

Essential Elements in a United Church of Christ Polity Class

History

- Origins, development, significant documents, major events, important persons in the four historic constituent traditions (Congregational, Christian, Evangelical, Reformed)
- Spiritual legacies of traditions and groups that did not originate in one of the four historic constituencies of the United Church of Christ (especially, but not necessarily limited to, African American, American Indian, Pacific Islander/Asian American, Hispanic), pre and post missionary contact
- Founding of the United Church of Christ
- Developments in the United Church of Christ from 1957 to the present
- Our diverse UCC histories in the broader evolution of faith traditions
- Relationship of local church histories to that of the national United Church of Christ

Theology

- Ecclesiology and the implications of Jesus Christ as Head of the Church
- Theological documents and texts (e.g. Statement of Faith, Preamble to the Constitution, services of ordination and installation, various working papers of the national setting, ecumenical documents, pronouncements of General Synod, etc.)
- Emphasis on “testimonies of the deeds of God rather than on tests of faith”
- Worship resources (e.g., *Book of Worship*, *New Century Hymnal*, various on-line materials from the wider UCC, etc.)
- Historic creeds and confessions in a progressive denomination
- How do our theological documents and approaches to theology shape the life of our church
- Stewardship

Polity

- Covenantal polity as a reflection of God’s covenant of grace
- Constituent expressions of the United Church of Christ as described in the national Constitution and By-Laws and their roles and relationships to one another
- Past and present structures of the United Church of Christ
- The meaning of accountability and autonomy in our covenantal polity
- Practical implications of ministry carried out in a covenantal polity
- Our covenantal polity in concrete practice among various expressions of the United Church of Christ
- Financing our various ministries (Our Church’s Wider Mission, special offerings, local church, etc.)

Ministry

- Forms of authorized ministry—licensed, commissioned, ordained—and emerging patterns for authorizing ministry
- Ministerial partnership with Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and mutual recognition of ministry via the Formula of Agreement
- Relationship of authorized ministry to ministry of all the baptized
- Structures and patterns of accountability—i.e., ordination, standing, discipline
- Ministerial ethics (Ordained Minister’s Code in the *Manual on Ministry*; boundary training, other ethics documents)
- Understandings of authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ (e.g., embodiment, empowerment models; authorized to represent)
- The United Church of Christ Search-and-Call process (core common practices, varieties of practice, legal issues, keeping covenant while in the process)

The Ethos of the UCC

- Core commitments of the United Church of Christ: multi-cultural, multi-racial, anti-racist, open and affirming, just peace, accessible to all
- Core values: continuing testament, extravagant welcome, changing lives
- Being a “United and Uniting Church” and our ecumenical vocation
- The evolving shape of mission, local and global
- Multiple resources available from the national United Church of Christ, as well as Conferences and Associations