

# SEARCH AND CALL CONVERSATIONS



**For United Church of Christ Conference Staff**



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## RESOURCES

Materials and tools for your Conference or Association working with Local Churches in pastoral transition are available from the Ministerial Excellence, Support, and Authorization (MESA) Team of the United Church of Christ.

### Resources:

- MESA website: [www.ucc.org/ministers](http://www.ucc.org/ministers)
  - o Search and Call: [http://www.ucc.org/ministers\\_search-and-call](http://www.ucc.org/ministers_search-and-call)
    - Local Church Profile
    - Ministerial Profile
- UCC Search and Call Tools
  - o Ministerial Profiles Portal with Snapshot database: <https://uccprofiles.ucc.org>
  - o UCC Ministry Opportunities: <http://oppsearch.ucc.org>
  - o *Conference User Guide*: <http://uccfiles.com/pdf/User-Guide.pdf>
- Search and Call Church Kit, available from UCC Resources:
  - o Progress Poster
  - o *Discernment Travelogue*
  - o Marks Mosaic Cards
  - o *Call Agreement Workbook*
  - o *Guide to Pastoral Search and Call: Local Church*
  - o *Guide to Pastoral Search and Call: Intentional Interim*
- Stretching Beyond Bias video series: <https://vimeo.com/album/5604408>
- *A Sure Foundation: Resources for the Relationship between Pastors and Congregations* – [www.ucc.org/ministers\\_local-church-leaders](http://www.ucc.org/ministers_local-church-leaders)

## INTRODUCTION

*“Test everything. Hold onto the good.” – I Thessalonians 5:21*

Pastoral ministry has a way of advancing God’s purposes through faithful partnership between minister(s) and congregation(s), each responding to God’s calling in order to serve better together than they could on their own. How we describe ministerial positions in the church, how these positions are titled, and how candidates are sourced, leads to important conversations.

This resource was created out of such conversations across conferences of the United Church of Christ. It clarifies seven themes for use by those in Search and Call ministry representing a Conference or Association. It responds to conversations happening among ethnic-specific churches, small churches, large churches, conferences, denominations, ministers, and consultants. It acknowledges a context in which the norm of congregational ministry still is one pastor for one congregation, yet approximately 10% of pastors in UCC churches serve more than one congregation, one-fourth of UCC pastors identify as bivocational, and 17% of those in pastoral ministry lead a ministry team as a senior minister with associate(s).<sup>1</sup>

This “Conversations” guide with accompanying “Vocabulary: Local Church Search and Call in the United Church of Christ” examines the practice, ethos and values of UCC Search and Call. Each section of this document leads to application questions around continued decision-making and innovation by conference or association staff.

It is hoped you will read the whole booklet. It begins with candidate sourcing considerations in a diverse and multi-cultural church, explores the role of the Conference in Search and Call ministry, dialogues with non-judicatory professionals, and then looks carefully at four models as standard umbrella categories for ethical pastorates: intentional interim ministry, designated-term ministry, supply ministry, and – last but specifically not least – settled ministry.

Search and Call staff, like others practicing discernment with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, are encouraged to pray and vision, breathe and reflect, and draw on the wisdom of a living tradition.

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<sup>1</sup> *FACTs on Ministerial Leadership*. Findings from the United Church of Christ 2015 Faith Communities Today (FACT) Survey of Congregations.

## DIVERSITY: CALLING FORTH AND SHARING MINISTERIAL LEADERS

To live out their vocation in the world that God loves, churches raise up their own members and develop networks across churches for promoting and identifying those gifted for ministry. Versatile skills and experiences, cross-cultural competencies, valuable leadership and professional education are all added to a minister's toolkit over time.

When sourcing candidates for parish ministry, prevailing practice throughout the United Church of Christ is for conferences to report open vacancies by posting a position on *UCC Ministry Opportunities*, then to circulate to the local church an authorized minister's UCC Ministerial Profile.

The most common way ministers are identified and formed in the United Church of Christ is when a congregation helps shape one for ministry who goes away to serve a different congregation. However, the "child of the congregation" who is raised up within a congregation to serve that same congregation, is also a powerful model used within our churches. These can be lay persons, lay persons authorized temporarily for sacraments through the association, or lay persons on a journey as Members In Discernment preparing for ordained ministry. These can also be persons ordained to continue serving over time in their home congregation, with whom the association discerns readiness for the lifelong vocation of ordained ministry.

When anyone is ordained in and on behalf of the UCC, they carry with them the wider church's authority for leadership with Word and Sacrament. This shared authority extends across time and/or place, and is recognized by the ecumenical Christian tradition.

The purpose of pastoral leadership development within one congregation can be well-served by "child" models. Likewise, ethnic-specific churches who together form partnerships and relationships of exchange with other churches might effectively be served by traditions of elders appointing ministers in something of a "cohort" model among a closed circuit of churches.

At the same time, any church which considers for pastoral leadership *only* ministerial candidates from within its membership or closed networks is not availing itself of the resources held in covenant across the United Church of Christ. These include multi-

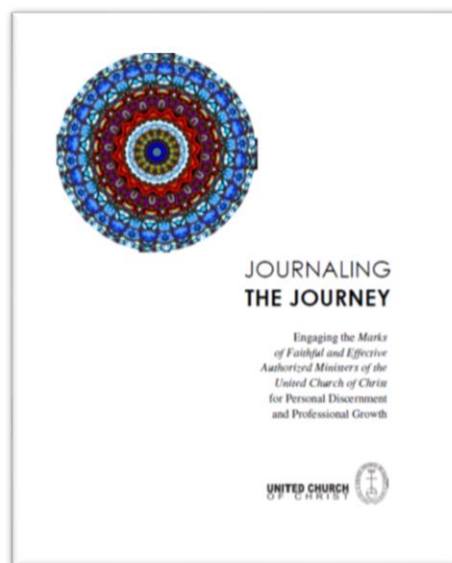
cultural resources, educational resources, and stewardship of the vocation of ministry across generations, including gifts that return to the local congregation from that same congregation sent out years before.

Because the UCC Ministerial Profile contains conference-staff validation of ministerial standing and fitness across all associations, the common language used is English. The Snapshot database, however, lists 40 different languages utilized by worshipping communities. By using the Snapshot database, conferences can resource multi-lingual faith communities with profiles of bilingual or multi-lingual ordained ministers.

Document translation services can be made available for use of the profile with a monolingual search committee. MESA is currently looking into future capacity for minister-provided content and references to be supported in the profile system using languages other than English.

### Questions for Application

- 1) What are the pros and cons of the “closed cohort” or “child of the congregation” models?
- 2) Where do you see these models working well, or not so well?
- 3) What is required to live into mutual covenants inter-culturally?



## THE CONFERENCE ROLE IN SEARCH AND CALL

The *UCC Constitution and Bylaws* places conferences in a position to serve both congregations and ministers by upholding two parts to “open search” – reporting all vacancies, and transmitting any eligible profile as requested by an ordained minister.

Currently about 140 staff members serve in the ministry of Search and Call, positioned between almost 5,000 congregations and up to 10,000 ordained UCC ministers across 38 Conferences. (Plus hundreds of Members in Discernment, those with Privilege of Call, those seeking Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing, and Formula of Agreement partners.) Staff meet with congregations and Search Committees; staff administer paperwork or recruit profiles; staff work to validate profiles that eventually reach search committees. Processes that work with a particular church also represent covenantal systems wider than the Local Church.

In general, what churches like about the United Church of Christ open search process is that it is a participatory process, decided by the congregation with prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Ministers like the open search process when they too can choose where they are led by God to go to serve their call. Additional values in the process are upheld by the conference representing the wider church: transparency so all parties set clear expectations, parity among all UCC candidates, confidentiality dealing with ministerial profiles, and intentionality dealing with change.

PREPARING for the Search	DISCERNING through the Search	COMPLETING the Search
<b>WHAT PROGRESS ARE WE MAKING IN THE TRANSITION TO A NEW PASTOR?</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Our governing body seeks out resources from the conference for a fruitful transition.	<input type="checkbox"/> The search committee meets with the conference to begin a Spirit-filled search.	<input type="checkbox"/> The search committee introduces the final candidate to us.
<input type="checkbox"/> With conference support, our governing body identifies transitional pastoral leadership.	<input type="checkbox"/> The conference posts our open position on UCC Ministry Opportunities.	<input type="checkbox"/> We meet the candidate and worship together, listening for the Spirit among us.
<input type="checkbox"/> We prepare a local church profile together, asking: <input type="radio"/> Who are we? <input type="radio"/> Who is our neighbor? <input type="radio"/> Who is God calling us to become?	<input type="checkbox"/> The search committee considers ministerial profiles received from the conference.	<input type="checkbox"/> We vote on whether to call this candidate to share in who we are, who our neighbor is, and who God is calling us to become.
<input type="checkbox"/> We form and commission a search committee.	<input type="checkbox"/> The search committee holds interviews to narrow the candidate pool.	<input type="checkbox"/> If the vote is affirmative, a call agreement is signed.
	<input type="checkbox"/> The search committee identifies a final candidate.	<input type="checkbox"/> We relocate (if needed) our new pastor and welcome this new season of our ministry.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Our governing body negotiates a compensation package with the candidate.	<input type="checkbox"/> With our association and our new pastor, we sign a covenant and plan an installation.

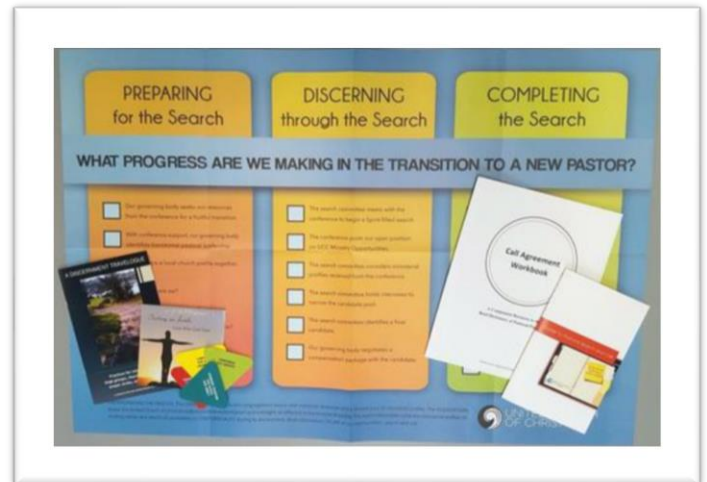
UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS: The CONFERENCE supports the congregation's search with transition resources and a diverse pool of ministerial profiles. The ASSOCIATION across the United Church of Christ provides ministerial authorization and oversight, as reflected in the ministerial profile. The search committee holds the ministerial profiles, including names and details of candidates, in CONFIDENTIALITY during its discernment. More information ONLINE at [ucc.org/transition\\_search\\_and\\_call](http://ucc.org/transition_search_and_call).

 UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



A Conference might work simultaneously with more than one church, and can bring lay leaders together across churches for maximum benefit. Typically, a Search and Call staff person working with one or more churches takes the following steps.

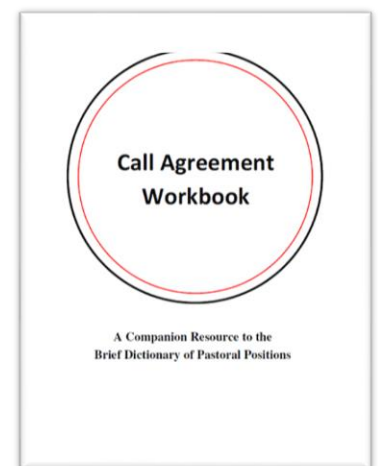
1. The Conference or Association representative meets with a congregation's Governing Body. They outline a process toward new ministerial leadership, and encourage leaders to organize important transition tasks in the life of the church. The Governing Body makes use of the process poster from MESA, *The Guide to Pastoral Search and Call*, and other tools for internal communication within the congregation.



2. Before advertising a church opening, the Conference is assured by the Governing Body that the church has prepared employment and compensation particulars, such as type of call and salary range. Parameters vary according to intentional interim, designated-term, settled ministry, or supply ministry, and should always reference current conference clergy compensation guidelines. Use of the *Call Agreement Workbook* is highly recommended.
3. During the intentional interim time, the Conference staff member provides the Local Church Profile template and related materials. The congregation's transitional leaders broadly engage the church community to conduct a process of conversation, engagement and discovery, documenting through the Local Church Profile the whole church's vision and needs for the next chapter of ministry. A later Search Committee will use the Local Church Profile in conversation with pastoral candidates.

*(Variation: The intentional interim minister often supports a Transition Team working on the Local Church Profile. Where there is no intentional interim minister, a church might draw on one minister for the supply role and a different resource-person for coaching with transitional work. Depending on availability, multiple churches may share the same coach.)*

4. At a significant juncture, Conference staff advises the creation of a Search Committee. In addition to using the Local Church Profile, the Search Committee will also use Scripture-informed resources for their practice of discernment together, such as “The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers,” and overcoming-bias videos from MESA.
5. The conference makes a listing on *UCC Ministry Opportunities* for the settled or for the designated-term position. Conference staff receives inquiries from authorized ministers concerning the position.
6. Conference staff provides to the Search Committee (in a settled scenario) or to the Governing Body (in a designated-term scenario) available UCC Ministerial Profiles. The Conference sources profiles via candidate direct request, and also via searching the Snapshot database to expand the pool of candidates. Criteria for “batch-sourcing” profiles include gifts, skills, and availability. These criteria should be named explicitly in conversation with church leaders.
7. Staff emphasizes confidentiality with profiles and reinforces a committee’s commitments to overcome bias. A Search Committee receives and reads profiles, selecting candidates for interview. Distance interviews proceed, with reference checks before an in-person interview, neutral pulpit, and candidating weekend. Some churches will combine later in-person steps. Conference staff remains available for support and consultation.
8. With a final candidate in view, the Search Committee relays information to the Governing Body for their negotiation of acceptable terms of call with the candidate.
9. After a shared worship experience with the minister preaching, the Search Committee presents the minister for a vote by the congregation. An affirmative vote is expected, reflecting the unity of the congregation.
10. A call agreement, already negotiated to describe the terms of call with clarity, is signed by both the minister and a representative of the Governing Body. The church will reference the call agreement, the Local Church Profile, and its Scope of Work in years to come, for the sake of ministry assessment and evaluation.

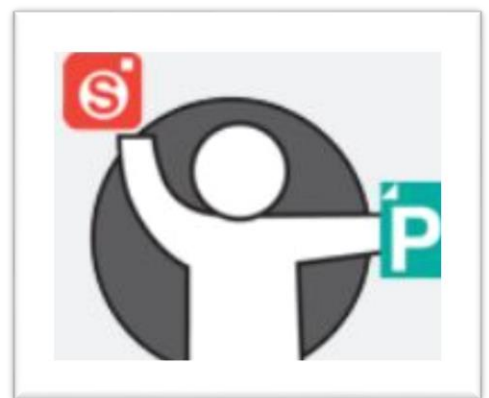


11. The minister meets with the local Committee on Ministry (COM) to establish relationship and standing as appropriate. The COM looks for membership and standing to be transferred in all settled and designated-term ministries, but not necessarily in intentional interim or supply ministries. The appropriate Association representative signs a Three-Way Covenant with the minister and the Local Church.
12. The Association takes part in an installation service appropriate for any settled minister, and sometimes in an installation service for the designated-term minister. The installation service clarifies for the whole community the nature and purpose of the pastorate, and celebrates the gifts and work of the church.

Most churches want to know the timeline for the above steps involved in filling a pastoral vacancy. Setting expectations appropriately requires practical wisdom.

In some cases allowing more time is useful, when long lists of candidates are not lining up, or when a church must work out conflict before being ready to form a Search Committee. Painful lessons from experience: the last thing a Search Committee wants to do is hurry and work through a laborious process only to find out that the church is not unified and cannot elect to call their candidate as minister, or they realize too late that there is no money to fund the position.

On the other hand, momentum and energetic participation in this in-between time are important. Conference staff can help the congregation organize its leadership for future-oriented tasks, beginning with clear communication from the Governing Body. The congregation can assemble a Transition Team if needed. A season of learning and preparation is important before the season of search itself, to help the congregation anticipate positive contributions by a future minister and match the call of a minister to the congregation's collective and prayerful vision.



Managing group anxiety and drawing out God's creative possibility is a hallmark of effectiveness in Search and Call ministry. A UCC local church makes its own decisions.

The wider church representative nevertheless has an opportunity to bring options and perspective, something true and something faithful, into a process which requires the guidance and the surprises of the Holy Spirit.

### **Questions for Application**

- 1) What do you love – and love to hate – about UCC Search and Call?
- 2) What do you need in order to support Local Churches in search?
- 3) How often do you pray for covenantal commitments that span time and place, while you pray for the congregations and ministers within your Conference?

## SUCCESSION MODELS WITH CONSULTANTS

Search and Call staff working with a congregation might want to know about a variety of approaches practiced by transitional consultants within and beyond the church.

*Process consultants* are different than *recruiting consultants* (or head-hunters). The former rely on organizational theory and leadership concepts also employed by intentional interim ministers as they consult with congregations on transitional tasks. The latter additionally recruit, vet, and recommend applicants, which intentional interim ministers do not do.

Any consultant selected by the congregation signs a contractual agreement with the congregation, and should work professionally and candidly with the Conference setting, utilizing UCC Ministerial Profiles on all UCC candidates. The congregation contracts with this outside resource-person to help assess circumstances, facilitate a process for the congregation, and hold accountability for boundaries with the outgoing minister.

"Succession planning" in general involves advance planning with the conference, and may include a period of intentional interim ministry prior to the next settled ministry.

"Direct succession" (without an interim time) is offered by consultants in response to a congregation's desire to maximize leadership continuity, prolong peak organizational performance, and achieve time efficiency.

Though normative in some traditions, direct succession is not typical in most UCC churches. A key feature in its success is the discerning presence of a consultant. Based on assessment of situational factors, including the congregation's particular circumstances and leadership, characteristics of current pastor and new pastor, a consultant might recommend the following models. Or the consultant might modify these models when contextualizing recommendations for a given church. As often as some churches start down one of these paths and see it through to the end, other churches start but end up changing or altering the path.

**A. Seamless Transition** - (Fred Schwerdt). The congregation decides ahead of time to plan an overlapping period between outgoing and incoming minister. A

third-party consultant accompanies the two ministers, ensuring a timeline for transitional tasks and a clean departure by the former pastor.

**B. Single-Phase Transition** - (Susan Beaumont). The congregation decides to utilize a minister already on staff in a temporary senior role, while a third-party consultant assists with transitional tasks in preparation for a new minister. Upon the new senior's arrival, the other staffmember retains their prior role.

**C. Succession Planning** - (Russell Crabtree). The current minister decides, and the congregation plans, a timeline where the new minister will start when the current minister leaves. During preparation and the search itself, a third-party consultant rather than an intentional interim minister assists the congregation with transitional tasks.

**D. Associate Pastor Succession** - (Susan Beaumont). The congregation plans with a consultant to consider an associate pastor for the senior pastor position. This candidacy is considered first. Depending on outcome, a public search process is undertaken. If the associate pastor is not selected for the senior position, the associate plans a graceful exit.

Any form of direct succession needs good boundaries from the current/departing settled minister, to be successful. Other factors matter as well. Before choosing direct succession, consider evaluating ten things: healthy church, mature outgoing pastor, mature incoming pastor, good match between pastors, congregational buy-in, clear preparedness, role clarity by leaders, and optimal timing.<sup>2</sup>

In any of the above models, a Search Committee made of representatives of the congregation still works with the conference to receive ministerial profiles. Search Committees are free to utilize other source networks and referrals, but at a minimum they receive any profile from the conference as requested by a UCC minister in good standing.

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<sup>2</sup> Anthony Robinson, "Another Option: Pastoral Succession." Chapter in ed. Norman B. Bendroth, *Transitional Ministry Today: Successful Strategies for Churches and Pastors* (NY: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 111-120.

In every case the opening is posted on *UCC Ministry Opportunities*. However, in the case of associate pastor succession, this public posting happens after the Search Committee has considered but decided against the candidacy of the associate pastor.

Churches employing consultant-based models have to date more often been multi-staff, large-membership congregations, with a successful and influential departing senior minister. If such a congregation has significant resources, ongoing patterns of self-assessment, and an organizational strategic plan, then working a pre-planned transition with a consultant rather than an intentional interim minister can be useful.

These models are not recommended, however, whenever a church is currently in the midst of conflict, when the impetus for choosing a direct successor is coming from the outgoing minister, or when the congregation's desire to avoid change is the motive for pre-planning leadership transition. See "Navigating Change," the next theme in this document.

### **Questions for Application**

- 1) What are some possibilities and some precautions you see with pre-planned direct succession?
- 2) To a congregation interested in a consultant's model for pastoral transition, what would you recommend?

## NAVIGATING CHANGE: INTENTIONAL INTERIM MINISTRY

UCC conferences, along with many judicatories ecumenically, often rely upon intentional interim ministers to resource congregations during a time of leadership transition. An intentional interim minister provides for churches some navigation of organizational dynamics, some openness to change, along with steady presence in the pastoral role.

Intentional interim ministers might be available and employed ecumenically. It is expected that with every UCC candidate each church use the UCC Ministerial Profile. The conference can use the Snapshot database and other relational networking to provide available profiles. Sometimes, conferences play a leading role in identifying and training additional ministers to serve an intentional interim role, or a related role as a transitional coach. Intentional interim ministers do not stay on in a pastoral role, but accompany a congregation with the perspective of an outsider, for typically 12-18 months.

The intentional interim minister might work directly with the settled-pastor Search Committee, depending on the guiding philosophy of conference staff, the minister's own capacity and skillset, and the specific terms of the call agreement. The minister should always work with the congregation's Transition Team and/or Governing Body, to help the congregation accomplish core tasks in preparation for a settled pastorate.

During or preceding ministerial transition, churches might deal with some difficult matters. Intentional interim work takes shape according to contextually-specific circumstances. Three general scenarios are described below, with additional considerations described by intentional interim ministers themselves.

- 1) The most common purpose served by an intentional interim minister is *helping the congregation prepare for a settled pastorate after the departure, death or retirement of a settled minister*. Creative organizational adaptation may help the church make the most of a new chapter. An intentional interim minister may be the one to raise awareness of current functioning and new possibilities, initiating changes if needed including staff change, governance change, or other change as needed. The interim also uplifts resources available but perhaps forgotten from the congregation's traditions, wider church relationships, and current community context. In this situation the intentional interim minister supports the success of the next pastor by absorbing anxiety and the outworkings of grief related to loss



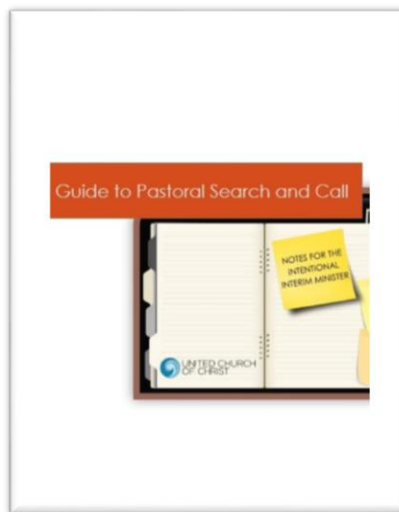
and change. Intentional interim ministry as a field was started out of the observation of short-tenure pastorates and rapid turnover following popular long-tenure pastorates – a phenomenon known as the “unintentional interim.”

- 2) A second purpose sometimes served by an intentional interim minister involves *leading deliberate activities to explore and heal a congregation's internal conflict*. In this case the minister brings process tools to facilitate process and mend rifts that would de-stabilize the next ministry chapter. This type of interim applies when previous leadership has covered over meaningfully divergent values in the mission of the congregation as a whole. It is also useful after cyclical pastoral turnover, when a congregation repeatedly targets a leader as the source of problems rather than utilize the leader's ability to help the church address its problems. The focus of the interim time is to prepare the body with clarity for a positive next chapter with a settled minister.
- 3) A third purpose served at times by an intentional interim minister includes tasks related to *serving a congregation after pastoral misconduct*. A congregation that must process trauma related to a previous pastor will need an intentional interim minister's approach to care, lament, and narrative, while taking steps to deal with public proceedings, insurance entities, and church policies and protocols. This specialization, sometimes called “after-pastor,” developed after limited bonding and effectiveness was noticed – with increased pastoral turnover – after ethical misconduct by a past pastor. The effective interim minister in this case will serve with extra transparency, and will leave behind a congregation that has an improved ability to trust itself in relationship with a new settled minister.

These three scenarios are very different from each other – whether the minister's function is to mix things up, calm things down, or debride wounds. The effectiveness of an intentional interim time depends upon the welcome of the congregation to do specific transitional work, and on a match between congregation and minister for that particular time. Use of the Snapshot database as well as the profile can help the conference identify possible candidates with an appropriate skillset. The Governing Body (or in some cases an abbreviated Search Committee) selects one candidate on behalf of the congregation to lead and serve during this important season.

A congregation's completion of transitional work, and its readiness to seek a new settled minister, precede the work of a settled-pastor Search Committee. The minister and lay leaders during the interim time may be guided by resources such as:

- *Guide to Pastoral Search and Call* – for the Intentional Interim Minister
- Local Church Profile
- Training and peer-mentoring provided by the Interim Ministry Network



Additional purposes served by intentional interim ministers sometimes include congregational discernment toward bold decisions: revitalization, relocation, redevelopment, new ministry planning, merger, or church closure. Interim ministry has been growing in this direction over the past decade, alongside church life-cycle realities and a changing landscape for ministry. However, any church drawing upon a minister for a time of significant adaptation (more *transformation* than *transition*) might begin to frame the term at the outset not as an interim time but as a designated-term instead.

For instance, a congregation re-inventing its mission or staffing needs might be better served by a short-term pastor who is not named an intentional interim minister, but rather a “designated-term” pastor. A designated-term pastor has the congregation’s commitment for a certain number of years, but unlike an interim may additionally be eligible for a settled call (depending upon the terms stated in the call agreement). See “Addressing the Context,” the next theme in this document.

**Note:** An ordained minister who is trained in intentional interim ministry is also eligible to serve in other ministerial or consultant roles. However, having started in one church as an intentional interim, in that particular setting the minister cannot ethically re-write the terms of call in order to be considered for any further designated-term or settled position. This means in some cases that a separate designated-term minister will follow after the intentional interim minister, if the church is still facing adaptive changes or is not yet positioned for a settled minister.

### **Questions for Application**

- 1) What are some strengths and some challenges you see in the intentional interim model?
- 2) What resources help you guide a congregation as to the purpose of an interim time, and help the congregation know when its transition tasks are completed?
- 3) Where do you refer intentional interim ministers for training and development?

## ADDRESSING THE CONTEXT: DESIGNATED-TERM MINISTRY

Life-cycle realities and the changing landscape for ministry drive new adaptations by churches looking not just at staffing transition, but other changes as well. Financial changes. Cultural changes. Organizational changes.

UCC conferences in resourcing pastoral vacancies have realized the Church exists in mission to serve needs and opportunities that are always evolving. Short-term ministers who accept a call for a certain number of years may bring organizational skills in merger, relocation, ministry start-up, or redevelopment. Or they may be ministers who are more widely geographically available given a shorter time-frame, or who could serve a church as it closes. Titles, scenarios, and specializations abound and are multiplying for 1-year, 2-year, 3-5 year terms. The commonality among them is a designated *time period* for a designated *purpose*.

The congregation in a designated-term scenario might not have capacity for a Search Committee. Local church leadership on the Governing Body must define the term of the pastorate, and the purpose of the pastorate, before receiving profiles and interviewing candidates. It is made clear whether the position is renewable, or not, and whether it might become a settled call, and on what basis.

In all cases the designated-term position is publicly posted on UCC Ministry Opportunities. The conference using the Snapshot database can help identify candidates whose gifts and skills and availability match with the congregation's stated purpose for the designated-term: e.g. revitalization, closure and legacy, yoked pastorate, or the start of a new ministry.

The congregation will have a chance to vote to elect the Governing Body's candidate, understanding the length and scope of the designated-term, and the basis for assessment. An installation service, if relevant, makes clear the purpose of the term (whether revitalization, relocation, redevelopment, new ministry planning, or church closure), and invites covenantal accountability with the Association.

The designated-term model is not to be used in a situation where transitional work is needed, but the congregation seeks to avoid that work. Rather, this model is meant to equip significant transformational work by a congregation in a time of adaptive change.

Because the Conference is asked for more involvement and investment when resourcing this model of Search and Call, a Conference can require certain commitments by the congregation. For example, a Transition Team might be required to work with the designated-term minister to achieve stated goals, and to consult with the Conference on appropriate assessment near the end of the term.

The congregation limits its freedom to conduct a search for a new minister before the pre-decided assessment date. After such assessment, the congregation can discern renewal of the minister's term, or the call to a settled position. Should the minister and congregation decide to extend and accept a settled call, the designated-term minister is considered an internal candidate, and the search is not opened up more broadly. If the designated-term minister's call is not renewed, or if the minister decides to move on, the Conference again works with the church in a Search and Call process open widely to new candidates.

### **Questions for Application**

- 1) What are some situations in which you would – or would not – recommend a designated-term? How can the Call Agreement Workbook clarify these situations?
- 2) When would you ask the church to create a Local Church Profile to prepare for an effective designated-term pastorate? When would you expect a church to work together with the designated-term pastor on creating a Local Church Profile?
- 3) Does your conference make use of the New Beginnings Assessment Service (or something like it)? See <http://www.ucc.org/new-beginnings/>.

## CONGREGATIONAL MAINTENANCE: SUPPLY MINISTRY

A congregation that is not interested in transitional work to prepare for settled leadership, nor in significant evaluation and adaptation of its ministry around life-cycle challenges, is probably not interested in either an intentional interim or a designated-term minister. A congregation may simply want a supply minister.

Sometimes supply ministers are sourced from within a congregation: a layperson is identified to receive Lay Ministerial Standing on a temporary basis, or a retired ordained minister who is a church member is able to fulfill a season of service. Other times, supply ministers come through open search like other pastoral candidates, found through public posting or identified within the Snapshot database. Such openings may draw profiles including from Members in Discernment, Ordained Ministers, Ordained Ministerial Partners in related denominations, or pastors from denominations within the Formula of Agreement.

UCC conferences are free to provide profiles for supply ministry as needed, while posting the position on *UCC Ministry Opportunities*.

Good reasons for a congregation to enlist a supply minister include:

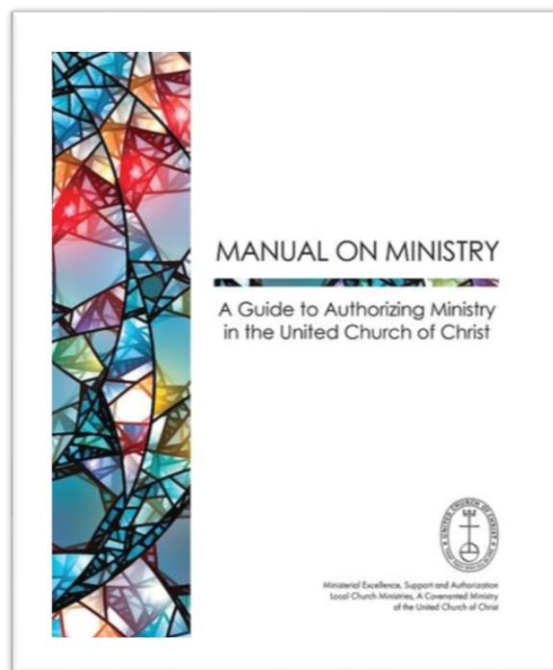
- Short-term medical emergencies
- Family leave
- A bridge period until the next pastor is available to begin
- Sabbatical
- Providing experience to a Member in Discernment
- Ongoing sacramental need

Congregations whose only limitation is financial – offering a part-time position – are not necessarily limited to a supply ministry model. Calling a settled minister may still be an option. (See “Enduring Togetherness,” the next theme in this document.)

Unlike settled ministry, the duration of a supply ministry ends at a pre-defined time. If there is little clarity on that ending date, a supply ministry should be re-assessed yearly by the congregation in consultation with the conference and in keeping with the association’s requirements for Lay Ministerial Standing.

## Questions for Application

- 1) What are the pros and cons of the supply model?
- 2) When and why does your Conference respond to a request for a supply minister?  
How and when is the Association Committee on Ministry involved?
- 3) How are the beginning - and ending - of a supply ministry understood and ritualized?



## THE ENDURING VALUE OF TOGETHERNESS: SETTLED MINISTRY

What matters most for a settled position is an intentional vision of partnership shared between the life of the church and the vocation of the authorized minister. This level of joyful commitment and relationship over time is significant, and sought by most churches.

A value on enduring relationship originates for deep spiritual and practical reasons from the covenantal tradition of the UCC:

- 1) Scripture. An ordained minister's service is not defined as a managerial position with the church, nor is the church's relationship defined as managerial over the minister. Instead the nature of a pastoral call is a mature promise between two responsible parties who choose to lay their service before God and – with God's help – to pick up certain commitments toward one another and one another's growth through time.
- 2) Practice. Teams and partnerships function better, the longer they are together. This includes handling both change and continuity through time.

A search committee will do well to consult "The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers" to learn about and articulate the expectations on an ordained minister who can serve among them and equip them for their faithful calling. The church using a Local Church Profile will understand and convey the most reliable picture of their own ministry and ministry potential, identifying the purposes for which they need a minister, and avoiding unrealistic expectations.

At times settled ministry is compared to marriage, and it is true that covenantal commitment is involved (as opposed to casual dating). But this metaphor has its limits. A pastorate is not lifelong. This covenant involves outside parties from the association. And, while ministry involves qualities of love and sacrament, it equally involves professional organizational leadership, for which there are many "right" possibilities.

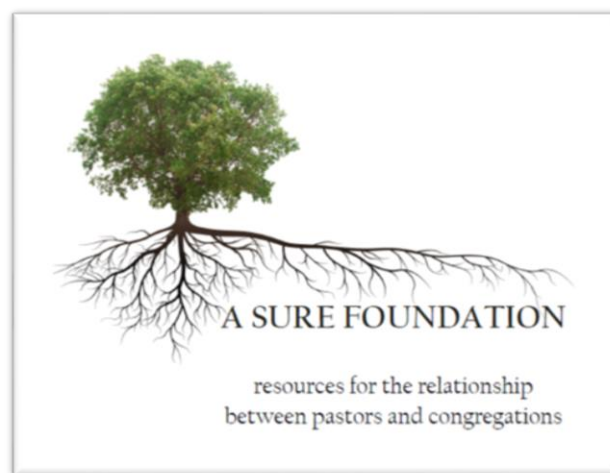
Options for a settled pastor include: a part-time pastor; a yoked or shared pastor; a team of part-time pastors; a senior/associate team of ministers; a co-pastor team; or, a single full-time pastor. In addition to posting on *UCC Ministry Opportunities* and receiving profiles by candidate request, a conference can use keywords, availability or



specialization criteria in the Snapshot database to look up possible candidates. The Search Committee will review profiles and conduct interviews in order to identify a match of ministry purpose and gifting. The longest-lasting form of ministry might typically be full-time, but full-time compensation does not define a settled pastorate.

The best preparation for a long-term, successful pastorate will involve a written Scope of Work, a statement of boundaries related to previous pastors, a behavioral covenant, the presence of a personnel committee to do regular reviews and to recommend annual pay increases, the presence of a Pastoral Relations Committee, and clear encouragement toward a minister's standing and participation in the wider church. See more recommended practices and tools in the MESA resource: *A Sure Foundation*.

Any call agreement should reinforce best practices of compensation and employment. Fair and just compensation in all situations is designed to allow, encourage and support sources for livelihood and a schedule for the minister on par with an appropriate community standard of living. Family health insurance, pension plan, sabbatical and continuing education are important benefits for all settled ministers. Benefits should be included in any part-time position just like a full-time position, to encourage minister retention and to draw the widest possible pool of candidates.



### Questions for Application

- 1) What metaphor do you use to describe settled ministry?
- 2) How might congregations encourage long-term minister retention?



# Search and Call Conversations: Appendix

## VOCABULARY: LOCAL CHURCH SEARCH AND CALL IN THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

### Introduction:

This document was created in hopes of identifying a common vocabulary of ministerial positions within the United Church of Christ. A document of this type has long been requested by judicatory staff in order to increase consistency and shared understandings of ministerial positions within local churches. The definitions outlined here focus on local church positions, not conference staff or other wider-church positions.

The vocabulary is organized into four categories of ministerial positions: Settled, Intentional Interim, Designated-Term, and Supply. Each category gives a general definition of the ministerial position, examples of the types of pastoral roles found within that category, and a list of considerations to take into account for the search and call process.

Categories were created out of a collaborative process involving research and discernment across conferences. More than two-thirds of UCC conferences responded or participated in 2014 focus groups, surveys and interviews. In sharing this fruit harvested from an inductive method, with attention to the UCC Constitution and Bylaws, MESA returns thanks for collegial partnership and hopes that this document is a positive step forward in our shared ministry.

### General Assumptions

- *All positions involve the use of ministerial profiles, which document eligibility for United Church of Christ employment.*
- *All positions involve a timely listing through UCC Ministry Opportunities, as accepted public reporting of ministerial vacancies.*

## Category 1: Settled Pastor

**Settled Pastor** (Senior Pastor / Associate Pastor / Solo Pastor / Co-Pastor / Part-Time Pastor / Yoked Pastor) – a called position intended for longer-term ministry in which the minister moves church membership to the congregation served and moves standing to related association

- ❖ *Senior Pastor* – a settled pastor position which oversees one or more authorized ministers in a congregation
- ❖ *Associate Pastor* – a settled pastor position under the direction of a senior pastor; often associate or assistant pastors have special titles and portfolios such as minister for pastoral visitation, executive minister, youth minister or other specialization
- ❖ *Solo Pastor* – a settled pastor position which is the only authorized minister on staff of a congregation
- ❖ *Co-Pastor* – more than one settled pastor serving jointly in the same congregation
- ❖ *Part-Time Pastor* – a settled pastor who works fewer than forty hours per week
- ❖ *Yoked or Shared Pastor* – a settled pastor serving more than one congregation in intentional relationship

## **Search and Call Considerations for Settled Pastor Positions:**

Role of the Conference/Association: The conference works with church leadership to understand the transition process, to convey guiding practices, and to establish a search committee when a church is ready. The conference provides ministerial profiles to the settled-pastor search committee. The conference further recommends clarification of practices and policies that can guard against premature pastoral turnover (compensation guidelines, job description, conflict resolution policy, personnel and pastoral relations committees, standing in association, and ministerial boundaries for the departing pastor).

Use of the Ministerial Profile: A settled-pastor search committee uses ministerial profiles for comparison and discernment of best candidates for consideration, interview and possible call. The profile also meets the employer's (the church's) obligation for background screening on UCC authorized ministers.

UCC Ministry Opportunities: The vacant settled-pastor position is listed on the opportunities website to raise visibility, deepen leadership wells and candidate pools, and fulfill "open search" provision. Settled candidates are identified by minister request, the searchable Snapshot Database, and other networking.

Ethics for the Minister: Upon departure, pastor will not return to serve the congregation or its members in any pastoral capacity. For a minimum of one year up to three years, the minister will observe a no-contact boundary with congregants and will teach congregants to observe the same. This boundary enables the past minister to fulfill the ministerial code of ethics, in support of the congregation's relationship-building with a new minister. Re-establishing contact is considered only after negotiation with the new minister, potentially in dialogue with a wider church representative.

## Category 2: Intentional Interim Pastor

**Intentional Interim Pastor** – a called position for a temporary term of congregational preparation for a settled-pastor search, in which the minister does not typically move church membership to the congregation served nor move standing to the related association

- ❖ *Interim Minister or Transitioning Pastor* – an interim pastor who fulfills the pastoral role and who also facilitates intentional transitional work with the congregation preparing for a settled pastorate
- ❖ *Professional Interim or Transition Ministry Specialist* – an interim pastor whose career consists predominantly of such settings; may have specializations such as head-of-staff, after-pastor, or conflict facilitation
- ❖ *Transitional Consultant* – a resource-person who facilitates intentional transitional work with the congregation while the congregation is served by a different pastor; may bring specialization such as seamless transition, associate-pastor succession, or other skills

## **Search and Call Considerations for Intentional Interim Positions:**

Role of the Conference/Association: The conference works with the interim-minister search committee, if there is one, to provide profiles. The conference further resources the local church's transition team with a guidebook for transitional work together with the minister during the interim period.

Use of the Ministerial Profile: Congregational leadership or interim-minister search committee uses ministerial profiles to discern a match for their needs during an interim term. The profile also meets the employer's (the church's) obligation for background screening on UCC authorized ministers.

UCC Ministry Opportunities: The position is listed on the opportunities website to raise visibility, deepen leadership wells and candidate pools, and fulfill "open search" provision. Interim candidates are identified by minister request, through the searchable Snapshot Database, and by other networking.

Ethics for the Minister: An interim minister will not be considered as a candidate for the settled position. S/he will complete the interim term but will not put aside the terms of an interim-specific call agreement to stay on indefinitely. Upon departure, pastor will not serve the congregation nor serve members of the congregation in a pastoral capacity.

### Category 3: Designated-Term Pastor

**Designated-Term Pastor** (Merger / Closure / Revitalization / Legacy / Repositioning / Redevelopment / Relocation / New Church / Healing) – a called position for a designated time period for a defined purpose, in which the pastor may move church membership to the congregation served and may move standing to the related association

- ❖ *Revitalization or Turnaround Pastor* - a designated-term pastor who is called for a specific time period and for a specific purpose: the revitalization of the congregation; after the initial designated term, the pastor is potentially eligible for the settled pastor position
- ❖ *Hospice or Legacy Pastor* - a designated-term pastor who is called for a specific time period and for a specific purpose: the closure tasks of a congregation
- ❖ *Redevelopment or Repositioning Pastor* - a designated-term pastor who is called for a specific time period and for a specific purpose: the creation of an identified new ministry within or alongside a current congregation; after the initial designated term, the pastor is potentially eligible for the settled pastor position
- ❖ *New Church Start Pastor* - a designated-term pastor who is called for a specific time period and for a specific purpose: the gathering of a new church; after the initial designated term, the pastor is potentially eligible for the settled pastor position
- ❖ *Other* - a designated-term pastor who is called for a specific time period and for a specific purpose: such as merger, relocation, reunification, cultural reassessment, staff transition, selling a building, or healing a crisis; may be eligible for the settled position or for a renewed designated term, according to initial call agreement



## **Search and Call Considerations for Designated-Term Positions:**

Role of the Conference/Association: Before receiving profiles, a church works with the conference to clarify the purpose of the next juncture (i.e. utilizing New Beginnings assessment service) to document the basis of a designated-term position. The conference supplies a select batch of profiles to church leadership or to a search committee if one exists. The conference also holds accountability at certain measuring points in time, assessing how the work is progressing. The church at pre-identified points in time is free to change to a new strategy of search and call or a new vision of its next minister; the conference may require reports or commitments of the congregation and/or minister in preparation.

Use of the Ministerial Profile: Congregational leadership uses ministerial profiles to discern a match for ministry during the marked period of time. The profile also meets the employer's (the church's) obligation for background screening on UCC authorized ministers.

UCC Ministry Opportunities: The position is listed on the opportunities website to raise visibility, deepen leadership wells and candidate pools, and fulfill "open search" provision. Candidates for designated-term pastorates are identified by minister request, through the searchable Snapshot Database, and by other networking.

Ethics for the Minister: Designated-term ministers may or may not be eligible to be considered for a renewed term or a settled position, according to initial terms of call and agreed-upon timetable. Designated-term ministers will not put aside the terms of the call agreement to stay on indefinitely. Upon conclusion of a ministry, pastor will not return to serve congregation nor serve members of the congregation in a pastoral capacity.

## Category 4: Supply Pastor

**Supply Pastor** (Short-Term Supply / Long-Term Supply / Sabbatical Supply / Bridge / Acting / Pulpit Supply / Sustaining Pastor) – a temporary position in which the pastor does not move membership to the congregation served nor move standing to related association

- ❖ *Short-Term Supply* – a temporary pastor who steps in during a time of immediate need, generally filling a position that is not tenable to leave vacant for any length of time; circumstances could be a death, serious illness, family leave, unexpected resignation, among other situations
- ❖ *Bridge Pastor* – a temporary pastor who steps in while a congregation is deciding what path they will take to fill a pastoral vacancy, or for reasons of timing before an intentional interim minister or settled minister can begin
- ❖ *Sustaining Pastor* – a temporary pastor who fills pastoral duties while a congregation is in search, who is not eligible to be called for the settled position; formerly referred to as 'Sustaining Interim' but with no emphasis on transitional interim work
- ❖ *Acting* – a staff member who temporarily steps up to a senior position but does not keep it; or a temporary pastor who fills the pastoral role while a congregation is in search and who remains eligible to be called for the settled position. *See preferred: Supply Minister or Designated-Term Pastor.*
- ❖ *Long-Term Supply* – a temporary pastor who fills pastoral duties indefinitely, while not called as the congregation's minister
- ❖ *Sabbatical Supply* – a temporary pastor who fills pastoral duties while a settled pastor is on sabbatical
- ❖ *Pulpit Supply* – a temporary preacher/worship leader on a week-to-week basis

- ❖ *Student Pastor* – a temporary pastor whom the congregation agrees to help form and prepare for ministry

### **Search and Call Considerations for Supply Pastor Positions:**

Role of the Conference/Association: The conference works with congregational leadership to provide at least one profile of a minister with demonstrated capacity and willingness.

Use of the Ministerial Profile: Congregational leadership uses ministerial profile(s) to meet the employer's (the church's) obligation for background screening on UCC authorized ministers.

UCC Ministry Opportunities: The position is listed on the opportunities website to raise visibility, deepen leadership wells and candidate pools, and fulfill "open search" provision. Candidates for supply ministry are identified by minister request, through the searchable Snapshot Database, and by other networking.

Ethics for the Minister: Following a supply ministry, pastor will only return to the congregation upon the agreement of an official representative of the conference and any current pastor.



[www.ucc.org/ministers](http://www.ucc.org/ministers)