

# 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.