



Michigan Conference United Church of Christ

5945 Park Lake Road • PO Box 1006 • East Lansing, MI 48826 • Phone (517) 332-3511 • Fax (517) 339-2621

Call Agreement

THE CALL of _____

TO BECOME THE PASTOR AND TEACHER

of _____ **UCC**

in _____, **Michigan**

Having sought the guidance of the Holy Spirit and believing that God has called us to share in a mutual and common ministry in Christ, the people of _____ UCC, at a regularly-called meeting of this Congregation held on _____, 20__, voted to enter into covenant with you to become a Pastor and Teacher of this Church beginning _____, 20__.

1. TERMS OF THE CALL

This is an agreement between _____ UCC in _____ MI and _____, called to the position of Pastor and Teacher. All parties base the execution of this agreement upon their good faith.

The terms of call outlined in this agreement are contingent upon your holding (or being able to obtain within one year) Ordained Ministerial Standing, Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing, Dual Ministerial Standing, or Licensed Ministerial Standing in the _____ Association of the Michigan Conference of the United Church of Christ. Should your ministerial standing lapse or be suspended, terminated, or transferred for any reason, this agreement will be terminated immediately by the governing board of our Church.

Believing that the cause and mission of Christ's Church will be forwarded under your pastoral and spiritual leadership, we enter into this agreement with you.

Our Church calls you to accept this pastoral office in our Church by recognizing and acknowledging with us the responsibilities and duties you have as our Pastor including: those outlined in the attached position description; those included in the constitution and bylaws of this Church; and those by the customs and usages of the pastoral office of the United Church of Christ as defined in the *United Church Manual on Ministry*, particularly sub-sections entitled "The Local Church in Relation to its Pastor," and "The Ordained Minister's Code," which include the right and responsibility of participation and leadership in the mission of the United Church of Christ, the ecumenical movement, and the community.

As a Congregation, we wholeheartedly commit ourselves to the following terms of covenant. The terms of this agreement are for a _____time commitment, which, although there will be fluctuations, we expect _____ hours per week or _____ units per week to be adequate to meet the terms of this agreement.

2. **RELOCATION EXPENSES**

Our Church will pay commonly-accepted relocation costs to move you and family members residing with you from _____ to _____. It is your responsibility to secure three written estimates of the costs involved and submit them to our Church's governing board so that we can adequately plan and execute our part of these logistics. Relocation costs include the expense of up to _____ advance home hunting trips for you and your family, moving your household goods, mileage for transporting your automobiles, and meals and lodging for you and your family in route. These costs will not exceed \$_____. Should expenses need to exceed the proposed amount, board approval would be required.

3. **CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK EXPENSE**

Because the United Church of Christ encourages best practices for the creation of a safe Church environment, a criminal background check was required for our consideration of your candidacy. Accordingly, our Church will reimburse you for the most recent UCC criminal background check, if not previously reimbursed.

4. **SALARY AND HOUSING**

Because our Church is committed to treating our Pastor fairly and justly, we honor God and one another by providing the following financial care. All figures listed in this section are annual amounts and will be pro-rated during the remainder of the current budget year.

a. **Cash Salary**

Beginning on _____, 20____, our Church will pay \$_____ annually as cash salary payable on a _____ basis. The treasurer of our Church will make these payments.

b. **Housing** (check and complete one of the following)

i. _____ Our Church will provide a housing allowance, in accordance with Internal Revenue Service guidelines, of \$_____ per year.

ii. _____ Our Church will provide a Parsonage, including the costs of all utilities, maintenance, and agreed-upon improvements. Further, in accordance with Internal Revenue Service guidelines, we will provide a furnishings allowance in the amount of \$_____ per year.

5. BENEFITS

a. Health, Vision and Dental Insurance

Our Church will pay 100% of the contribution costs required to provide health, vision and dental coverage for you and, if applicable, for your family members who are eligible, in the United Church of Christ Health and Dental Benefits Plans, or an equivalent insurance plan.

b. Social Security and Medicare Offset

Our Church will compensate you for the portion of Social Security and Medicare tax we would pay if pastors were permitted by the Internal Revenue Service to be paid as an employee of the Church. This amount is the percentage established annually by the Internal Revenue Service. The current percentage equals 7.65 % of the salary plus housing or furnishings allowance, and will be paid to you on a _____ basis.

c. Pension Plan (check and complete one of the following)

i. _____ Because we are providing you with a housing allowance, our Church will pay, on your behalf, an amount equal to 14% of the pension basis to your pension account in *The Annuity Fund of the United Church of Christ*. The pension basis equals the total cash salary (item 4a) plus the housing allowance (item 4b). Using the information contained in this agreement, the pension basis for this year is \$_____ and the annual contribution is \$_____.

ii. _____ Because we are providing you with a parsonage, our Church will pay, on your behalf, an amount equal to 14% of 130% of the pension basis to the Pastor's pension account in *The Annuity Fund of the United Church of Christ*. The pension basis equals total cash salary (item 4a) plus furnishing allowance (item 4b). Using the information contained in this agreement, the pension basis for this year is \$_____ and the annual contribution is \$_____.

d. Life Insurance and Disability Income Benefits

If you are eligible to participate, our Church will pay 1½% of the pension basis to the Life Insurance and Disability Income Benefit Plan of the United Church of Christ on your behalf. Using the information contained in this agreement, the pension basis for this year is \$_____ and the annual contribution is \$_____.

6. OPERATING EXPENSES IN SUPPORT OF YOUR MINISTRY

Our Church recognizes that in order to call forth the gifts God has given you to lead our Church faithfully, we must provide both resources and support that will assist you in remaining vital, creative, and energetic for this ministry. Therefore, we will provide for you from our Church's operating budget funds, either to pay directly or to reimburse you for, certain expenses incurred while you are carrying out the ministry of this Church.

a. **Professional Expenses**

Our Church will reimburse you for reasonable professional expenses not to exceed \$_____ per year. Professional expenses include such items as: books, journals, entertainment expenses for Church guests, professional dues, vestments, and other legitimate costs incurred as a result of your service to this ministry. To obtain reimbursement, you must submit receipts on a monthly basis to the Church treasurer.

b. **Conference, Association, and Other Wider Church Meetings**

Our Church values our Pastor's participation in the wider Church. Thus, we will pay your reasonable expenses for attendance and participation in our UCC denominational, General Synod (if a delegate), Conference, Association, and other meetings. When these events occur during a time we regularly gather for worship, the Church will make other provision to provide leadership for our worship services. The amount established for these meeting expenses is \$_____ for this year.

c. **Continuing Education**

Our Church encourages you to participate in two weeks of Clergy in-service training and continuing education programs each year to strengthen your ministry in our Church. Therefore, we have budgeted \$_____ annually, exclusive of travel, for the cost of such events. It is your responsibility to discuss in advance with the governing board and other appropriate Church bodies the nature, timing, and programmatic impact of potential opportunities, so that we can negotiate with you the dates and types of events that best support our Church's programs and needs for development.

d. **Travel Costs**

- i. _____ Our Church will reimburse you for using your automobile in fulfilling the duties of the office. The Church pays for miles driven at the Internal Revenue Service mileage rate established each year. It is your responsibility to keep a log of mileage for appropriate services and to submit it monthly for payment.
- ii. _____ We will budget a line item cost based on past experience and future projections.

There are also times when other transportation means will be necessary, as well as, the cost of room and board while attending Conference, Association, and wider Church meetings, and continuing education events. Therefore, we have established \$_____ for this year to cover such costs.

7. **SABBATICAL LEAVE**

In anticipation of further Ministerial tenure, our Church will provide you with a sabbatical leave of three months after every five years of full-time ministry with our Church for the purpose of renewal, professional study and growth. During the sabbatical, you will be paid full salary and benefits and up to 50% of the cost of tuition and other expenses—travel, board, lodging, etc. We recognize that a sabbatical is not a vacation. During a sabbatical year, regular vacation time shall also be allowed, either added to sabbatical time or taken separately. It is your responsibility to share with the governing board and other appropriate Church bodies, at least one year prior to beginning the sabbatical, your

developing plans for time away. In your absence, we covenant with integrity to care for our Church, our programs, our worship life, and each other. Further, we covenant not to use this time to accomplish or decide alone what we have not been willing or able to do together. We will, and we expect you will also, use this time to reflect on our mutual ministry in Christ and how we can live more fully into our call as a Church of Jesus Christ. Upon your return, we will invite you to share with the Church an overview of activities and “learnings” from the sabbatical. Unless otherwise agreed prior to the sabbatical, we expect you will continue as our Pastor and teacher for at least one year after the return or repay the Church for the full cost of salary and benefits for the time taken as sabbatical.

8. WEEKLY SCHEDULE, VACATION, FAMILY LEAVE, and COMPASSIONATE LEAVE

a. Weekly Schedule

We realize that the demands of Church life come at all hours of the day and night, and that the covenant with our Church requires your attention to matters at times often beyond control. In addition, we recognize your need each week to take time for self and family. Therefore, we encourage and support your ability to manage the equivalent of two days off per week for rest, relaxation, and to be with family.

b. Vacation Leave

Our Church will provide you with four weeks of vacation (including four Sundays) during each twelve months of service. Vacation time does not accrue. We will be responsible for our Church, our programs, our worship life, and each other during your vacation leave.

c. Family Leave

Family leave is extended to you if you and your family experience the birth or adoption of a child. You will receive _____ days of family leave so that you can care for self and family. Family leave does not accrue and unused leave is not payable upon termination.

d. Compassionate Leave

Our Church realizes that life is not always predictable or within our own control. Therefore, in the event of special circumstances, compassionate leave is available. We understand special circumstances to include the death of an immediate family member; sickness; or personal crisis. Allowance may also be made for the Pastor to be with his/her other immediate family at times of special celebration such as weddings or graduations. We will provide you with up to _____ days of compassionate leave per incident. Compassionate leave does not accrue and unused compassionate leave is not payable upon termination.

9. DISABILITY AND DEATH BENEFITS

a. Disability Benefits

If you become disabled and unable to practice pastoral responsibilities while serving our Church, we are responsible for paying full salary, housing, Social Security and Medicare offset, and benefits until such time as the *Life Insurance and Disability Income Benefit Plan of the United*

Church of Christ becomes effective, a period of at least 30 days, but in no case any longer than 90 days. If it becomes apparent that a disability will keep you from performing your pastoral responsibilities for longer than 90 days or permanently, we will negotiate with you or a responsible member of your family regarding the possible continued use of the Parsonage (if applicable) for up to three additional months.

b. Death Benefits

In the event of your death while serving our Church, we will provide your immediate family, in addition to salary earned but not yet paid: cash salary, housing, and Social Security and Medicare offset for the current month; cash salary, housing, and Social Security and Medicare offset for an additional three months; and the cash value of any vacation leave earned. Further provisions, if necessary, may be considered and discussed with your family, our governing board, a staff member of the Michigan Conference UCC, and your Association's Church and Ministry Committee.

c. Disability and Death Benefits

If death occurs prior to the *Life Insurance and Disability Income Benefit Plan of the United Church of Christ* becoming effective, we will provide your family with no more than four months of cash salary, housing, Social Security and Medicare offset, and benefits, coordinating the provisions of the Disability Benefits and the Death Benefits described above.

10. REVIEW OF PASTORAL CALL AGREEMENT

Through our governing board or other appropriate Church body, together we will review this agreement annually, including your salary and other arrangements, keeping in mind cost-of-living increases and possible merit increases in salary.

11. MINISTRY AND PASTORAL/PARISH RELATIONSHIP EVALUATION

Our Church accepts its responsibility to live faithfully and in covenant with you as our Pastor and teacher. Accordingly, at the end of our first year together and at least every three years thereafter, we covenant to study and review the priorities of our Church through the Pastoral Relations Committee, regarding our program and administrative goals; your relationship with our Congregation; and the stated goals agreed to with you in the position description, for the effectiveness of our mutual ministry.

12. MEDIATION PROCEDURES

Our Church acknowledges that even as we pledge our faithfulness to God, one another, and you as our Pastor and Teacher, there may be times when difficulties within our relationship begin to overwhelm us. In those instances we covenant with you to seek the support, advice, and wisdom of our Conference Minister, the Associate Conference Minister assigned to work with the clergy and Churches of our Association, and/or our Association Church and Ministry Committee, in order that we may actively work to maintain the goodness of our relationship and the righteousness God has placed within it. Either the Pastor or our governing board can request such a consultation if, in the opinion of either, our relationships are becoming ineffective or unhealthy.

13. **TERMINATION OF PASTORAL CALL**

Our Church recognizes that most relationships do not last forever. We also acknowledge that many reasons can lead to a separation. Thus, this Pastoral Call Agreement can be terminated by either party giving at least 90 day's written notice to the other, or upon other terms to which we both mutually agree.

14. **FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PULPIT**

Notwithstanding any of the other responsibilities outlined for you as our Pastor and teacher in the attached position description and other resources reference on the first page of this document, in accepting pastoral leadership we also accept your freedom of expression in the pulpit as it pertains to matters of faith and faithfulness according to the dictates of the Word of God, the work of the Holy Spirit, the traditions of the United Church of Christ, and the context in which we live our lives.

15. **AFFIRMATION OF THIS PASTORAL CALL AGREEMENT**

Believing that God has led you to be our Pastor and Teacher and that, with God as our helper, both you and our local Church will remain faithful to the terms outlines in this pastoral call agreement, we affirm and validate all parts of this pastoral call agreement.

Date _____ Pastor-Elect

Date _____ Moderator

Please send a copy of this signed agreement to the Michigan Conference Office, 5945 Park Lake Road, East Lansing, MI 48823. The Conference recommends that each Local Church create a Three-Way Ministry Covenant with their Settled Minister and Association. This link will direct you to a menu of covenant templates for your use: https://www.ucc.org/ministers_regional-ministers

June, 2019