

## A THREE-WAY MINISTRY COVENANT

### Among

\_\_\_\_\_ (*Local Church or Membership*)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (*Authorized Minister*)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (*Association*)      \_\_\_\_\_ (*Conference*)

### ABOUT THE THREE-WAY COVENANT for Leave of Absence Standing

Leave of Absence is a ministerial standing for Ordained Ministers experiencing a prolonged life season when they are neither seeking nor engaged in professional ministry. Such a season might include family leave to care for a new child or an aging parent, study leave to begin an academic program, vocational discernment when a person reassesses their professional path, sick leave following a serious accident or health crisis, or other reasons. During such a season, Leave of Absence modifies the expectations for the ecclesial relationship between the Ordained Minister and their Association, in order to make room for life changes and/or vocational discernment.

An Ordained Minister requests Leave of Absence in writing to the Committee on Ministry where they hold ministerial standing. In conversation with the Committee on Ministry, expectations for the duration of Leave of Absence are outlined in a covenant that includes the Ordained Minister's responsibility for--or reprieve from—requirements for maintaining standing, the ongoing relationship with Local Church of membership, the Ordained Minister's authorization (or not) to perform acts of ministry, and the agreed-upon method of renewing Leave of Absence annually (up to five years) and the process for when the Leave of Absence expires.

The United Church of Christ advises that when an Authorized Minister has chosen to maintain Leave of Absence Standing a covenantal relationship be established among the Authorized Minister, the Local Church, and the United Church of Christ as represented by an Association or Conference. This relationship is known as a three-way covenant, with each party accountable to and for the others. The purpose of this covenant is three-fold:

1. to strengthen, support and sustain the ministries of all the partners that share in this covenant;
2. to encourage mutual participation and accountability of and for the life of each by the others;
3. to observe, nurture, celebrate, and call forth the ministry of the Ordained Minister with Leave of Absence Standing.

### COVENANTS OF MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

**seeking Leave of Absence Standing, as an Authorized Minister of the United Church of Christ covenants:**

To \_\_\_\_\_ *United Church of Christ* in \_\_\_\_\_:

- to serve a congregation (the Local Church of membership) in roles of service traditionally performed by lay persons such as participate on a committee, teach a class or serve as liturgist in worship, and guest preach when invited by the Local Church minister;
- Maintain membership in good standing with \_\_\_\_\_, including financial support for the general ministries of this church and a commitment to earnest prayer for the well-being of this congregation and its ministry and to embody the ethics of the UCC Ministerial Code;
- Fidelity to the terms of this covenant and dedication to the tasks as set forth.

To the \_\_\_\_\_ where standing is held:

- Participation in Association Annual Meetings, Ministerium gatherings, Conference Annual Meetings and to communicate with the Association and Conference when able;
- To vote at meetings when appropriate;
- Adherence to oversight by the Association Committee on Ministry in accordance with the guidelines outlined in this Covenant. The following requirements for maintaining standing are waived or modified (*state the manner of modification*)

○ Boundary Training

\_\_\_\_ Waived

\_\_\_\_ Modified in this manner: \_\_\_\_\_

○ Life-long Learning

\_\_\_\_ Waived

\_\_\_\_ Modified in this manner: \_\_\_\_\_

○ Other Requirements

\_\_\_\_ Waived

\_\_\_\_ Modified in this manner: \_\_\_\_\_

- To refrain from seeking ministerial positions, entering into Call Agreements, providing on-going Pulpit Supply;
- To refrain from public acts of ministry, **unless** invited by an Ordained Minister in good standing. The following **exceptions** are allowed:

\_\_\_ Officiating at weddings and/or funerals

\_\_\_ Pulpit supply

\_\_\_ Celebrating Sacraments

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*Additionally, as a Minister with Leave of Absence Standing I understand: that my standing can transfer across Associations, and that I may request to reinstate my Active Ministerial Standing in the Association where my Leave of Absence Standing is held should I desire to return to Active Ministerial Standing.*

**United Church of Christ, as the Local Church of Membership covenants:**

To \_\_\_\_\_:

- Belief in God's call that has led you to this particular season of mission and ministry;
- Prayers for \_\_\_\_\_ work with the \_\_\_\_\_;
- Public recognition of an Ordained Minister with Leave of Absence Standing as a member of the congregation and extend invitations to co-officiate rites and sacraments when appropriate;

To the \_\_\_\_\_

- Appropriate documentation of an ordained minister with Leave of Absence Ministerial Standing;
- Fidelity to the covenants of mutual accountability as articulated in this document.

**The \_\_\_\_\_ of the United Church of Christ covenants:**

To \_\_\_\_\_:

- All of the rights and responsibilities of an authorized minister in this Association.
- Clear communication of this Association's/Conference's requirements for good Leave of Absence Ministerial Standing;
- Will maintain annual contact with the Minister holding Leave of Absence Standing, in order to keep accurate contact information and communicate relevant information from

the Association/Conference, ensuring that the minister’s Leave of Absence Standing is recorded in the UCC Data Hub.

To \_\_\_\_\_, *United Church of Christ*:

- Belief in the local church as the locus for mission and ministry in the United Church of Christ and thankfulness for your support of the ordained minister with Leave of Absence Standing;
- Appropriate support and oversight of all ministers in three- or four-way covenants with your congregation.

**Covenant to be renewed or revised by (Date)** \_\_\_\_\_

At the end of **five years** from the first date of signing, this Covenant will expire. At that time, standing will be terminated without bias unless the following are met:

- The Ordained Minister with Leave of Absence Standing requests in writing to the Committee on Ministry that they return to active Ordained Ministerial Standing; (*note: The Ordained Minister must provide proof that the requirements for maintaining standing are current or they have plans to become current within one year*)

**OR**

- The Ordained Minister requests in writing to the Committee on Ministry to resign their standing.

We trust in God’s presence with us as we seek to be faithful to this covenant:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Ordained Minister with Leave of Absence Standing

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Authorized Minister/President, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
UCC Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date