

**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
EXECUTIVE COUNCIL POLICY ON
COVENANTAL INCLUSION OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICE
INSTITUTIONS WITHIN THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**
(Adopted October 14, 2002)

PREAMBLE

The heritage of the work of the United Church of Christ (UCC) in health and human services dates back to the earliest origins of the denomination and continues to this day. The 15th General Synod reaffirmed the centrality of this work to the life of a faithful church as it adopted the UCC Mission Statement on Health and Human Services. This statement claims that among the varied dimensions of the health and human service work of the church is the establishment and support of institutions of healing and service.

In present times, over 80 corporations that operate hundreds of health and human service institutions claim roots in the UCC and are a continuing part of the UCC Mission in Health and Welfare. The purpose of this document is to define the nature of the covenantal inclusion of these and future institutions in the UCC and set forth guidelines for covenantal accountability between the health and human service ministries themselves and between these organizations and other settings of the UCC.

I. ELEMENTS OF THE COVENANT

Just as the Mission of the UCC in Health and Human Services is multi-dimensional, so are the covenantal relationships that are formed to carry out that mission. Many of these relationships are appropriately informal. Nevertheless, it is important to define some essential elements of the covenantal relations with health and human service ministry institutions within the UCC as foundational as well as the settings of today's church that hold them together. The Executive Council asserts that these essential elements exist in three fundamental sets of relationships and accountabilities within the UCC:

1. *The relationship between UCC congregations and health and human service ministries:* In this relationship congregations are encouraged to be involved in the ministry of UCC health and human service institutions and health and human service institutions are encouraged to extend their resources to serve and enhance the ministries of congregations and their members.

As the body composed of all UCC congregations in a geographic area (UCC Bylaws, Article VIII, 46) UCC Conferences and health and human service ministry institutions whose corporate operations are located within the Conference (Home Conference) carry primary accountability for this element of the covenant.

2. *The relationship between the Covenanted Ministries and General Synod of the UCC and health and human service ministries:* In this relationship, UCC health and human service ministry institutions contribute their perspectives and resources to the work of the UCC Covenanted Ministries and the General Synod. The Covenanted Ministries enable access to those national resources that can support and encourage the institutional ministry of health and human service.

The bodies that carry primary accountability for this element of the covenant are the General Synod and Executive Council; Wider Church Ministries, which is assigned overall coordination of the UCC's Mission in Health and Human Services; and the Council for Health and Human Service Ministries, which represents UCC health and human service ministry institutions. (See UCC Bylaws Article III, 221, g and Article IV, 271, k)

3. *The relationship of UCC health and human service ministry institutions with one another.* In this relationship UCC health and human service ministries support one another in on-going efforts to define and live out their UCC faith-based identity and fulfill their covenantal commitments within the UCC.

The Council for Health and Human Service Ministries has been created by UCC health and human service ministry institutions and recognized by the General Synod (UCC Bylaws, Article VI, 300) to, in part, "support and nurture its member institutions in fulfillment of their ministries as part of the mission of the UCC." thus, CHHSM carries primary accountability for this element of the covenant.

In summary, the UCC bodies which carry primary accountability for the covenant partnership between UCC health and human service ministry institutions and the settings of the UCC to which they have significant relationships include the following: UCC Conferences, the General Synod, the Executive Council, the Office of General Ministries (OGM), Wider Church Ministries (WCM) and the Council for Health and Human Service Ministries (CHHSM).

II. FRAMEWORK FOR COVENANTAL COLLABORATION

Clearly, none of the bodies enumerated above can accomplish their work without collaboration with one another or, for that matter, their own particular constituencies. The Executive Council understands the authority that each of these settings of the church enjoys to establish their own policies and practices with respect to the conduct of their covenantal relationships. Nevertheless, when such relationships involve multiple settings of the church it is important to achieve agreement on a common framework and guidelines under which all bodies can exercise their particular obligations.

The purpose of this policy is to encourage consistency of understanding and practice throughout the United Church of Christ with respect to the covenantal inclusion of health and human service ministry institutions in the life of the denomination.

UCC Conferences:

1. Each UCC Conference is encouraged to develop and maintain written policy, criteria and expectations for the *recognition* and inclusion of health and human service ministry institutions with corporate offices within its geographic boundaries (Home Conference) in its life and ministry. Such policies and criteria may vary between Conferences but are encouraged to reflect the covenantal principles and accountabilities outlined in Section I of this document. Each Conference is asked to provide copies of its policy, criteria and expectations to the other UCC bodies named in this document as well as a current list of those health and human service ministry institutions that the Conference has duly *recognized*.
2. Each UCC Conference is encouraged to develop and maintain written policies, criteria and expectations through which it may enter into a *special mission relationship* with a health and human service ministry that does not have its corporate offices within its geographic boundaries, but is covenantally included in the UCC through listing in the UCC Yearbook. Conferences are asked to provide a copy of their policy, criteria and expectations for such *special mission relationships* to the other UCC bodies named in this document and a current list of those ministries with which they have such relationships.
3. Conferences are encouraged to take leadership in working collaboratively with their congregations and the health and human service ministry institutions they *recognize* and/or with which they have a *special mission relationship* to develop creative partnerships in health and human service ministry.
4. Conferences are encouraged to design a process for endorsement of any special financial campaigns proposed by health and human service ministry institutions that contemplate the solicitation of funds from congregations or other UCC affiliated organizations and/or the promotion of the campaign within congregations or other UCC affiliated organizations.

Covenanted Ministries/General Synod:

1. The General Synod of the UCC, through the Executive Council, will have the responsibility for communicating and interpreting this policy to all bodies named in this document and will review the document periodically to insure that it continues to serve the needs of the covenantal partnerships involved.
2. The Office of General Ministries will be responsible for maintaining a centralized current record of the policies, criteria and expectations of Conferences. OGM will publish in the UCC Yearbook a list of all health and human service ministry institutions that conform to the elements of this covenantal partnership as prescribed in Section I of this document, including *recognition* by their Home Conference and membership in the Council for Health and Human Service Ministries.
3. The Office of General Ministries, through its Financial Ministries office, will provide consultation to UCC Conferences and institutions concerning the

strategy and timing of any proposed financial campaigns by health and human service ministry institutions that contemplate the solicitation of funds from congregations or other UCC affiliated organizations and/or the promotion of the campaign within congregations or other UCC affiliated organizations.

4. Wider Church Ministries is encouraged to work to assure the engagement of health and human service ministry institutions in the overall mission of the UCC in health and welfare, including the education and advocacy components of that ministry.

Council for Health and Human Service Ministries (CHHSM):

1. CHHSM is encouraged to work consultatively with UCC Conferences, their *recognized* ministry institutions and those with which they have *special mission relationships* to develop creative ways to be faithful to their covenantal relationship and, as requested, to assist member ministries and Conferences in establishing their policies, criteria and expectations for entering in to such relationships in accordance with the provisions of this document. CHHSM is asked to review and consult with UCC Conferences, institutions and UCC Financial Ministries concerning the strategy and timing of any proposed special financial campaigns by health and human service ministry institutions that contemplate the solicitation of UCC congregations and/or their members.
2. CHHSM is encouraged to assure the representation and active participation of UCC health and human service ministry institutions on the UCC Executive Council and Wider Church Ministries Board of Directors as prescribed in the Bylaws of the UCC and, through the Mission Planning Council and other mechanisms. CHHSM is asked to be available as a resource to all of the Covenanted Ministries on issues related to health and human services.
3. CHHSM is asked to maintain statistical and programmatic records on the size and scope of the UCC institutional ministry in health and human service and support the Office of General Ministries in maintaining its records pursuant to implementation of this policy.
4. CHHSM is encouraged to operate programs for its members and the wider church that provide opportunities for UCC health and human service ministry institutions to work together in understanding and living out their faith-grounded identity and enrich their covenantal relationship with one another, the UCC and the wider ecumenical community of faith-based health and human service ministries.

III. UCC CONFERENCE POLICY FOR REGOGNITION AND SPECIAL MISSION RELATIONSHIPS

To assist UCC Conferences and the other bodies named in this document, a standardized template for “Conference Policy on Recognition and Special Mission Relationships with Health and Human Service Ministry Institutions” has been developed and appended hereto as part of this policy. This template reflects policy standards conforming to the foundational elements of covenantal relations with health and human service institutions within the UCC as set forth by the Executive Council in Section I (Elements of the Covenant) of this Policy. The Executive Council commends the use of this template to all UCC Conferences as the basis for their own policies with respect to these relationships.