

STANDING RULES FOR ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCILS

When a candidate has successfully completed the ordination examination conducted by the Northern California Nevada Conference Committee on the Ministry, the next step in the approval process is an Ecclesiastical Council.

The purpose of the Ecclesiastical Council is to authorize the ordination of the candidate.

The Association Board of Directors arranges for an official meeting of an Ecclesiastical Council and decides how all or a portion of the candidate's ordination paper will be made available to the delegates to the Ecclesiastical Council.

The candidate makes a presentation based on his/her ordination paper. The presentation should demonstrate the person's theological, polity, and functional understandings of ordained ministry and relate these to the commitment and preparation of the person for the particular type of ordained ministry position to which she/he has been called or to which she or he is seeking a call.

The Ecclesiastical Council engages in an examination of the candidate in order to satisfy itself as to the preparation and fitness of the candidate for ordained ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ. The examination is not limited to the presentation or ordination paper of the candidate. (See below "Guidelines for Examination of Candidates")

On completion of the examination, the Council deliberates and votes whether or not to authorize ordination pending an approved call and the establishment of a covenantal relationship among the partners to the call.

Options before the Committee include:

"Yes." The Council believes that the candidate meets the requirements for ordination within the United Church of Christ and, in the Council's judgment, will be an effective and faithful ordained minister. This decision is contingent on the candidate's securing a call to an approved ordained ministry position. If the candidate has received a call contingent upon ordination, the Association will already have reviewed the terms of that call with the candidate and representatives of the calling body in a Credentials Committee. The report of the Credentials Committee will be received as part of the agenda of the Ecclesiastical Council.

"Yes, but . . ." The Council believes that the candidate has the potential for ordained ministry, but it has certain reservations or concerns that must be addressed. The Council may want to stipulate additional requirements of the candidate before making its final decision. It will be clear with the candidate what additionally needs to be done in preparation for a subsequent examination and decision.

“No, but . . .” The Council believes that, at this time, significant qualifications for ordination in the United Church of Christ are lacking. It may indicate under what terms and conditions it would consider the application again.

“No.” In some cases the Council may have to say no to a candidate if, in its judgment, the candidate has not fulfilled and cannot fulfill in the foreseeable future the requirements for ordination or will not be an effective and faithful ordained minister of the United Church of Christ. In the Northern California Nevada Conference, where a candidate would already have been examined by the Conference Committee on the Ministry, this outcome should never occur, as a candidate so lacking in qualifications would not have been recommended to the Association for an Ecclesiastical Council.