

United Church of Christ Covenant and Polity
Syllabus 2023-2024

For this year you will need the books Hidden Histories of the United Church of Christ Volume 1 and Volume 2. These can be purchased used at a very reasonable price from Abe books <https://www.abebooks.com/> .

Session 1

Nurturing UCC Identity

- Acknowledging Jesus Christ as the sole Head of the Church.
- Communicating passion for the oneness of the Body of Christ.
- Participating in the various settings of the United Church of Christ
- Knowing and appreciating UCC history, polity and theology.
- Exhibiting a commitment to the core values of the United Church of Christ

Building Transformational Leadership Skills

- Empowering the Church to be faithful to God's call, reflective of Christ's mission, and open to the surprises of the Holy Spirit.
- Strategically creating the future of God's Church.

Participating in Theological Praxis

- Practicing theological reflection and engagement as part of one's sense of ministerial identity.
- Integrating theological reflection in teaching, preaching and ecclesial and community leadership.
- Articulating a theology and practice of ministry consistent with the UCC Manual on Ministry.

Prior to class watch video "The Beginnings of the United Church of Christ"
<https://vimeo.com/showcase/4814431>

Prior to class, students are to find their local church constitution and bylaws and read them and bring them to class. Note if these are currently working or not, and what changes need to be made.

Class: The beginnings of the United Church of Christ, Local church constitutions and bylaws

General Synod 34, Indianapolis. Reflections by delegates, highlights, significant votes of General Synod.

Question for class at the conclusion of the Synod Presentation-In one or two sentences, state what you would say about General Synod in your local church as a mission moment.

Paper for next session: “My Experience in the Wider Church” and a 1 minute “elevator speech” about the United Church of Christ. An elevator speech is what you might say to someone about the United Church of Christ in the time that it takes to travel no more than 2 floors in an elevator.

Session 2

Marks:

Exhibiting a Spiritual Foundation and Ongoing Spiritual Practice

- Being called to authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ.
- Continuing discernment of one's call in community.
- Exhibiting a commitment to lifelong spiritual development and faithful personal stewardship.

Nurturing UCC Identity

- Acknowledging Jesus Christ as the sole Head of the Church.
- Communicating passion for the oneness of the Body of Christ.
- Holding active membership in a Local Church of the United Church of Christ
- Participating in the various settings of the United Church of Christ
- Knowing and appreciating UCC history, polity and theology.
- Exhibiting a commitment to the core values of the United Church of Christ

Building Transformational Leadership Skills

- Empowering the Church to be faithful to God's call, reflective of Christ's mission, and open to the surprises of the Holy Spirit.
- Strategically creating the future of God's Church.
- Witnessing in the public square God's redeeming power.
- Working collaboratively with intercultural awareness and sensitivity.
- Encouraging leadership development of self and others through continuing education and lifelong learning.

Participating in Theological Praxis

- Practicing theological reflection and engagement as part of one's sense of ministerial identity.
- Integrating theological reflection in teaching, preaching and ecclesial and community leadership.
- Articulating a theology and practice of ministry consistent with the UCC Manual on Ministry.

Strengthening inter and intra-personal assets.

- Living in relationships of covenantal accountability with God and the Church.
- Demonstrating excellent communication skills

Class: Reflections on Papers.

“My Experience in the Wider Church” and a 1 minute or less “elevator speech”.

An elevator speech is what you might say to someone about the United Church of Christ in the time that it takes to travel no more than 2 floors in an elevator.

Highlights of the Manual on Ministry and The Marks.

Session 3

Marks:

Nurturing UCC Identity

- Acknowledging Jesus Christ as the sole Head of the Church.
- Communicating passion for the oneness of the Body of Christ.
- Holding active membership in a Local Church of the United Church of Christ
- Participating in the various settings of the United Church of Christ
- Knowing and appreciating UCC history, polity and theology.

Strengthening inter and intra-personal assets.

- Developing and maintaining a healthy sense of self as shaped by God, community and life experiences.
- Living in relationships of covenantal accountability with God and the Church.

Discussion of Covenant -Biblical foundations for covenant. Salem Church Covenant. Local church autonomy and covenant. Signs of the covenant in the UCC (OCWM, participation in annual meeting, service in the wider church, etc.). Three and four-way covenants in the United Church of Christ. Ordained Minister's Code.

All-Paper for next session: 3-5 pages on a "Hidden History" as assigned.

Everyone is to read the Introduction to Volume 1, "Beyond Historical Orthodoxy" as well as the Introduction to Volume 2, "Unity and Diversity".

Choose one of these hidden histories to read and report on:

Volume 1:

- **"American Indians, Missions and The United Church of Christ."**
- **"The Afro Christian Connection" and "Blacks and the American Missionary Association"**
- **"The Ursinus School and the Reaction against Evangelical Catholicism" (If no one chooses this, we will all read it)**
- **"Armenian Congregationalists flee from genocide and find a home in the US"**
- **"The Deaconess Movement in 19th Century America: Pioneer and Professional Women"**
- **"Women's Work and Women's Boards"**
- **"Sho-Chiku-Bai: Japanese-American Congregationalists"**

Volume 2:

- **“The Union Church: A Case of Lutheran and Reformed Congregations”**
- **“Origins of the Christian Denomination in New England”**
- **“Women’s Mission Structure and The American Board”**
- **“Religious Journalism: A Legacy from the Christian Church”**
- **“The Congregational Training School for Women”**
- **“Chinese Congregationalism”**

A fifth stream of the United Church of Christ: The Afro-Christian Church

Session 4

Marks:

Nurturing UCC Identity

- Communicating passion for the oneness of the Body of Christ.
- Knowing and appreciating UCC history, polity and theology.

Class: A fifth stream of the United Church of Christ. The Afro-Christian Church.

Hidden Histories of the UCC. Summarize your report by naming three things that surprised you about your “Hidden History”. Where is the church where you serve or are a member in the Ursinus debate?

Summer Assignments:

Attend the Annual Gathering and Meeting of the Penn West Conference and the Penn Central Conference.

Reading-A Short Course in the History of the United Church of Christ

[\(https://www.ucc.org/domestic-policy/ourfaithourvote_about/about-us_short-course/\)](https://www.ucc.org/domestic-policy/ourfaithourvote_about/about-us_short-course/)

Paper-Reflections on the local church, your association, The Penn West Conference and why covenants in these bodies allow us to do God’s work. Include in this your experience at the Penn West Conference Annual Meeting.