

UCC Ordination Requirements (October 1, 2012)

In the UCC, the Local Association is the ordaining body and therefore has a lot of authority/power in this regard. The Manual on Ministry, available for download from the UCC website (ucc.org), is the best national resource on UCC ordination requirements and procedures. But as ordination authority rests completely with the Local Association, there will be slight variations in the requirements and procedures for pursuing ordination in the UCC Association to Association. However, once ordained by a Local Association, that ordination is for life and is transferable to all other Associations of the UCC. The following are the ordination requirements/procedures as practiced in the Kentuckiana Association of the Indiana-Kentucky Conference of the United Church of Christ:

1. Must be a member in good standing of a UCC Church.
2. Must have a BA or BS from an accredited college or university.
3. Must have an MDiv from an accredited seminary or divinity school and have completed requisite UCC Polity course and at least one unit of CPE (local requirement). (Rev. Dr. Gregory Bain, Pastor of Grace-Immanuel UCC is the LPTS adjunct professor for UCC Polity (502-296-4418). Pastor Bain teaches the class for people seeking ordination, licensure, and ordained in other denominations seeking Privilege of Call in the UCC. It's the same class, same material with the goal of polity uniformity throughout the UCC.)
4. Person seeking ordination appears before the Committee on Ministry (COM) of their Local Association of the UCC.
 - a. Local Association in the LPTS area is the Kentuckiana Association (headquartered in Louisville, KY) of the Indiana-Kentucky Conference (IKC, headquartered in Indianapolis, IN)
 - b. Sharon Crosby (502-231-4133) is the current chair of the COM for the Kentuckiana Association.
5. If approved by the COM, person seeking ordination becomes a "Member in Discernment" of the COM while in seminary and an advisor/mentor from COM will be assigned to guide them through the process.
6. The next step is to write a "Statement of Faith and Ministry" and submit it for approval by COM.
7. Once COM approves, present "Statement of Faith and Ministry" at an Ecclesiastical Council (interested members from all of the churches in the Association gather usually on a Sunday afternoon to hear the presentation, ask questions of the one in discernment, and vote to approve the Member in Discernment for ordination). Ecclesiastical Council notifies COM of their recommendation and COM approves the Member in Discernment as a candidate for ordination.
8. Once approved for ordination, candidate writes a Profile that is on kept on file and circulated by the UCC National Headquarters (located in Cleveland, OH) to UCC churches' Pastor Search Committees.
9. Ordination candidate then applies through the national UCC headquarters for and must pass an in-depth National Background Check (NBC) prior to Profile being circulated and prior to ordination (cost for this National Background Check is about \$150, a cost the candidate bears which is typically reimbursed later by the first congregation to hire).
10. Interview with interested congregational Pastor Search Committee(s), who will usually have the candidate preach a sermon either to them or to the congregation before offering the call.
11. Receive and accept a call to an authorized ministry, which could be a pastoral position in a congregation, chaplaincy, or another approved clergy position (COM is the approving authority in

determining what is an “authorized ministry” in regards to an ordainable position. For example: In the Kentuckiana Association, Interim Minister is not an ordainable position).

12. Ordination typically takes place at the candidate’s home UCC congregation, the place where the ordination process began. The ordaining Association typically conducts the Ordination Service. Then, the Installation Service is conducted by the congregation of first called clergy position, typically.

To change denomination to UCC or keep original denomination and be approved for Privilege of Call (Ministerial Standing) in the UCC (required to pastor a UCC church):

1. Contact local UCC Association COM to request transfer of ordination to UCC or seek Privilege of Call in that Association of the UCC (to keep original ordination, yet pastor a UCC church).
2. All of the above ordination requirements listed in the previous section apply including the UCC Polity Course (taught locally through LPTS by Rev. Greg Bain on an as-needed basis).
3. Local Association COM will probably require a written Statement of Faith and Ministry but presentation at an Ecclesiastical Council is usually waived for those already ordained by another denomination.
4. Creating a UCC Profile and completion of the National Background Check are required for transfer of ordination and Privilege of Call authorization.
5. Final approval by Association COM for transfer of ordination or Privilege of Call (aka “Standing”) typically takes about a year to complete.
6. Privilege of Call is NOT transferable Association to Association.

Licensed Local Pastor

1. There are procedures to License Local Pastors under certain circumstances and situations specified in the Manual on Ministry.
2. Licensure renewal is an annual requirement and, like Privilege of Call, is not transferable Association to Association.

Miscellaneous

1. The above are the local ordination procedures/requirements that follow the national guidelines fairly closely. However, how the procedures/requirements for ordination play out specifically can be a little different Association to Association; UCC Polity allows for this. For example: the Kentuckiana Association requires candidates for ordination to have at least one unit of CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education). CPE is a local requirement.
2. There is a slow-growing organic movement developing within the UCC toward developing an “alternate path to ordination” for long-time licensed pastors that waives the MDiv requirement. However, this is a long and *rare* process and there are only a few of these ordinands in the UCC nationwide. There has been only one of these candidates locally in recent memory and, in the end, his ordination was not approved.