

Ministerial Licensing and Ordination

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It has been both an honor and joy to serve as the Director of Ministerial Licensing and Ordination for the past two years. I especially appreciate the opportunity I have had to collaborate with the exceptional group of elders who serve on the Pastoral Ministry Leadership Team (PMLT). Together, we oversee the licensing and ordination process for the US National Conference and give leadership to the professional development of its ministers.



Jim Bolich
*Director of
Ministerial
Licensing and
Ordination*

PMLT Regions

Licensing of ministers is shared among four regional Ministerial Licensing and Ordination Teams (MLOT). Each MLOT is tasked with the responsibility of assuring that our ministers can think critically, communicate clearly, engage biblically, and interact effectively. We depend on the MLOT to assure that licentiates advancing through the process are demonstrating growth in theological development, Kingdom dynamics (spiritually alive; relationally connected; missionally engaged), and practical ministry skills.

In addition to licensing ministers, PMLT elders take the initiative to communicate regularly with retired and unassigned ministers in their region for the purpose of support and relationship. Regions are delegated as follows:

East. The East Region has been served by Rev. Greg Helman (Blue Rock UB church, Waynesboro, Pa.) and Rev. Stuart Johns (Idaville UB church, Gardners, Pa.).

Central. The Central Region has been served in the north by Rev. Terry Smith (Bethel UB church, Elmore, Ohio) and in the south by Rev. Mike Brown (Franklin UB church, New Albany, Ohio).

North. The North Region has been served by Rev. Randy Carpenter (Colwood UB church, Caro, Mich.) and Rev. Lee Rhodes (Countryside UB church, Breckenridge, Mich.).

West. The West Region has been served by Rev. Craig Burkholder (Hudson UB church, Hudson, Ind.) and Rev. Troy Green (WestSide Community UB church, Monroe, Ind.).

Ministerial Licensing

Elders Orders were granted to 13 persons.

- Kelly Ball (Colwood UB church, Caro, Mich.).
- Nick Balsiger (The Well, Huntington, Ind.).
- Aaron deNeui (Philomath UB church, Philomath, Ore.).

- Benjamin Gladhill (Lake View UB church, Camden, Mich.).
- Joshua Good (Hillsdale UB church, Hillsdale, Mich.).
- Eric Griffon (Fowlerville UB church, Fowlerville, Mich.).
- Jerald Jones (McCallum UB church, Delton, Mich.).
- Ryan Koch (Hopewell UB church, Auburn, Ind.).
- Brad North (South Scipio UB church, Harlan, Ind.).
- Jennifer Smith (Emmanuel UB church, Fort Wayne, Ind.).
- Matt Stemen (Emmanuel UB church, Fort Wayne, Ind.).
- Rick Tawney (First UB church and Renew Columbus, Columbus, Ohio).
- Sam Ward (Emmanuel UB church, Fort Wayne, Ind.).

National Church licenses were granted to 15 persons.

- Brian Black (Macedonia UB church, Greencastle, Pa.).
- Brad Buckley (College Park UB church, Huntington, Ind.).
- Jason Carter (College Park UB church, Huntington, Ind.).
- Jonathan Crider (Mount Victory UB church, Decatur, Ind.).
- Neil Estep (Kilpatrick UB church, Woodland, Mich.).
- Eric Griffon (Fowlerville UB church, Fowlerville, Mich.).
- Andre Laird (Mount Zion UB church, Wayne, Ohio).
- Jay Leadley (Fowlerville UB church, Fowlerville, Mich.).
- Ken Meyer (New Horizons UB church, Rockford, Ohio).
- Daniel Pratt (Bethany Evangelical UB church, Carlisle, Ohio).
- Colin Raab (Mount Pleasant UB church, Chambersburg, Pa.).
- Robert Rose (First Church Bronx, Bronx, N. Y.).
- Byron Spear (Banner of Christ UB church, Byron Center, Mich.).
- Dawn Sundstrom (Green Bay, Wisc.).
- Frank Yang (Emmanuel UB church, Fort Wayne, Ind.).

Specialized Ministry licenses were granted to 5 persons.

- April Dice (Hillsdale UB church, Hillsdale, Mich.).
- Seth Johns (Prince Street UB church, Shippensburg, Pa.).
- Dan Lake (Brown Corners UB church, Clare, Mich.).
- Julie Llewellyn (Emmanuel UB church, Fort Wayne, Ind.).
- Cassie Showerman (Fowlerville UB church, Fowlerville, Mich.).

Provisional licenses were granted to 26 persons.

- James Bolich, III (The Heights UB church, East Liverpool, Ohio).
- Matt Coppess (Calvary UB church, Saginaw, Mich.).
- Greg Culpen (Jerusalem Chapel UB church, Churchville, Va.).

- Nathan Davis (New Horizons UB church, Rockford, Ohio).
- Bethany Daymut (Renew Communities UB church, Berea, Ohio).
- Jason DeRuyver (Fowlerville UB church, Fowlerville, Mich.).
- Daniel Fernihough (New Hope UB church, Bryan, Ohio).
- Casey Ferrell (Emmanuel UB church, Fort Wayne, Ind.).
- Tami Garlock (Renew Communities UB church, Berea, Ohio).
- Steven Greer (Cochranton UB church, Cochranton, Pa.).
- Eli Grove (First UB church, New Castle, Pa.).
- Michael Heim (Victory Heights UB church, Franklin, Pa.).
- Seth Johns (Prince Street UB church, Shippensburg, Pa.).
- Dan Lake (Brown Corners UB church, Clare, Mich.).
- Lauren Lund (Renew Communities UB church, Berea, Ohio).
- James Martin (Orrstown UB church, Orrstown, Pa.).
- Dave Nicholls (New Hope UB church, Bryan, Ohio).
- Danis Okang (Lifespring International UB church, Allentown, Pa.).
- Colin Raab (Mount Pleasant UB church, Chambersburg, Pa.).
- Nick Randle (King Street UB church, Chambersburg, Pa.).
- Karena Schroeder (Emmanuel UB church, Fort Wayne, Ind.).
- Bethany Solyntjes (Renew Communities UB church, Berea, Ohio).
- Matt Sundberg (Mainstreet UB church, Walbridge, Ohio).
- Hunter Taylor (Brown Corners UB church, Clare, Mich.).
- Jeffrey Thompson (Brown Corners UB church, Clare, Mich.).
- Dwight Walker (Fountain UB church, Keyser, W. Va.).

Permanent Lay Minister licenses granted.

- None

Temporary Lay Minister licenses granted.

- None

Summary of PMLT Actions

At the beginning of the 2021-2023 biennium, the PMLT established five priorities:

1. Clarify educational pathways and continuing education.
2. Encourage pastors/congregations to pray for and encourage young people to recognize and pursue the call to ministry.
3. Foster diversity of generation, gender, and ethnicity in MLOTs and the PMLT.
4. Review/update core topics for Ordination/National Conference license to reflect outcomes and ac-

commodate alternative educational pathways.

5. Find ways to use the licensing process to encourage spiritual, relational, practical, and personal development.

I am pleased to report that we have advanced in all of these areas. The following items summarize our work.

- *Ministerial Licensing and Ordination Team Description.* The PMLT approved a description to clarify the composition and duties of MLOTs. This description provides for participation of ministers from other regions who bring a unique perspective and/or skillset to the team. Our intent is to encourage greater diversity at the MLOT level which, in time, will facilitate greater diversity on the PMLT.

- *Qualities/Characteristics of a UB Minister.* Recognizing that if we're going to develop pastors, we need to know what we're looking to develop, the PMLT engaged in a discussion of the character and competence traits expected of ministers. This conversation will help our regional MLOTs in their assessment of candidates for ministry.

- *Dynamic vs. Scheduled Interview Plan.* Historically, we have used a dynamic approach for scheduling interviews with regional MLOTs. Doing so maximizes the flexibility for licentiates, but also creates challenges for aligning calendars and keeping ministers on track. Desiring to refine our process, the PMLT decided to transition to a scheduled approach which establishes several interview "windows" throughout the year. Deadlines for documents to be submitted are set in such a way to enable MLOTs to most effectively plan for interviews.

- *Continuing Education/Book Review.* Fulfilling our responsibility to promote professional development and continuing education (Discipline ¶634.3), the PMLT reviewed what ministers' annual reports revealed about the types of continuing education in which our ministers are engaging. Unsurprisingly, NC'21, cluster meetings, and the pastor/spouse summit form the foundation of much of the continuing education reported. We were encouraged to see the Idea to Action Symposium ranking high on the list. We also reviewed the list of books ministers submit on their reports. By and large, our ministers read a widely varied mix of books.

- *Handbook Chapter on Transferring Credentials.* The PMLT created a chapter in the Pastoral Ministry Handbook which clarifies how we receive the credentials of ministers from other denominations, associations, or churches. Doing so clarifies pathways, including instances in which ministers are being received along with a congregation affiliating with the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA.

- *Updating Core Topics for Ordination.* The PMLT reviewed our list of core topics to assure that coursework is widely available and expands the breadth and depth of training for our ministers. The PMLT removed outdated topics and replaced them with others.

- *Age Restriction for Non-Credit Course of Study.* Huntington University remains our first choice in ministerial education. The PMLT recognizes the value of engaging in the HU campus community, and continues to point ministers to those programs. However, given the debt-load accrued by many in pursuing degree programs, the PMLT removed the age restriction for considering the non-credit course of study. Our intent is to open the door to pastoral ministry to individuals who lack the financial resources to pursue degree programs.

- *Initial Level of Licensing.* For most of the history of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, the initial license a minister received was granted by the local church in collaboration with the annual conference. Because the PMLT still believes that the local church is the best community to help individuals discern God's call to ministry and receive affirmation of that call, we are implementing a process by which the initial level of ministerial licensing (Lay and Provisional) is returned to the local church in collaboration with the cluster leader and PMLT.

- *Clarifying Credentialing Pathways.* Several ministers have been experiencing confusion concerning the classifications of ministers. The PMLT took action to define the three licensing pathways (Ordination, Specialized, Lay), communicate the value of the licensing process (relationship/discipleship), and clarify the credentialing pathways.

- *Removing Senior Pastors.* The Discipline states that policies regarding assigning, employing, and terminating senior pastors are explained in the Pastoral Ministry Handbook. However, upon reviewing the Handbook, we discovered the process for terminating senior pastors was unclear. The intent of the PMLT was to honor the connectional system by which the UB church has always operated. The PMLT added the following statement to the Handbook: "Senior pastors may be removed by action of the bishop, or by action of the local board in consultation with the bishop."

- *Pastoral Development Plan.* The PMLT reviewed, approved, and endorsed the plan presented by the team. The plan is part of this report, but is included in the National Conference materials as Report 24.

Pastoral Ministry Handbook

The Pastoral Ministry Handbook remains the primary source of information concerning the licensing process. I am grateful for the careful assistance Steve Dennie provides in updating both the online and downloadable PDF versions in a timely manner. Recently, we reorganized the Handbook to include new chapters, with a revision date of April 20, 2023.

United Brethren History

For many years, Bob Bruce and Darryl Elliot have led a team of instructors in offering the UB History Course, which is one requirement for ministerial licensing. During this biennium, Bob led several two-day sessions of the course. All of these have been held virtually via Zoom. Several other persons have joined him in conducting portions of the course, including Anthony Blair, Daryl Elliott, and Steve Dennie. Recently, Bob pointed out that it's time to recruit a new generation of instructors.

The PMLT sees this as an appropriate time to re-imagine how we guide participants through understanding the Core Values and Enduring Commitments (Gospel, Unity, Mission) along with our history. We have agreed to begin moving in the direction of transitioning from a lecture-based approach to an experience-based approach in which participants interact with our history and wrestle with modern issues. I am in the process of working through the logistics of such an approach.

Collaboration with Huntington University

Huntington University remains our preferred provider of ministerial education at both the undergradu-

ate and graduate levels. A bachelor degree in a ministry-related field and the Master of Arts in Pastoral Leadership at HU serves as the “Standard Course of Study” for ministers seeking ordination in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ.

The Idea to Action Symposium, which launched in 2019, is an example of the ways partnering serves both the denomination and the University. It continues to provide high-quality continuing education opportunities for UB ministers and people while raising awareness of the excellence of education being provided by HU.

On the Homefront

Janet and I both enjoy and are challenged by the ministry roles in which God has placed us.

We are blessed to be part of the Mount Pleasant Church (Chambersburg, Pa.) community. I remain impressed by the congregation’s commitment to prayer, preparing the next generation, and planting ministries which reproduce other ministries. And I’m excited about the future of ministry in our corner of God’s Kingdom.

In a surprise shift, after 15 years of teaching at Cumberland Valley Christian School (Chambersburg, Pa.), Janet has been teaching 3rd grade at Carlisle Christian Academy (Carlisle, Pa.) for the past two years. She is enjoying the smaller class sizes and serving in this community.

We also clearly sense that our sons are exactly where God desires, for which we are grateful. Jim³ has been serving as the youth director at The Heights United Brethren Church (East Liverpool, Ohio) since December 2019. Recently, he was approved for the Provisional ministry license. David completed a degree in Business Management from Mount Vernon Nazarene University (Ohio) and is now employed with Abraxas Youth and Family Services. He lives in Greencastle, Pa.

In Closing

It is a pleasure to be part of the UBNO staff. Bishop Todd Fetters has a unique capacity for balancing the serious work of ministry with the joy of serving God’s people. It’s an honor to be part of his team.

I have appreciated the giftedness and insights which both Samantha Essig and Jamie Hoffman have brought to the role of administrative assistant. Both have helped us refine our systems and have helped in a myriad of ways to assist in the process of licensing ministers.

The rest of the crew is extraordinary as well, and I’m grateful to serve on this team.