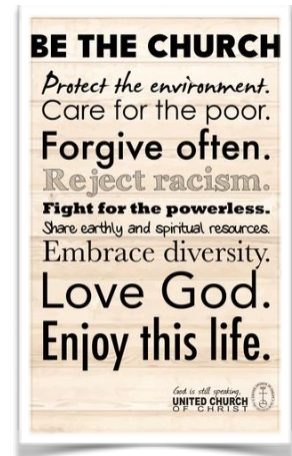


A Christian Educator's Guide

A guide for seeking and maintaining a faith
formation position in a local church



A guide for Massachusetts Conference UCC Christian education faith formation leaders,
adapted with permission from
Called To Educational and Formational Ministries,
Association of United Church Educators (www.AUCE-UCC.org)

This booklet may be found online at <https://www.macucc.org/faithformation>
as well as the *Handbook for Youth Ministry Leaders* at the Youth Ministry link

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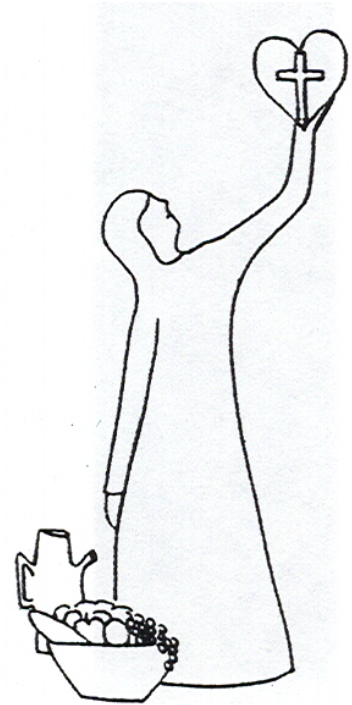
Words of Introduction:

The Joy of Discipleship in Christian Education and Faith Formation

In this Guide there are numerous explanations and descriptions of what to do and how to do it. We have taken care to include practical strategies for when a position becomes unusually stressful or even ends. And while there are certainly “costs” involved in this critical ministry, we want to be sure that you are aware of the many *joys* of discipleship in this ministry.

The list of joys from educational and formational ministries are different for each educator, as well as for each church. However, the common thread is the joy which comes from sharing one's faith in God, the difference it makes in your life, and in someone else's life in an immediate, direct, and tangible way. Any list would have to include teaching young children how to use their Bibles so they can read about Moses and Joseph and Jonah and Jesus for themselves, and then hearing from the parents of those children about how the Bible has become their child's favorite bedtime reading. Another would have to be those moments when you are able to make faith come alive in the eyes of those skeptical middle schoolers, even if it's just for an instant. Learning more from the members of the adult class than you could ever hope to teach them is a special gift anytime. Struggling with the privilege of serving as mentor and role model in the faith for all the children and volunteers in the church school, youth ministry programs, and adult Bible study is both a joy and an awesome responsibility. All these and more would have to be on any list of the joys of the church educator.

Usually, though, the true joy and the real sense of accomplishment in this life's work is summed up in those moments when you are not working and are not even in the church. These moments can happen anywhere — the grocery store, the pharmacy, the mall, the beach, or maybe even in a crowded hotel lobby hundreds of miles away. They are times when you run into one of your church school families and the children run up to you with joy in their eyes and a big hug to share with that special person from the church who made it possible for them to know God. Those are the moments that make it all worthwhile. Those are the moments when God is saying directly to you, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”



Definitions for Christian Educators and Youth Ministry Leaders

Christian Educator

For our purposes here, a Christian educator is a person experienced in educational/formational ministry in the local church, having had some education, either formal or experiential, and whose gifts are recognized by a congregation through a formalized agreement. Thus, an ordained person, with a master's degree called to a local church as a minister of education is a Christian educator, just as a lay person who recently accepted a part-time offer from her or his congregation to oversee the church school is a Christian educator. Though possessing vastly different education and experience and serving in vastly different roles, both have in common the fact that a local church recognizes its need for a staff educator and selects or calls the appropriate person to serve in that role.

Youth Ministry Leader

A youth ministry leader is much the same as a Christian educator except that his or her focus of ministry is in working with and ministering specifically to teenagers. Again, education and experience will vary. The exact definition of "youth" should be determined by each individual congregation.

In order to determine whether your congregation requires a volunteer or paid Christian educator or youth ministry leader, consider the descriptions that follow:

Volunteer

A volunteer Christian educator/youth ministry leader should be considered a member of the church staff, even though he or she is not paid. The support, training, and communication with the pastor, other members of the church's staff and this volunteer are required for an effective working relationship resulting in an effective ministry. The absence of a salary should in no way diminish the value and quality of the expectations of the volunteer who takes on this important ministry. All expenses and supplies needed must be reimbursed. If the congregation determines that it requires tasks of the Christian educator/youth ministry leader that need more education and background such as training, specific skills, knowledge of educational and developmental theories, and biblical and theological training, it should consider making this a paid position.

Employed Layperson

Laypersons who serve as Christian educators or youth ministry leaders may not view their work as a calling, yet they find enough enjoyment and fulfillment in these positions to willingly dedicate their time and energy to the children, youth, and adults they serve in a paid position.

Employed Authorized Minister

In the United Church of Christ, many ministers of Christian education and formation are ordained. An ordained minister is a minister of word and sacrament having taken a few, one, or no Christian education courses in seminary, as some seminaries do not require Christian education courses for graduation.

Contractor or Consultant

A consultant is generally contracted by the project rather than working a set number of hours. As a contractor, he/she is self-employed and as such is responsible for providing his/her own resources, tools, primary office, and benefits. The hourly or unit rate is thus higher than for a typical employee.

How a Consultant May Be Utilized

- Develop with and for the congregation a program for faith formation. This could include an overview of the church year, an outline for weekly programming, and long range plans for the program.
- Recruit volunteers and serve as a mentor to them, providing leadership training, program evaluation, and resources.
- Serve as an interim faith formation staff person.
- Serve as a resource person to boards and committees responsible for faith formation and/or faith formation personnel. This may include developing a job description, compensation recommendations, clarification of goals and strategies, and assisting in the search process.
- Serve as a mentor for a faith formation staff person, providing resources, support, and guidance for a period of six months to a year.

A Note About Commissioned Ministers

Commissioned ministers of Christian education/formation have similar educational background as ordained ministers, but have focused their ministerial preparation specifically in the area of Christian education and formation and/or youth ministry, and have chosen to have this calling recognized as an authorized ministry by the United Church of Christ. As of 2017, the United Church of Christ has moved toward recognizing only one form of authorized ministry. This means that people who are currently training to become UCC ministers will be ordained, as commissioning to Christian education (or other specific ministries) will no longer be an option. It will be up to the search committee to closely examine the education and training background of any ministers it interviews for its Christian education/formation and/or youth position.

A Note About These Categories

Although the descriptions above seem to fit nicely into labeled boxes, the educational background of Christian educators and youth ministry leaders can be as different and varied as each individual. Some discover their call to be a Christian educator/youth ministry leader early on, and are able to follow a college (and sometimes graduate school) curriculum that gives them a good academic background in Bible, theology, and developmental and educational theory. Others arrive at a position in Christian education and formation much later, but are able to use their life experiences in the church as well as their secular employment experience, to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

Embrace diversity.

Strengthening the Leadership of the Christian Educator and Youth Ministry Leader

Marks of Faithful and Effective Christian Education/Formation Practitioners

Able to think critically.

Engages the stories of the Christian faith and the stories of God's people throughout time and history.

Engages in sacramental living and recognizes the power of ritual and practice to form and transform the life of faith.

Engages in professional development as time and resources allow.

Knowledge and understanding of human, faith, generational, and spiritual developmental theories and research.

Able to translate theological and biblical concepts across age levels and life stages.

Able to utilize varied teaching and learning styles across age levels and life stages.

Has knowledge and understanding of multiple intelligence theories and cultural frameworks for learning.

Able to present and engage learners in processes of guided discovery that lead to the learners' insights and decisions.

Is self-aware and engaged in his/her own experience and story of faith.

Is committed to and participates in intentional continuing education that develops increased levels of expertise and experience.

Engages in ongoing development of (professional) relationships with peers/colleagues through informal and formal networks and organizations (i.e. Association of United Church Educators, Religious Education Association).

Actively engages in and is knowledgeable of the denomination's expressions of basic history, identity, and ethos, including justice, global, interfaith, and ecumenical perspectives, and is able to relate them across age levels, life stages, and individual faith history.

Advocates on behalf of each group within a congregation for intentional faith formation.

Advocates for appropriate faith formation and engagement which addresses the particular needs of all populations within the congregation.

Engages with and participates in all aspects of a congregation's ministry and mission and advocates for a faith formation perspective throughout all aspects of the congregation's ministry and mission.

Actively engages in a regular practice of goal setting and assessment of the work/ministry in cooperation with the congregation he/she serves.

Able to teach others to teach—not as the sole faith former/educator of the congregation, but teaching with others and beside others.

Able to lead and equip others to lead, develop programs, and fashion faith formation within the congregation.

Models and maintains healthy boundaries in all aspects of the faith community life and in all relationships within the community of faith he or she serves.

Association of United Church Educators, Fall 2010

The Church Educator's Code

The Ministry of Church Education

I believe that God calls the whole church and every member to participate in and extend the ministry of Jesus Christ; that the privilege and responsibility of witnessing to the gospel in church and society belongs to every baptized Christian; that God empowers the ministry of the church and its members by the Holy Spirit; that the church nurtures faith, evokes gifts, and equips its members for service; and that God calls certain of the church's members to various forms of ministry in and on behalf of the Church.

I have been called by God to be a minister and servant of Jesus Christ in a ministry of education in the United Church of Christ, a church attentive to the Word, inclusive of all people, responsive to God's call, and supportive of one another.

I will seek to witness to the ministry of Jesus Christ.

I will faithfully and diligently perform the work of ministry to which I have been called.

Partnership in Ministry

I will nurture and offer my gifts for the teaching ministry of the church. I will seek to call forth and nurture the gifts of others for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ.

I will seek to understand, support, and interpret the diverse ministries of the United Church of Christ and its members as carried out throughout the world.

I will work cooperatively and collegially with those with whom I serve in ministry.

I will stand in a supportive relationship with, and for the rights of, my staff colleagues, offering and receiving counsel and support in times of need.

I will be an advocate for fair and just employment standards for all employees of the church, particularly in the place where I serve.

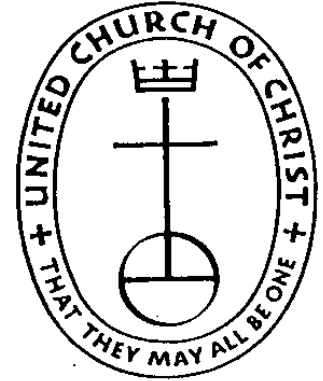
I will be a responsible participant in the life and work of the local church, association, conference, and national settings of the United Church of Christ.

I will be a responsible representative of the Church Universal and participate in those activities which strengthen its unity, witness, and mission.

I will seek the counsel of the appropriate body and persons in local, conference, or association settings should divisive tensions threaten my relationship with those with whom I minister.

The Ethics of Ministry

I will regard and minister to all persons with equal respect and concern.



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST

I will honor all confidences shared with me with the exception of times when I am legally bound to share information.

I will honor my legal and moral obligations where appropriate to disclose and report to civil and/or ecclesiastical authorities situations of actual or pending harm to myself or others.

I will not use my position, power, or authority to exploit or harass any person for sexual, financial, or other personal gain.

I will adhere to my setting's policy statements concerning appropriate and ethical behavior.

I will diligently care for the health and safety of those in my charge.

I will not misuse the finance of the institution which I serve.

I will deal honorably with the record of my predecessor.

I will not, upon my termination and departure from a ministry position, interfere with nor intrude upon the ministry of my successor.

Growth in Ministry

I will seek to grow in faith, knowledge, and the practice of educational ministry through intentional continuing education, study leave/sabbatical, membership in relevant professional organization(s), ongoing study, and worship and devotional life.

I will encourage and participate in the periodic evaluation of my ministry.

I will cooperate with the appropriate certifying and/or authorizing bodies in the periodic review of my ministry.

Commitments to Self and Family

I will honor my commitments to my family and to myself.

I will honor my need for time for physical and spiritual renewal, recreation, and vacation.

I will honor my family's need for privacy and time together as well as my own need for privacy.

I will be a responsible steward of my personal and family finances. I will honor and accept responsibility for all debts which I incur.

I will attend to my physical well-being and avoid abusive behaviors and abusive use of substances.

Relying on the grace of God, I will lead a life worthy of the calling to which I have been called.

*The Purpose and Use of The Church Educator's Code and A Guide for Conversation and Planning
may be found, along with The Code, by visiting:*

<http://www.ucc.org/education/certified-educators/The-Educators-Code.pdf>

A Covenant for Church Youth Ministries

June 2010

This “Covenant for Church Youth Ministries” is inspired by and adapted from “The National Charter,” a similar set of promises promoted in the United Kingdom by two organization — the Association of Christian Youth and Children’s Workers, and Youthwork — a collaboration of organizations working together to resource and inspire Christian youth work. We are grateful to the Eastern Ohio Association of the United Church of Christ, which obtained permission from these UK organizations to draw upon and modify the contents of “The National Charter” for use in this covenant. It is shared here with their permission and blessings.

1. We will pray and support.

We believe that our youth ministry leaders need spiritual support in their work with young people.

We promise to pray for our youth ministry leaders and keep their needs a high priority in church prayer life.

2. We will acknowledge the importance of gifts and God’s call.

We believe that gifts and call are best discerned in the context of the faith community.

We promise to provide opportunities for prayerful discernment.

3. We will provide opportunities for retreat and reflection.

We believe that taking time to think and pray is just as essential for our youth ministry leaders as organizing events and meeting young people.

We promise to provide opportunities for our youth ministry leaders to use part of their schedules for retreat, reflection, worship and personal development.

4. We will provide ongoing training and development.

We believe that maintaining the gifts and skills of the youth ministry leaders is an ongoing process and that it is important to continually invest in professional development.

We promise to set aside time and money to provide this for our youth ministry leaders.

5. We will give a full day of rest each week.

We believe that taking regular time off helps maintain our youth ministry leaders’ passion and energy for their work with young people.

We promise to actively encourage our youth ministry leaders to take a day away from their role each week.

6. We will share responsibility as a priesthood of all believers.

We believe that having a youth ministry leader does not release the rest of the church from our responsibilities toward young people.

We promise to encourage everyone to play a part in volunteering, praying for and supporting young people.

7. We will celebrate and appreciate.

We believe it is vital to acknowledge what our youth ministry leaders are doing and the commitment they have made to work with young people in our church. We promise to make sure our youth ministry leaders know they are appreciated and we will celebrate their achievements.

8. We will strive to be a just employer.

We believe it is important to have clear structures and procedures for recruiting and employing youth ministry leaders, and to provide supportive management structures which are fair and just.

We promise to follow non-exploitive practices in the way we employ our youth ministry leaders.

Preparation for Educational/ Formational Ministries

in the Massachusetts Conference,
United Church of Christ

Christian Educators Certification Program

For church leaders and local Christian educators who wish to develop skills for creating and/or leading a progressive, comprehensive, and exceptional faith formation ministry in their local churches. Christian educators are persons who may serve in the role of church school superintendent, director/coordinator of Christian education, pastor, other authorized minister, and/or church school teacher, for instance. The Certification Certificate, presented at the completion of the program (see Frequently Asked Questions below for details) will indicate that the educator has achieved a certain level of proficiency as a Christian educator that is recognized by the Massachusetts Conference UCC.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who may take these classes?

Any lay person or authorized minister in the Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island Conferences, and beyond who wishes to further his/her education and understanding of faith formation.

Where are the class sessions held?

There are two locations for you to choose from for each class offered:

Centre Congregational Church, 5 Summer St., Lynnfield, MA <centre-church.org>

or

Edwards Church, 297 Main St., Northampton, MA <edwardschurchnorthampton.org>

[The sessions in Northampton are also available via video conferencing — more info. below]

Do I have to attend the class at both locations?

No; just choose the location and/or date that is most convenient for you for each class offered.

How long is each class?

Each class begins at 8:30 a.m. and ends at 12:30 p.m.

What is the cost?

Individual session: \$45 each

One year of 3 classes: \$125

We encourage the local church to cover the cost of their participant as a show of support for this training.

Can I attend these courses via web conferencing?

Yes! But only the sessions held at the Northampton site/date. Just select that option when you register. However we strongly recommend that you attend the classes in person, if you are able, to gain the most from face to face contact with the instructors and students.

Do I have to complete the CE Certification Program or can I just take one or a few classes?

All classes are open to both those who are pursuing CE Certification and all others who are interested in only a specific class or classes. CE Certification is an option for those who desire to complete the two years of classes.

When is the registration deadline?

There is no deadline, however an early registration will guarantee your receipt of any class changes or updates.

Christian Educators Certification Program (cont'd.)

What is required for Christian Educator Certification?

- Minimum one year experience in the field of Christian Education (time during participation in certification program included),
- Completion of all Massachusetts Conference UCC Certification courses:
 - UCC History, Polity, and Identity
 - Old Testament & New Testament
 - Basics in Christian Education & Administration
 - Worship & Sacraments
 - Theories of Religious Education
 - Human and Faith Development
 - Curriculum Resources (taken at Super Saturday) <<http://www.macucc.org/supersaturday>>
 - Safe Church Policies (taken at Super Saturday) <<http://www.macucc.org/supersaturday>>
 - Racial Justice (taken at Super Saturday) <<http://www.macucc.org/supersaturday>>
 - Plus two electives offered at Super Saturdays <<http://www.macucc.org/supersaturday>> and/or the New England Association of United Church Educators Conference <<https://www.auce-ucc.org/new-england>>
- Participation in a MACUCC CE Community of Practice <<http://www.macucc.org/cecop>>
- Membership in the Association of United Church Educators <<https://www.auce-ucc.org/join-auce>>

How do I keep track of my completed Certification requirements?

Download this form, which will also serve as your application for certification at the end of the program. <<https://macucc.brtapp.com/files/files/documentsce/applicationforcertification.pdf>>

After completing the Certification requirements, what happens next?

The Christian Educator Certification Task Team will review your application for certification, confirm that you have met the requirements, and if accepted, you will be invited to attend the luncheon at Conference Annual Meeting in June (at no cost) to be presented with your Certificate. (If you choose to attend the entire Annual Meeting, you or your church will be responsible for those fees.)

Who should I contact if I have more questions?

Debbie Gline Allen, the Massachusetts Conference Christian Education & Youth Ministry Consultant at glineallend@macucc.org or call 508-603-6011.

Please visit <http://www.macucc.org/certification> to check for recent updates to this information.

Education for Effective Youth Ministry

An interactive program for local church youth leaders who are just beginning their work with youth, or who feel the need to obtain new skills. This program, offered every other year, is designed for pastors, lay leaders, Christian education directors, and youth leaders who are interested in developing a comprehensive youth ministry in their local church.

Benefits and Resources of EEYM

- In-depth youth ministry study providing skills to equip you to be an effective youth leader in your local church.
- An opportunity to join others from southern New England who are passionate about youth ministry in a spirit of learning, faith-building, and friendship.
- Ongoing peer support and networking.
- Each participant will receive a copy of *Youth Group Seeds: A Practical Guide to Growing a Youth Group* by Rev. Terry Martinson.
- EEYM Certificate of Completion upon completion of all four classes plus Racial Justice Training*

Class/Training Requirements

- Theological Foundations for Youth Ministry**
An overview of the five foundations of the church (community, teaching, preaching, serving, worship) with stories and examples for ministering with youth.
- Youth Ministry Resources, Social Media, & Safe Church Practices**
Hands-on materials and practices for selecting curriculum resources, managing and using social media, and creating and following safe church practices in youth ministry.
- Mission and Service**
An overview of the theology, practice, and resources available for engaging youth in mission and service opportunities.
- Bible Study & Worship for Youth Ministry**
Resources and practical, age-appropriate practices for engaging teens with the Bible and in worship.
- *Racial Justice** (taken at Super Saturday) <<http://www.macucc.org/supersaturday>>
A discussion of the history of white privilege, how its ingrained in our society, its detrimental impact on people of color, and what we can do to positively use white privilege.

Where?

Edwards Retreat Center
1 Badger Rd., Framingham, MA

When?

Each session begins at 9:00 a.m. and ends at 3:00 p.m.; lunch is included in the registration fee.

What is the cost?

\$75 per session (\$275 for all four sessions) includes lunch and materials.

When is the registration deadline?

There is no deadline, however an early registration will guarantee your receipt of any class changes or updates.

Can I attend these courses via web conferencing?

Yes! Just select that option when you register. However we strongly recommend that you attend the classes in person, if you are able, to gain the most from face to face contact with the instructors and students.

How do I register?

Register online here: <https://macucc-reg.brapp.com/EEYM2018>

Who should I contact if I have more questions?

Debbie Gline Allen, the Massachusetts Conference Christian Education & Youth Ministry Consultant at glineallend@macucc.org or call 508-603-6011.

*Please visit <http://www.macucc.org/eeym>
to check for recent updates to this information.*

Seeking a Call

Self Assessment

Although the questions that follow in this section are written for a person currently engaged in an educational/faith formation or youth ministry position, persons seeking their first call are encouraged to reflect on the same questions, adapting them to their present employment and/or volunteer setting, even if secular.

Leadership Effectiveness

Achievements

1. List the achievements of the past year in your education/formation ministry or youth ministry. (These may be activities, events, services which occurred for the first time or continuing ministries which were effectively sustained. Be comprehensive.)
2. Identify three things you would do differently if you were facing the same issues and circumstances again. Is there anything you would not do again? Why or why not?

Interactions

3. Reflect on individuals with whom you have interacted in the course of fulfilling your education/formation ministry or youth ministry role. Are you able to identify persons who have responded enthusiastically to your efforts? In what way have they done so?
4. Are you able to identify persons whom you have been able to nurture and encourage to assume more leadership for educational/formational or youth ministry efforts? How did that happen? If it didn't happen, why didn't it?

Goals and Objectives

5. Did you have specific goals and objectives for the previous year? Did you establish them or were they developed by a group assigned to this task? Did you work with that group? List those goals and objectives.
6. Evaluate the goals and objectives in terms of the following:
 - a) Which ones were achieved
 - b) Which ones were not fully achieved, but made progress
 - c) Which ones were abandoned or not achieved
 - d) Which ones (in your judgement) were not helpful to individual faith development or to the building of a faith community (whether achieved or not)?
 - e) Which goals were established by sources external to you and were they achieved? Why or why not?
7. Reflect on the reasons for each of your responses to a) through e) above.
8. List the goals and objectives you would like to propose and implement for the coming year?

Leadership Style

9. Examining your own leadership style(s), what would you like to change in order to be more effective in working with people or in coordinating the educational/formational or youth ministries? Why? What do you feel is good and should continue and why?

Visibility and Support

10. How do you sense the people you are called to serve receive your educational/formational or youth ministry? Do you have a network of colleagues, staff, or volunteers to provide feedback on a regular basis? How has it been helpful or not helpful?

11. Is your role visible to the congregation? Is there understanding of what you do behind the scenes? Is that work valued? Is more interpretation needed? If so, how can that be achieved?

12. What is your image as a Christian educator/youth ministry leader within the congregation? In the community? Among youth? Among parents and other adults? Among the children? Within the official board or church council? How are you described?

13. Have you received adequate support from the committees, task forces, and boards which work alongside you? Is there appropriate attendance at the meetings of these groups? Is there a balanced sharing of tasks or did you do much that could be delegated? Is there a healthy flow of ideas and suggestions for programs, procedures and improvements? Is the climate congenial and positive? Are meetings purposeful, well organized, and personally supportive of participants? Is the Christian faith lived out in this support?

Personal and Professional Development

Caring For Yourself

14. Do you have enough time for yourself, for rest, recreation, friends, and family? If not, how can you re-arrange your work patterns to correct those limitations?

Job Description

15. Is your salary and benefit package adequate or do you need to advocate for improvement? Can you identify someone who can help you?

16. What continuing education experiences have you had in the past year? In what areas could you benefit from continuing education opportunities to strengthen your ministry? Where and how can you secure these opportunities?

17. Review your job or position description. Are there changes which need to be made in emphasis or priority? What are they? How can you advocate for these changes most effectively? If the changes are made, will you be comfortable in the new roles or with the revised priorities?

Involvement Beyond Your Current Ministry Setting

18. In what denominational, community, and ecumenical activities were you involved during this past year? How do you feel about your contributions and the effectiveness of these ministries? Are you overly involved? Are questions being raised about the level of your involvement?

Staff Relationships

19. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your relationship with the senior pastor? How could it be improved? In what ways could the senior pastor be more supportive of your work? How could you be more supportive of him or her? Are there some issues of leadership, style, or substance that need attention? What are they? Do you meet regularly (weekly), one-on-one or as a church staff? Do you feel comfortable in your relationship?

20. How is your working and personal relationship with other staff members? Are there issues which need to be resolved? Can you manage those issues or must other persons or committees/boards resolve them?

Developing a Resume

A resume is a concise summary of your skills, background, and credentials. It communicates a maximum amount of relevant information through a minimum number of words. A resume is a capsulized biography designed to persuade an employer to grant you an interview or to request your formal application. In the United Church of Christ, lay Christian educators and youth ministry leaders may use resumes when searching for a position on a church staff. (Christian educators and youth ministry leaders who are authorized ministers are encouraged to prepare a UCC Ministerial Profile, as described in the next section.) When desiring to communicate specifically about Christian education/formation or youth ministry experience and skills, a resume is an important tool.

Formats

There are two types of resumes: chronological and functional. The following definitions and sample resumes are provided to assist you in discerning which is most appropriate for your use.

Chronological

The chronological resume format is the most common one used and reveals your employment, education, activities, and other information in chronological order, with the most recent event listed first under each heading. This format is best used when your vocational direction is clear and the position you seek is directly in line with your employment experience and history.

Functional

This format is most often used in cases of career change, redirection, or re-entry when you wish to emphasize areas of ability and potential rather than your work history. A functional resume allows you to highlight major areas of accomplishment and competencies and to organize them in the order that best supports your vocational objectives and desired employment positions.

Developing a Strong Resume

Sell yourself. Create a good first impression by highlighting your skills and abilities appropriate to the position you are seeking. Look at your transferable skills and how they can be used in the new position.

Use active language. Always use action words and articulate marketable skills acquired through your previous positions.

Be consistent. Choose a pattern of spacing, an order of information presentation or format of highlighting and be consistent throughout.

Clarify your history. When preparing a chronological resume, present the information in reverse chronological order.

List education and work experience starting with the most recent first.

Check for grammar. Misspellings and poorly constructed sentences communicate negative impressions about a candidate. Have someone else proofread your resume and make comments.

Create a positive impression. If not using an online form, ensure that your resume is neat and visually appealing. If you make hard copies, choose a simple font. Choose high quality paper in white, off-white or other neutral colors. If possible, have the final version professionally reproduced.

Other Helpful Do's and Don'ts

- Do be honest.
- Do reflect your uniqueness.
- Do design it to pique the curiosity of the reader, rather than answer all questions.
- Do be consistent in format.
- Do write in phrases, rather than complete sentences.
- Do keep it short.
- Don't include personal information such as birth date, height, weight, marital status, number of dependents, or health.
- Don't mail a resume to a prospective church or placement person without an accompanying cover letter.

Example of a Chronological Resume

Name

Street or P.O. Box address

City, State, and Zip

Telephone

E-mail

Vocational Objective (be as specific as possible)

Brief description of the type of position for which you wish to be considered. If you are unwilling to relocate, your geographic preference should be indicated in this section.

Summary of Qualifications (Work experience and education)

Name of seminary, college/university, technical/vocational school, and/or high school, dates attended, degrees received, and major field. List significant information about related coursework relevant to the vocational objectives. Also, include any relevant information about thesis, related research work, field experiences, workshops and seminars, special skills, etc.

Activities

Organizations, memberships and other pertinent information. Be sure to include any areas of service and/or committee memberships beyond your local church (i.e., camp directing, Association, Conference, or national committee memberships).

Special Skills

If you have other assets, skills or experiences significant to your career objective which may not be easily organized under another heading, they may be included here.

References

Furnished upon request.

Example of a Functional Resume

Name

Street or P.O. Box address

City, State, and Zip

Telephone

E-mail

Vocational Objective (be as specific as possible)

Brief description of the type of position for which you wish to be considered. If you are unwilling to relocate, your geographic preference should be indicated in this section.

Professional Skills

List three or four functional skills in order of importance. The skills most related to your present job objectives should be listed first. Within each skill area, stress the ones most directly related to accomplishments, results produced and tasks performed that indicate you do indeed possess each stated functional skill.

Employment History (or work experience)

List position title, organization, institution or company, and dates of employment.

Education

Name of seminary, college/university, technical/vocational school, and/or high school, dates attended, degrees received, and major field. List significant information about related coursework relevant to the vocational objectives. Also, include any relevant information about thesis, related research work, field experiences, workshops and seminars, special skills, etc.

References

Furnished upon request.

Preparing a Ministerial Profile

All United Church of Christ authorized ministers are encouraged to use the UCC Search and Call process and prepare a Ministerial Profile.

Visit the United Church of Christ's Ministerial Profile webpage to get started:

www.ucc.org/ministers/profile

Networking for a Job Search

Your credentials are set. Your resume or Ministerial Profile is finished and polished to your satisfaction. Your references are all lined up. Now what?

Talk To People

The best way to find a good job is through talking to people with contacts and connections in your chosen field. Networking is a process of developing and involving contact persons to research and solve problem issues, like finding a job. It is a simple process of talking to people who refer you to other people. There are a number of ways to begin to network as a part of your job search; several are listed here.

Local Christian Educator Meetings

First, do your homework by checking to see if there is a local gathering of Christian educators or youth ministry leaders. These gatherings can take a variety of forms. The Association of United Church Educators (www.AUCE-UCC.org) may have a regional, conference or a local chapter in your area that holds periodic gatherings of Christian educators and youth ministry leaders for study and renewal. The Massachusetts Conference has Communities of Practice for Christian Educators and Youth Ministry Leaders. Visit <http://www.macucc.org/cecop> to locate the Community of Practice nearest you. These gatherings are excellent opportunities to meet other Christian educators and youth ministry leaders to find out current information on everything from curriculum to the best new ministry practices. These people are also in the best position to know about current and potential job openings.

Conference Staff

Network with Conference and Association staff. Visit the Massachusetts Conference Classifieds page at <https://www.macucc.org/classifieds>. If you need more assistance, contact Debbie Gline Allen, Christian Education and Youth Ministry Consultant for the Massachusetts Conference. She may be reached via e-mail at glineallend@macucc.org or by calling 508-603-6601.

Talk To Your Pastor

If you intend to begin networking with the goal of leaving your current position, it would not be good for your pastor to hear from someone else that you were considering making a change. However, your pastor may be the perfect person to start with, especially if she or he has been encouraging your professional development. She or he may be in the best position to give you advice and direction on how to make the changes you feel you need to make. However, if one of your reasons for making a change is that your relationship with the pastor is not a good one, you may want to defer that conversation while networking quietly and in a confidential manner.

Search the United Church of Christ Ministry Opportunities Listing

The following link takes you to a searchable database, updated in real time, that includes employment and other opportunities for clergy and laypersons in the United Church of Christ.

<http://oppsearch.ucc.org/web/default.aspx>

Expressing Thanks

A key part of networking is acknowledging the assistance you received from your contacts. A note or card is one way to express your gratitude but even a phone call or e-mail will be appreciated.

Signing a Contract or Letter of Call

Whether a Christian educator/youth ministry leader is called or hired, a written contract is to be negotiated and signed. The position may be part-time or full-time, but careful attention should be given to the terms of the contract to avoid future conflict and misunderstanding.

Several key questions have to be answered and/or clarified by the Christian educator/youth ministry leader and the local church before signing the document. The written document has to be carefully studied and all items considered conscientiously.

Expectations and commitments of both the Christian educator/youth ministry leader and the local church or the calling body should be in the document, to serve as a guide for both parties in the performance of the responsibilities and accountability of everyone involved.

Job Description

- ✓ Are the areas of primary and secondary responsibility clearly defined?
- ✓ If the position is part-time, are the hours expected specified? Is compensation provided for extra hours worked?
- ✓ Could accountable extra hours be applied as compensated time off?
- ✓ Will there be time off for weekend seminars and conferences?
- ✓ How will involvement with the association, conference, national and ecumenical settings be addressed?
- ✓ What are your responsibilities for worship, calling, meeting with committees and boards?
- ✓ To whom are you accountable? Who will sign your contract on behalf of the church?

Compensation

- ✓ Are all terms, salary and benefits agreed upon and understood?
- ✓ If part-time, what benefits will the church provide?
- ✓ What has been determined with regard to insurance, annuity, vacation time, educational allowance (books, publication materials, professional association, and seminar dues and travel expenses to seminars and conferences), mileage?
- ✓ If you are ordained, is there a housing allowance?
- ✓ How many weeks of paid vacation are provided? Is there a required time of the year when vacation must be taken? or may not be taken?

Evaluation/Assessment

- ✓ Is there an evaluation process established for all staff? What is the process and who is part of it?
- ✓ Is this process separate from any salary negotiations?
- ✓ Is there a provision in the agreement for you to meet with the evaluation committee privately?
- ✓ How often does the evaluation takes place?

Support

- ✓ Is there a support system for all staff?
- ✓ Who makes up your support network or committee? Do they understand their role in caring, giving affirmations of appreciation, clarification, and constructive criticism?
- ✓ Are they comfortable being the channel of communication between the Christian educator/ youth ministry leader and the congregation?

Administrative Office Support

- ✓ Although most Christian educators and youth ministry leaders are familiar with the use of digital technology, it is necessary to clarify how much administrative support will be provided.
- ✓ Will preparation outside the actual performance of the responsibility be counted as part of the contractual time?

Separation Issues

- ✓ How much notice is required by either party to terminate the agreement?
- ✓ In the event of termination without cause, what does the severance package provide? How are benefits handled?
- ✓ Who will represent the church in the event of a separation?

For assistance in crafting a call agreement between an authorized minister and a local church in the United Church of Christ, visit http://www.ucc.org/ministers_search-and-call.

Supporting the Relationship
Between
the Christian Educator
or Youth Ministry Leader
and
the Local Church

Love God.

Sample Service of Covenanting for the Christian Educator or Youth Ministry Leader

This service of worship and covenanting should be welcoming of children by incorporating the arts and as many of the five senses as possible, as well as leadership by children at appropriate times.

PRELUDE

OPENING STATEMENT:

The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. (Deut. 6:4b-7)

HYMN: Called as Partners in Christ's Service NCH #495

or

Jesus Loves Me NCH #327

INVOCATION

STATEMENT

A member of the Christian Education Committee or other appropriate group shall interpret the purpose of this service of covenanting. He or she should tell the congregation something of the person's background and welcome him or her on behalf of the congregation.

HEBREW SCRIPTURE

[Choose from Deuteronomy 4:12,6-10; 6:17-25; Psalm 25:4-10]

CHILDREN'S OR YOUTH CHOIR ANTHEM

CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURE

[Choose from Ephesians 4:1-16; Romans 1:1-18; 1 Corinthians 12:4-31]

Covenant

Pastor: Dear friends, _____ Church has declared that, having gathered under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it has called _____ to minister in this place as [title of position] and that it now receives [him/her] as appointed by God for this ministry.

_____, are you willing to enter this covenant with _____ Church?

[Christian Educator/Youth Ministry Leader]: I am willing, and I promise to serve this church faithfully, teaching the word of God, according to the faith and order of the United Church of Christ.

Pastor: Members of _____ Church, will those who are able rise and affirm your covenant with your commissioned minister?

Local Church Members: We, the members of _____, receive _____ as our [title of position], promising to labor with [him/her] in the ministry of the gospel and to give [him/her] due honor and support.

CHARGE TO THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATOR and the Congregation

A charge by the pastor with whom the Christian educator/youth ministry leader will be associated, utilizing visuals and symbols of educational/formation or youth ministries.

RESPONSE BY THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATOR (optional)

A statement of faith incorporating the Christian educator's or youth ministry leader's understanding of and hopes for the educational ministry of the church, utilizing visuals and symbols of educational/formation or youth ministries.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

HYMN: You Are Called to Tell the Story NCH #357

BENEDICTION

Establishing a Faith Formation Committee

From The Youth Ministry Handbook, Rev. Kim Mislin, First Congregational Church, Bakersfield, CA. Used by permission.

This article is intended for larger congregations with good-sized youth programs. The information provided is still important, but should be adapted by each individual congregation to meet its unique youth ministry and/or faith formation needs.

No one person should be responsible for all aspects of a ministry program. There must be shared leadership and a network of accountability, even if the church has only fifty members and four youth. Without this, the church leaves itself open to the potential for significant liability. The easiest way to establish this network of accountability is by establishing a committee for faith formation ministries that is accountable to the governing body of the church.

The group that the Committee reports to should have a member of this Committee as a voting member. This person serves as the link between both groups.

The establishment of this Committee makes a clear statement about the group's desire to be involved, and intention in having a high quality program for its youth. This positive approach provides a good foundation for the ministry.

A Faith Formation and/or Youth Committee should include the following persons:

Voting Members

Chairperson	Someone not usually involved in youth ministry who also has administrative gifts
Representative	From the Committee or Governing Body that this Committee is accountable to
Parent Representative(s)	Representing each age group of youth involved in the program
Youth Representative	Representing each age group involved in the program as appropriate
Youth/children's ministry leaders	Leaders, facilitators, sponsors from each age group

Ex-Officio Members (voice without vote)

Ministers	May also be voting members depending on church policy
Church legal counsel	To handle screening forms, incident reports, insurance issues, etc.)
Other church leaders and interested persons	

If youth activities such as choirs, service clubs, and sporting groups are also considered to be youth/children's ministry activities, then representatives of these groups should also be voting members of the Committee. The goal is to provide a voice for all aspects of the youth / children's ministry program, enriched by the viewpoints of those not directly involved in this ministry, thereby providing balance.

The Committee for Youth/Faith Formation Ministries should exercise leadership in the following ways:

1. Establish a Mission Statement of the vision, objectives, and theology of the youth/ children's ministry program. This can be used to help evaluate whether particular requests are in keeping with the overall spirit of the program. This mission statement is the road map of the program, and can become the basis for long range planning.
2. Establish in writing clear guidelines and procedures for all youth/children's ministry activities. The Committee can modify these guidelines when necessary when the group decides that change would be helpful. New guidelines must be circulated to all persons involved, and all guidelines must be consistently enforced. Guidelines and procedures should include fiscal matters, so that those involved in youth/children's ministries are aware of the financial resources available to the program. For example, a policy for fund-raising should be clearly stated, and could be worded in the following manner: General fund-raising for youth/children's ministries can occur, but if funds are raised for a specific event it should be stipulated at the time the funds are raised, so that if the event does not occur, the funds will be placed in the youth/children's ministry account.
3. Review and approve youth/children's ministry activities before they occur. It will be up to the Committee to decide which activities require approval. For example, a senior high group wants to study a topic and then go across town for pizza. Does the topic to be studied need to be approved? Does the need for approval depend on the topic (for instance, sexuality)? Do in- town off-campus trips need approval? Is approval only necessary for overnight, out-of-town, or unusual outings? Whatever the committee decides, it is important to be consistent in enforcing decisions.
4. Act as an advocate for the youth/children and adult leaders. This is one of the most important yet often overlooked functions of the Committee. Both the youth/children and their leaders need prayer, affirmation, and support. Find opportunities to publicly acknowledge the youth/children and their adult leaders.
5. Mediate difficulties and disputes that involve the youth/children and/or the program. The Committee can act as the intermediary between such groups as the youth and the church governing board, or the youth and the pastors. As mediators the committee can model positive conflict management and communication skills so that problems are dealt with directly and in a respectful, timely manner.

A planning retreat is often helpful when a committee first forms. Be sure to have a facilitator who understands both the needs of youth/children's ministry and how this ministry should be integrated into the overall life of the church. A retreat can be a wonderful time for relationship building and dreaming as well as designing concrete guidelines and plans.

After a committee is established it should be publicly recognized in a worship service in whatever way is consistent with the particular faith tradition. In this way the entire church acknowledges and empowers this very important ministry.

The Committee should meet monthly for the purpose of being consistently and faithfully involved in the youth/children's ministry program. Once a committee is established and becomes comfortable with a routine, an hour should be sufficient for conducting most business. A sample agenda for a routine meeting is as follows:

1. Prayer
2. Sharing of joys and concerns
3. Review of events requiring approval and any other business
4. Long-range planning
5. Other business
6. Affirmation of youth/children and leaders
7. Prayer

The Committee should report monthly to the committee or governing body to which it is accountable through the person on the Committee who is also a voting member on the supervising committee or governing body. In this way, open communication will be maintained and the youth/children's ministry program stands a better chance of being integrated into the overall church ministry.

Ongoing Nurture and Support

Personnel Committee

Make sure there is a separate personnel committee for the non-ordained staff members, and see that new staff members are connected and have regular meetings with that group. The policies of your congregation will act as a guide to the frequency of the meeting. These meetings should always include time for meeting with a staff person without other staff members present. This will help to build an atmosphere of trust and ensure honest communication between individual staff members and the committee. The evaluation process should be clearly defined (see the Periodic Review Process on the following page) and a personnel file begun. Confidentiality must be respected.

Communication Issues

Affirm and support the educational ministry of your congregation by intentionally keeping the Christian educator's or youth ministry leader's role and work site visible. Educational events can be publicized in your newsletter, bulletin, on your church's website, and via social media. Announcements can be made during worship. Determine how frequently and in what role the Christian educator/youth ministry leader will participate in worship to encourage the congregation to see the educational dimension of worship life and affirm the validity of the his/her ministry.

Personal and Professional Growth

Be sure your Christian educator/youth ministry leader connects with a Massachusetts Conference Christian Education Community of Practice in your area (<http://www.macucc.org/cecop>). These groups offer networking, peer support, increased awareness of UCC resources, and a sharing of best practices in the ministry of Christian education and faith formation. Encourage and support the personal and professional growth of your Christian educator/youth ministry leader. Make available resources (time and money) for the Christian educator/youth ministry leader to attend professional seminars and workshops as well as personal retreat time for spiritual nurture. Provide an allowance for books and other resources. Provide money to join professional associations such as the Association of United Church Educators (www.AUCE-UCC.org), which will also acquaint him or her with colleagues in the profession and solid professional development opportunities.

Certification

Provide the funds for your Christian educator/youth ministry leader to pursue certification through the Massachusetts Conference, and provide incentive for the completion of either in the form of increased compensation or benefits.

Christian Educator Certification Program: <http://www.macucc.org/certification>

Effective Education for Youth Ministry: <http://www.macucc.org/eeym>

Periodic Review Process

Review is a process for assessing what is of value. The review or evaluation process is not a substitute for conflict resolution. Rather it is a means of identifying growth and growth goals and affirming the Christian educator/youth ministry leader. This review guide has been arranged in three sections so that the Board or Committee and the Christian educator/youth ministry leader can work separately, then together, to compare expectations and deal with any discrepancies.

Questions and areas for the Board or Committee to address:

- What are the strengths of our Christian educator/youth ministry leader?
- Is support for your Christian educator/youth ministry leader adequate? Not adequate? In what ways?
- List the goals the committee considers important to implement for the coming year.
- Which goals could our Christian educator/youth ministry leader plan/coordinate/implement?
- For which goals might other staff take responsibility?
- For which goals might volunteers take responsibility?
- List possible ways to implement these plans.
- What are areas in which our Christian educator/youth ministry leader might consider continuing education in the coming year?
- How will participation in continuing education be facilitated?

Questions and areas for the Christian educator/youth ministry leader to address:

- What are some major personal accomplishments of the past year?
- List the goals you see as important to implement for the coming year.
- Which goals could I plan/coordinate/implement?
- For which goals might other staff take responsibility?
- For which goals might volunteers take responsibility?
- List possible ways to implement these plans.
- What are the areas in which I might engage in continuing education in the coming year?
- What will I need in the way of resources and time to do so?
- How has the Board or Committee been most helpful? Least helpful?

Questions and areas for both the Board or Committee and the Christian educator/youth ministry leader to address together:

- List the strengths of the Christian educator/youth ministry leader.
- What are the highlights of our church's educational youth ministry in the last year?
- Which previously set goals were met? Which were not? Which goals were changed or modified?
- Are the position description expectations still realistic? What might be added? Deleted? Changed?
- How can the support for the Christian educator/youth ministry leader be improved?

Recommendations for the coming year:

- Compensation issues
- Resources for ministry (volunteers, program and expense money, facilities, etc.)
- What goals for the coming year could strengthen the church's educational ministry?
Be specific and realistic!

Recognizing Stress and Burnout

Definitions

All people who work on a daily basis with human beings at one time or another may experience stress or burnout. Stress is the result of having to deal with too many crises that break the balance we have in our lives. Burnout can produce exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. Burnout is the result of our inability to deal with stressful situations in our work, in our lives or in our family life.

Crisis

Life brings with it certain levels of crisis. (For the purpose of this document, the word “crisis” refers to high-stress events, both positive and negative.) The two main classifications of crisis are developmental and accidental. A developmental crisis is one that is produced by our own maturation. Such events include marriage, birth, graduation, retirement, new jobs, and other changes that are part of the life cycle. Accidental crises, on the other hand, include sickness, accidents, surgery, moving, unemployment, and/or natural disasters. Both types of crises produce stress in our lives. If we are not able to deal with the levels of stress produced by various types of crises, burnout can result. Psychologists and psychiatrists agree that stress is cumulative. When you keep adding too many crises together, the level of stress increases and the ability of the person to cope is diminished.

Christian educators and youth ministry leaders are continuously dealing with different types of crises in their work environment. Just a telephone call from a Sunday school teacher saying that she or he can not be present on Sunday creates a certain level of stress if the ministry team is not functioning well. If parents are complaining about a program or about any specific activity, stress is created. How much stress a person can handle at a particular time depends on how well equipped that person is and what support is available and utilized by him or her.

Let's look at the previous example. When the Christian educator receives that telephone call and knows that there are other people she or he can count on, the level of stress is reduced. On the other hand if there is nobody she or he can call at the last minute, it creates a stressful situation.

Sources of Stress

- How many hours a week do you work?
- Do you see your work growing and your time shrinking?
- Who is in charge? To whom do you report?
- What kind of relationships do you have with your colleagues?
- What are the things you do not like to do, but are expected of you?
- Do you feel well compensated for the work you do?
- Who cares about your work?
- What are the sources of support for your work?
- How do you balance your work with your family life and your leisure time?
- What support do you receive from your Conference, Association or national offices?
- How do you renew your skills?
- How do you adapt to or resist change?

These and many other questions can help determine if the situation you work in creates levels of stress that can lead to burnout. Stress is dynamic and can change from one moment to the other. However, burnout is a sense of failure that is more difficult to deal with because it radically diminishes coping mechanisms.

Burnout

- Are you frustrated with your ministry situation?
- Do you think you are at the end of your rope?
- Do you feel emotionally drained?
- Have you lost the passion for your educational or youth ministry?
- Do you care what happens to the participants?
- Are you having problems relating to other people?
- Do you feel everybody blames you for what is wrong and nobody recognizes what is right?
- When you wake up in the morning, do you dread going to work?
- Do you feel that you are pounding your head against the wall?
- Has your health been affected?

If you answered yes to two or more of these questions, you are a candidate for burnout. But this does not necessarily mean you are at the end of your rope. There is hope.

Steps for Dealing with Stress and Burnout

- Take a break. Create distance between yourself and the situation. Take time for spiritual renewal through prayer and biblical reflection.
- Explore and identify the situations creating stress. Try to boil down the problem to just the specifics. What is going on? What is the real problem or situation? Break down the problem into its parts.
- What resources do you have available to help you deal with the particular problem? Consider personal strengths, a problem solving process, and communication skills.
- Identify the problem or situation. Define all the possible alternatives, evaluate the alternatives and choose the best options, and act on them.
- Celebrate the value of personal relationships and the support network you have. Take time to seek support and other points of view. Contact your Association, Conference or national office for networking and support, particularly the MA Conference Christian Education/ Youth Ministry Communities of Practice (<https://www.macucc.org/cecop>). Your Association of United Church Educators Regional Representative is also a good source of support (www.AUCE-UCC.org).
- One of the strengths of human beings is to learn by our mistakes or our challenges. Take time to articulate in writing what you have learned. These learnings can be helpful in a future situation.
- God will not abandon you. Pray. God will provide you with the peace, patience, and endurance to work through those situations that create stress and burnout in ministry.

Resignation or Dismissal

You love what you do. You love being a Christian educator or youth ministry leader. However there are times when a person needs to move on, and there are times when a church needs to move in a different direction. Separation can take two different forms — one is resignation from the position; the other is termination by the employer. Each one requires a different approach.

Resignation

Resignation is considered a voluntary action. Changes in personal circumstances, the discovery of incompatibilities with the persons you work with, or marked theological differences that make you uncomfortable could all be issues leading to your resignation.

The issue of separation is a stressful one to deal with, even if you are resigning on good terms. You have developed special relationships with people in the congregation, staff, children, youth, and adults. What should you do?

Create opportunities to express your feelings to those who will be missed. Provide some kind of closing, perhaps during a worship service, or the church may want to have a special reception for you. An Exit Interview (see pg. 59) is a process that many churches find helpful for allowing each party to share thoughts and learnings, as well as joys at the close of your time together. Events like this help in the separation process for all concerned. Once you leave a position, ethics requires you to respect the church's new beginning without you.

If resignation is provoked by particular situations in the work environment, and you feel that the best way out is by resigning, you should be honest. Learn from your experience. It may be time to make an assessment of yourself and set new goals.

Dismissal

The other type of separation is dismissal by your employer. This type of separation creates high levels of stress for all involved.

Questions to assess your situation:

- Were there any early signs that termination might happen? Did your evaluation show possible signs of dismissal?
- Was there an unusual amount of criticism about you and your work? If so, how did you respond?
- Were your relationships with other staff members deteriorating?
- Were there major theological or philosophical differences between you and the congregation and/or the staff?
- Was the church cutting staff because of financial support or budgetary losses?
- Do you feel the dismissal was unfair, or you have been mistreated?

Dealing With Reality

Responding to some of these questions may help you put reality in perspective. Do not jump immediately to conclusions before you have examined the total context of the situation. Try to get some responses from the pastor, your supervisor, the education committee or the church board. An Exit Interview (see the following pages) with church representatives can be helpful to you and the church.

Face Your Feelings

Whenever dismissal occurs there are a lot of feelings on both sides. You may feel anger, bitterness, guilt, confusion, loss of identity and low self-esteem. Remember this type of news creates imbalance in your life and emotions need to be addressed in a healthy manner. Remember to be intentional in retaining your professional demeanor.

An unexpected dismissal can create financial setbacks, loss of health insurance, separation from loved ones, and can threaten your personal stability in many different ways. Refer to your contract. What does it say about termination? Does it guarantee any type of compensation in such cases or continuation on the health insurance for a reasonable time? Be sure to check if you are eligible for unemployment.

An Ethical and Professional Response

You will need to maintain a professional attitude when interacting with your peers, colleagues, and the people in your congregation after your departure. Realize that, like you, the congregation needs to move forward, and any disruptive conversations or actions that arise out of unresolved anger or stress will not be helpful for either party. The Massachusetts Conference has staff members who can help you work through any pain as well as offer guidance in working through issues that you or the congregation may need to address. (If you are ordained, your Committee On Ministry can help in this way.)

After your final day of employment, it is customary, and wise, to discontinue contact with the members of the congregation. This will help them to make a smooth transition to a new Christian education/youth ministry staff person. If you are a member of the congregation you served, you will need to have discussions with the pastor and church leadership as to how you will continue to function as member, particularly when a new Christian education/youth ministry staff person is hired. As difficult as this could be, it may be possible that both parties will determine that you seek membership in another church. In either case, speaking the truth in love will be the best course of action, followed by a decision or compromise that will best serve the Church.

Planning Your Future

Your next step is to take responsibility over your life. Life must continue. This is not the end of the world, although it might seem like it to you now. These are some of the steps you can take:

- Pray
- Do something good for yourself.
- Make an assessment of yourself and your personal resources.
- Set continuing education goals, if needed.
- Find support from people doing the same type of ministry.
- Do not let your bitterness sever relationships with people closest to you.
- Take steps to promote your spiritual growth.
- Prepare new goals for your ministry and your life.
- Update your resume or Ministerial Profile.
- Develop a network leading to your next position.
- Try to learn the most you can from this temporary setback.
- Trust God. Trust in the One that can lead you forward.

Exit Interview

A framework for a Christian education/formation staff member

This may be revised or adapted to your individual circumstances and church context as necessary. Remember that an exit interview is a time for mutual reflection, not evaluation or a time to emphasize negative experiences. Yet it may be helpful to the church to hear the departing individual speak honestly and openly about challenges both professional and personal in nature without judgment.

It is recommended that two or three gather to listen and reflect. It would be important for the Chair or representatives of the Christian Education Committee or Board and either Personnel or Pastoral Relations Board or Committee to be present, as well as an individual of the departing staff member's choosing — invited for support and to listen in.

Opening Prayer and Candle Lighting 5 minutes

Moments of Reflection 20 minutes (Choose 3-5)

1. Who or what has blessed your ministry here?
2. What were the greatest joys or high points in this work?
3. What were the greatest challenges or low points in this work?
4. How have you known God's presence in this work/ministry?
5. What do you celebrate about your work or what gave you great satisfaction?
6. Is there an accomplishment you'd place first on your resume or profile?

Moments of Review 20 minutes (Choose 4-6)

1. What enhanced working relationships here?
(With staff, committee members, etc.)
2. What hindered working relationships here?
(With staff, committee members, etc.)
3. Which job responsibility was most rewarding? (In what way or why?)
4. Which job responsibility was most difficult? (In what way or why?)
5. Do you have recommendations for the scope of this work to make to the congregation?
6. Would you add/delete any tasks or responsibilities?
7. Was the work adequately resourced and supported?
8. What, if any, changes or improvements would you recommend that might be particularly helpful to the person that will be hired as the next Christian educator/youth ministry leader?

Closing Prayers 5 minutes

BE THE CHURCH

Protect the environment.

Care for the poor.

Forgive often.

Reject racism.

Fight for the powerless.

Share earthly and spiritual resources.

Embrace diversity.

Love God.

Enjoy this life.

God is still speaking.
**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**

