

**The Placement System  
Maine Conference, United Church of Christ  
Policies and Procedures  
2005, Revised January 2009**

**Preface**

The time of transition when a pastor leaves—whether for another church or to retire—is a time of loss and grief, as well as an opportunity for new growth for both congregation and pastor. It is the desire of the Maine Conference UCC to provide each church and each minister in the search process with pastoral care and technical assistance throughout the search process. While our placement system is in some ways similar to the systems of other Conferences, it also is uniquely our own, based on our unique experiences and designed to meet the needs of our churches. We hope that this document will make clear our search-and-call policies and procedures.

**Profiles**

Any UCC candidate seeking a church first must have the Office of Local Church Ministries: Parish Life and Leadership (PLL) forward a current profile to our Placement Assistant. Only official ministerial profiles distributed by the PLL profile office will be circulated to search committees in the Maine Conference. The Conference Office will send profiles to the Chair of the Search Committee via mail or electronically.

Profiles are sent with the consent of the candidate and only at his/her request. The Maine Conference will not withhold a UCC profile from a search committee unless the Conference has knowledge of an impending fitness review. The Maine Conference requires that an Oxford Documents Criminal Background Check (CBC) accompany all profiles that circulate in Maine. The Maine Conference will not circulate any profile with a CBC that is more than eighteen months old.

Profiles are confidential documents and should not be shared outside the search committee. At the conclusion of the search process, a search committee should keep a summarized record of the number of profiles received and a description of gender and racial distribution of potential candidates. With the exception of the profile of the final candidate, all other profiles should be destroyed.

**Procedures Unique to the Maine Conference**

1. The Maine Conference requires each local church to complete the Local Church Profile (LCP) developed by the Office of Local Church Ministries: Parish Life and Leadership (PLL). According to Maine Conference policies, the local church search committee is responsible for sending its own LCP to pastoral candidates. Maine Conference staff will not send the LCP to any candidate.
2. The Maine Conference also requires each local church to complete a Prospectus, which summarizes information in the Local Church Profile. In order to encourage interest in pastoral positions, Conference placement staff will send the Prospectus to pastoral candidates.
3. The Maine Conference serves local church search committees through the ministry of its Placement Team. The Placement Team consists of the Conference Minister, the Associate Conference Ministers, and the Placement Assistant. One of the ministers is assigned to work with each local church search committee.

4. The Maine Conference Placement Team requires each local church wishing to utilize the placement services of the Conference to sign a mutual “Covenant around the Search Process.” (See Appendix A.)
5. When a local church search committee requests that the Placement Team set up a neutral pulpit for the purpose of experiencing a candidate’s worship leadership, the Placement Team will place a temporary hold on forwarding ministerial candidates’ profiles so that the search committee can focus upon evaluating the neutral pulpit candidate. Forwarding of new ministerial profiles will resume when the search committee informs the Placement Team that the neutral pulpit candidate is no longer under consideration.
6. The Maine Conference requests that each local church pay the costs of Criminal Background Checks (CBCs) for its interim and settled pastors. (Currently, each CBC costs \$140.) At the beginning of a local church’s search for an interim or a settled minister, the Conference will send the local church an invoice—one invoice per interim or settled search—to cover the cost of a CBC. The church should submit the requested funds directly to the Conference, which will hold the money in escrow. When the local church selects its called/settled minister, transitional/interim minister, or student pastor, the Maine Conference will use the escrowed funds in order to reimburse the called candidate for his or her CBC—provided that the candidate has utilized the services of the Maine Conference Placement Team. Each called candidate will be eligible for reimbursement of a single fee paid. The Maine Conference will make reimbursement—if funds were received from the local church—at the time the candidate begins employment in the local church by which she/he has been called.

## **References**

All search committees and all candidates must have on file in the Conference office a signed consent form, which allows each party to seek information regarding the other. No profiles—including interim profiles—will be circulated without a consent form. At the request of a search committee, a conference minister will complete a reference check with the Conference in which a candidate has his or her standing, in an effort to discern whether there exist any known issues regarding fitness for ministry. The information shared in this reference check is confidential. We encourage all clergy seeking a call in the Maine Conference UCC to speak with a conference minister regarding employment openings in the Conference, thereby learning whether any positions might be a particularly good fit given a candidate’s experience level.

## **Non-UCC Clergy**

With the exception of Ordained Ministerial Partners of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), it is the policy of the Maine Conference to not circulate non-UCC credentials to our search committees; as a general rule, the Conference also does not conduct reference checks on non-UCC clergy. Non-UCC clergy wishing to seek placement in Maine Conference UCC must apply for “privilege of call” in the geographical location where they currently reside.

Exceptions to this policy may occur when a local church is not able to find a suitable candidate. Exceptions to this policy are also made during searches for interim ministers. The Maine Conference *will* circulate the credentials of non-UCC candidates for transitional ministry positions, provided that a candidate has completed an official UCC Transitional Ministry Profile (TMP).

In all cases, the Conference is unable to provide references or information on non-UCC clergy unless a UCC Statement of Consent and a Background Disclosure Statement are signed by the

clergy person and on file in the Conference office. Even in situations where the Conference helps gather information on non-UCC clergy, it must be understood that Association Church and Ministry Committees possess final responsibility for determining whether a minister can be authorized to perform ministry within their Association(s). A church with UCC insurance whose pastor lacks UCC ministerial authorization may have its coverage terminated.

### **Interim Ministers**

If you wish to be considered for interim ministry in the Maine Conference you must forward to the Conference's Placement Assistant a copy of the UCC Transitional Ministry Profile (TMP). It is available on the UCC website <<http://www.ucc.org/ministers/pdfs/imp.rtf>>. It must have a signed UCC Statement of Consent form with it. Non-UCC ministers will be considered for interim positions. It is our policy to give to a congregation a limited number of interim profiles that we think match the particular needs of the church in transition. For example, in some cases, it may be preferable to send the profiles of individuals who have had formal interim training and previous interim experience. In other cases, these characteristics are not critical. Congregations are free to request certain candidates' profiles if they are not included in those documents originally provided by the conference minister.

### **Small Churches**

Because we are a Conference of small churches—many of which employ only limited part-time pastoral assistance—we do not always follow the standard policies and procedures of the United Church of Christ Search-and-Call process. If we did follow standard procedures in all instances, many of our small churches would not receive any profiles. If you are interested in doing part-time ministry, you should have either a PLL profile—or, if you are a student, a resume—on file with the Conference. In addition, a signed Statement of Consent, signed Background Disclosure Form, and an Oxford Documents Criminal Background Check (CBC) is required for every candidate. If you learn of an employment opportunity in Maine that sounds interesting, you should inform the conference minister who is working with the church's search committee of your interest. In order to learn which conference minister is working with the church, phone the Conference Office and speak with the Conference Placement Assistant.

Thank you for your interest in serving the churches of the Maine Conference, UCC. We at the Conference wish you the best in your search-and-call endeavors and look forward to working with you!

Maine Conference UCC

Placement Assistant: Alyssa Lodewick, [placement@maineucc.org](mailto:placement@maineucc.org)

207-846-5118

## Appendix A

### **COVENANTING AROUND THE PASTORAL SEARCH PROCESS**

As your congregation undergoes the search for new pastoral leadership, the Maine Conference Placement Team covenants with you in the following ways; we promise to:

1. Provide spiritual and moral support to your fellowship during this interim period between past and future pastoral leadership.
2. Provide staff guidance to the governing board of the congregation when requested.
3. Provide staff guidance to the search committee for a minimum of three search committee meetings, during which we will:
  - Provide an overview of the search process; review the process of creating a Local Church Profile (LCP), a Church Prospectus, and an Advertisement for the UCC *Employment Opportunities Bulletin*.
  - Offer suggestions on evaluating Candidate Profiles; offer interview techniques and questions; review a finalized Local Church Profile (LCP).
  - Present a “Mock Candidate,” with whom search committee members may practice their interview techniques and receive critique on their effectiveness.
4. Assist in your search for new pastoral leadership by:
  - Advertising your vacancy nationally.
  - Introducing tested denominational materials to aid in your search.
  - Instructing your Search Committee as to how it may best use these resources.
  - Seeking and identifying potential candidates through the work of the Maine Conference Placement Team.
  - Furnishing you with information regarding salary, housing, and benefit guidelines, as well as arrangements operative in other congregations of comparable size within the Conference family.
  - Supplying your Search Committee with the profiles of all candidates who request that their credentials be shared, as well as the profiles of candidates suggested by Conference staff. In all cases, profiles will only be released to your Search Committee with candidates’ permission.
5. Ensure that each candidate profile comes with a Criminal Background Check and a Self-Disclosure statement from the candidate. These steps are taken in order to ensure that the local church has followed due-diligence procedures in selecting a qualified candidate.
6. Offer a personal and candid evaluation of any candidate upon request. If additional information is needed about the final list of candidates, the Conference staff person working with your church will do whatever research is necessary to gather the missing data.
7. Be responsive to all other requests of the Search Committee and congregation for additional assistance.
8. Reimburse the called candidate, upon receipt of their Call Agreement, the cost of their Criminal Background Check (CBC), IF such monies were paid the conference at the beginning of the search process.

The cost to the Maine Conference for an average search process is \$10,000.00

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Conference Staff Person

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Date

## Appendix B

In order to fulfill its covenant with the Maine Conference, the Governing Board/Committee and the Search Committee of \_\_\_\_\_ agree to:

1. Interpret to the congregation why the Interim Minister will not be considered as a candidate for the settled pastoral leadership position.
2. Complete the Congregational Profile as carefully, accurately, and rapidly as possible, having sought input of the whole congregation.
3. Correspond at least twice with each candidate whose profile is received:
  - a) first, to confirm that the Search Committee has received the profile and is considering it;
  - b) second, to notify candidates that they are no longer under consideration, as soon as such decisions are made.
4. Consider for candidacy only those clergy persons who: 1) are recognized as having ministerial standing within the United Church of Christ; 2) are non-UCC clergy persons who have been granted a current privilege of call by an Association within the United Church of Christ; or 3) are candidates approved by the Maine Conference Placement Team.
5. Inform the Conference Staff Person of all names of candidates received independently of the Conference Office; cease interacting with such candidates; clarify that the Search Committee will only consider those profiles and applications which come through the UCC office.
6. Strictly respect the confidentiality of the candidates and maintain that confidentiality in discussions with individuals outside the Search Committee.
7. Give equal consideration to all candidates regardless of their age, race, gender, nationality, marital status, or sexual orientation.
8. Schedule face-to-face interviews with candidates only after the Conference Minister has secured references from other Conference Staff.
9. Invite only the Search Committee's recommended candidate to preach before the congregation.
10. Consult with the Conference Staff Person before making revisions in the recommended pastoral search process.
11. Keep both congregation and Conference Staff Person regularly apprised of search progress, seeking clarification and counsel when needed.
12. Provide the Maine Conference with the cost for up to two Criminal Background Checks (one each for the Interim Pastor and the Settled Pastor), understanding that received monies will be placed in escrow and reimbursed to called candidate(s) upon the Conference's receipt of signed Call Agreement(s).
13. Engage in an intentional conversation with the Conference staff regarding financial support of the United Church of Christ; and continue contributions to both Fellowship Dues and OCWM.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Moderator of the Congregation

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

