

United Church Mission (UCM) Fact Sheet

Responding to church member and delegate concerns, after more than four years of Conference-wide study, conversation, prayer, and vetting by local churches, the 215th (2014) Conference Annual Meeting voted overwhelmingly to endorse United Church Mission (UCM) as a new way of funding our common mission through the Massachusetts Conference and the National setting of the United Church of Christ. For those congregations that opt in, UCM will replace Conference and Association Fellowship Dues and Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) Basic Support as the primary way they contribute to the shared ministries of the UCC beyond their local setting. 76 Conference churches (about 21%) are participating in UCM for 2018.

Advantages to United Church Mission:

- ✦ eliminates the Fellowship Dues "head tax," removing the need to aggressively clean membership rolls to reduce Dues payments
- ✦ affirms all church giving as mission giving by creating a unified system of support
- ✦ simplifies giving to the wider church, making it easier to understand and explain
- ✦ mirrors biblical principles of percentage giving
- ✦ reflects the message we give to our church members to give proportionally
- ✦ promotes fairness for churches of all sizes and socio-economic make-ups
- ✦ ensures that all settings of the church rise or decline together
- ✦ maintains a reasonable minimum expectation for wider church support while making allowance for hardship situations faced by particular congregations
- ✦ invites generosity, promoting giving to the wider and local church as well

How United Church Mission Works

United Church Mission (UCM) contributions are based on a percentage of the prior year's total income received by a local congregation as reported in its most recent internal Annual Report. Total income would include general operating income from all sources, as well as general missions giving, but not special giving such as capital campaign contributions, disaster relief, or special offerings. Churches are asked, initially, to continue to give at least the same proportion of total income represented by Association and Conference Fellowship Dues and OCWM Basic Support contributions. **This means that the first year of a church's UCM contribution will not be less than the combined amount of Dues and Basic Support given by the church the year before.** Not unlike local church stewardship campaigns, churches will be encouraged to consider increasing this percentage gradually over time as they are able.

Local Church Budgeting Practices

Transitioning to United Church Mission will, in many cases, require some adjustments to a congregation's current budgeting practices:

- ✦ Churches that currently consider both OCWM Basic Support and Fellowship Dues as part of their mission budgets will have minor changes to their budgets, with these two lines simply combined into a single UCM amount.

- ✦ Churches having a separate category for Wider Church Support – alongside operating expenses and mission spending – will only need to combine Fellowship Dues and OCWM into UCM.
- ✦ Churches that have unified budgets (i.e., members make a single pledge to the church and then the church determines the amount given as mission spending), where Fellowship Dues are currently in the operating portion of the budget, may simply move this amount to the mission spending category. (This will more accurately represent the level of mission giving and increase the mission spending percentage of the overall budget.)
- ✦ Churches with a split pledge (i.e., members make separate pledges to operating budget and mission budget) have two options. We strongly recommend a transfer to the mission fund of an amount equivalent to the old Fellowship Dues, making no change to the budget bottom line and providing the funds needed for all mission spending. An alternative – not recommended – would be to continue to confine mission spending to the amount pledged by members, freeing up funds in the operating budget for other projects but forcing decreased mission spending to maintain support for wider church mission.

Churches That Ask Members to Contribute to Fellowship Dues

Some churches ask members to contribute to Fellowship Dues, income that is relied upon to help them support wider church ministry. It is suggested that such churches continue to invite these gifts, but instead of asking people to “pay their dues,” ask them to support United Church Mission by making an extra designated gift. Church leaders are encouraged to inform their congregations about how the work of the wider church supports their church and other churches, and changes lives. Then, explain how UCM replaces Fellowship Dues and OCWM. Finally, invite special gifts to United Church Mission. Churches may want to use the same suggested amount as they currently do with Fellowship Dues or perhaps encourage a higher level of giving.

Needed From United Church Mission Churches

Churches that are interested in UCM should be in touch with Conference staff as early as possible in the church’s decision-making process. This is critical, as the approach is new and mistaken assumptions can lead to misunderstandings.

Churches making the transition to United Church Mission for 2019 are asked to inform the Conference by December 15, 2018. In general, requests to join UCM received after this date will be honored for 2019. However, your church may hope to transition to UCM for 2019, but be unable to make that decision officially until a January or February 2019 annual church business meeting. In this circumstance, it is possible for churches to be received into UCM for 2019 on a provisional basis, if advance notice is made to the Conference by December 15, 2018.

When notified of a church’s interest in or desire to move to UCM, Conference staff will contact the church to answer questions, to obtain relevant financial information, to work through UCM calculations, to assist church leaders with presenting the change to the congregation, and to help make adjustments to current budgeting practices.

For More Information

If you have questions about or wish to make the transition to United Church Mission, please contact Jonathan New, Associate Conference Minister for Stewardship and Financial Development. Jonathan may be reached at newj@macucc.org or (508) 875-5233 ext. 231.

Defining “Total Income” in United Church Mission (UCM) Calculations

Income to be INCLUDED in the UCM “Total Income” calculation:

- ✦ Operating pledge receipts for the year
- ✦ Missions/Outreach pledge receipts for the year
- ✦ Plate offerings
- ✦ Fellowship Dues or UCM contributed directly by members
- ✦ Investment income, including bank interest, dividends from external trusts, and investment income allocation for the year. (Investment income allocation would be the regular ‘draw’ on endowments. The MACUCC Endowment Policy Manual recommends utilization of 5% of market value averaged over 3 or 5 years, using quarterly data.)
- ✦ Net rental income
- ✦ Net income from programs (such as a nursery school)
- ✦ Net fundraising income to general operating budget

Income to be EXCLUDED from the UCM “Total Income” calculation:

- ✦ Capital Campaign contributions
- ✦ One-time gifts restricted by the donor for a particular purpose
- ✦ Memorial gifts
- ✦ Bequests
- ✦ Extraordinary use of endowment funds to balance the budget. (This means any amount utilized in excess of 5% of the market value of the endowment averaged over 3 or 5 years, using quarterly data).
- ✦ Special Offerings (One Great Hour of Sharing, Christmas Fund, etc.)
- ✦ Disaster relief or other one-time mission giving
- ✦ Net income from fundraising for restricted purposes (e.g. to buy new handbells) ✦
Income from one-time sale of assets (e.g. parsonage, communion silver)