CLERGY CALL AND PLACEMENT

FWC does not grant ministerial standing or offer placement services. We advocate participation in the UCC’s system of ecclesiastical recognition and placement, with its accompanying accountability. Clergy and congregations should familiarize themselves thoroughly with the Manual on Ministry of the UCC.

We recognize two common problems in the UCC. First, pastors who consider themselves to be orthodox, evangelical, or conservative in contrast to official UCC policy, or who become active in renewal efforts, sometimes have difficulty with Church and Ministry Committees when seeking license, ordination, standing, or fairness in disciplinary procedures. Second, congregations committed to the historic faith often have difficulty finding a pastor within the system who is theologically compatible with the congregation.

UCC Clergy who believe they have been mistreated by Church and Ministry Commissions based on theological discrimination should notify the Conference Staff, the Office for Church Life and Leadership, and a group such as FWC. In rare cases, clergy may need to seek alternative paths to ecclesiastical recognition, such as standing with the Evangelical Association.

UCC polity gives congregations the right to call a pastor of their own choosing, with or without standing in the UCC. Congregations should exercise great care in choosing pastors who will preach and minister in keeping with their traditions and convictions. We recommend using the UCC’s placement service and the services of conference staff as the first option in seeking a pastor. The Office for Church Life and Leadership provides an excellent process for matching pastors and churches as well as safeguards such as required disclosure of criminal and disciplinary records.

Where the UCC’s process is unhelpful or adversarial in finding a compatible pastor, other options for churches seeking pastors include contacting the Evangelical Association, the Pastor Referral Network, Intercristo, and placement offices at colleges and seminaries. FWC pastors openly seeking a call may indicate that fact on the FWClergy web page, but FWC cannot and does not validate their character or competence. Any church should thoroughly investigate a potential pastoral candidate according to all legally available means.

It is important to ask specific questions of pastoral candidates to ascertain the potential pastor’s theology and intent. Possible questions might include:

- What do you believe are the essential truths of the Christian faith?
- What is your philosophy of worship and what is your perception of this congregation’s approach to worship and how it might fit with your own?
- Can you affirm without reservation the Apostles’ Creed? (You may also substitute or add other testimonies of faith such as the Nicene Creed, the Basis of Union with Interpretations of the UCC, and the Lexington Confession.)
- What is your opinion of the principles of Faithful and Welcoming Churches?
- Are you personally committed to remaining in the UCC? Under what circumstances might you change your perspective on this question?
- What is your perspective of the UCC’s “Open and Affirming” identity and “Still Speaking” campaign? How might you use the pastoral office to advocate for your views?
- Would you consent to officiate at same sex civil unions or same sex marriage ceremonies?