



Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning Policy

“Do not be conformed to the standards of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, that you may discern the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Romans 12.2

The Oversight Working Group of the Committee on Ministry has discerned and developed a three-fold approach to the policy of lifelong learning:

- a) the Committee on Ministry will frame the requirement for continuing education for all authorized ministers as a vehicle for professional and personal development;
- b) the Committee on Ministry will provide certain mandatory educational forums;
- c) the Committee on Ministry will identify a wide base of resources from which authorized ministers may draw for further elective study.

“As the Church implements God’s mission, there are three tasks: nurture, service and transformation.

“MISSION NURTURES: The Church equips, nurtures and educates the congregation for mission; inviting, attracting, and welcoming people into the community’s faith journey. This is accomplished by: nourishing the faithful, being transformed by and transforming members into the cultures of the faith while deepening their relationship to God.

“Evangelism attracts people to the faith in various ways: by pasturing those who are searching for faith and healing; nurturing people through the wonderful and painful passages of the human condition; providing an alternative for those wanting to abandon the emptiness of cultural individualistic consumerism; giving substance to those yearning for “being” to replace the “having” focus of culture; providing community and intimacy in a world designed for individuals and their competitively managed achievement; pointing to redemption for those searching for ways to deal with their shame and guilt; giving encouragement to those hoping for a world of justice; deepening a spiritual life in a spiritually impoverished culture.

“MISSION SERVES: The Church provides services to those in need, particularly those unable to care for themselves – the hungry, the sick and the victims of wars and disasters; and those terribly alone in this world. There are so many people suffering deprivation; homeless because of disasters and/or poverty; children for whom hunger is their daily fare; aged and powerless persons who need care – there is no end to the service needs.

“MISSION TRANSFORMS: The Church is called to resist evil in all its manifestations; challenging unjust structures; combating the destructive ‘isms’ of the culture. The underlying notion is that God calls for a change in persons, cultures, societies, governments, economies, local churches and denominations – a change to bring them into congruence with God’s purpose for the Creation.”
(Ministry Issues: Forming and Preparing Pastoral Leaders for God’s Church)

As is true with other professions, the landscape of ministry is changing more rapidly than ever before. New churches are being born, established churches are in need of revitalization, all churches prosper by keeping abreast of developmental wisdom and cultural change. Within the UCC, we are challenged to validate multiple paths to ministry so that the needs of the church may continue to be met in uncertain times. Having walked a path to ministry, our authorized ministers find themselves in need of regular refreshment and rejuvenation, professionally and personally. Lifelong learning provides an important avenue toward all these promised lands.

Therefore we recommend:

- a) That the Committee on Ministry mandate educational events on a regularly rotating basis. These events should include, but may not be limited to, boundary workshops and anti-racism seminars. Such events can offered in cooperation with other associations, ecumenical partners, and national covenanted ministries. We suggest that authorized ministers be asked to develop a plan of action in the subject area and that certification of attendance be awarded after the plan of action is submitted.
- b) That the Committee on Ministry continue to identify available resources for lifelong learning. Possibilities include, but may not be limited to, in person classes at local branches of accredited seminaries, online classes, experiences with the Associations' Spire Center, individual projects completed with supervision, mentoring, educational retreats, etc. These resources will be publicized on Living Water Association's website and its weekly e-newsletter, Streams of Connection.
- c) That the Committee on Ministry review, on an annual basis, the Ministry Information form and utilize this as a tool for purposes of ministerial accountability.