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Pastoral Ministry

HANDBOOK

Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA

About the Pastoral Ministry Handbook

Most of the Pastoral Ministry Handbook outlines policies, requirements, and procedures related to the various categories of United Brethren ministers. Additional chapters deal with the stationing of ministers and other information of relevance to ministers.

All of this material is the responsibility of the Pastoral Ministry Leadership Team, which is appointed by the bishop. The PMLT can revise the Pastoral Ministry Handbook at any time, which has risen to prominence in the Church at that particular time.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In its broadest sense, the term “minister” can be applied to all Christians who use the gifts God has given them. Within that understanding, all United Brethren members should be “ministers,” actively developing and using the gifts they have received.

In its more restrictive use, “minister” refers to individuals who have been recognized by the church as having received a more specific call from God. This call has been confirmed through a process of study and examination which has also equipped them to perform specific pastoral responsibilities within the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA.

The United Brethren church does not discriminate in granting ministerial credentials on the basis of gender or race.

Classifications

Ministers in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, can be classified as follows: local church ministers, national conference ministers, ordained elders, lay ministers, and specialized ministers. Specific descriptions for each of these classifications are described in subsequent chapters.

The first three classifications—local church minister, national conference minister, and ordained elder—are parts of a three-step process which may culminate in ordination. Local church ministers are expected to pursue either a national conference license or a specialized ministry license. National conference ministers are expected to pursue ordination.

Any of these classifications that are actively stationed or hired by a local church, and that meet current Internal Revenue Service requirements for exemption, are considered by the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, as eligible for such exemption.

General Qualifications

No person shall be approved or retained as a licensed minister in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, whose life is not in harmony with the established moral and social standards of the church as defined in the Discipline. In addition, ministers are not permitted to use tobacco, beverage alcohol, and illicit drugs, or to engage in any immoral conduct, and their marriage relationships must be in harmony with the teachings of Scripture as defined in the Discipline.

All ministers are required to attend and maintain membership in a local United Brethren church. Failure to do so will render the ministerial license null and void.

Expectations

1. General Statement

All ministers are expected to model a Christ-centered lifestyle. In so doing, they will confirm the message of

the death, resurrection, and return of Christ which they are to proclaim. They are to evangelize the lost, assimilate them into the church, and train those in their churches to be effective disciples of Jesus Christ as they nurture them in the faith.

2. Spiritual Development and Lifestyle

All ministers should give priority time to their own spiritual development through the disciplines of prayer, meditation on the Word of God, and fasting. They should be wise managers of their time and careful stewards of their relationships with all people, especially with regard to the opposite sex. They should use their speech judiciously, speaking evil of no one, and should take the initiative in restoring broke relationships.

3. Pastoral Transitions

When ministers transition from ministerial positions, the friendships and bonds of affection they have established with their parishioners continue; however, the pastoral relationship does not. Since the primary goal at the time of transition is the development of the new pastoral relationship, ministers are to operate in light of the following expectations. Violation of these provisions shall be considered trespassing, and ministers so accused shall be answerable to the bishop .

a. Ministers shall not communicate with members of a previous congregation in such a way that it disrupts the work of the successor.

b. Ministers shall not perform funerals, baptisms or weddings, nor participate in any other pastoral function at their former churches or for members of their former churches, unless specifically invited to do so by the current pastor or bishop.

c. Ministers shall not form a new congregation (regardless of denominational affiliation) without the approval of the Church Multiplication Leadership Team.

CHAPTER 2

Lay Ministers

Description

Lay ministers are those members of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, who have been called by God and who are not seeking recognition or employment as a professional member of the clergy. Rather, they intend to use the gifts God has given them to perform specific acts of ministry and leadership in the local churches where they are members.

This license is granted by the local church. Persons holding this license are not assumed to be pursuing status as a national conference minister or ordained elder.

Qualifications

Candidates for this license must have been members

of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, for at least two years and members of the local church to which they apply for at least one year. They must have demonstrated faithfulness to the expectations of members, adherence to the moral and social standards of the church, and conformity to the general expectations of ministers.

Licensing

The following procedure is established for the licensing of lay ministers:

1. Referral of the Senior Pastor

After consulting with the candidate to determine God's call and the candidate's suitability for ministry, the senior pastor shall refer the candidate to an examining committee.

2. Examination

The senior pastor shall arrange for an examining committee composed of the cluster coach (or his appointee), the senior pastor, and one other member of the local church. The candidate shall present the following to the committee:

a. *Three Letters of Reference.* These letters are to be obtained from acquaintances of the candidate and should give evidence of the candidate's faithfulness in Christian living.

b. *A Written Testimony.* This document should outline the candidate's Christian experience, beliefs, and reason for pursuing the lay minister's license.

Based on the above documents and any others the committee may require, the candidate shall be examined to determine matters of personal integrity, commitment to the Christian faith, ministerial call, relationships with others, spiritual maturity, and understanding of the doctrinal distinctness, history, and polity of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA.

3. Report to the Local Church

Following the examination, the examining committee shall report its findings to the local church, making any recommendations it deems consistent with its findings. Pending a favorable recommendation from the examining committee, the local church may choose to grant a lay ministers license.

4. Probationary License

Prior to completion of the course of study (outlined below), the lay minister's license is considered probationary and is subject to annual renewal.

5. Permanent License

When the course of study has been completed, the examining committee shall once again examine the candidate. If the committee so recommends, the local church may grant a permanent lay minister's license to the candidate.

6. Transferring the License

When lay ministers, both permanent and probationary, transfer their membership from one United Brethren church to another, the license is automatically transferred once the receiving church has confirmed the transfer of membership.

7. Loss of the License

Local churches have the authority to revoke the licenses of lay ministers whose lives and ministries are inconsistent with the expectations detailed in the Discipline. Failure to retain membership in a United Brethren church will also result in loss of license.

8. Unorganized Churches

Candidates who are actively involved in a congregation that is recognized by the national conference but is not yet organized as a full member congregation may obtain a lay minister's license. The examining committee in such cases shall consist of the senior pastor (if a national conference minister), the cluster coach, and at least one additional elder and one United Brethren layperson. The process for examination shall follow the same procedures as for other candidates.

Following the examination, the committee shall report its finding to the bishop, making any recommendations it deems consistent with its finding. The bishop may then issue a probationary license.

9. Service Outside the Local Congregation

Lay ministers may serve as supply pastors and perform ongoing specific acts of ministry outside of the local congregation of which they are members; however, they must first be approved for service by the Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team.

Course of Study

All persons who have been granted a probationary lay minister's license shall pursue a course of study in which they shall read and be examined on 16 books. These books shall be chosen from a reading list prepared by the Pastoral Ministries Licensing Team.

To be eligible for annual renewal, those holding a probationary license must read and pass an examination on four books. The examination will be administered by the senior pastor. When 16 books have been read and the examinations passed, the candidate shall be eligible for a permanent lay minister's license.

Expectations of Lay Ministers

In addition to the general expectations of all ministers and members in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, lay ministers are expected to faithfully fulfill the following:

1. Annual Reporting

All lay ministers, both permanent and probationary,

are expected to file an annual report of their activities with the local church to which they belong. If they are serving as a supply pastor, lay ministers will also file an annual report with the bishop and cluster coach.

2. Accountability

Since this license is granted by the local church, lay ministers are accountable to the local church of which they are members.

3. Ministerial Service

Lay ministers shall work under the direction of their senior pastors and bishop. They may be asked to supply pulpits when ministers are ill or on vacation, serve as supply pastors, or do specific acts of ministry as part of the overall ministry of their local church or denomination.

When serving as a supply pastor, lay ministers are authorized to officiate at funerals and administer the ordinances of baptism and communion, and are permitted to conduct weddings. Probationary lay ministers will not be permitted to serve as a supply pastor of any congregation for longer than one year.

CHAPTER 3

Local Church Ministers

Description

The local church license is granted by a local congregation to affirm a person's call to ministry. Through these steps, the church seeks to develop ministers who give evidence of high moral character, doctrinal soundness, administrative integrity, and pastoral competency.

This license is granted as the entry level for two distinct tracks of ministerial pursuit. For those seeking ordination, the local church license is the first of three steps toward ordination. For those desiring to serve in a specialized ministry area for a local church, but not in an ordained capacity, the local church license serves as the first of two steps in order to receive a Specialized Ministry License.

Qualifications

To become a candidate for local church license, persons must do the following:

1. Hold membership in the local United Brethren church to which they apply.
2. Verify that they have completed the equivalent of a standard high school education.
3. Demonstrate faithfulness to the expectations of members (chapter 7), adherence to the moral and social standards of the church (chapters 8 and 9), and conformity to the general expectations of ministers (chapter 10).

Local church ministers are not eligible to serve as lay delegates to the national conference nor may they serve as ministerial representatives on any national conference

board or commission. They serve as advisory members of the national conference.

Licensing of Local Church Ministers

The following procedure is established for the licensing of local church ministers:

1. Referral of the Senior Pastor

After consulting with the candidate to determine God's call and the candidate's suitability for ministry, the senior pastor shall refer the candidate to an examining committee.

2. Examination

The senior pastor shall arrange for an examining committee composed of the cluster coach (or his appointee), the senior pastor, and one other member of the local conference. The cluster coach will serve as chairman of the examining committee. The candidate shall present the following to the committee:

a. *Three Letters of Reference.* These letters are to be obtained from acquaintances of the candidate and should give evidence of the candidate's faithfulness in Christian living and suitability for ministerial licensing. They should be obtained from the following:

- (1) The senior pastor of the church where the candidate is a member.
- (2) The lay leader (or a key layperson) of the church where the candidate is a member.
- (3) The chairperson of the Personnel Relations Commission of the church where the candidate is a member.

b. *A copy of his/her high school diploma.*

c. *Written responses to the following:*

- (1) Do you believe our Confession of Faith as set forth in our Discipline?
- (2) Describe your conversion experience, journey of faith, and call to ministry.
- (3) What is your motive in seeking this local church license?
- (4) Are you satisfied with the moral and social standards and the government of the church, and will you maintain them on all occasions?
- (5) Will you submit yourself to the official counsel of your fellow Christians?
- (6) Define the following terms: depravity, redemption, faith, repentance, justification, regeneration, and sanctification.
- (7) Is it your purpose, if received, to remain permanently with the church?
- (8) Will you pursue the course of study and any additional requirements needed for ordination or a specialized ministry license in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA?
- (9) Have you ever pled guilty to or been convicted of any crime?
- (10) Have you ever been charged with child neglect or abuse?

(11) Has your driver's license ever been suspended or revoked?

(12) Are you abstaining from the use of beverage alcohol, illicit drugs, and tobacco?

Based on the above documents and any others the committee may require, the candidate shall be examined to determine matters of personal integrity, commitment to the Christian faith, ministerial call, relationships with others, spiritual maturity, and understanding of the doctrinal distinctives, history, and polity of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA.

3. Report to the Local Church

Following the examination, the examining committee shall report its findings to the local church and make any recommendations it deems consistent with its findings. Pending a favorable recommendation from the examining committee, the local church may choose to grant a local church license.

4. Notify the Bishop

The cluster coach shall file a report of the examination and action taken with the bishop. This report should include copies of all documentation presented to the committee.

5. Annual Renewal

This license must be renewed each year by the local church, with a notation of the action taken made on the license by the cluster coach. Renewal is subject to the following conditions:

- a. An annual report must be made to the local church. This report may be made in person or in writing.
- b. Progress is being made in the required course of study (see below). Should a local church minister fail to complete the equivalent of two years of academic work within any four-year period, the license shall be considered null and void.

6. Referral for National Conference License

Local conference ministers seeking ordination may be referred to the national conference when the following conditions have been met:

- a. The local church license has been held for a minimum of 12 months.
- b. They have completed the equivalent of two years of college.
- c. They have completed the course in United Brethren church history.
- d. They have demonstrated a level of faithfulness and competency which warrants consideration for a National conference license.

Should a local church minister be referred and not received as a national conference minister, the previous status as a local church minister will be retained.

7. Referral for Specialized Ministry License

Local conference ministers not seeking ordination

may be referred to the national conference when the following conditions have been met:

- a. The local church license has been held for a minimum of 12 months.
- b. They must have a minimum of 30 semester hours of college level work in their field of specialization from an accredited college, including a minimum of 12 semester hours of college level work in Bible.
- c. They have completed the course in United Brethren church history.
- d. They have demonstrated a level of faithfulness and competency which warrants consideration for a Specialized Ministry license.

Should a local church minister be referred and not received as a specialized minister, the previous status as a local church minister will be retained.

8. Transferring the License

When local church ministers transfer their membership from one United Brethren church to another, the license is automatically transferred once the receiving church has confirmed the transfer of membership.

9. Loss of the License

Local churches have the authority to revoke the licenses of local church ministers whose lives and ministries are inconsistent with the expectations detailed in the Discipline. Should they desire, local church ministers shall be granted an opportunity for a hearing before final action is taken. Failure to retain membership in a United Brethren church will also result in loss of license.

10. Ministers from Other Denominations

If a minister from another denomination with the equivalent of this local church license seeks to be licensed by the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, a license will be granted providing that all other requirements for a local church license have been met.

11. Unorganized Churches

Candidates who are actively involved in a congregation that is recognized by the national conference but is not yet organized as a full member congregation may obtain a local church license. The examining committee in such cases shall consist of the senior pastor (if a national conference minister), the cluster coach, and at least one additional elder and one United Brethren layperson. The process for examination shall follow the same procedures as for other candidates.

Following the examination, the committee shall report its finding to the bishop, making any recommendations it deems consistent with its finding. The bishop may then issue a local conference license. This license is subject to annual renewal by the bishop until the candidate is referred for a national conference license or the congregation is officially organized.

Course of Study

All local church ministers are expected to pursue a course of study leading toward a Master of Divinity degree through an approved seminary or the equivalent to the Master of Arts in Pastoral Ministry degree through the Huntington University Graduate School of Christian Ministries.

Candidates who received their local church licenses at an age of 35 years or older may be permitted to meet this requirement through a Diploma of Pastoral Leadership program or a ministerial training correspondence program approved by the Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team.

Expectations of Local Church Ministers

In addition to the general expectations of all ministers and members in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, local church ministers are expected to faithfully fulfill the following:

1. Annual Reporting

All local church ministers are expected to file an annual report of their activities with the local church to which they belong. When serving as a supply pastor, local church ministers will also file an annual report with the bishop and cluster coach.

2. Accountability

Since this license is granted by the local church, local church ministers are accountable to the local church of which they are members. If they are serving as a supply pastor, they are also required to participate in and be accountable to a cluster.

3. Ministerial Service

Local church ministers shall work under the direction of their senior pastors and bishop. They may be asked to supply pulpits when ministers are ill or on vacation, act as supply pastors, or do specific acts of ministry as part of the overall ministry of their local church or denomination. If they are asked to serve as a supply pastor, they must first be approved for service by the Pastoral Ministries Licensing Team. When serving as a supply pastor, local conference ministers are authorized to officiate at funerals and weddings and to administer the ordinances of baptism and communion.

CHAPTER 4

Specialized Ministers

Description

The Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, uses the term “specialized minister” to describe all non-ordained paid staff ministers employed by churches of the denomination. Individuals holding this license are not pursuing ordination, and generally are employed to oversee specific areas of ministry in a local church. This designation does not include ministry support positions, such as secretarial or custodial staff.

Qualifications

Specialized ministers must meet the following qualifications:

1. Education

Persons holding this license must have a minimum of 30 semester hours of college level work in their field of specialization from an accredited college, including a minimum of 12 semester hours of college level work in Bible and the course in United Brethren church history.

2. Experience

Persons holding this license must have served for a minimum of 12 months on a professional basis in the field of specialization in a United Brethren church.

3. Membership

Persons holding this license must be members of a United Brethren church.

Licensing of Specialized Ministers

The following procedure is established for the licensing of specialized ministers:

1. Recommendation from a Local Church

After reviewing his or her conduct as a local church minister and their suitability for ministry, the senior pastor of a local church may recommend that the local church refer a candidate to the national conference for a specialized minister’s license. If the local church so concurs, the senior pastor will notify the bishop, and the bishop will forward the candidate’s file to the appropriate Ministerial Licensing and Ordination Team, consisting of at least 3 ordained elders, for examination.

2. Examination

The candidate shall present the following to the examining committee:

a. *Three letters of reference.* These letters should give evidence of the candidate’s faithfulness in Christian living and are to be obtained from the following:

(1) The senior pastor of the church where the candidate is a member.

(2) The lay leader (or a key layperson) of the church where the candidate is a member.

(3) The chairperson of the Personnel Relations Commission of the church where the candidate is a member.

b. *Copies of educational transcripts which verify the candidate's educational qualifications.*

c. *Written responses to the following:*

(1) Describe your conversion experience, journey of faith, and call to ministry.

(2) Do you believe the Bible is the Word of God and that it reveals the only way for our salvation? How do you support your belief?

(3) What is your motive for desiring a specialized minister's license?

(4) What is the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer? How is this demonstrated in your life?

(5) What do you believe regarding the nature of humanity and the individual need for salvation?

(6) Define the following terms: depravity, redemption, faith, repentance, justification, regeneration, and sanctification.

(7) Demonstrate proficiency with a plan of salvation, and identify individuals you personally have led to Christ.

(8) Will you agree to abide by the official actions of your conference and denomination in all matters relating to your ministry?

(9) Are you satisfied with the moral and social standards and with the government of this denomination, and will you seek to maintain them?

(10) What are your future plans regarding ministry inasmuch as they pertain to this license?

(11) What current debts do you have?

(12) Have you ever pled guilty to or been convicted of any crime?

(13) Have you ever been charged with child neglect or abuse?

(14) Has your driver's license ever been suspended or revoked?

(15) Do you use illegal drugs, beverage alcohol, or tobacco in any form?

(16) Is your marriage in harmony with the teachings of Scripture as interpreted by this denomination?

(17) What role does your area of ministry play in the overall ministry of the church?

(18) What is your understanding of staff relationships in the church?

(19) Explain your philosophy of ministry as it relates to your specific area of specialization. Based on the above documents and any others the committee may require, the candidate shall be examined to determine matters of personal integrity, commitment to the Christian faith, ministerial call, relationships with others, spiritual maturity, and understanding of the doctrinal distinctives, history, and polity of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA.

3. Recommendation to the Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team

Following the examination, the Ministerial Licensing and Ordination Team will report its findings to the Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team and make any recommendations it deems consistent with its findings. Pending a favorable recommendation from the examining committee, the Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team may choose to grant a specialized minister's license.

4. Loss of the License

The bishop and/or Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team shall have the authority to revoke the licenses of specialized ministers whose lives and ministries are inconsistent with the expectations detailed in the Discipline. Should they desire, specialized ministers shall be granted an opportunity for a hearing before final action is taken.

Failure to retain membership in a United Brethren church will also result in loss of license.

5. Ordination

If specialized ministers decide to pursue ordination, this license will be deemed the equivalent of a National Church license, pending the completion of all additional requirements for National license.

Expectations of Specialized Ministers

In addition to the general expectations of all ministers and members in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, specialized ministers are expected to faithfully fulfill the following requirements:

1. Annual Reporting

All specialized ministers are expected to file an annual report of their activities with the bishop.

2. Accountability

Since this license is granted by the national conference, specialized ministers are accountable to the national conference in addition to the normal accountability procedures in the local church where they serve.

3. Ministerial Service

Specialized ministers shall work under the direction of their senior pastors or bishop. They may officiate at funerals and weddings and administer the ordinances of baptism and communion only under the supervision of a senior pastor.

CHAPTER 5

National Conference Ministers

Description

National conference ministers are those members of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, whose call to the ministry has been affirmed by the national conference and who are continuing the pursuit of ordination. The national conference license is the second of three steps toward ordination, which is the goal expected of persons holding this license.

Qualifications

To become a candidate for this license, a person must fulfill the following:

1. Hold a local church license from a United Brethren church for at least 12 months.
2. Complete two years of college and the course in United Brethren church history.
3. Demonstrate a level of faithfulness and competency which warrants consideration for an national conference license.
4. Demonstrate faithfulness to the expectations of members (chapter 7), adherence to the moral and social standards of the church (chapters 8 and 9), and conformity to the general expectations of ministers (chapter 10).

Licensing of National Conference Ministers

The following procedure is established for the licensing of national conference ministers:

1. Referral of the Local Church

After local church ministers have held their licenses for a minimum of 12 months, they may request that their local churches refer them for consideration as national conference ministers. The local church shall verify that the local church ministers have met the qualifications and shall make the appropriate referral should they deem the ministers to be suitable candidates.

2. Examination

Candidates shall be examined by the Ministerial Licensing and Ordination Team, consisting of at least 3 ordained elders. They shall present the following to the committee:

a. *Five letters of reference.* These letters should give evidence of the candidate's faithfulness in Christian living and should be obtained from the following individuals:

- (1) A faculty or graduate school member in the candidate's major area of study.
- (2) The pastor of the local United Brethren church the candidate attends (or, if the candidate is the pastor,

from another United Brethren pastor).

(3) The lay leader (or a key layperson) of the local United Brethren church the candidate attends.

(4) The cluster coach.

(5) A friend or relative.

b. *A copy of his/her academic transcripts.*

c. *Written responses to the following:*

(1) Describe your conversion experience, journey of faith, and call to ministry.

(2) Do you believe the Bible is the Word of God and that it reveals the only way for our salvation? How do you support your belief?

(3) What is your motive for desiring a national conference license?

(4) What is the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer? How is this demonstrated in your life?

(5) What do you believe regarding the nature of humanity and the individual need for salvation?

(6) Define the following terms: depravity, redemption, faith, repentance, justification, regeneration, and sanctification.

(7) Demonstrate a proficiency with a plan of salvation and identify individuals you personally have led to Christ.

(8) Will you agree to abide by the official actions of your conference and denomination in all matters relating to your ministry?

(9) Are you satisfied with the moral and social standards and with the government of this denomination, and will you seek to maintain them?

(10) What are your future plans regarding ministry inasmuch as they pertain to this license?

(11) Will you faithfully pursue the course of study required for you?

(12) Demonstrate your working knowledge of the Discipline in the following areas: the reception and duties of members, local church structure, and the classifications and duties of ministers.

(13) What current debts do you have?

(14) Have you ever pled guilty to or been convicted of any crime?

(15) Have you ever been charged with child neglect or abuse?

(16) Has your driver's license ever been suspended or revoked?

(17) Do you use illegal drugs, beverage alcohol, or tobacco in any form?

(18) Is your marriage in harmony with the teachings of Scripture as interpreted by this denomination?

Based on the above documents and any others the committee may require, candidates shall be examined to determine matters of personal integrity, commitment to the Christian faith, ministerial call, relationships with others, spiritual maturity, and understanding of the doctrinal distinctives, history, and polity of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA.

3. Report to the Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team

Following the examination, the examining committee shall report its findings to the Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team and make any recommendations it deems consistent with its findings. Pending a favorable recommendation from the examining committee, the Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team may choose to grant a national conference license.

4. Renewal

The national conference license is valid for four years. Following this initial four-year period, annual renewal is required. Renewal is subject to the following conditions:

- a. An annual report must be made to the Ministerial Licensing and Ordination Team.
- b. Progress is being made in the required course of study (see below).

5. Referral for Ordination Status

National conference ministers may be referred for ordination status when the following conditions have been met:

- a. The national conference license has been held for a minimum of two years.
- b. They have completed a Master of Divinity degree from an approved seminary or the Master of Arts in Pastoral Ministry degree from the Huntington University Graduate School of Christian Ministries, or have completed the requirements for those 35 years or older.
- c. They have served for one year in a recognized ministry appointment approved by the Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team.
- d. They have demonstrated a level of faithfulness and competency which warrants consideration for ordination status.

6. Loss of the License

The Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team shall have the authority to revoke the licenses of national conference ministers whose lives and ministries are inconsistent with the expectations detailed in the Discipline. Should they desire, national conference ministers shall be granted an opportunity for a hearing before final action is taken.

Failure to retain membership in a United Brethren church will also result in loss of license.

7. Ministers from Other Denominations

Ministers from other denominations who hold a license equivalent to the national conference license and who seek to be licensed by the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, may have the local church license requirements waived provided they can demonstrate that their current credentials are in good standing from their previous denominations. All other requirements must be met.

Course of Study

All national conference ministers are expected to pursue a course of study leading toward a Master of Divinity degree through an accredited seminary or the Master of Arts in Pastoral Ministry degree through the Huntington University Graduate School of Christian Ministries.

Candidates who received their local church licenses at an age of 35 years or older may be permitted to meet this requirement through a Diploma of Pastoral Leadership program or a ministerial training correspondence program approved by the Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team.

Expectations of National Conference Ministers

In addition to the general expectations of all ministers and members in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, national conference ministers are expected to faithfully fulfill the following requirements:

1. Annual Reporting

All national conference ministers will file an annual report with the bishop and cluster coach. In addition, they are expected to file a separate annual report of their activities with the Ministerial Licensing and Ordination Team.

2. Accountability

Since this license is granted by the national conference, national conference ministers are accountable to the national conference. They are also required to participate in and be accountable to a cluster

3. Ministerial Service

National conference ministers shall work under the direction of the bishop. They may be asked to supply pulpits when ministers are ill or on vacation or be assigned as the senior pastor of a local church. National conference ministers are authorized to officiate at funerals and weddings and to administer the ordinances of baptism and communion.

CHAPTER 6

Ordained Elders

Description

Elders are those members of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, who have been called by God and are pursuing employment as professional members of the clergy. Their call has been confirmed by the church through a process of examination, education, and accountability. Ordination is the third step in a process which began with the local church license and continued with the national conference license.

Qualifications

To become a candidate for ordination, a national con-

ference minister must accomplish the following:

1. Earn a Master of Divinity degree from an accredited seminary or the Master of Arts in Pastoral Ministry degree from the Huntington University Graduate School of Christian Ministries.
2. Serve for one year in a recognized ministry appointment approved by the Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team.
3. Demonstrate a level of faithfulness and competency which warrants consideration for the status of ordained elder.

Procedure

The following procedure is established for the ordination of ministers:

1. Request of the National Conference Minister

After holding a national conference license for a minimum of two years, individuals may submit a request to the Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team for consideration for the office of ordained elder in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA.

2. Examination

Applicants shall be examined by the Ministerial Licensing and Ordination Team, consisting of at least 3 ordained elders. They shall present the following to the committee:

a. *Five letters of reference.* These letters should give evidence of the applicant's marriage and family relationships, interpersonal relationship and social skills, and faithfulness in Christian living. They should be obtained from the following individuals:

- (1) A faculty or graduate school member in the candidate's major area of study.
- (2) The pastor of the local United Brethren church the candidate attends (or, if the candidate is the pastor, from another United Brethren pastor).
- (3) The lay leader (or a key layperson) of the local United Brethren church the candidate attends.
- (4) The cluster coach.
- (5) A friend or relative.

b. *A copy of his/her academic transcripts.*
 c. *Written responses to the questions in Chapter 8, "Examination of Candidates for Ordination."*

Based on these documents and any others the committee may require, the candidate shall be examined to determine matters of personal integrity, commitment to the Christian faith, ministerial call, relationships with others, spiritual maturity, and understanding of the doctrinal distinctives, history, and polity of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA.

3. Report to the Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team

Following the examination, the examining committee shall report its findings to the Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team and make any recommendations it deems

consistent with its findings. Pending a favorable recommendation from the examining committee, the Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team may choose to grant ordination status.

4. Loss of the License

The Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team shall have the authority to revoke the credentials of any elders whose lives and ministries are inconsistent with the expectations detailed in the Discipline. Should they desire, elders shall be granted an opportunity for a hearing before final action is taken. Failure to retain membership in a United Brethren church will also result in loss of license.

5. Elders from Other Denominations

Ordained ministers from other denominations who seek to be ordained by the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, must demonstrate that their ordinations are still considered to be in good standing from their denomination of origin, and provide documentation that verifies they meet the educational requirements for ordination in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ.

These elders will be examined by the Ministerial Licensing and Ordination Team. Once that examination has occurred and a favorable recommendation has been approved by Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team, these elders will be granted a national conference license. Upon completion of the one year of service requirement and the course in United Brethren church history their prior ordination will be recognized.

Ministers from other denominations who are over 35 years of age will be permitted to meet the educational requirements for ordination through a Diploma of Pastoral Leadership program or a ministerial training correspondence program approved by the Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team.

Continuing Education for Elders

All elders who are actively serving in a local church are required to complete two continuing education units (CEUs) and read four ministry-related books during each calendar year. (Each CEU is the equivalent of 10 hours classroom contact time.) Reports for each are to be filed with the bishop and cluster coach at the time of the annual audit.

Expectations of Elders

In addition to the general expectations of all ministers and members in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, elders are expected to faithfully fulfill the following:

1. Annual Reporting

All elders must file an annual report of their activities with the bishop and cluster coach.

2. Accountability

Since this license is granted by the national conference, ordained ministers are accountable to the national conference. They are also required to participate in and be accountable to a cluster.

3. Ministerial Service

Elders shall work under the direction of the bishop. They are authorized to officiate at funerals and weddings and to administer the ordinances of baptism and communion. If they consistently fail to meet the continuing education requirements described above, they will no longer be eligible to serve as a pastor in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA. No ordained elder is guaranteed a pastoral assignment in the denomination.

CHAPTER 7

Ordained Chaplains

Description

Ordained chaplains are members of the United Brethren church who have been called by God and are pursuing employment as professional members of the chaplaincy. They provide pastoral care for persons of diverse backgrounds in physical, mental, spiritual, and social need in diverse settings. Their call has been confirmed by the church through a process of examination, education, and accountability. Ordination is the third step in a process which began with the local church license and continued with the national conference license.

Qualifications

To become a candidate for ordination as chaplain, a national conference minister must do the following:

1. Earn a Master of Divinity or a Master of Theology degree from an accredited seminary (ATS approved), or the Master of Arts in Pastoral Ministry degree from the Huntington University Graduate School of Christian Ministries.

2. Complete four units (1600 hours) of Clinical Pastoral Education in an institution accredited by the American College of Pastoral Education.

3. Demonstrate a level of faithfulness and competency which warrants consideration for licentiate status.

Procedure

The following procedure is established for the ordination of chaplains.

1. Request by the National Conference Minister

After holding a national conference license for a minimum of two years, individuals may submit a request to the conference Ministerial Licensing and Ordination Team for consideration for the office of ordained chaplain in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA.

2. Examination by the Ministerial Licensing and Ordination Team

Applicants shall be examined by the Ministerial Licensing and Ordination Team. The following are required.

- a. *Five letters of reference.* These letters should give evidence of the applicant's marriage and family relationships, interpersonal relationships and social skills, and faithfulness in Christian living. They should be obtained from the following individuals:

- (1) Two Clinical Pastoral Education supervisors.

- (2) The pastor of the local United Brethren church the candidate attends.

- (3) A layperson serving in leadership at the local United Brethren church the candidate attends.

- (4) A friend or relative.

- b. *A copy of his/her academic transcripts.*

- c. *Written responses to the questions in Chapter 8, "Examination of Candidates for Ordination."*

3. Ordination by the National Conference

Following the examination, the examining committee shall report its findings to the Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team and make any recommendations it deems consistent with its findings. Pending a favorable recommendation from the examining committee, the Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team may choose to grant ordination status.

Loss of License

The Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team shall have the authority to revoke the credentials of any chaplains whose lives and ministries are inconsistent with the expectations detailed in the Discipline. Should they desire, chaplains shall be granted an opportunity for a hearing before final action is taken.

Ordained Chaplains from Other Denominations

Ordained chaplains from other denominations who seek to be ordained by the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, must demonstrate that their ordinations are still considered to be in good standing from their denomination of origin, demonstrate a favorable standing with the American College of Chaplains and provide documentation that verifies they meet the educational requirements for ordination in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ.

These elders will be examined by the Ministerial Licensing and Ordination Team. Once that examination has occurred and a favorable recommendation has been approved by Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team, these elders will be granted a national conference license. Upon completion of the one year of service requirement and the course in United Brethren church history their prior ordination will be recognized.

Ministers from other denominations who are over 35 years of age will be permitted to meet the educational

requirements for ordination through a Diploma of Pastoral Leadership program or a ministerial training correspondence program approved by the Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team.

Continuing Education for Elders

All chaplains are required to complete CEUs annually as offered by the American College of Chaplains and National Association of Catholic Chaplains.

Expectations of Chaplains

In addition to the general expectations of all ministers and members in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, elders are expected to faithfully fulfill the following:

1. Annual Reporting

All chaplains must file an annual report of their activities with the bishop.

2. Accountability

Since this license is granted by the national conference, ordained chaplains are accountable to the national conference of which they are members. They are also required to participate in and be accountable to a cluster.

3. Ministerial Service

Chaplains shall work under the direction of the bishop. They are authorized to officiate at funerals and weddings and to administer the ordinances of baptism and communion. They may supply pulpits when ministers are ill or on vacation. They may serve as associates, but not as the senior pastor, of any congregation.

CHAPTER 8

Questions Asked of Candidates for Ordination

Section 1: Commitment to the Christian Faith and Call to Ministry

a. *Outcome:* Ministers should be able to clearly and confidently articulate their journey of faith and offer a convincing testimony of God's current activity and direction. Because the United Brethren Church believes strongly in a ministerial call, ministers should further be able to clearly articulate their reasons for seeking a ministerial license.

b. *Questions:*

1. Describe your conversion experience and journey of faith.
2. Describe your call to ministry, including your reason for desiring ordination and your future plans regarding ministry.
3. Describe the spiritual walks of your spouse and

children. How have they demonstrated support for your call to ministry?

Section 2: Theology

a. *Outcome:* Ministers should be able to articulate the uniqueness (in polity and history) of the United Brethren Church.

b. *Questions:*

We believe that the issues contained in our Confession of Faith are the fundamental issues of Christian orthodoxy which are consistent across theological perspectives in the evangelical church. Thus, for each section of the Confession of Faith and the Official Doctrinal Positions, the candidate should be asked the following questions:

1. Do you agree with this position of the United Brethren Church?

2. From your own Biblical and theological perspective, how would you defend this position?

3. Summary Question (to be asked at the conclusion of the review of the Confession of Faith): How will you respond to those whose theological positions may differ from yours in any of these areas?

Section 3: Membership, Family, and Social Standards

a. *Outcome:* Ministers should be able to articulate the uniqueness (in polity and history) of the United Brethren Church.

b. *Questions:*

For each of the membership, family and social standards of the United Brethren Church (Discipline, chapters 7, 8 and 9), the candidate should be asked the following questions:

1. Do you agree with this position of the United Brethren Church?

2. From a Biblical and theological perspective, how would you defend this position?

3. Will you support, teach and model the position of the Church in your ministry?

Section 4: Spiritual Maturity

a. *Outcome:* Scripture teaches that the responsibilities of the ministry are not to be entrusted to those whose faith is still new. Thus, ministers should be able to demonstrate spiritual maturity.

b. *Questions:*

1. Describe your personal practice with regard to the spiritual disciplines.

2. What are your spiritual gifts, and how do you see them being used in your ministry?

3. Demonstrate proficiency with a plan of salvation and identify individuals with whom you have intentionally shared your faith.

Section 5: Relationships with Others

a. *Outcome:* Because effective ministry is relational in

nature, ministers must have a history of healthy relationships with people, including those of the opposite sex.

b. *Questions:*

1. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of your personality.
2. Describe your leadership style.
3. Describe your conflict management style.
4. Describe how you build relationships with unbelievers.
5. Do you currently have broken relationships with any other individual, and what steps are you taking (or have you taken) to restore these?

Section 6: Personal Integrity

a. *Outcome:* Ministers are expected to be persons of the highest integrity. Their names and reputations are to generate respect and admiration from those inside and outside their congregations.

b. *Questions:*

1. What current debts do you have? Are you managing this debt responsibly?
2. Do you tell the truth?
3. Do you manage your time well?
4. Have you ever pled guilty to or have been convicted of any crime?
5. Have you ever been charged with child neglect or abuse?
6. Has your driver's license ever been suspended or revoked?
7. Do you use illegal drugs, beverage alcohol or tobacco in any form?
8. What is your accountability system?
9. Describe your work ethic.
10. Are your marriage and family relationships in harmony with the teachings of Scripture as interpreted by this denomination?

CHAPTER 9

Assigning Ministers

Philosophical Statements

The following statements identify the basic philosophy used by the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, to make pastoral appointments.

1. Pastors are Stationed, Not Called

In the United Brethren church, authority for pastoral assignments rests solely with the stationing committee. The final decision regarding a pastoral assignment does not belong to the local church or any of its commissions or boards.

2. The Assignment Process Involves Dialogue

The stationing committee will communicate with the pastors and congregations involved in the assignment

process and will use all information received as a part of the decision-making process. Both pastor and Personnel Relations Commission or its equivalent are granted the right to consult with the stationing committee.

3. The Goal is a Long-term Assignment

Because long-term assignments provide a better opportunity for qualitative and quantitative growth, the stationing committee will try to match congregational needs with pastoral strengths.

4. There are No Guaranteed Appointments

Since the goal of the stationing committee is to match congregational needs and pastoral strengths, individual ministers may experience periods of time when they are not assigned to a local church. Likewise, local churches may experience periods of time when they are without an assigned pastor.

5. Interim Ministers will be Used

The process of assigning pastors requires a thoroughness which often results in a temporary vacancy at a local congregation. In such instances, the local churches may be assigned an interim minister to provide limited pastoral ministry until a permanent assignment can be made.

The Assignment Process

Assigning ministers consists of the following steps.

1. A Vacancy Occurs

This vacancy may result from a pastoral resignation, death or other incapacitation, or it may be initiated by the denomination. The local church may ask the stationing committee to review its pastoral assignment, but no local board or commission has the authority to terminate a pastor's employment.

2. Formation of a Stationing Committee

Once a vacancy has occurred, the bishop will form a stationing committee to process this assignment. The stationing committee will be composed of the bishop, a member of the Pastoral Ministries Leadership team appointed by the bishop, the local church's cluster coach and the chairman of the local church's Personnel Relations Commission. The bishop will serve as chairman of the stationing committee.

3. Meeting with Local Leaders

When a vacancy has occurred, a representative of the stationing committee shall meet with the leaders of the local church to explain the assignment process and evaluate the needs and vision of the congregation.

4. Completion of a Parish Profile

Each congregation will complete a "Parish Profile," using the form prepared for this purpose. Responsibility for this rests with the local church.

5. Communication with the Prospective Pastor

After receiving the completed “Parish Profile,” the stationing committee will approach its choice to fill the vacancy. The prospective pastor will receive a copy of the parish profile and be asked to consider the assignment. If the prospective pastor declines the assignment, another prospective pastor will be approached. When a pastor has indicated interest, the Personnel Relations Commission of the church where he/she is serving will be notified of the potential transition.

6. Communication with the Local Church

When a prospective pastor has expressed interest in filling the vacancy, he/she will prepare a document which provides biographical information and a philosophy of ministry. This document will be presented to the leaders of the local church for review. If the information seems satisfactory, a pastoral interview with the Personnel Relations Commission and the stationing committee or their equivalent will be held in the process toward assignment. If the pastor is currently serving at another United Brethren congregation, he/she must also notify the chairman of the Personnel Relations Commission at the current church.

7. Introductory Meeting Between the New Pastor and Local Leaders

The stationing committee shall arrange for an introductory meeting between the new pastor and local leaders. At this meeting, both parties will have the opportunity to clarify expectations and philosophies. An “Agreement of Understanding” will be completed to document the understandings reached.

8. Assignment is Announced

At the earliest possible time following this introductory meeting between the new pastor and local leaders, the assignment will be announced. The pastor will be given ample time to inform his/her present church of the new assignment.

Assignment of Associate Staff Members

The Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, recognizes the need for multi-pastor congregations to create staff relationships which meet their special interpersonal and directional needs. As such, within the framework of the stationing committee process, the denomination grants these congregations the right to request and receive resumes, interview candidates, and designate the person they deem best for associate staff positions, with the following understandings:

1. The final decision for the senior pastor and co-pastor position rests solely with the stationing committee.
2. The final decision for employing and terminating associate staff members rests solely with the local church.
3. The bishop must be informed of any United Brethren ministers under consideration.

4. If a church hires someone who does not hold a United Brethren ministerial license, the national conference is not obligated to provide licensing.

5. While the primary accountability relationship rests with the senior pastor, ministers licensed by the national conference are required to participate in all accountability processes within the national conference.

Special Appointment Assignments

Stationing committees may appoint national conference ministers and elders to special appointment assignments, such as chaplains, missionaries, and general officials. These appointments are made on the request of the minister or elder called to such service.

Temporary Assignment of Non-United Brethren Ministers

Ordained or licensed clergy in other Christian denominations or independent churches may be appointed to serve as a supply pastor at a United Brethren church under the following requirements:

1. Conditions

- a. Such ministers must be in good standing in the church or denomination in which they are licensed.
- b. Such ministers must provide valid ministerial credentials.
- c. Such ministers shall be examined by the regional Ministerial Licensing and Ordination Team to determine matters of personal integrity, commitment to the Christian faith, ministerial call, relationships with others, spiritual maturity, and understanding of and agreement with the doctrinal distinctives, history, and polity of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA.
- d. A positive recommendation must be made by a stationing committee and the Ministerial Licensing and Ordination Team.
- e. Such ministers shall not be granted a vote in the national conference or in national conference elections, including any referenda.

2. Reporting

Such ministers will file an annual report with the bishop and cluster coach.

3. Accountability

They will be required to participate in and be accountable to a cluster.

CHAPTER 10

Requests for Exemption from Service

All national conference ministers and elders are assumed to be available for assignment. The Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, recognizes that life situations may warrant a time of unavailability and establishes the following exemptions:

1. Leave of Absence

Ministers may seek to be exempted from service for personal reasons, to actively pursue more education, or because of ministry-related service in another position, such as chaplaincy, educational positions, or other positions where ministerial credentials are essential. Those who do may request a leave of absence. This exemption will be granted for one year. Ministerial licenses are considered to be in good standing during this exemption period.

For those who request a leave of absence for personal reasons other than educational or ministry-related service in another position, this exemption may be renewed yearly for three consecutive years, after which the individual shall be considered inactive with cause.

2. Retired Status

At age 65, ministers may request retired status from the conference. This exemption does not need to be renewed. Ministerial licenses are considered to be in good standing during this exemption period.

3. Medical Leave

This exemption is for ministers who cannot perform their duties because of a physician-certified medical condition. These ministers will be considered to be in good standing with the national conference during this exemption period, and will enjoy all rights and privileges of their license. They will report yearly to the national conference.

4. Inactive with Cause for Personal Reasons

This exemption is for ministers who have requested a leave of absence from any ministry for an extended period of time for personal reasons, except for those who hold positions in chaplaincy, educational positions, or other positions where ministerial credentials are essential.

During this period, such ministers shall not perform any of the duties of the ministry except under the direct supervision of the bishop or the individual's pastor. After remaining in this status for two years, ministers shall surrender their credentials to the bishop to be held in trust until such time as they renew ministry. Such individuals will report to the national conference.

5. Inactive without Cause

This exemption is used for ministers who have not

reported to the national conference as required and who are not serving in a ministerial capacity in the church. These ministerial licenses are not considered to be in good standing during this exemption period. The national conference shall attempt to contact such individuals to determine their desire for ministry, and the national conference shall have the authority to determine the future of their license.

During this period, ministers shall not perform any of the duties of the ministry. These ministers shall surrender their credentials to the bishop to be held in trust until such time as they renew ministry or the national conference determines the appropriate course of action regarding their license.

6. Probation

This exemption is used for ministers who are living inconsistently with the expectations and obligations of ministers as described in the Discipline or who are under investigation for such. Ministerial licenses are suspended during this probation period and can only be renewed to good standing after a full restoration process is completed.

CHAPTER 11

Official Doctrinal Positions

Depravity

All persons are born, because of the fall of the race in Adam, with an inherent tendency toward evil. This depravity has negatively affected and is operative in every faculty of one's being. Each person, because of the inherited depravity, when confronted by the world, the flesh and the devil, will follow the sinful nature, deliberately choosing to ratify sin, and thus assumes the guilt and condemnation belonging to a sinner.

(Adopted by the 1981 General Conference)

Divine Foreknowledge

Our Confession of Faith states: "We believe in the only true God that this triune God created the heavens and earth and all that in them is, visible as well as invisible, and furthermore sustains, governs, protects, and supports the same."

The Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA affirms that God's knowledge of all past, present and future events is exhaustive and infallible. God's knowledge includes all future decisions and actions of free moral agents. The openness view denies that God's knowledge is this comprehensive. Thus, the "openness" view of God's foreknowledge is contrary to our denomination's historic understanding.

Destiny of the Unevangelized

Our Confession of Faith states: "We believe in Jesus

Christ that He is the Savior and Mediator of the whole human race, if they with full faith in Him accept the grace proffered in Jesus. We believe that the Holy Bible, Old and New Testaments, is the Word of God; that it contains the only true way to our salvation; that every true Christian is bound to acknowledge and receive it with the influence of the Spirit of God as the only rule and guide; and that without faith in Jesus Christ, true repentance, forgiveness of sins, and following after Christ, no one can be a true Christian.”

The heart of the United Brethren movement is evangelism. We believe in a transformed life made possible through an experiential faith in Jesus Christ. The church believes that God wants all people to come to salvation by hearing the gospel proclaimed and responding to it with personal faith. Salvation is possible only through the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

We recognize that some in our church believe that God may, if He so chooses, save some to whom the gospel message has never been specifically proclaimed, namely, those whose deaths occur prior to an age of accountability, the mentally impaired, or those who have never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. Even with this understanding, the church has always insisted that salvation is a gift of God, given solely on the basis of the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

The Gift Ministry of the Holy Spirit

In a study of the gift ministry of the Holy Spirit, one becomes deeply impressed with the thought that any doctrine of the church, though right in itself can be wrongly elevated to a position it does not deserve. There must be a balanced message. At its center is man's salvation in Jesus Christ.

We must place equal emphasis upon the importance of the Spirit and the Word. The Church must be open to whatever God wants her to do. The Church must discover a professed openness to the fullness of the Spirit which reconciles negative attitudes. Those of the Church who disagree on the gift ministry must remember love is the cord that never breaks. The Church must seek to have everything done under the guidance of the Spirit, in obedience to the Word, so that it exalts Jesus Christ, ministers to the Church and witnesses to the world. The deepest intention of members of the Church should be a spiritual fullness that we so desperately need.

(This statement is a summary of a much larger study on this topic. The complete study is included as an appendix in "Theological Perspectives" by Dr. Paul R. Fetters, ed.)

The Authority and Infallibility of Scripture

The Church of the United Brethren in Christ reaffirms unequivocally the Word of God, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be sole authority for the believer and the church and the only infallible rule of faith and practice; that sincere and full acceptance of the

Bible as final authority is an indispensable condition of true Christian unity and further the Church of the United Brethren in Christ calls upon all churches to restore the Word of God to rightful preeminence in teaching, preaching and practice.

As the result of a contemporary resurgence of the issues of authority and infallibility we believe it is important to again declare our belief in the Holy Bible, the Word of God written, as the infallible Word of God to man, wholly trustworthy in the fullness of its message of God's redemptive grace and His acts in history.

Further, we dedicate ourselves to the proclamation of the word through teaching, preaching and personal witness, calling upon God's people everywhere to join us in this noble task, so that others may find in the sure, dependable Word of God what we have found—an infallible guide.

(Adopted by the 1977 General Conference)

CHAPTER 12

Restoration Policy

Most churches have not developed guidelines for fallen religious leaders. The Pastoral Ministry Leadership Team (PMLT) realizes that there are numerous areas for which a pastor or church leader may need restoration. Not every area can be detailed in a document such as this.

The PMLT recommends that a specific workbook be followed in the event of pastoral indiscretion.

Thomas Pedigo has written a workbook with excellent guidelines and checklists for numerous pastoral indiscretions. His *Restoration Manual* is a workbook for restoring fallen ministers and religious leaders. It describes various checklists that a restoration team should consider when working with specific situations. His list of twenty topics include: family, financial, spiritual, moral, behavioral and mental situations.

Introduction

The tragedy of highly placed Christian leaders falling into sexual immorality has become increasingly front page news. The problem is not just with highly placed Christian leaders. In a survey by *Christianity Today*, 23% of pastors responding admitted to sexual indiscretions, mostly with people within the parish. Many others emphasized strong temptations in this area, overcome only by the grace of God.

The problems above are not confined to pastors who have a weak view of Scripture. Bible-believing pastors are vulnerable as well. The time has come to address this concern and other moral failures.

Prevention

Society today is badly in need of families who model

living above temptation through the grace of God. The cost of preventing the tragedy of moral failure by the pastor is far less than the cost in money, pain, grief, disillusionment, and disappointment that comes after the fact.

Much of the cost of prevention must be borne by the pastor himself. He needs to continually put forth the effort needed to pursue the spiritual disciplines and maintain a strong relationship with Jesus Christ. A strong home life, good marriage, and pure thought life take diligent labor but are invaluable allies against temptation.

Jesus said to “watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation” (Matthew 26:41). Temptation is not the same as sin, but to play with fire is an invitation to be burned. Opportunities for temptation should be reduced as much as is practical. Keep dealings with the opposite sex always innocent and above criticism.

The cost of prevention is also borne by those in positions of authority. Careful screening of applicants for national conference license from the local church and from other denominations is a first step. Credentials and references need to be checked out for any past history of moral failure. Accountability is a continual necessity and hard questions need to be asked by a pastor’s Ministerial Leadership and Ordination Team when there is good evidence of problems.

Procedures when Charges Arise

When charges arise, it is very important that all actions be taken quickly to minimize further complications. Confidentiality should also be strictly adhered to, where appropriate.

Since the lay delegate is the spokesman of the local church, he should be the person to contact the bishop when a situation arises. The bishop in turn should contact the stationing committee and the cluster leader. Guidelines for determining guilt or innocence when charges are contested are beyond the scope of this paper.

When guilt of sexual immorality has been clearly determined, credentials are to be surrendered. There should be an immediate relieving of pastoral responsibilities. Such action should be done by the bishop and not left to the discretion of the local church. Discretion by the local church allows the opportunity for politics to enter the picture along with evaluations of the “compassion” and “holier than thou” attitudes of those involved.

All affected parties need to be dealt with. Too often the spouse is left on the sidelines while the one committing the sin is treated as a sort of “celebrity.” Efforts also need to be made to help “the other woman” to confess and be restored if possible, recognizing that often she is a person within the church.

Assumptions for Restoration

The procedures for restoration listed below apply to situations where guilt is clearly established and the pastor desires restoration. Restoration is only possible in a

climate of repentance evidenced by integrity and cooperation.

The necessary assumptions for restoration are:

1. The fallen person has truly repented and experiences genuine sorrow for sin.
2. There is a decisive renunciation of the act.
3. There is an attitude of non-defensiveness, i.e. there is no excuse making.
4. There is a spirit devoid of bitterness.
5. The spouse is ready to forgive and restore the marriage without an accusatory attitude.
6. An acknowledgment of sin has been made to the spouse and family.
7. Public confession has been made to the church in which the pastor has served.

Recommendations for Restoration

When moral failure has occurred, discipline needs to be administered for the protection and restoration of all parties, including those harmed and hurt in the local church.

- The church cannot avoid the issue of accountability or surrender to a siren song of “Let’s not be rigid and judgmental.”
- It also is not Christian to simply walk away from a fallen brother.

The goal is not to punish but to restore through biblical discipline. The Restoration Team (bishop, pastors, and other church leaders) needs to approach this task with utmost sincerity. The apostle Paul tells us, “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted” (Gal 6:1; also Romans 12: 17-19).

A Restoration Team is to be appointed by the bishop in consultation with the cluster leader, made up of three or four persons. The members of the Restoration Team should be mature in the faith. Team members should be elders in the UB Church or at least serving in ministry in a UB church.

The Restoration Team does not have to specifically perform the duties, but they are responsible for oversight of the process. The Restoration Team will monitor and establish conditions and progress toward restoration and explore circumstances that led to wrong choices in the first place, such as problems in the home. From time to time, the team members need to meet apart from the person being restored in order to reassure themselves that they are not being manipulated or misled.

When dealing with the situation, the Restoration Team will also set up marriage and psychological counseling with a reputable Christian counselor, as needed. The coverage of the cost of counseling is to be determined by the Restoration Team. Coincident with the goal of restoring the fallen pastor is the goal of restoring the marriage. If practical, both husband and wife should be sent to a Christian retreat center for one or two weeks for intensive spiritual and psychological counseling.

Marriage counseling by the counselor selected above by the Restoration Team should then continue until satisfactory resolution.

When there is a breakdown in the process because of the attitude or actions of the one to be restored, the team may recommend to the bishop termination of restoration efforts.

Goal of Restoration

In restoration of the pastor who has fallen, there are four goals in most situations: Restoration to fellowship, worship, service and leadership, in that order. Before a person resumes pastoral responsibilities, God's people need assurances that the same problems will not occur again. It is one thing for a person to repent and be forgiven, but it is another to entrust souls into the hands of someone who has not yet been fully restored.

1. *Restore to Fellowship.* The central goal in this step is restoration to fellowship with God and His Church through Jesus Christ. The "assumptions for restoration" listed above are integral to this goal. The restoration team helps to insure a continuing and growing relationship with Christ through accountability and monitoring.

2. *Restore to Worship* (I Cor. 5:1-5; 2 Cor. 2:6-8). Accountability, spiritual care, and growth take place within the local church. The fallen pastor should be encouraged to worship in a local UB church, if feasible. The specific church will be determined by the Restoration Team in consultation with the local pastor.

3. *Restore to Service.* All Christians should exercise their gifts for ministry (Eph 4:9-16). Again, this is done within the context of the local church. Avenues of service should be sought out quickly, recognizing that before one can be faithful in much, he must restore faithfulness, trust, and integrity in a little (Matt 25:14-30; Luke 16:10). The Restoration Team should continue to monitor progress in ministry projects/opportunities through consultation with the local pastor.

4. *Restore to Spiritual Leadership.* In the final sense, this is a restoration that only God can make. The church can put a fallen pastor back into pastoral leadership, but only God can put real spiritual leadership back into the pastor. Men such as David give evidence that God is willing to do so. But it is a costly procedure. Integrity, humility, rebuilding of confidence, and blamelessness should all be present. The nature of the moral failure should also be considered. The qualifications in I Tim 3: 1-7 and Titus 1:6-9 apply just as much for restoration as they do when initially entering the pastorate. A return to the pastorate may not be an actual goal in every situation.

Restoration to pastoral ministry should not be considered a guaranteed thing. One of the deterrents to falling into sin is to realize the costs involved. A pastor who knows beforehand that yielding to sin would bar him forever from the pastoral ministry is less likely to yield. These matters must be treated with utmost seriousness, in the fear of the Lord. The full authority of the Word of

God and the integrity of what and who a spiritual leader should be must be upheld.

Before renewal of credentials and returning to pastoral ministry, there is to be a minimum of one year of probation, under the supervision of the Restoration Team. There must also be certification by the marriage counselor that underlying spiritual and psychological problems have been dealt with satisfactorily. A recommendation is also needed by the pastor of the church in which the person has been worshipping.

The Restoration Team may then make recommendation to the bishop, who in turn may refer the matter to the Pastoral Ministry Leadership Team for action. Recommendation is not to depend on such items as money-raising, church growth, or speaking ability or popularity, but demonstration of restoration of spiritual qualities such as integrity, purity, and holiness. Spiritual leadership involves a dedication and commitment to please God first and confront people in their sin by the authority of the Word of God, to speak the truth in love but to speak the truth. If the person to be restored is not able to do so with a clear, forgiven conscience, he is not yet ready for pastoral ministry.

If there has been restoration to the pastoral ministry and then repeated moral failure, restoration should be confined to the first three goals.

Footnotes

"How Common is Pastoral Indiscretion?" *Leadership*, Winter Quarter, 1988, pp. 12-13.

For further comment on the four goals, see Edward G. Dobson, "Should A Fallen Leader Be Restored?" *Fundamentalist Journal*, May 1989, pp. 2f.

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CHAPTER 13

Sabbatical Guidelines

In the last 100 years, sabbaticals have become primarily identified as the time off used by professors in universities who want to study a subject for a concentrated period of time, usually in a location away from home. Prior to that, however, sabbaticals were used as a means for clergy to recuperate and restore their physical and spiritual vigor.

Without time off, clergy are good candidates for burnout. Pastors are on call around the clock and are “among the last generalists,” required to be orators, theologians, counselors, and administrators.

One study has shown that in a typical church, the pastor is required to wear at least 16 different and distinct ministry hats. Wearing all those hats is often what he’s called—and paid—to do. But it’s unrealistic to think a person responsible for such a huge spiritual role can do it without periodically getting away for an extended time of renewal.

There is a need for fulltime ministry professionals to be refreshed and restored physically, emotionally, and spiritually for their ministry effort.

- Effective pastoral service requires a greater than normal commitment of time and effort, and families often suffer due to this huge responsibility.
- Renewal periods are not vacations, but times for intentional exploration and reflection, for regaining the enthusiasm and creativity for ministry, for discovering what will make the pastor’s heart sing.

The Pastoral Ministry Leadership Team encourages churches to adopt a policy for pastoral sabbaticals (compensated leaves of absence). This policy is intended to encourage sabbaticals for ministry professionals who can benefit from a period of change and renewal, and such leaves are to be used for professional and personal development.

What is a Sabbatical?

A sabbatical is a time to focus in-depth on things that are important to a person’s work and life with the church. Sabbaticals for pastors are highly recommended in order to renew the calling and creativity of our spiritual leaders. Such sabbaticals should include intentional times for reflection, rekindling the spirit, and deepening spiritual life and family relationships.

Why Should We Give our Pastor a Sabbatical?

A congregation should arrange for a pastor’s sabbatical because it’s biblical, and because both the pastor and the church need it. The sabbatical year practiced by the Hebrew people was the final year in a cycle of seven years (Leviticus 25:3-4). It was also a time when the Hebrew people had the opportunity to renew their trust in God as the provider of all of their needs, even during the time

when they did not labor.

After pastors have served a congregation for five years or more, they have a tendency to take God and one another for granted, often falling into frustrating patterns rather than finding a faithful and creative future. A sabbatical for the pastor can provide time to focus on reading, writing, preaching and prayer, and forces members to exercise their ministries for the good of one another and the gospel.

Are Pastor Sabbaticals Necessary?

Most pastors will never receive a sabbatical. Those who do, however, find it to be a transformative experience. A pastor will probably survive without a Sabbath rest, but a sabbatical will help him thrive in his church.

What’s the Purpose of a Pastor Sabbatical?

In general terms, a sabbatical strengthens and further develops a pastor’s ability to serve the church. This happens when a pastor experiences the results of a well planned Sabbath. These results include the following:

- *New Perspective.* Perhaps most significant, a pastor will gain a new understanding of the world in which his church ministers. This will deepen his own insight and positively affect his preaching and his service.
- *Spiritual Renewal.* One of the easiest places to dry out spiritually is in the pulpit. A pastor is constantly talking and teaching about the spiritual life. But because it is so much a part of his conversation and work, maintaining and developing his own spiritual life seems less important. So it is easy to neglect. A pastor sabbatical can be a time to renew spiritual disciplines that got lost in the busy-ness of life.
- *Rest.* Pastor sabbaticals are not vacations. However, intense stress needs more than a week or two to break away from. It will likely take a pastor a month just to unwind from the stresses of everyday ministry.
- *Education.* Whether or not he actually earns a degree or certificate, a pastor sabbatical is educational. He will learn from his travels, from his research, from new relationships, and from quiet times alone with God.
- *Renewed Passion and Vision.* All of the above results lead to this. A pastor will return from his sabbatical with a clearer sense of mission and the renewed energy to work toward accomplishing it.

Why do We Want our Pastor to do This?

- Being an effective pastor involves continual spiritual growth.
- Parish ministry today is changing rapidly. Pastors need to retreat periodically to retool or refocus their ministry approaches.
- Pastors work long, hard hours without weekends off, and are rarely afforded the luxury of having two consecutive days off every week.
- Because of the stress of doing ministry in this changing culture and because of the long hours of work

each week, without regular renewal time (a sabbatical) pastors risk facing symptoms of emotional burnout and poor physical health.

How does the Congregation Benefit from the Pastor's Sabbatical?

- A pastor will almost assuredly come back with refreshed energy and a clearer focus for ministry in our midst.
- The congregation's ministry will get even stronger, and one's pastor will be healthier and doing better ministry.
- With the pastor gone for a while, individuals in the church can use their individual gifts in new and different ways.
- A church will hopefully develop the awareness that they should not become overly dependent on their pastor.

What are the Conditions for a Sabbatical?

A leave is a privilege which may be granted to an individual who has demonstrated above-average performance in his professional responsibilities.

- The pastor has served the church for a minimum of six years of fulltime service from the initial date of hire. A proposal for a sabbatical may be submitted in the sixth year of fulltime employment for a leave during the following (7th) year.
- The pastor must be a fulltime ministry professional (e.g., senior pastor, associate pastor, youth pastor, music and worship pastor, etc.).
- A sabbatical may be a 1-2 month leave. Additional lengths of time are usually beneficial for the recipient. The ideal renewal program is an uninterrupted time of three to four months. Only in rare and compelling situations should a renewal program be split into two or more pieces.
- Pastors are encouraged to present a written plan for their sabbatical to the church's governing board. Usually this is done three to six months in advance of the sabbatical. This written plan can include such details as their personal objective, a description of the major elements of the experience, proposed beginning and ending dates, listing of job responsibilities so proper coverage may be arranged, and any anticipated cost to the congregation.
- It is expected that there would be no contact between pastor and the church unless there was extreme emergency.

What Do Pastors Do On Sabbatical?

Sabbaticals can be designed in a variety of ways. However, here are a few things that pastors frequently include in their time away.

- *Visit Israel.* A visit to the Holy Land helps bring biblical events to life. It transforms a pastor's teaching.
- *Write.* He might write some articles for publication or finish a doctoral dissertation.
- *Visit Other Churches.* Explore other worship and preaching styles.
- *Visit Missionaries.* Part of his pastor sabbatical

might include time to meet with missionaries where they work.

- *Ministry Projects.* He might help a church rebuild after a fire, serve meals at an inner-city mission, or help with outreach at a major sporting event.
- *Rest.* Though a pastor sabbatical is not vacation, he should take time to rest. Without rest, the stress levels of ministry cannot be broken.
- *Education.* Many pastors use their time away to further develop their understanding of ministry, counseling, or preaching.
- *Travel.* Visiting other countries can be educational, eye-opening, relaxing, and restorative. It will give new perspective.

These are just examples of what other pastors have done on their sabbaticals. A pastor doesn't have to focus on just one thing while he is gone. A little variety will make the time more productive. For some great advice from pastors who've gone on sabbaticals or to find possible getaways, check out these websites:

- Parsonage.org
- Lillyendowment.org/religion.html

How Can We Pay for a Pastor Sabbatical?

You say, "We are convinced that our pastor needs a Sabbath rest. He knows what he wants to do while he's gone. The congregation is supportive. But how are we going to pay for it all?"

A church will need money for guest speakers while the pastor is gone. A pastor needs extra money for travel, supplies, seminars, retreat centers, and other expenses. A pastor sabbatical isn't cheap. So how can a church afford it? Here are a few ideas.

- *Make it a Budget Item.* The best way to pay for a pastor sabbatical is to plan for it well in advance. Put it into the annual budget and save the money over several years.
- *Lilly Endowment.* As part of their National Clergy Renewal Program, the Lilly Foundation distributes grants to churches to help them with pastor sabbaticals. Extensive planning and paperwork are required (lillyendowment.org/religion.html)
- *Special Offerings.* Allow people in the congregation to give sacrificially to a pastor's time away. Do this only after the congregation has been thoroughly educated about the need and purpose of the pastor's sabbatical.
- *Continue Paying the Pastor's Salary.* Pastors receive full salary, pension, and health benefits; car allowance is not usually paid during the sabbatical time. Pastors are responsible for the educational cost of the sabbatical, though their continuing education dollars may be used. A pastor's bills won't stop just because he isn't preaching every Sunday. Keep paying his full salary so that he can afford to be gone.
- Churches may consider a sliding scale for sabbaticals longer than one month (i.e. first month = 100%, second month = 95%, third month = 90%, etc.). [It is

assumed that the church will not receive outside funding (e.g. a grant or restricted donation) for the leave. If the church were to receive such funds, then these percentages could be revised in proportion to the amount of the funding. In no case shall the total salary exceed the amount of the normal full salary of the individual for the period of the leave.]

Summary

A sabbatical can provide:

- A wonderful time for congregational lay leaders to step forward and take responsibility for the ministry and programs of the congregation while the pastor is gone.
- A service opportunity for people to use their gifts of being worship assistants, preachers, doing hospital and home visits, or performing administration and oversight.
- An opportunity not only for the pastor, but for the whole congregation!

Planning for a sabbatical might seem financially overwhelming. But if a church plans ahead, sets money aside a little at a time, and looks for alternative sources of assistance, giving the pastor a sabbatical becomes something a church can't afford not to do.

Adopted February 24, 2009

CHAPTER 14

Ten Principles to Assist and Encourage Your Pastor's Wife

Typically, the pastor is the only individual in the family who is employed by the church. It is imperative for the church leadership and church family to see the pastor's wife as such—the wife of their pastor. Even in the rare situation where the wife (or adult children) is employed by the church, this distinction is key to authority and relational issues.

To encourage a healthy atmosphere between the pastor, pastor's wife, and church body, several areas need to be considered and addressed throughout the ebbs and flows of family life and ministry life.

1. Ministry

Understand that God has given your pastor's wife talents and spiritual gifts to be used for his glory—within the home, church, and/or community. Make every effort to provide a welcoming environment for the gifts of the pastor's wife to be used within the church body.

2. Distinction

Be cautious in assuming or placing unwelcome re-

sponsibilities on the pastor's wife simply because she is married to the pastor. Give freedom to your pastor's wife to help her husband carry the burden of ministry as best suits the pastoral couple.

3. Individuality

Just as each pastor's ministry will have its own distinctives and characteristics, so too will the ministry of the pastor's wife. Seek to encourage your pastor's wife with the unique personality, giftedness, and strengths God has given her—and in relation to her stage in life and the demands she currently faces (children, aging parents, etc.).

4. Sanctuary

It is very valuable to promote and encourage a "safe haven" within the pastor's home. For churches that provide a parsonage for their pastor, it is important to also grant the necessary freedom to the pastor's family to make their house their home. The church family and key leadership should respect the privacy of those who live in the parsonage and provide resources for any needed repairs or improvements. These respect issues are equally important for churches whose pastor lives in a private dwelling.

5. Connection

It is important for church leaders to promote and encourage healthy communication. Pastor, pastor's wife, and church family all need to avoid triangulation while also allowing for personal styles and family dynamics when dealing with ministry-related communication (email, texting, voicemail, etc.).

6. Friendship

Promote and encourage healthy interactions between the pastor's wife and the church family and community. Relationships are a natural avenue for sharing life, faith, and ministry. Opportunities to nurture relationships with extended family, pastoral couples, church family, and community are essential for long-term health and contentment.

7. Motherhood

Your pastor's wife plays a vital role in raising her children. Support and encourage a healthy environment within the family unit by providing the freedom for the unique needs and stages of each child as they grow and mature. Be careful not to single out the pastor's children on issues of behavior and ministry involvement. Rather, pray for and encourage the pastor's children as individuals and embrace their unique personal and spiritual development.

8. Sacrifice

Understand that the pastor's wife and children often forfeit/share out of their personal time with the pastor

(husband/father) to benefit the needs of others. Promote a healthy schedule for the pastor to take his days off and vacation days each year for his personal health and mental well-being, as well as for the refreshment and nurturing of his family relationships.

9. Commitment

All married couples who profess a faith in Jesus Christ will, therefore, serve as an example of what a Christian home and marriage should look like. While there is no perfect pastor or pastor's wife, the reality is that their relationship and marriage may be used by others in unfair comparison, be idealized, or be targetted with unwanted attention.

Church leadership must commit to pray for their pastor's home life, marriage relationship, and children. Understand that Satan targets Christian marriages for attack—including the pastor and pastor's wife. Encourage the pastor and wife to share ministry together as much

as possible within their specific family dynamics, preferences, and availability. Prayer support by the church family on behalf of the pastor's wife and family is essential for the pastor's health—and the health of the church.

10. Invest

A pastor who is happy at home will be a more effective pastor for the church body as a whole. Open dialogue between the pastor and the Personnel Relations Committee concerning the well-being and happiness of the pastor's wife is beneficial for both the pastor and pastor's wife. Encourage continued health within the pastor home and marriage by providing the necessary funds to underwrite the expense for an annual get-away with his wife and/or the necessary resources to attend a marriage conference together. Hosting a Pastor Appreciation (and family) Day periodically is another way to invest in your pastor's family and to promote your loving support.