ORDER FOR CREATION OR RENEWAL OF A LAY MINISTERIAL STANDING COVENANT

This order is to be held during worship at a Local Church of an Association, or during an Association meeting or other event. It involves the participation of Local Church, Association, and Conference as covenantal representatives. It is appropriate for a Committee on Ministry representative to be present, along with the Lay Ministerial Standing pastoral supervisor, and a representative of the Conference.

This order may be incorporated into a Service of Word and Sacrament or a Service of the Word following the sermon.

As stated in Manual on Ministry, in cases where an ordained minister is not available to serve in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ, and when a lay member has been identified to meet the representative need of the United Church of Christ in a specific time and place of ministerial service, the Association can confer authority to celebrate the sacraments through Lay Ministerial Standing. Lay persons who hold Lay Ministerial Standing are required to participate in ecclesial systems of oversight and adhere to the UCC Ministerial Code.

This liturgy may be used for a lay member who has met the Association’s requirements for Lay Ministerial Standing. That member might already be a Member in Discernment, or might not, or might become a Member in Discernment. In all cases, a Lay Ministerial Standing covenant is subject to annual renewal between the Local Church and the Association.

Outline

- Greeting
- Introduction
- Lay Ministerial Standing Vows
- Prayer
- Declaration
- Benediction

ref. Section 2:4 Ministerial Standing for Lay Persons

Revised 2019
All may be seated except representatives of the Committee on Ministry, representative members of the Local Church where the candidate holds active membership, the candidate’s advisor/supervisor, and the candidate.

Greeting

A representative of the Committee on Ministry may greet the people, and the people may respond with these or similar words.

Committee On Ministry Representative:
Greetings in the name of Jesus,
God-with-us, Emmanuel.

Congregation:
Greetings in the name of Christ,
the Church’s cornerstone.

Committee On Ministry Representative:
We welcome all to this occasion
recognizing a covenant between settings of the church
and conferring the authority
of Lay Ministerial Standing
one year at a time, on behalf of the wider United Church of Christ.

The candidate may be invited to come forward along with the Moderator or other representatives of the congregation. An unsigned covenant for Lay Ministerial Standing is presented at the communion table or baptismal font.

Vows

Lay Ministerial Standing Supervisor (addressing candidate):
Do you understand your service to be representative of the United Church of Christ for this particular season and for the particular role and tasks of _________________?

Candidate:
I do.

Lay Ministerial Standing Supervisor:
Do you acknowledge that Lay Ministerial Standing is a temporary, accountable, and covenantal relationship with the Association, to meet the needs of the Local Church?

Candidate:  
I do.

Lay Ministerial Standing Supervisor:  
Do you commit this year to meeting regularly with myself as a representative of the Association?

Candidate:  
I do.

Lay Ministerial Standing Supervisor:  
For this coming year, do you accept the responsibility of sacramental service with accountability to the wider church?

Candidate:  
I do, with God’s help.

Supervisor presents to candidate a copy of the UCC Ministerial Code.

Lay Ministerial Standing Supervisor:  
Do you commit to abiding by the ethical standards of the United Church of Christ, as given in the UCC Ministerial Code?

Candidate:  
I do, with God’s help.

Conference Representative:  
Do you acknowledge that Lay Ministerial Standing involves a temporary and covenantal relationship between your Local Church and the Association?

Members of the Local Church:  
We do.

Conference Representative:  
Do you commit to mutuality in ministry with your Lay Minister, seeking the mind of Christ together, not expecting one member to be the entire church, but rather encouraging each person to play a part?

Members of the Local Church:  
We do, with God’s help.
Conference Representative:
The __name of Conference__ Conference of the United Church of Christ commits to continue this journey with your congregation, seeking in prayer to listen with you to God’s call for your future.

If the candidate is a Member in Discernment, vows continue with the following questions to the congregation.

Lay Ministerial Standing Supervisor:
Does __name of local church____ United Church of Christ undertake with __name of MID____ the journey of ministerial preparation and formation, expecting to hear annually from the Committee on Ministry concerning their status as a Member(s) in Discernment?

Members of the Local Church Discernment Committee:
We do, with God’s help.

Lay Ministerial Standing Supervisor:
Do you who are members of the MID’s Local Church Discernment Committee promise to support their journey of discernment through prayer, encouragement, through meeting together, and listening together to God’s call?

Members of the Local Church Discernment Committee:
We do, with God’s help.

The document attesting the Lay Ministerial Standing covenant is signed by all parties. A song or hymn may be sung, such as an a capella “Amen” chorus.

PRAYER

All who are able may stand.

Leader:
Let us pray.

All:
We give thanks to you, God, for your ongoing call on our lives. We thank you for our companion in Christ, __name of Lay Minister__. We trust you to provide what is needed to carry out these responsibilities for this worshipping community at this time.
DECLARATION

Committee on Ministry Representative:
Having gathered in covenantal partnership and having witnessed these shared vows with the __name of Conference__ and with __name of Local Church__, the Committee on Ministry of the __name of Association__ confers Lay Ministerial Standing upon __candidate name__.

BENEDICTION

Conference Representative:
Hear these words from Scripture:
The One who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it!iii

In Christ’s name, and in covenantal partnership across Local Church, Association, and Conference settings of the United Church of Christ, now let us be equipped and built up for the work of the Body of Christ in the world, remembering the Way of Jesus, who came not be served but to serve.

All:
Amen.

The Committee on Ministry representative(s) may give a greeting of Christian love such as a sign of peace, and may present an appropriate certificate to the Lay Minister.

A Service of Word and Sacrament or a Service of the Word may continue, or a hymn and a benediction may close the order.

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ii Philippians 1:6, paraphrase