

The
Organizational Covenant
of the
Prairie Association
Illinois Conference
United Church of Christ

Adopted April 24, 2004

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of the
Prairie Association, Illinois Conference, United Church of Christ

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The Organizational Covenant of the Prairie Association, Illinois Conference, United Church of Christ

Preamble:

The Churches of the Prairie Association establish this covenant with each other in order to:

- " Express more fully our common life in Jesus Christ,
- " Support and empower the ministries of our member congregations,
- " Authorize the standing and membership of local churches in the Association,
- " Authorize individuals for ministry in and on behalf of ourselves and the United Church of Christ,
- " Support these authorized persons and invite them into relationships of growth and accountability,
- " Interpret and promote the work of the United Church of Christ,
- " Represent the needs and aspirations of our member churches to the United Church of Christ, and
- " Engage in collective witness and service in ways endorsed and supported by our member churches.

Article I Name

The name of this organization is The Prairie Association of the Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Article II Membership and Affiliation

- " The basic unit of the life and organization of the Prairie Association is its member local churches.
- " The membership of this Association consists of all congregations and all ordained, licensed and commissioned ministers who hold authorized standing in this Association.
- " This Association will be related to the United Church of Christ through the Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ, of which it is an integral part. All provisions of this covenant are intended to be consistent with the constitution and bylaws of the United Church of Christ and of the Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Article III Organization

1. Ministry Team for Association Administration

The membership of the Ministry Team for Association Administration (MTAA) will consist of the Association Moderator, the Vice-Moderator, the Secretary, the Treasurer, one representative each from the Ministry Teams for Authorized Ministry and Church Relations, selected by the members of the respective Ministry Teams from among their own members, and the Association Minister. All members have right of voice and vote. The Ministry Team for Association Administration will:

- " Function as the primary oversight and planning body of the Association, stewarding its vision and mission,

- " Periodically evaluate and update the vision and mission of the Association,
- " Establish program and ministry goals to implement that vision and mission,
- " Receive reports from staff and related entities,
- " Establish the Association budget and oversee its financial affairs,
- " Annually appoint an Association Nominating Committee,
- " Appoint volunteer staff as it deems helpful and appropriate. Such staff may serve as long as the MTAA desires, but must be annually reaffirmed in their role,
- " Appoint individuals to fill vacancies which may occur in elected and appointed positions. Persons appointed to positions otherwise filled by election will serve until the next Association election,
- " Declare any elected or appointed position vacant if the person filling that position systematically fails to fulfill the responsibilities for which he or she was elected or appointed,
- " Recommend individuals for appointment to Conference positions when the Association is requested to provide such names,
- " Appoint an Association Meeting Planning Committee and designate a chairperson thereof,
- " Establish themes and/or presenters for Association Meetings as consistent with the vision and mission of the Association, and
- " Foster Association ties with the wider church.

The MTAA will meet six times a year at times set by the Association Moderator. Additional meetings may be called by either the Moderator or the Association Minister.

2. Ministry Team for Authorized Ministry

The membership of the Ministry Team for Authorized Ministry (MTAM) will consist of twelve members, elected by the Association. They will annually elect a chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, and representative to the MTAA. The MTAM will:

- " On behalf of the Association, grant or revoke the authorized standing of ordained, licensed and commissioned ministers, including the oversight of the in-call and licensure processes,
- " Exercise oversight of authorized ministers, being responsible for their care and discipline,
- " Establish relationship with non-UCC ministers who serve member churches,
- " Call Ecclesiastical Councils of the Association for purpose of granting initial authorization for ordination, commissioning and privilege of call,
- " Transfer ordained ministerial standing of authorized ministers according to policy,
- " Offer mediation/conflict transformation resources to authorized ministers,
- " In conjunction with the Ministry Team for Church Relations, establish common values, principles, and procedures as guidelines for use when the work of the two teams overlaps, and
- " Consult with the Ministry Team for Church Relations when its work will impact a local church.

In all its proceedings, the MTAM will recognize the latest edition of UCC Manual on Ministry as Committee and Association policy, except that the MTAM will be authorized to formally adopt policy in addition to or in place of specific content in Manual on Ministry when in its considered judgment it is best to do so. Any such policy will only be effective upon its endorsement by the MTAA. If MTAM policy and Manual on Ministry conflict, MTAM policy will take precedence.

By this covenant, the Association delegates all questions of authorization, except authorization for initial ordination, commissioning and privilege of call, to the MTAM. Decisions of the MTAM are final and are not subject to appeal, except that the decision of the MTAM to revoke a person's authorized standing may be appealed to the Review Board as described herein.

Any person whose authorized standing has been revoked by the MTAM may appeal the process and procedure of the MTAM's deliberations and decision-making to a Review Board of the Association. The Review Board will be comprised of the MTAA minus the Association Minister and the representative from the MTAM, neither of whom will participate in the review. In a timely manner the Review Board will request the Illinois Conference Minister to appoint an individual to staff the process of the review. In its deliberations, the Review Board will consider only the process and procedures used by the MTAM. The Review Board may either affirm that the MTAM properly followed its policies and procedures, in which case the original decision will be affirmed and the appeal will end, or if the Review Board finds errors of process or procedure, it will send the case back to the MTAM for reconsideration.

The MTAM will meet as necessary for the timely and considered exercise of its responsibilities.

3. Ministry Team for Church Relations

The membership of the Ministry Team for Church Relations (MTCR) will consist of 12 members, elected by the Association. They will annually elect a chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, and representative to the MTAA. The MTCR will:

- Cultivate relationship with member churches,
- Represent churches and their concerns to the wider church, and
- Interpret the perspectives of the wider church to local churches and advocate for generous OCWM support by local churches.

The MTCR will also have the responsibility to

- Exercise oversight of member churches, being responsible for their care and discipline,
- Recommend standing or revocation of standing for local churches.
- Shepherd new or newly affiliating churches through the process of obtaining standing as a member church,
- Offer mediation/conflict transformation resources to local churches,
- In conjunction with the MTAM, establish common values, principles, and procedures as guidelines for use when the work of the two teams overlaps, and
- Consult with the MTAM when its work will impact an authorized minister.

The MTCR will meet quarterly or as needed for the timely and considered exercise of its responsibilities.

4. Nominating Committee

The membership of the Nominating Committee will consist of the Association Vice-Moderator, who will serve as chair, together with 4 at-large members. These additional members will be appointed by the MTAA.

The Nominating Committee will:

- " Prepare a slate of nominees for all elected positions described in this covenant,

- " Nominate delegates and alternates to the UCC General Synod, according to the direction of the Illinois Conference,
- " Nominate individuals for the Illinois Conference Council and any other elected positions as may be required by the Illinois Conference,
- " Present the slate to the MTAA of the Association for its endorsement prior to the Association Annual Meeting,
- " Publish the slate of nominees in a form reasonably accessible to members of the Association at least two weeks prior to the Association Annual Meeting, and
- " Present the slate of nominees to the Annual Meeting.

The Nominating Committee will meet as necessary at the direction of its chair.

5. Association Meeting Planning Committee

The membership of the Association Meeting Planning Committee will consist of individuals appointed by the MTAA. The MTAA will designate the Committee Chair. Their number will be established as deemed appropriate to their task. The Association Meeting Planning Committee will:

- " Be responsible for the specific planning and administration of Association meetings for which they have been assigned responsibility, and
- " Use the Association's vision and mission as guides for its work.

The Association Meeting Planning Committee will meet as necessary at the direction of its chair.

6. Other Committees

The MTAA may establish and appoint members to other committees, *ad hoc* committees, and task forces as it sees fit for the accomplishment of the Association's mission and vision. In all such cases, the MTAA will clearly establish the committee or task force's purpose and authority. Said committees will exist for one year, but the MTAA may annually renew their existence for so long as is deemed appropriate.

Article IV Officers

The elected officers of the Association will be:

1. Moderator, who will

- " Serve as a member of and chair the Association MTAA and all meetings of the Association, and
- " Serve on the Conference Council and its Executive Committee.

2. Vice-Moderator, who will

- " Assume the duties of the Moderator in the absence of the Moderator,
- " Serve on the Association MTAA,
- " Serve as one of the Association's at-large representatives on the Conference Council, and
- " Serve as member of and chair the Association Nominating Committee.

3. Secretary, who will

- " Handle official correspondence of the Association,
- " Serve as a member of the Association MTAA, and
- " Record minutes of the MTAA and all meetings of the Association.

4. Treasurer, who will

- " Serve as a member of the Association MTAA,
- " Oversee and be accountable for the finances of the Association, and report same to the Association and MTAA, and
- " Participate with staff in the preparation of the Association budget to be recommended to the Association MTAA.

Article V Elections, Terms of Office and Appointments

All elections will be held at the Annual Meeting of the Association.

1. Terms of Office

- " The **Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Secretary and Treasurer** will all be elected for terms of two years, in such a manner that the terms of the Moderator and Vice-Moderator are concurrent with each other and expire in even numbered years, and the terms of the Secretary and Treasurer are concurrent with each other and expire in odd numbered years. All officers may serve only one term, and will not be eligible for election to the same office until one year has elapsed after the end of their previous term. The officers of the Association must hold membership in a member church of the Prairie Association.
- " Members of the **Ministry Teams for Authorized Ministry and Church Relations** will be elected for terms of three years. These terms will be arranged to maintain an orderly rotation of members. Members may serve two consecutive terms and will not be eligible for re-election to the same office until one year has elapsed after the end of the second term. All members of the Ministry Teams must hold membership in a member church of the Prairie Association.

2. Appointments

- " All appointments to the Association Nominating Committee will be made by the MTAA at their first meeting following the Association Annual Meeting. These appointments will be for terms of two years, staggered in such a way that approximately one half of each committee is appointed each year. Members will be eligible for appointment to a second consecutive term, but will not be eligible for appointment to the same committee until one year has elapsed after the end of their second term.
- " All appointments to the Association Meeting Planning Committee will be for a definite term specified in the appointment. Members will be eligible for re-appointment at the will of the MTAA.
- " All appointments to unexpired terms will be made by the MTAA. Appointment to an unexpired term which is otherwise filled by election of the Association will only be until the next Annual Meeting of the Association, at which time the office will be filled by nomination and election according to the usual process. Appointment to an unexpired term will not count as a term of office when considering the term limits specified above.
- " Appointments to Committees established by action of the MTAA will be for terms of one year and will be without term limit.

3. Diversity

The Nominating Committee will use diligence in attempting to maintain an approximate balance and even rotation between women and men, and between laypersons and authorized ministers in all elected positions of the Association, and will also seek to ensure wide geographical representation among the same.

Article VI Staff

1. Association Minister

The Prairie Association will participate with the Illinois Conference in calling an Association Minister according to practices, policy and requirements established by the Conference. The Association Minister will fulfill the job description as specified by the Conference, will seek to help the member churches and authorized ministers engage in effective witness and mission, will serve ex-officio on all Association committees, with voice but not vote, except as otherwise provided in this covenant, and will maintain the official list of member churches and authorized ministers as specified in the Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ.

2. Volunteer Staff

The MTAA may appoint volunteer staff as it deems helpful to fulfill the vision and mission of the Association. All such appointments will be for terms of one year, which may be renewed at the desire of the MTAA.

Article VII Meetings

1. Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Prairie Association will be held during the month of April, at a time and place established by the MTAA.

2. Programmatic Meeting

A Programmatic Meeting will be held in November, at a time and place established by the MTAA.

3. Ecclesiastical Councils

Ecclesiastical Councils will be called by the MTAM for the purpose of authorizing candidates for ordination, commissioning and privilege of call.

4. Special Meetings

Special meetings may be called by the MTAA as deemed helpful for the life of the Association, or upon petition of ten member churches holding standing in the Prairie Association. Only matters specified in the call may be acted upon at such a special meeting.

Written notice of any Meeting of this Association will be transmitted to all churches and authorized ministers of the Association at least 30 days in advance of the Meeting.

Voting membership of any Meeting of this Association will consist of the members of the MTAA, all ordained, licensed and commissioned ministers holding standing in the Prairie Association, all volunteer staff as appointed by the MTAA, and two adult delegates and one youth delegate from each church.

A quorum for meetings of the Association (except for Ecclesiastical Councils) will consist of fifty voting delegates representing one third of the churches of the Association.

Ecclesiastical Councils will have a quorum requirement of eight churches represented by authorized ministers and/or by lay members holding membership in those churches. All authorized ministers and two lay delegates from each represented church will constitute the voting membership of an Ecclesiastical Council.

Article VIII Resolutions

Resolutions proposed for adoption by the Association may be presented by any church holding standing in the Association, or by any group of five authorized ministers. Said resolution must be presented to the Moderator at least 60 days prior to the Association Annual Meeting. The Moderator will report the proposed resolution to the MTAA, and will cause the resolution to be distributed in writing to all churches and authorized ministers no later than 30 days prior to the Meeting. For adoption, said resolution requires the affirmative vote of a majority of those present and voting at the Annual Meeting of the Association.

Article IX Rules of Order

Unless otherwise specified in this covenant, all business transacted at meetings of the Prairie Association and its committees will be conducted according to the most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order.

Article X Amendments

Amendments to this Organizational Covenant may be proposed by the MTAA, or by ten of the member churches submitting them to the Moderator at least ten weeks prior to the Association Annual Meeting. Notice of such amendments will be transmitted in writing to the churches and authorized ministers of the Association at least 30 days prior to the Meeting. Adoption of an amendment to this Organizational Covenant will require a two thirds affirmative vote of those present and voting.