultation with listening teams from the Northern Association Committee on Ministry to reconcile differing perspectives within the congregation
- Presentations to the congregation by persons involved in the wider church ministries of the conference
- Assistance to seek resolution or management of conflict within the congregation
- Anything else?

What one or two things do you plan for your congregation and your pastor to make a major focus of your effort during the next two years?

I. Guidelines for Conference Minister Fitness Review

(This process, as recommended and revised by the UCC Council of Conference Ministers on October 27, 2008, applies to all ministerial conference staff.)

To be a Conference Minister is a **sacred trust**. In the Gospel of John, Jesus speaks of the “Good Shepherd” and says that “the shepherd goes before them, and the sheep follow the shepherd, because they know the shepherd’s voice.” To be a Conference Minister in the United Church of Christ is to have responsibility for pastoral oversight of churches and ministers. It is to be called to a ministry that requires the highest level of trust and faith. To be in such a relationship of leadership and to be worthy of this trust requires deep ethical foundations and the best practices for maintaining clear and appropriate boundaries.

To be a Conference Minister is a **privilege**. It is a joy to be entrusted with this particular vocation, and to be challenged to grow in the ways that Paul describes in speaking of spiritual gifts in the Letter to the Ephesians: *“And God’s gifts were given . . . for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature personhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ....”*

I. Introduction to the process

In the event ethical questions are raised concerning the fitness for ministry of a Conference Minister, these guidelines offer procedures for bringing forward concerns, investigating them, adjudicating them, and providing pastoral support. It provides for a safe means of concerns being raised and a fair review. Its purpose is to deal with issues of power and authority in faithful ways. These guidelines have emerged from experience in multiple settings with a number of fitness reviews.

II. Assumptions informing these guidelines

*“Associations (or a conference acting as an association) have the responsibility for ensuring ecclesiastical accountability for **all** authorized ministers.”*¹ (Page 5, Section 8, *Manual on Ministry*) Given that Ordained Ministerial Standing is conferred, transferred, and suspended or terminated by associations or conferences acting as associations, when allegations about ordained ministerial fitness are raised, it is essential that there be a similar process of review for all authorized ministers.

When a Conference Minister is the subject of a Fitness Review, there is the high probability that many, if not most of the members of the conference, will have conflicts of interest.

Because Conference Ministers are called by an entire conference to provide executive and spiritual leadership, the position of power they occupy creates a unique and challenging situation for Committees on Ministry.

When the Conference Minister is the subject of a fitness concern, a commitment to justice and fairness for that conference and Conference Minister requires a change of location for the review while maintaining the same fitness guidelines that apply to all United Church of Christ clergy.

¹ All references to “Association” in this document will also refer to those situations where the Conference acts as an Association.

Care needs to be taken to identify the boundaries between personnel and fitness questions. Personnel concerns should be referred to the Board of Directors or its personnel committee and fitness concerns should be referred to the Committee on Ministry.

Consultation by conference leadership with the United Church of Christ Proclamation, Identity and Communication Team is strongly recommended for advice and assistance in dealing with the media throughout this process.

All Manual on Ministry references are to the 2001 or current edition.

The Nationwide Special Counsel of the United Church of Christ will be consulted and kept informed during the process by the General Minister and President and Parish Life and Leadership.

III. How is the process initiated?

The process described in the *“Recommended Guidelines for a Conference Minister Fitness Review”* is initiated when an identified individual raises a specific concern that calls into question a Conference Minister’s fitness for authorized ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ. The initial concern may be expressed through a letter, a phone call, or an email communication.

The concern may be received by the Committee on Ministry of the Association where the Conference Minister holds standing, the Conference Board of Directors, the General Minister and President, a Conference or Association staff member, or a staff person serving in the national setting of the UCC. Regardless of the identity of the initial recipient, the concern will be directed to the General Minister and President; he/she will consult with Parish Life and Leadership and immediately make contact with the Committee on Ministry Chairperson in the Association where the Conference Minister holds standing.

From the beginning of the process, coordination will be in the office of the General Minister and President with consultation from Parish Life and Leadership to utilize Fitness Review expertise in assisting the Committee Chairperson with the review.

When the Committee on Ministry Chairperson and the designated national staff review the concern(s), attention should be paid to the distinction between personnel matters and concerns that relate to fitness for ministry. In the event of uncertainty in regard to this distinction, the General Minister and President will determine whether the concern is fitness or personnel related. Only matters related to fitness should be included in the initial concern which is presented to a Committee on Ministry without factors that would identify the individual whose fitness is in question. Personnel concerns (job performance, staff supervision) should be identified to the Conference Minister and, in consultation with the General Minister and President, referred to the Conference Board of Directors or its Personnel Committee.

The Committee on Ministry Chairperson, following procedures in Manual on Ministry, will present the allegation(s) without identifying factors to the members of the Committee on Ministry. If it is not possible to convene a face-to-face meeting quickly, the allegation may be presented in a conference phone call. Email is never appropriate for use with such sensitive matters. Members will be guided in their decision-making by Section Eight (2001 Edition) of Manual on Ministry which states:

“The information, if found to be true, does call into question a person’s fitness for continued ministry on behalf of the United Church of Christ....”

If the Committee on Ministry does determine that the information would call into question the person's fitness for ministry, the identity of the Conference Minister will be disclosed and the *"Recommended Guidelines for a Conference Minister Fitness Review"* will be interpreted to the Committee. It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Committee on Ministry to communicate to the Conference Minister whose fitness has been called into question, the Chair of the Board of Directors, and the person who raised the concern, that a Fitness Review has been initiated.

It will be the responsibility of the General Minister and President to follow-up with the conference leadership and the Conference Minister. Parish Life and Leadership may be asked by the General Minister and President to provide staff to the Committee on Ministry, and these guidelines will be followed during the Fitness Review.

IV. Leave of absence

When a Fitness Review is authorized, the Conference Board of Directors is expected to place the Conference Minister on a leave of absence without prejudice and with pay until the allegation is fully adjudicated. Being on leave helps to assure that there is no actual or perceived conflict of interest as the investigation and adjudication take place.

During a Leave of Absence, the Conference Board of Directors, in consultation with the General Minister and President, will select a Temporary Conference Executive to carry out the responsibilities of the Conference Minister during this period. It is strongly recommended that an Associate Conference Minister not be asked to serve in that capacity as it might constitute a conflict of interest and would compromise his/her current ministry. In addition to maintaining the day-to-day ministry of the Conference, the Temporary Conference Executive may be expected to provide significant leadership and assistance as the Conference responds and adapts to the particular circumstance of the review of its Conference Minister.

V. Next steps

A. The General Minister and President, in consultation with Parish Life and Leadership, will consider, as a qualified Adjudicating Committee on Ministry, a neighboring association in another conference with the following qualifications: has adopted Manual on Ministry, is equipped to conduct a Fitness Review, and has a clear appeal procedure (limited to the process) to that association's Executive Committee or the Conference's Board of Directors. After consultation with the Conference Minister of that Conference, a formal request will be extended to the "Adjudicating Committee on Ministry."

B. The Parish Life and Leadership staff person, appointed by the General Minister and President, will work closely with the Committee on Ministry that holds the Conference Minister's standing to facilitate the transfer of oversight of the fitness review to the Adjudicating Committee on Ministry by the following action:

Motion that the COM would make to transfer the adjudication of the fitness review:

"The Committee on the Ministry of the _____ Association of the _____ Conference formally enters into a covenant with the Committee on Ministry of the _____ Association of the _____ Conference and requests that the Committee on the Ministry conduct a Fitness Review on our behalf. This review is to consider the fitness for ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ of the Rev. _____. By making this request, we expect that:

1. Provision for pastoral support for the parties involved in this review will be made by the Office of General Minister and President.
2. The _____ Association Committee on the Ministry will investigate, deliberate and come to a determination.
3. The determination will be referred back to our Committee on Ministry where it will be formally accepted in its entirety without further investigation or debate.
4. After the determination is voted, if an appeal is made on the process, such appeal will occur according to the procedure of and within the _____ Association of the _____ Conference.”

C. The Adjudicating Committee on Ministry will vote to receive the transfer and will begin to take steps to prepare for a fitness review by the following action:

Motion that the Adjudicating COM would make to receive the fitness review:

“The COM of _____ Association of _____ Conference, in accordance with “*The Recommended Guidelines for a Conference Minister Fitness Review*,” receives the fitness review of the Rev. _____ referred to us by the Committee on Ministry of _____ Association of _____ Conference.

We realize that we assume responsibility for ensuring a fair and just fitness review process for Rev. _____ and that we will be responsible for determining the final outcome of the fitness review. Should Rev. _____ wish to appeal our decision, that appeal will follow the processes established by our Association.”

D. The information-gathering phase will be handled by two persons from a trained Response Team. The General Minister and President, in consultation with Parish Life and Leadership and the Adjudicating Committee on the Ministry will determine whether trained Response Team members are presently available or whether others need to be found.

E. Costs for the conducting of the fitness review shall be borne by the Association/Conference where the Conference Minister holds his/her standing.

F. In consultation with the person whose fitness has been called into question, the General Minister and President will appoint a support person Conference Minister, preferably from a pool of former Conference Ministers. It is important to remember that the support person is not an advocate. [Training will be provided to the support person by Parish Life and Leadership so that he/she is clear about the difference in roles between an advocate and a support person.] The General Minister and President, in consultation with Parish Life and Leadership and Conference Leadership, may appoint other support persons as needed.

G. A support person for the individual (s) initiating the fitness concern will be selected by the Committee on Ministry in the Adjudicating Association, utilizing a process appropriate to the geographical location of the individual (s) involved.

H. The Fitness Review process will proceed according to Section Eight (2001 Edition) of the Manual on Ministry:

1. After the Response Team gathers information, they report to the Adjudicating Committee on Ministry.

2. The Adjudicating Committee on Ministry receives information, conducts interviews, and prayerfully deliberates.
3. The Adjudicating Committee on Ministry will communicate regularly with the Committee on Ministry that holds the Conference Minister's standing. Communications will focus on the process, without specific details.
4. The Adjudicating Committee on Ministry makes its decision based on the six possible outcomes described in Section Eight of the Manual on Ministry (2001 Edition).
5. The Adjudicating Committee on Ministry prepares a report summarizing its process and describing in specific detail its determination and recommendations, including specific sections of the Minister's Code that were violated by the behaviors addressed in the fitness review process.
6. Representatives of the Adjudicating Committee on Ministry present the report to the Committee on Ministry that holds the Conference Minister's standing.
7. Representatives of the Adjudicating Committee on Ministry meet with the Conference Minister and inform him/her of the decision, outlining the appeal process available.
8. Representatives of the Adjudicating Committee on Ministry meet with the person(s) raising the fitness concerns and inform him/her/them of the decision, outlining the appeal process available;
9. Representatives of the Adjudicating Committee on Ministry report to the leadership (e.g. Conference Board of Directors.)
10. The General Minister and President, and Parish Life and Leadership staff will assist the conference leadership in developing a process for reporting the outcome to the pastors and churches of the conference. The national staff will also assist the Board of Directors as they deal with the personnel issues that emerge as a result of the outcome.
11. In order to continue to avoid conflict of interest, any growth plan required of the Conference Minister will be supervised by the Adjudicating Committee (or a designated subcommittee) until such time as they are satisfied that the conditions have been met.

I. The decision of the Adjudicating Committee on Ministry is final, pending appeal, and may not be changed by the Committee on Ministry that holds the Conference Minister's standing.

VI. Appeal process

The appeal process will be according to the accepted procedure of the Adjudicating Committee on Ministry. There is no appeal to the Committee on Ministry that holds the Conference Minister's standing.

VII. Legal counsel

Legal counsel has no role in the ecclesiastical process; however, all parties involved in a Conference Minister Fitness Review may wish to consult separate legal counsel. There must be clarity and boundaries among those representing the legal interests of the conference, of the Conference Minister and of the person(s) who raised the fitness concern(s). The Conference Minister whose fitness has been called into question does not participate in any decision regarding the selection of counsel for the conference.

VIII. Record-keeping

The General Minister and President shall maintain a confidential record of all decisions and actions related to this matter, including decisions and actions of the Adjudicating Committee on Ministry, the Committee on Ministry of the Association that holds standing, and the Conference Board of Directors and its committees. The conference and the association Committee on Ministry shall also maintain confidential records of all decisions and actions related to this matter in accordance with their regular practices and procedures.

IX. Reinstatement

If the Fitness Review results in the termination of ordained ministerial standing, the Conference Minister may apply for reinstatement based on the guidelines described in Sections Three and Eight of Manual on Ministry. The request should be directed to the Adjudicating Committee on Ministry. Before considering a request for reinstatement, the Committee on Ministry should consult the expectations and considerations described in Section Eight of Manual on Ministry. The reinstatement process must include a thorough review of all records from the original Fitness Review, including first-hand interviews with members of the Adjudicating Committee where possible.

X. Interim Conference Ministers

In the case of Interim Conference Ministers, the guidelines would be followed if the Conference Minister's ecclesiastical standing is within the conference where the interim serves. If the Interim Conference Minister's standing is held in another conference, the Fitness Review should be the responsibility of that body.

XI. Association Minister, Associate Conference Minister, Regional Minister, Conference Program Staff, or other conference staff position

When a concern is raised that might call into question the fitness for ministry of an authorized minister serving as a staff person in an association or conference of the United Church of Christ, the following pattern of follow-through and guidelines for dealing with the concern is recommended:

- The concern comes to the attention of the Conference Minister. The Conference Minister immediately initiates a consultation with the staff of Parish Life and Leadership and also notifies the General Minister and President that a concern has been raised.
 - The staff person of Parish Life and Leadership and the Conference Minister will review procedures in the Manual on Ministry.
 - The staff person of Parish Life and Leadership and the Conference Minister will review together the boundary issues that will arise for the Conference Minister between the personnel/head of staff/supervisor roles and the role of staffing the standing/authorization/Committee on Ministry process.
 - The Conference Minister needs to remain solely in the personnel/supervisor/head of staff role. The Conference Minister consulting with Parish Life and Leadership will identify a neighboring Conference Minister or a Conference staff person to work with the Committee on Ministry in the review process.
- The Conference Minister will take the concern to the Committee on Ministry in the Association where the staff person currently has his/her standing. The staff of Parish Life and Leadership or a neighboring Conference Minister will have had prior contact and will have reviewed the Manual on Ministry procedures with the chairperson.

- The Chairperson of the Committee on Ministry will present the concerns to the entire Committee “without identifying factors”, and the Committee will respond to the question in the Manual on Ministry: *The information, if found to be true, does call into question a person’s fitness for continued ministry on behalf of the United Church of Christ . . .*”
 - If the answer is “no” then the committee would be asked if a “Situational Support Consultation” or any other kind of recommended follow-up with the minister would be needed, and they would then follow up with the minister.
 - If the answer is “yes”, then the Parish Life and Leadership staff person or neighboring Conference Minister would be notified by the Chair and, in consultation with the Conference Minister, another association in the conference would be selected to conduct the review.
 - If the conference is one that has a single Committee on Ministry serving all associations or if the conference and association are one, then an association in a neighboring conference will be sought.
 - The association or conference selected will be requested to convene a fitness for ministry review.
 - The association that currently has the minister’s standing will be required to pass the enabling motion which transfers authorization for oversight of the minister to the Association that will conduct the review. The Adjudicating Association passes a motion to receive the fitness review.
 - The Conference Minister will then notify the staff person that a concern has been raised and will identify the process that will be followed.
 - The Conference Minister, consulting with the Personnel Committee of the conference where the staff person is employed, will seek a leave of absence, with pay, for the minister for the time of the review and pending the outcome of that review.
 - The association that has agreed to conduct the fitness for ministry review and has been authorized to do so by the association holding the minister’s standing, will carefully select a Response Team that is both experienced and that holds the least possibility of conflict of interest in their relationship to the minister. In no case should a Response Team member come from the association where the minister/staff person currently serves or has standing.
- The Fitness Review process, as outlined in the guidelines for a Conference Minister, will apply, as will the appeal procedures, which are, as in the case of any minister who has been subject to a fitness for ministry review, only on the process used and not on the substance of the concern or the content of the decision.
 - The above guidelines should also be used in the case where a familial or collegial relationship would create the perception of a conflict of interest.

J. Guidelines and Covenants for Retiring/Retired Pastors

What follows are three documents that provide resources for retiring ministers and congregations:

- “Ethics for Retiring and Retired Ministers”
- “Covenant of Closure for Retiring or Resigning Pastors”
- “Covenant for a New Ministry When the Previous Minister is Remaining in the Community”

When a pastor leaves a congregation, there is often confusion regarding the appropriate relationship with the departing pastor. This may impact the relationships developed with the new pastor called to the congregation. The attached documents help name the issues and develop a way for a departing pastor, congregation, and, in particular cases, the new pastor to clarify appropriate expectations.

It is hopeful that the documents will strengthen our local congregations and more clearly define expectations for retiring pastors.

This material is adapted from documents created by the Ohio Conference, UCC.

Ethics for Retiring and Retired Ministers

The Nature of Ministry...

...in the United Church of Christ is such that strong and personal bonds are established between the pastor and members of the congregation. This situation can make retirement a difficult and traumatic experience. Bringing the pastoral relationships to a closure is a crucially important matter for the retiring pastor, the members of the congregation, and the retiring pastor's successor. The congregation and the new pastor need and deserve the opportunity to cultivate and nurture those same kinds of bonds and relationships that previously existed between the retiring pastor and the congregation.

It Has Been Well Proven...

...that the retiring pastor is the key person to set the tone for the closure of the pastoral relationships. The pastor who handles retirement gracefully can become the "beloved former pastor," while the one who pursues the course of continuing involvement can destroy the very respect and strength that hard work and dedication had established.

In statements and actions (public and private), both before and after retirement, the retiring pastor (and spouse) can very well establish the reality of a ministry that has been closed and completed, and can clear the way for the successor. At the same time, the congregation also bears responsibility for seeing that the transition from "active" to "retired" is accomplished smoothly and ethically. Members must avoid "holding onto" or "calling back" the retired pastor.

It Has Also Been Clearly Shown...

...that moving away from the community in which the pastor has served makes the matter of ethics and proper relationships much easier to accomplish.

For the pastor who chooses to continue living in the community where she/he retired, making a complete break for an extended period of time has been shown to be very helpful, i.e. a lengthy interim ministry in another community or an extended vacation or simply a planned sabbatical away from the church previously served.

Some Guidelines of Ethical Behavior:

1. Make a complete break from the church from which you are retiring, at least initially or as described above.
2. Be a true and loyal friend to your former congregation and its new pastor by refusing to engage in pastoral or hospital calls or counseling.

3. Attend weddings and funerals of former parishioners as a friend, but do not agree to conduct such services.
4. Be an active member of the congregation of our choice. If you remain in the congregation formerly served, decline all offices or positions for an agreed upon period of time.

Covenant of Closure for Retiring or Resigning Pastors

1. I will separate myself from participation in the life of the congregation from which I am retiring or resigning for a period of at least _____ year(s).
2. I will be a true and loyal friend to my former congregation and its pastor by not making pastoral or hospital calls, or counseling with members, or presiding at weddings or funerals of former parishioners. I will also decline all offices or positions in this congregation.
3. I will confer only with the Conference staff or the current pastor of this congregation about any problems I perceive in the congregation, and will not discuss them with member of this congregation or others.
4. I will communicate with the Conference staff should confusion, conflict, or other differences arise between myself and this congregation.
5. If at the end of the agreed to period of time (see item #1) I wish to participate in this congregation, I will communicate such interests to the Conference staff who will facilitate discussion of this possibility with the congregation and its pastor. If such participation is deemed appropriate, a “Covenant for a New Ministry When the Former Pastor is Remaining in the Community” will be established.
6. I reaffirm my vows as an ordained pastor. Relying on the grace of God, I also reaffirm my commitment to the “Manual on Ministry” of the United Church of Christ.

Signed _____ Date _____

Witness for
The Congregation _____ Date _____

Witness for
The Association _____ Date _____

Covenant for a New Ministry When the Previous Minister Is Remaining in the Community

1. Out of our mutual respect and our profound love for this congregation and its ministry in this community, we will do everything we can to undergird the current pastoral trust relationship.
2. We understand that the former minister will participate in this congregation as a member.
3. We understand that the former pastor will refrain from holding offices or positions within the congregation for an agreed upon period of time.
4. We understand that if members of the congregation request the former pastor to provide pastoral care or to preside at weddings or funerals, the former pastor will decline and guide those making the request to the current pastor.
5. We understand that if the current pastor desires help with the care of the membership, a mutual request by the current and former pastors will be made to the Association Minister. Upon approval by the Conference staff and the congregation, the former pastor is willing to help in the following way(s): [Carefully list the specific activities upon which you have agreed]

6. We will communicate with each other to avoid any opportunity for confusion over expectations.
7. We will confer only with each other or with the Conference staff about any problems we perceive with our understanding of these expectations. Specifically, we will avoid making any negative comments to members of the congregation.
8. We will affirm our commitment to the “Manual on Ministry” of the United Church of Christ.

Current Pastor _____
Date _____

Former
Pastor _____ Date _____

Witness for the

Congregation _____

Date _____

Witness for the

Association _____ Date _____

XII. Guideline adoption

These guidelines were adopted by the Penn Central Conference Board of Directors on January 17, 2009 and recommended to each Association. Committees on Ministry voted to adopt the guidelines at subsequent meetings.