

Ordination

in the CHURCH OF THE UNITED BRETHREN IN CHRIST, USA

CHAPTER 6

Ordained Elders

Description

Elders are those members of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, who have been called by God and are pursuing employment as professional members of the clergy. Their call has been confirmed by the church through a process of examination, education, and accountability. Ordination is the third step in a process which began with the local church license and continued with the national conference license.

Qualifications

To become a candidate for ordination, a national conference minister must accomplish the following:

1. Earn a Master of Divinity degree from an accredited seminary or the Master of Arts in Pastoral Ministry degree from the Huntington University Graduate School of Christian Ministries.
2. Serve for one year in a recognized ministry appointment approved by the Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team.
3. Demonstrate a level of faithfulness and competency which warrants consideration for the status of ordained elder.

Procedure

The following procedure is established for the ordination of ministers:

1. Request of the National Conference Minister

After holding a national conference license for a minimum of two years, individuals may submit a request to the Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team for consideration for the office of ordained elder in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA.

2. Examination

Applicants shall be examined by the Ministerial Licensing and Ordination Team, consisting of at least 3 ordained elders. They shall present the following to the committee:

a. *Five letters of reference.* These letters should give evidence of the applicant's marriage and family relationships, interpersonal relationship and social skills, and faithfulness in Christian living. They should be obtained from the following individuals:

- (1) A faculty or graduate school member in the candidate's major area of study.
- (2) The pastor of the local United Brethren church the candidate attends (or, if the candidate is the pastor, from another United Brethren pastor).
- (3) The lay leader (or a key layperson) of the local United Brethren church the candidate attends.
- (4) The cluster coach.
- (5) A friend or relative.

b. *A copy of his/her academic transcripts.*

c. *Written responses to the questions in Chapter 8, "Examination of Candidates for Ordination."*

Based on these documents and any others the committee may require, the candidate shall be examined to determine matters of personal integrity, commitment to the Christian faith, ministerial call, relationships with others, spiritual maturity, and understanding of the doctrinal distinctives, history, and polity of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA.

3. Report to the Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team

Following the examination, the examining committee shall report its findings to the Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team and make any recommendations it deems consistent with its findings. Pending a favorable recommendation from the examining committee, the Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team may choose to grant ordination status.

4. Loss of the License

The Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team shall have the authority to revoke the credentials of any elders whose lives and ministries are inconsistent with the expectations detailed in the Discipline. Should they desire, elders shall be granted an opportunity for a hearing before final action is taken. Failure to retain membership in a United Brethren church will also result in loss of license.

5. Elders from Other Denominations

Ordained ministers from other denominations who seek to be ordained by the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, must demonstrate that their ordinations are still considered to be in good standing from their denomination of origin, and provide documentation that verifies they meet the educational requirements for ordination in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ.

These elders will be examined by the Ministerial Licensing and Ordination Team. Once that examination has occurred and a favorable recommendation has been approved by Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team, these elders will be granted a national conference license. Upon completion of the one year of service requirement and the course in United Brethren church history their prior ordination will be recognized.

Ministers from other denominations who are over 35 years of age will be permitted to meet the educational requirements for ordination through a Diploma of Pastoral Leadership program or a ministerial training correspondence program approved by the Pastoral Ministries Leadership Team.

Continuing Education for Elders

All elders who are actively serving in a local church are required to complete two continuing education units (CEUs) and read four ministry-related books during each calendar year. (Each CEU is the equivalent of 10 hours classroom contact time.) Reports for each are

to be filed with the bishop and cluster coach at the time of the annual audit.

Expectations of Elders

In addition to the general expectations of all ministers and members in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, elders are expected to faithfully fulfill the following:

1. Annual Reporting

All elders must file an annual report of their activities with the bishop and cluster coach.

2. Accountability

Since this license is granted by the national conference, ordained ministers are accountable to the national conference. They are also required to participate in and be accountable to a cluster.

3. Ministerial Service

Elders shall work under the direction of the bishop. They are authorized to officiate at funerals and weddings and to administer the ordinances of baptism and communion. If they consistently fail to meet the continuing education requirements described above, they will no longer be eligible to serve as a pastor in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA. No ordained elder is guaranteed a pastoral assignment in the denomination.

CHAPTER 8

Questions Asked of Candidates for Ordination

Section 1: Commitment to the Christian Faith and Call to Ministry

a. *Outcome:* Ministers should be able to clearly and confidently articulate their journey of faith and offer a convincing testimony of God's current activity and direction. Because the United Brethren Church believes strongly in a ministerial call, ministers should further be able to clearly articulate their reasons for seeking a ministerial license.

b. *Questions:*

1. Describe your conversion experience and journey of faith.
2. Describe your call to ministry, including your reason for desiring ordination and your future plans regarding ministry.
3. Describe the spiritual walks of your spouse and children. How have they demonstrated support for your call to ministry?

Section 2: Theology

a. *Outcome:* Ministers should be able to articulate the uniqueness (in polity and history) of the United Brethren Church.

b. *Questions:*

We believe that the issues contained in our Confession of Faith are the fundamental issues of Christian orthodoxy which are consistent across theological perspectives in the evangelical church. Thus, for each section of the Confession of Faith and the Official Doctrinal Positions, the candidate should be asked the following questions:

1. Do you agree with this position of the United Brethren Church?
2. From your own Biblical and theological perspective, how would you defend this position?
3. Summary Question (to be asked at the conclusion of the review of the Confession of Faith): How will you respond to those

whose theological positions may differ from yours in any of these areas?

Section 3: Membership, Family, and Social Standards

a. *Outcome:* Ministers should be able to articulate the uniqueness (in polity and history) of the United Brethren Church.

b. *Questions:*

For each of the membership, family and social standards of the United Brethren Church (Discipline, chapters 7, 8 and 9), the candidate should be asked the following questions:

1. Do you agree with this position of the United Brethren Church?
2. From a Biblical and theological perspective, how would you defend this position?
3. Will you support, teach and model the position of the Church in your ministry?

Section 4: Spiritual Maturity

a. *Outcome:* Scripture teaches that the responsibilities of the ministry are not to be entrusted to those whose faith is still new. Thus, ministers should be able to demonstrate spiritual maturity.

b. *Questions:*

1. Describe your personal practice with regard to the spiritual disciplines.
2. What are your spiritual gifts, and how do you see them being used in your ministry?
3. Demonstrate proficiency with a plan of salvation and identify individuals with whom you have intentionally shared your faith.

Section 5: Relationships with Others

a. *Outcome:* Because effective ministry is relational in nature, ministers must have a history of healthy relationships with people, including those of the opposite sex.

b. *Questions:*

1. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of your personality.
2. Describe your leadership style.
3. Describe your conflict management style.
4. Describe how you build relationships with unbelievers.
5. Do you currently have broken relationships with any other individual, and what steps are you taking (or have you taken) to restore these?

Section 6: Personal Integrity

a. *Outcome:* Ministers are expected to be persons of the highest integrity. Their names and reputations are to generate respect and admiration from those inside and outside their congregations.

b. *Questions:*

1. What current debts do you have? Are you managing this debt responsibly?
2. Do you tell the truth?
3. Do you manage your time well?
4. Have you ever pled guilty to or have been convicted of any crime?
5. Have you ever been charged with child neglect or abuse?
6. Has your driver's license ever been suspended or revoked?
7. Do you use illegal drugs, beverage alcohol or tobacco in any form?
8. What is your accountability system?
9. Describe your work ethic.
10. Are your marriage and family relationships in harmony with the teachings of Scripture as interpreted by this denomination?