

In the fall of 2013, the UCC's national setting Ministerial Excellence, Support & Authorization (MESA) Ministry Team initiated a process to reimagine the Manual on Ministry (MOM), which is an essential resource of the National Offices in service to and support of all covenant partners in the United Church of Christ. MESA has relied on a committee called the Habakkuk Group to review the Manual on Ministry and make recommendations to enhance the ministry of the United Church of Christ among authorized ministers, local church settings and middle judicatories of the United Church of Christ. One of the suggestions is the concept of Three and Four Way Covenants.

The concept of Covenant has long been established as the basis for a call to ministry in the United Church of Christ. Based on this principal, the Three-Way Covenant was developed to review and affirm annually the covenant established between an authorized minister, the local church setting and the conference in which the authorized minister and local church is located. This way, all three parties are able to renew their relationships as ministers together on behalf of Jesus Christ and the United Church of Christ.

A Four-Way Covenant is similar to the Three-Way Covenant except that it is between four entities: an authorized minister, a local church setting, a middle judicatory, and a place of employment other than a congregational setting (i.e. military, educational, hospital or residential chaplaincy, or seminary or other form of ministry).

MESA highly suggests the use of Three- and Four- Way Covenants as part of the original call negotiations, but **these** should not be confused with contracts or hiring agreements. MESA's intent is to have the covenant as part of an annual discussion regarding one's ministry whether from the **perspective of the** authorized minister, **the local** church setting, **the conference**, or **the place of employment and** does not change the context of the original contract or **call** agreement. It is to be a reminder that the Covenant is not stagnant, but a living relationship holding all parties together through our Creator and our common commitment to serve in the name of Jesus Christ. These covenants are to strengthen, support and sustain the ministries of all the partners that share in the covenant; to encourage mutual participation and accountability of and for the life of each by the others; and to observe, nurture, celebrate, and call forth the ministry of the authorized minister.

Though most congregational settings have already made decisions regarding compensation for authorized ministers in church settings, we encourage authorized ministers to begin the discussion now regarding Three-Way and Four-Way Covenants in preparation for further discussion over the course of the next year so that at the end of 2018, all authorized ministers will have a signed Three-Way with the local church setting as well as the agency or employer in the case of Four-Way Covenant. These conversations should include the Ministers Code of Conduct, the Church Code of Conduct, along with the PNEC Authorized Ministers Compensation Guidelines which are all available through PNEC.