

CENTRAL ASSOCIATION POLICY ON LICENSED MINISTRY (approved by Committee on Ministry Nov 2025)

A **licensed minister** is authorized by an Association of the United Church of Christ “to perform specific duties in a **designated local church** or **within that Association**, mainly preaching and conducting services of worship **for a designated time.**” (UCC Bylaws)

In the Central Association of the Keystone Conference, Licensure grants full sacramental authority within that local setting, and the minister is considered an authorized minister for participation in Association, Conference, and national meetings of the United Church of Christ. However, Licensure does not grant the individual authorization to represent the United Church of Christ beyond the local setting for ministry for which they have been authorized, or with individuals who do not have a connection with that local setting for ministry. Sacramental authority and officiating at marriages is approved only in connection with that specific location within the Central Association.

Licensed ministry may be considered when a local church needs pastoral and sacramental leadership but an ordained minister is not available. A license could be considered when a person feels their call is limited to a single setting, a small geographic area, or when ordination may require additional trainings to which the candidate does not feel called or wishes to pursue.

The Association Committee on Ministry (COM), in consultation with the local church requesting a person’s licensure, determines the specific duties and length of time for which the license is granted. A license is **not transferable to another ministry setting or Association**. If a licensed minister leaves one church to go to another, a new license is needed. Licensed ministers may use the UCC profile system to create, have validated, and circulate a profile within the Central Association or Keystone Conference. (https://www.ucc.org/what-we-do/justice-local-church-ministries/mesa/ministers/ministers_authorized/#:~:text=A%20licensed%20minister%20is%20authorized,authorized%2C%20for%20example%2C%20when%20a)

A call to licensed ministry, like one to ordained ministry, needs a season of discernment and assessment in partnership with one’s pastor and Association Committee on Ministry. This process includes:

- Application and formation (includes sacramental understanding, psychological evaluation, criminal background check, personal reflection on ministerial skill sets related to the 8 competency areas of the Marks, and completion of approved History and Polity Course)
- Call from a local church (or support from local UCC church of membership if seeking authorization to whole Association)
 - This call or support must be stated in each renewal cycle with a letter from the congregation to the Central Association COM

- If the licensure is to the whole association, the Executive Committee of the Central Association will be considered the calling body and will submit a letter outlining the need and the gifts of this candidate for the initial licensure and for each renewal cycle.
- Assignment of a ministry partner/sojourner (a seasoned minister in the association willing to be a ministry partner). This ministry partner will be responsible for supervision and annual evaluation of the licensed minister for at least the first three years of their license with a congregation.
- Completion of a Three- or Four-Way Covenant naming:
 - Annual Boundary Awareness Training (in accordance with Requirements to Maintain Standing document of the Central Association)
 - Annual Continuing Education (in accordance with Requirements to Maintain Standing document of the Central Association)
 - Annual Information Review and Ministry Update (using the Marks of Faithful and Effective Ministry)
 - Annual Support Conference with COM for renewal of license (renewal cycles may be longer for those holding their licenses for longer seasons, but should be clearly stated)

Licensed Ministers must renew their licenses with the Association Committee on Ministry annually for the first five years of standing. If the Licensed Minister remains in compliance and in need of authorization beyond this season, the Local Church, Central Association COM, and Licensed Minister may discern a longer renewal cycle and designate it in the Three- or Four- Way Covenant.

If a Licensed Minister's setting of service changes, the Central Association COM should be notified so that a new covenant and license may be established. Standing and Authorization end when the call ends unless arrangements have been made for moving into a new call.

If a Licensed Minister's setting of service includes more than one setting (example: serving a congregation while also serving in as an institutional chaplain), then a "dual license" may be granted.

All authorized ministers in the Central Association, including Licensed Ministers, are expected to abide by the UCC Ministerial Code and the Central Association Requirements to Maintain Standing, and are subject to all four oversight processes of authorized ministers (periodic Vocational Support, Situational Support Consultations, Annual Information Reviews, and Fitness Reviews). They can expect to receive the support, guidance, and oversight of the Central Association COM.

Reading List and Course Possibilities for Continuing Education (MARKS)

- Courses in Hebrew and New Testaments (ESST, PTP, ESFOSP)
- Christian Ethics (CAC, BTLS, WTJM)

- Basic Counseling for Pastors (SIIPA, ESST, CAC)
- Church History (ESFOSP, UCC, ESST, WTJM)
- Theology (ESST, PTP, UCC, ESFOSP, WTJM)
- Preaching (ESST, PTP, WTJM, CAC)
- Liturgy and Worship (ESFOSP, ESST, PTP, BTLS, UCC)
- Congregational Leadership (UCC, SIIPA, BTLS)
- Family Systems Theory (SIIPA, ESST, ESFOSP)
- *Dancing in the Darkness: Spiritual Lessons for Thriving in Turbulent Times* by Otis Moss III
- *Calendar: Christ's Time for the Church* by Laurence Hull Stokey
- *Faith Seeking Understanding* by Daniel Migliore
- *Preaching* by Fred Craddock
- *Dare to Lead* by Brene Brown
- *Canoeing the Mountains* by Tod Bolsinger
- *The Enneagram for Black Liberation: Return to Who You Are Beneath the Armor You Carry* by Chichi Agorom
- *Holy Envy* by Barbara Brown Taylor
- *Lament for a Son* by Nicholas Wolterstorff
- *The End of White Christian America* by Robert Jones