



“Living the Covenants”

Mutual Expectations During Transitional Times

The Massachusetts Conference, United Church of Christ

Transitional Ministry is a critical time in the life of any congregation. Our belief in the Massachusetts Conference is that this is an opportunity for congregations to do important work needed to prepare for a new settled pastor. It is also our belief that when Transitional Ministers and Regional Associate Conference Ministers and Committees on Ministry work collaboratively in mutual support and communication, we faithfully live out the mission of the Massachusetts Conference to Strengthen the Vitality of our Congregations and the Covenantal Relationships of which we are all a part.

Transitional Ministers are important assets to the Conference in our mutual efforts to provide skilled, pastoral leadership for our 382 congregations. As such, you can expect to fully participate in the life of the Massachusetts Conference with all of the support and access to resources that our Conference and Associations provide.

I. General Expectations

Transitional Ministers can expect:

Regional Associate Conference Minister will present profiles of Transitional Ministers to congregations in accordance with the protocols developed by the Regional Associate Conference Ministers and the Mass Conference Transitional Ministry Committee.

Authorization for Ministry

All people serving in Transitional Ministry in this conference must be authorized for ministry in their denominations.

Regional Associate Conference Ministers will:

- Check denominational references and will confirm authorization for ministry.

Transitional Ministers are expected to:

- Include appropriate judicatory reference and contact information on the U.C.C Interim Profile

Compensation

Congregations are expected to:

- Pay Transitional Ministers according to Massachusetts Conference Clergy Compensation Guidelines based on the size of the church and the experience of the Transitional Pastor or contract for part-time work based on pro-rated compensation guidelines.
- Negotiate the allocation of compensation based on the Transitional Minister’s own tax and personal needs, but that the total amount should not change.

- Pay mileage reimbursement, if there is a long commute, reimbursement should be negotiated with the specific candidate based on his/her particular tax requirements.

Transitional Ministers are expected to:

- Negotiate their own financial arrangements with congregations. [Note: Agreeing to a compensation package that is significantly below Conference Guidelines does not help the congregation prepare for a new settled pastor and does not help the efforts of the Regional Associate Conference Ministers in advocating for just compensation.]
- Provide their own template of a Covenant/Contract for employment for use with the congregation.

Participation in the Wider Church

Transitional Ministers are expected to:

Fully participate in the life of the wider church as practical, by attending Association and Conference meetings, clergy groups and events and assisting with committee and planning or task groups, etc.

II. Transitional Ministers are NOT to be considered as a candidate for the settled position

Transitional Ministers are expected to:

Make this clear to the congregation early and often. The Association or Conference staff should not be required to clarify this situation, nor should others be held responsible for this ethic of transitional ministry.

III. During the Transitional Time

Accountabilities

Transitional Ministers are expected to fully participate in the assessment, evaluation and exit interview processes established by the Association in which they serve.

Regional Associate Conference Ministers have different expectations regarding accountabilities. It is expected that the RCM and the Transitional Minister will have clear communications and understandings about expectations. Some of our Associations

have established entrance and exit interview processes and evaluation tools.

Ongoing Communications and Relationship

We believe that ongoing communication is critical to successful transitional ministry.

It is important to discuss expectations and communications in the ongoing relationship between the Transitional Minister and the RCM.

Some items that need to be discussed:

- Communicating about issues that may emerge – problems, conflicts, specific needs, situations that may have a significant impact on the ongoing life of the congregation.
- The Transitional Minister's role in relationship to the Settled Pastor Search Committee
- Communication about the progress of the transitional work being done
- Communication about the transition to the next Pastor (timing, exit interviews, closure activities, etc.)

Regional Associate Conference Ministers are expected to:

Share all information that might be helpful to the Transitional Minister as he/she works with the Search Committee or is involved in other ways with the congregation.

Relationship to the Settled Pastor Search Committee

Regional Associate Conference Ministers work differently with Transitional Ministers and Search Committees. It is expected that the RCM and the Transitional Minister will have clear communications and understandings about expectations. Transitional Minister works with the Search Committee to develop the church profile. Transitional Ministers *never* provide staff support for a Search Committee once the Church Profile has been completed.

Regional Associate Conference Ministers and Transitional Ministers are expected to:

Communicate with each other regarding the progress of the Search Committee.

IV. Closure/Ending

Ending a transitional time is as important as beginning the new settled pastorate.

Transitional Ministers are expected to:

- Remain with the congregation until the new settled pastor has been chosen. In some cases, this is not appropriate. If the Transitional Minister discerns that he/she might leave before plans for the new settled pastor are in place, they are expected to consult with the Regional Associate Conference Minister and do all that is possible to make the transition a smooth one.
- Participate in the Association's Exit Interview process or conduct one of their own or

leave a summary report that can be used by the congregation and the next pastor to help move things forward.

- Work with leadership in the congregation to provide appropriate contexts for members to say, 'good-by' to the Transitional Minister

Regional Associate Conference Ministers and COM's are expected to:

- Provide assistance in conducting exit interviews, when appropriate.
- Coordinate with the Transitional Ministers and congregational members to plan for the transition in whatever ways are helpful.