

Affirming Licensed and Commissioned Ministers as Authorized Ministers in the United Church of Christ

Source

Executive Committee of the Aha O Nā Mokupuni ‘O Maui, Moloka‘i, A Me Lāna‘i (formerly the Tri-Isle Association of the Hawai‘i Conference UCC)

Date of Adoption by Source or Sponsor

Adopted by the Executive Committee of the Aha O Nā Mokupuni ‘O Maui, Moloka‘i, A Me Lāna‘i (formerly the Tri-Isle Association of the Hawai‘i Conference UCC) March 2, 2022.

Brief Summary

This resolution is an overture to the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of Christ to affirm both Licensed Ministry and Commissioned Ministry as Authorized Ministries of the United Church of Christ in accordance with the current Constitution and Bylaws of the UCC and to direct Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization Local Church Ministries, A Covenanted Ministry of the United Church of Christ to amend *Manual on Ministry: A Guide to Authorizing Ministry in the United Church of Christ* © 2018 to reflect the United Church of Christ Constitution and Bylaws regarding both Licensed Ministers and Commissioned Ministers.

Biblical, theological and ethical rational for the resolution

In the letter to the church at Corinth, the Apostle writes:

⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good...²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸ And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way. (1 Cor. 12:4–7, 27–31 NRSV)

Similarly, the Apostle writes to the church in Rome:

¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of

38 God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. ³For by the grace given to me I
39 say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you
40 ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure
41 of faith that God has assigned. ⁴For as in one body we have many members,
42 and not all the members have the same function, ⁵so we, who are many, are
43 one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. ⁶We have
44 gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to
45 faith; ⁷ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; ⁸the exhorter, in
46 exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the
47 compassionate, in cheerfulness. (Rom. 12:1–8 NRSV)

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49 Under the heading “Theology of Ministry and Ordination” in *Manual on Ministry: A Guide to*
50 *Authorizing Ministry in the United Church of Christ* © 2018, we read:

51 The United Church of Christ believes that God calls every
52 Christian to be a servant of God, a minister⁴, living and serving
53 in Christ’s name. This call is celebrated sacramentally in baptism
54 as persons are claimed for Christ by the Holy Spirit and the Church;
55 all who are baptized spend the rest of their lives responding to
56 God’s call and claim. The particulars of each person’s call and
57 ministry vary with time, place, talents, experience, personal
58 situation and responsibilities, and, importantly, the needs of the
59 world. Ministry is lived in every aspect of one’s life as God’s love
60 is shown in word and deed.

61
62 The particular ministry of reconciling all God’s children with one
63 another, with creation, and with God, was given to God’s people
64 in scripture: “All this is from God, who reconciled us...through
65 Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in
66 Christ God was reconciling the world to Godself, not counting
67 their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of
68 reconciliation to us” (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). This ministry is
69 claimed daily by the United Church of Christ as it is called to
70 love God, neighbor, and self, and to do justice, love kindness, and
71 walk humbly with God (Matthew 22:36-50 and Micah 6:8).

72 Christians are members of the Body of Christ, the Church,
73 under the sole headship of Jesus Christ. This is a living body (1
74 Corinthians 12), called, formed and sent into the world by the
75 power of the Holy Spirit. Loving and serving God, the Church has
76 multiple purposes:

- 77 • embodying and proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ to all;
- 78 • nurturing and empowering the gathered Church through worship and
79 sacraments, fellowship and mutual care, education and spiritual
80 formation;
- 81 • acting in the world through deeds of justice and lovingkindness.(pp. 7–
82 8)

84 In defining ordination, the *Manual on Ministry: A Guide to Authorizing Ministry in the United*
85 *Church of Christ* © 2018 states:

86 The Church acknowledges that its members have many diverse ministries in
87 the world and in the Church. It also recognizes a specific need for
88 representative servant leaders “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for
89 building up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12). The United Church of Christ,
90 along with the Church Universal through the ages and throughout the world,
91 affirms God’s call to some individuals to be such leaders who help the Church
92 to be what God intends it to be. These persons are set apart through prayer and
93 the laying on of hands in the rite of ordination.

94
95 In ordination, the individual makes a lifetime commitment to God in Jesus
96 Christ and to the Church, relying on the Holy Spirit. As Ordained Ministers
97 enter the apostolic ministry,⁵ they continue the witness of Christ’s followers
98 from New Testament times. They receive authority from the Triune God to
99 serve in Jesus’ name. Ordained Ministers have particular responsibilities for
100 the proclamation and practice of the Christian faith and for the life of the
101 Church itself. (p. 8)

102
103 God calls some to serve for a season in a particular ministry to address the needs of the church.
104 In those cases, the United Church of Christ has authorized individuals to serve as Licensed
105 Ministers and Commissioned Ministers without requiring ordination (Constitution Article VI and
106 Bylaws Preamble and Article I). Those faithful ministers have often served small congregations
107 and offered specialized ministry in various settings. Those Licensed and Commissioned
108 Ministers have shared their gifts and proclaimed the gospel through faithful and loving service.
109 Some have pursued ordination. Associations and Conferenced Licensed and Commissioned
110 Ministers have been authorized to serve for a “season” as Ecclesiastes states: “For everything
111 there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven” (Ecclesiastes 31 NRSV). Affirming
112 those ministries, gifts, and seasons with authorization is consistent with the belief that all
113 ministry flows from the gift of the Spirit in Baptism.

114
115 Based on the covenantal polity of the United Church of Christ, local Associations have
116 authorized Licensed Ministers and Commissioned Ministers. The Constitution and Bylaws of the
117 United Church of Christ have not been amended, and the Ministerial Excellence, Support and
118 Authorization, Local Church Ministries, A Covenanted Ministry of the United Church of Christ
119 has set before the United Church of Christ the challenge of considering the elimination of
120 Licensed Ministry and Commissioned Ministry as they have been practiced without significant
121 discussion and discernment in all settings of the United Church of Christ since *Manual on*
122 *Ministry: A Guide to Authorizing Ministry in the United Church of Christ* © 2018 was published.
123 Some local Churches, Associations, and Conferences have found it necessary to affirm Licensed
124 and Commissioned Ministers as valued “authorized” ministers and calling for amending *Manual*
125 *on Ministry: A Guide to Authorizing Ministry in the United Church of Christ* © 2018 to guide
126 Associations in the process of authorizing Licensed and Commissioned Ministers.

127
128 While this *Manual on Ministry: A Guide to Authorizing Ministry in the United Church of Christ*
129 © 2018 is subtitled “A **Guide** to Authorizing Ministry in the United Church of Christ,” it is a

130 “guide” that lays out ordained ministry as the ultimate goal of all authorized ministers who have
131 not been ordained, and it is not congruent with the Constitution (Article VI) and Bylaws
132 (Preamble and Article I) of the UCC and conflicts with the practice of many Associations and
133 Conferences in authorizing Licensed Ministers and Commissioned Ministers.
134

135 Text of the Resolution

136
137 **WHEREAS** the Constitution (Article VI) and Bylaws (Preamble and Article I) of the United
138 Church of Christ recognize three forms of authorized ministers—licensed, commissioned,
139 and ordained,

140 **AND WHEREAS** those forms of authorized ministry affirm the United Church of Christ’s
141 belief that all are called to minister,

142 **AND WHEREAS** local churches, Associations and Conferences have been faithfully served by
143 Licensed Ministers and Commissioned Ministers,

144 **AND WHEREAS** many have affirmed the importance of maintaining both Licensed Ministry
145 and Commissioned Ministry, as authorized ministries of the United Church of Christ,

146 **AND WHEREAS** the Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization Team of Local Church
147 Ministries, A Covenanted Ministry of the United Church of Christ endeavored to set
148 before the United Church of Christ a common understanding of ordination in *Manual on*
149 *Ministry: A Guide to Authorizing Ministry in the United Church of Christ* © 2018, such a
150 common understanding requires the affirmation of Associations and Conferences whose
151 practices regarding authorized ministry differ,

152 **AND WHEREAS** the Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization Team of Local Church
153 Ministries, A Covenanted Ministry of the United Church of Christ in *Manual on*
154 *Ministry: A Guide to Authorizing Ministry in the United Church of Christ* © 2018 set
155 forth an understanding of ordination and provided a path to move through lay ministry to
156 ordained ministry,

157 **AND WHEREAS** the *Manual on Ministry: A Guide to Authorizing Ministry in the United*
158 *Church of Christ* © 2018 eliminates both Licensed Ministry and Commission Ministry as
159 authorized ministry,

160 **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the delegates to the 200th ‘Aha Pae‘āina of the Hawai‘i
161 Conference of the United Church of Christ meeting at Honolulu, Hawai‘i June 12–18, 2022 do
162 call upon the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of Christ to reaffirm Licensed
163 Ministry and Commissioned Ministry as authorized ministries of the United Church of Christ in
164 compliance with the Constitution (Article VI) and Bylaws (Preamble and Article I) of the United
165 Church of Christ.

166 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the delegates meeting as the Thirty-Fourth General Synod
167 of the United Church of Christ direct Local Church Ministries to amend *Manual on Ministry: A*
168 *Guide to Authorizing Ministry in the United Church of Christ* © 2018 so that it reflects the
169 Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ and the practice of many Associations.

170 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the United Church of Christ Board communicate
171 this action to all Conferences, Association, and Local Churches.

172 **Implementation**

173 This resolution would require the Conference Council to forward the resolution to the General
174 Minister and President of the United Church of Christ to the appropriate committee for
175 consideration at General Synod Thirty-Four.