

UUCPA Community Minister Policy

Written by the Committee on Ministry (CoM)
Approved by the Board on November 4, 2003

Background and Introduction

The purpose of this document is to initiate a policy that will guide CoM and the UUCPA Board in managing the church's relationships with Community Ministers from the time of application through their length of service as well as departure. The CoM is responsible for maintaining relationships with these ministers.

“Community Ministry” is used here to denote the work of ordained UU clergy who are immersed in a ministry setting in the larger community, or beyond the bounds of a single UU congregation.¹ The work of a community minister reaches a diverse population. Examples include hospice chaplain, campus minister or professor of religion, director of music and the arts, pastoral counselor, social justice advocate and director of community programs that reach out to the poor and disenfranchised.

Community ministers enrich UU congregations as they help envision and incarnate ministries in new and exciting ways. Their wealth of experience helps strengthen a congregation’s worship, social justice, pastoral care, and religious education programs. Furthermore, community ministers often work with parish-based ministers to network programs between local congregations and further district-wide goals and initiatives.² In other words, a community minister is considered one of the leaders of the church.³

A Community Minister applies for either endorsement or affiliation. A UUA member congregation, authorized District Body, UUA Associate Member organization, or the UUA must endorse all community ministers. Endorsement includes a pledge of continuing relationship and support and affirmation that the endorsing body recognizes the work as a ministry. Endorsement has often been mistakenly used interchangeably with affiliation. Affiliation for community ministers involves greater commitments by both minister and church than endorsement as well as a greater coordination between the ministry of the community minister and the congregation.⁴

¹ PCD Community Ministry Council, “What is Community Ministry?” handout.

² “Community Ministry,” by UUA Ministerial Fellowship Committee, June 2002

³ “Defining Community Ministry,” by Rev. D.D. Hotchkiss, Aug 1995.

⁴ MFC Rule 21

Application Process for Endorsement

Criteria for community minister endorsement

The applicant must be a UU minister who is presently involved in a full-time or part-time local ministry. Ordination may not be required, depending on the type of community ministry. The candidate must have received preliminary fellowship from the MFC.

Endorsement Process

1. The applicant will meet with the UUCPA Ministers to initiate the process of UUCPA endorsement as a Community Minister and establish a relationship with them.
2. The applicant will submit to CoM the UUA application form for community ministry and a letter describing her or his ministerial training, experience, including the current community ministry.
3. The candidate will meet with a CoM sub-committee (including one member of the Board of Trustees) to explore the degree of mutual interest in endorsement.
4. The sub-committee and the applicant will work with CoM to draft an agreement that specifies mutual expectations between UUCPA and the applicant regarding the community ministry and periodic renewal dates. During these discussions, the applicant will provide an estimated annual budget including both revenue and expenditures for the first three years of ministry with UUCPA. The proposal may include a recommendation that certain expenses be reimbursed, such as travel to the church.
5. CoM will forward to the Board the UUA application form, the letter from the applicant describing the proposed community ministry, and a proposed agreement for the terms of the endorsement.
6. In anticipation of the periodic endorsement renewal date, the community minister shall request a renewal or extension subject to the recommendation by CoM and approval by the Board of Trustees.

Affiliation Process

As of Summer 2003, CoM recommends that UUCPA postpone any community ministry affiliation until the church's previous experience with affiliation has been reviewed and a better process can be established for supporting an affiliated community minister. However, if affiliation is considered before a UUCPA policy on affiliation is written, UUCPA should follow the UUA guidelines for the affiliation process.

Ongoing Relationship

Expectations

An endorsed community Minister is expected to provide at least three instances of service to the congregation per year. In consultation with the Advisory Committee, the community minister will propose a combination of the following: deliver sermons, set up workshops, hold classes or write articles in church publications. She or he connects our congregation to the world outside, broadening the vision of the church and educating us

about the ways and needs of our community so that we can be of greater service. Information about the community ministry should be provided to the congregation regularly to maximize exposure of the minister and her or his work to the congregation and provide two-way nurturing between minister and members/friends. All endorsed ministers' names will appear on all official church letterheads.

Advisory Committee

A committee of at least three persons serves each Community Minister to provide ongoing support and connection between the congregation and the minister. Only one committee member is a CoM member. CoM will appoint the Advisory Committee in consultation with the Community Minister. The task of the Advisory Committee is to support the Community Minister and assist in the fulfillment of the agreement established during the endorsement process. In the event the community minister is only in preliminary fellowship (as opposed to full fellowship), the Advisory Committee then defaults to a Supervisory Committee.

Conflict Management

In the event that the relationship between the community minister and the church is not working out to the satisfaction of either or both parties, CoM and the Advisory Committee will be responsible in gathering the facts behind the disagreement. If necessary, mediation may be arranged to resolve differences. This process should ideally be guided by a UUCPA conflict management policy and in consultation with the Board.

Exit Process

A departing Community Minister needs to plan for a new relationship with the congregation and staff that will protect and preserve good relationships for all during the transition period that begins after the term of service is completed. This process is especially relevant to the minister who intends to remain in the same geographic area to serve as a minister or engage as layperson in the religious life of a church or fellowship.

The following procedures for this transition are based primarily upon the Unitarian Universalist Minister Association (UUMA) guidelines.

When a Community Minister at UUCPA intends to leave his or her position, he or she needs to do the following:

1. The departing minister meets with the UUCPA ministers and CoM to discuss and review the relationship between the Community Minister and the congregation during his/her term of service. The Community Minister shall review all relevant experiences, both positive and negative, with the UUCPA Ministers and CoM to facilitate the transition process. From that, they will jointly propose an exit plan to handle this change in status.

2. CoM submits the proposed exit plan to the UUCPA Board for approval. If the Board has reservations about the proposal, the Board may require that specific issues be addressed before final approval.
3. The departing Community Minister shall abide by the UUMA guidelines and Code of Professional Practice. For example, after the term of service has ended, the former minister should not perform ministerial services for the congregation, or engage in open discussion regarding the ministry of the incumbent ministers. The UUMA handbook contains guidelines that apply to former and retired ministers, which may be consulted during the formulation of the exit plan. Note that these guidelines are not specifically written for Community Ministers. Consequently, the review process involving the UUCPA Ministers, CoM, and the departing Community Minister is most critical in setting the course for the new relationship between the departing minister and UUCPA congregation.

The Community Minister's Advisory Committee may also provide a farewell service for the Minister.

Distribution and Revision of Policy and Agreements

This policy and all revised versions of it should be distributed to all UUCPA Ministers, Community Ministry Advisory Committee, CoM, the UUCPA Board, and the UUCPA office.

CoM shall have access to all documents pertaining to the community minister, including but not limited to the agreement between UUCPA and Community Minister, meeting notes and the exit policy. Some of these documents automatically become public records (such as the agreement). However, the remaining records shall enter the UUCPA public domain only upon the explicit approval of the Community Minister. Such records and information that the Community Minister is willing to share will be distributed to a wider audience including the Community Minister, all settled ministers (including MRE), the pertinent Community Minister Advisory committees, CoM, the UUCPA Board, and the UUCPA office.