

## **ST. LUCAS UCC THREE-WAY MINISTRY COVENANT FOR MINISTERS WITH ACTIVE STANDING WHO IDENTIFY AS RETIRED FROM MINISTRY**

### **COVENANTS OF MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY**

**[Retired Minister], as an Authorized Minister of the United Church of Christ covenants to:**

#### ***To St. Lucas United Church of Christ in Sunset Hills, Missouri:***

- Maintain membership in good standing with this Local Church, including financial support for the general ministries of this church, a commitment to earnest prayer for the well-being of this congregation and its ministry, and public recognition of membership in this Body of Christ;
- Offer public support of and private prayer for the pastoral staff of this church;
- Adhere to the UCC Ministerial Code of the Manual on Ministry;
- Participate in the life of the congregation with the exception of serving on the Church Council;
- Refrain from hearing or sharing in complaints about the pastor's leadership, sharing doubts publicly about the pastor's leadership ability or decisions, or offering unsolicited advice to the pastor, or if no current pastor, the church leadership;
- Refrain from offering pastoral support to other members of the congregation, including officiating weddings, funerals, baptisms, and serving communion to members unless requested by the senior pastor, or in the senior pastor's absence, the church leadership;
- Refrain from preaching at church services and special events unless requested by the senior pastor, or in the senior pastor's absence, the church leadership;
- To defer to the leadership of the church's pastor particularly when conflicts arise within a congregation. This does not mean that a retired minister may never disagree with their pastor, but it does mean that the retired minister is encouraged to find ways to share that disagreement that does not subvert the pastor's authority with the rest of the congregation;
- Refrain from participating in any Search and Call process within St. Lucas UCC.

#### ***To the St. Louis Association of the Mid-South Conference:***

- Encouraged to participate in Association Annual Meetings, Ministerium gatherings, Conference Annual Meetings;
- Adhere to oversight by the Association Committee on Ministry: Support, including the annual Information Review.

**St. Lucas UCC, as the Local Church of Membership covenants:**

*To [Retired Minister]:*

- Provide pastoral care and support;
- Support you in your ongoing vocational discernment;
- Publicly recognize milestones in ministry.

We of St. Lucas United Church of Christ are thankful for your years of faithful service to us and we look forward to worshipping and doing ministry beside you. We trust in God's presence with us as we all seek to be faithful to this covenant:

[Retired Minister]:

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Signature

Date

St. Lucas Church Council President:

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Signature

Date

St. Louis Association  
Committee on Ministry Support Representative:

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Signature

Date

## A THREE-WAY MINISTRY COVENANT FOR MINISTERS WITH ACTIVE STANDING WHO IDENTIFY AS RETIRED FROM MINISTRY

### Among

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#) *(Authorized Minister)*

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#) *(Local Church of Membership)*

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#) *(Association)*

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#) *(Conference)*

### ABOUT THE THREE-WAY COVENANT

The term “retired” has financial and employment connotations rather than ecclesial considerations. Some clergy receiving an annuity or pension call themselves “retired clergy” even when they continue to serve in active ministry, whether as interim, settled, part-time, volunteer, or in occasional service. From an ecclesial perspective, these ministers are considered “active” and need three-way covenants with their ministry contexts. Some clergy who call themselves “retired” do not intend to accept a call to ministry service beyond occasional service such as pulpit supply, community ministry, or short-term bridge positions. Unless they have received Exempt Standing, these ministers have active standing and must continue to meet the requirements for maintaining ministerial standing and they are expected to participate in the life of a Local Church. These Authorized Ministers, although not serving in a pastoral capacity in that Local Church, still share a unique relationship within the congregation and within the Association.

Active ministers who consider themselves retired often have a special, if informal, role of authority within the congregation. Other members of the congregation look to them as leaders in a unique way. Many times, a retired minister is a blessing for the current pastor and the congregation, but occasionally, a retired minister oversteps their authority and undermines the ministry of the pastor of the congregation. Mutually and clearly stated expectations help to minimize such situations. Thus, a three-way covenant that outlines the shared expectations of the covenantal partners is appropriate.

The sacred nature of the shared ministry between the Local Church, the Association (or the Conference Acting as an Association) and the Authorized Minister for the

purpose of God's mission and the relationship expectations of all covenantal partners should be made explicit in writing with the following **three-way covenant**.

This sample three-way covenant outlines expectations of the Authorized Minister, the Local Church of membership, and the Association (or Conference Acting as an Association) all in relationship to one another. Covenant – not only in writing but in all forms – is meant to secure the well-being of God's community and the Body of Christ as a whole; covenants are not crafted for the purpose of prioritizing needs or the wants of an individual or the Local Church. In the United Church of Christ, three-way covenants are written to further the mutual ministry of all ministry partners (Association or Conference Acting as an Association, Local Church and the Authorized Minister) in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ.

Accountability for healthy relationships, good communications and mutual concern for all participants should be built into the fabric of the three-way covenant in order to strengthen and encourage ethical and faithful ministry. The authority and power of the three-way covenant rests in the understanding and respect for mutual accountability on the part of each participant.

While the specific responsibilities in three-way covenants can vary according to Associations and the Local Church, some basic expectations are important to foster healthy relationships and communications among the covenantal partners and with God:

- **LOCAL CHURCH RESPONSIBILITIES** include participation in the Association and Conference Annual Gatherings; and support, including pastoral support, for its members who are Authorized Ministers.
- **AUTHORIZED MINISTERS RESPONSIBILITIES** include maintenance of ministerial standing; participation in the life of the Church of the United Church of Christ, faithfulness to the Ministerial Code of Ethics; and support of their pastor(s).
- **ASSOCIATION RESPONSIBILITIES** include appropriate documentation of the Authorized Minister as Authorized with ministerial standing; fidelity to the covenants of mutual accountability; and concern and respect for the health and vitality of the Authorized Minister and the Local Church.

On behalf of an Association and the United Church of Christ, a Committee on Ministry has the responsibility for Authorized Ministers. A Committee tends to the



- Participate in the life of the congregation as any other member of the congregation;
- Refrain from hearing or sharing in complaints about the pastor's leadership, sharing doubts publicly about the pastor's leadership ability or decisions, or offering unsolicited advice to the pastor, or if no current pastor, the church leadership;
- Refrain from offering pastoral support to other members of the congregation without explicit invitation of current pastor, or if no current pastor, the church leadership. If a retired clergyperson is asked to provide pastoral care or liturgical leadership (such as funerals, weddings, or baptisms) by a member of the congregation, they refer the request to the current pastor, or if no current pastor, the church leadership;
- Preach at the invitation of the current pastor, or if no current pastor, the church leadership;
- To defer to the leadership of the church's pastor particularly when conflicts arise within a congregation. This does not mean that a retired minister may never disagree with their pastor, but it does mean that the retired minister is encouraged to find ways to share that disagreement that does not subvert the pastor's authority with the rest of the congregation;
- Refrain from participating in any Search and Call process.

To the \_\_\_\_\_ *Association of*  
*the* \_\_\_\_\_  
Conference:

- Participate in Association Annual Meetings, Ministerium gatherings, Conference Annual Meetings;
- Adhere to oversight by the Association Committee on Ministry, including the annual Information Review and the triennial Periodic Review.

Click or tap here to enter text., as the Local Church of Membership covenants:

To \_\_\_\_\_:

- Provide pastoral care and support;

- Support the Authorized Minister in their ongoing vocational discernment;
- Provide appropriate avenues for the Authorized Minister to share their gifts as needed and desired;
- Publicly recognize milestones in ministry.

To the \_\_\_\_\_ Association of the

\_\_\_\_\_:

- Appropriate documentation of [Click or tap here to enter text.](#) as an Authorized Minister with ministerial standing;
- Fidelity to the covenants of mutual accountability as articulated in this document.

**The \_\_\_\_\_ Association/Conference of the United Church of Christ covenants:**

To \_\_\_\_\_:

- All of the rights and responsibilities of an authorized minister in this Association.
- Clear communication of this Association’s/Conference’s requirements for good ministerial standing (including but not limited to boundary training and continuing education) and of any policies supplemental to the Manual on Ministry that have been established by this Association/Conference; those requirements are:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(boundary training)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(continuing education)

\_\_\_\_\_ (other)

\_\_\_\_\_ (other)

To \_\_\_\_\_, United Church of Christ:

- Belief in the local church as the locus for mission and ministry in the United Church of Christ and thankfulness for your support of \_\_\_\_\_;
- Appropriate support and oversight of all ministers in three- or four-way covenants with your congregation.

We trust in God’s presence with us as we seek to be faithful to this covenant:

Authorized Minister	Authorized minister	Date
Signature	Typed Name	

President Signature	Date
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Association Minister Signature	Date
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Association Representative	Date
Signature	

Name of Conference	Date
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