

The Ohio Meadville District of the
Unitarian Universalist Association

Commissioned Lay Leader Program



Manual and Application Packet

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Commissioned Lay Leader Committee
Ohio Meadville District
114 Bank Street Suite B
Lodi, Ohio 44254 [om at uua.org](http://om.uua.org)
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Entering the CLL Program

1. Contact the District Office

Individuals or congregations interested in learning more about the Commissioned Lay Leader Program should contact the Ohio Meadville District office for information. The District Office will send an Application Packet consisting this manual, an Application Form, Three Application Reference Forms, and the Congregation/CLL Candidate Agreement (which when filled out represents the agreement between candidate and congregation as to the duties of the CLL candidate within the congregation).

2. Contact the Commissioned Lay Leader Committee

The CLL committee is happy to speak with any congregation or person who would like to learn more about the program—either over the phone or by arranging a visit. Don't be shy about contacting the committee—it helps the entire process for the candidate, committee, and congregation to be in close communication. The Ohio Meadville District office can help put you in touch with the CLL Committee's chairperson if you desire more information or discussion.

3. Talk with Your Congregation's Leadership

The Commissioned Lay Leader Program requires that candidates be sponsored by a local congregation. This implies two things. First, it implies the congregation's positive endorsement of the candidate. Congregations are instructed that the ideal candidate for the CLL program is someone who is already an active leader within the congregation; someone who would like to be more effective or assume broader responsibilities; someone who would give time, effort and thought to the training program, and then to additional responsibilities within the congregation; and someone who would be recognized and accepted as a leader by the congregation after commissioning. Second, the congregation's agreement to sponsor a candidate means that they agree to work closely with the candidate to specify in writing the expected duties of the CLL candidate, and to help provide the candidate with feedback as a part of the CLL educational process. The congregation is also expected to conduct an appropriate commissioning ceremony upon completion of the program.

As a potential applicant to the program, you need to make sure that your congregation is willing to give you a positive endorsement, that they understand their role in the process of both cultivating a CLL candidate and working with a commissioned CLL, and that they are willing and able to work out a written agreement as to the duties to be performed by the CLL candidate according to the mutual needs, interests and expectations of both congregation and candidate.

4. The Application

If you have learned what you can about the program, have spoken with your congregation's leadership and have every reason to expect their endorsement, and you are still interested in the program, it is time to complete your official application, by following these steps:

1. Complete your Application Form
2. Negotiate with your church board exactly what leadership roles and duties you expect to assume within the congregation as a part of your training program. Be sure also to have your board specify what they will do to support your efforts (this can be purely moral support, or for example, it could be an agreement to help pay to send you to leadership school). Write out the specifics of this mutual agreement on your Agreement Form, and have your congregation's President sign it.
3. Return your Application Form and Congregation/CLL Agreement to the District Office
4. Give the Application Reference Form to three persons who can vouch for your qualities as a potential CLL candidate. Be sure to include the minister of your congregation if there is one. Have your references return the completed forms directly to the District Office

5. Interview and Acceptance into the Program

Once the District Office has received all of your forms, they will be forwarded to the Chair of the CLL Committee, who will schedule an interview with the candidate at the next available meeting of the committee.

At the interview, the committee will be most interested in the candidate's commitment to Unitarian Universalism and their congregation; the match between the person's skills, style, and intended forms of service; and the good relationship between the congregation and the candidate. If the committee is satisfied with the interview, that candidate is then accepted into the CLL program as an official candidate.

As soon as a candidate is accepted into the program, that candidate is assigned a mentor for the educational/training component of the program. The mentor is a religious professional with experience, and is most commonly an ordained and fellowshipped Unitarian Universalist minister. It is up to the candidate to contact the mentor to arrange for times to meet.

Each CLL candidate is also assigned a liaison--a member of the CLL committee who has the responsibility of checking in with the candidate and facilitating the candidate's process. Your liaison will contact you prior to each regularly scheduled CLL committee meeting to check on your progress. However, if you have a question about the program, or if you or your mentor require more guidance as you structure your educational experiences, don't hesitate to contact your liaison.

The Training Program

Working with the Mentor/Guidelines for Mentors

It is expected that the educational/training component of the program be a matter of mutual decision and design on the part of candidate and mentor. The training program is meant to include both academic components (readings, workshops, etc...) and experiential ones, where the candidate has the opportunity to experience various aspects of church leadership under the guidance and feedback of the mentor. We suggest that mentors take into careful consideration the candidate's intended form of service in planning the training program with the candidate. A candidate who is most interested in pastoral care, for example, might have very different learning needs than a candidate interested in performing rites of passage, or in leading adult education. Candidates who feel called to a few specific forms of service are often most successful. However, it is perfectly acceptable for candidates to generalize, and explore all areas of congregational leadership. This candidate is perhaps more common in lay lead congregations, where the CLL might be expected to provide guidance in a variety of areas, than it is when the CLL expects to serve in a church with professional religious leadership. In the latter case, the candidate is more apt to be able to focus on specific areas of interest or need.

All CLLs do offer a public representation of Unitarian Universalist leadership; therefore, whatever a candidate's ambitions, the program should include a grounding in Unitarian Universalist identity, and practice in the presentation of that identity, whether in worship or other settings.

We strongly urge that mentors consider a candidate's learning style as they help plan the training program. Some of our candidates come to us with graduate educations and a great deal of academic sophistication; some of our candidates are interested in the program precisely because their gifts suggest leadership that doesn't require a seminary-level educational experience.

Because of the highly individualized nature of the CLL study program, we encourage mentors will questions to contact the committee. We are happy to put mentors in touch with experienced mentors.

Completing the educational program

The duration of the educational component of your program is up to you, your mentor, and your congregation. Most CLL candidates take approximately two years to complete their training. Once you and your mentor feel you have successfully completed the training program, you need to contact your CLL liaison to schedule a Candidate Interview with the committee.

The liaison will schedule your interview with the committee, and inform you of the date of your scheduled interview. Your liaison will then send you the CLL Candidate Self-Evaluation and Application for Interview (to be mailed to the district office or CLL liaison), Three CLL Candidate Reference Evaluations (to be distributed by you to three appropriate references including your program mentor and then mailed to the district office or to your CLL liaison), and the CLL Commissioning Agreement (to be completed by you and the Board of your church, signed by your President or Minister, and mailed to the district office to your CLL liaison).

The Commissioning Process

The candidate interview

The interview with candidates will be scheduled be shorter or longer as required. Mentors are invited but not required to attend the interview between the candidate and committee. During the interview the candidate shall present a brief (10 minute) worship experience, which should demonstrate the candidate's ability in oral presentation and in assuming the role of a public religious leader. The committee will then ask the candidate various questions based on the candidate's experiences within the program. The candidate might be especially prepared to discuss identified growth areas, and plans for continued education. After the candidate completes the interview, the Committee will discuss its decision. Unsuccessful candidates will be contacted with specific suggestions of continued training and with a goal-date for another interview.

The initial commission

The CLL chair writes a formal letter of acceptance to the successful candidate with copies to the congregation/board president and to the Ohio Meadville Board of Trustees. The Chair also signs and presents a certificate of commissioning for the candidate. The CLL chair, in the letter to the congregation, recommends that the congregation set a date for presentation of the CLL certificate to the candidate. The congregation is urged to make this a celebratory event, which both congratulates the candidate for his or her accomplishment and which reminds the congregation of the mutual covenant of service that now exists between congregation and Commissioned Lay Leader. The Commissioned Lay Leader Committee is happy to send representatives to such events on request, whenever possible.

The Committee strongly advises that the public presentation of the CLL's certificate include a means of informing the congregation of the basic content and intent behind the CLL Code of ethics. In any case, the CLL is required to sign the CLL Code of Ethics on or near the date of commissioning, and provide a copy of that signed Code of Ethics to the Board of the local church, the Minister(s) of the local church if any, and the CLL Committee liaison.

The renewal process

Commissioned Lay Leaders are commissioned for a three year period. During that three year period the CLL liaison will continue to monitor the CLL's experience and provide the Committee with periodic reports. Six months prior to the expiration of the three year commission, the CLL liaison will send the CLL candidate the required CLL Candidate Recommissioning Application Form and the Congregation/CLL Recommissioning Agreement.

Recommissioning depends both on the continuance of a satisfactory relationship of performance and expectations between the congregation and the CLL. The renewal process requires that the congregation affirm their desire to continue to relationship with the CLL, and that the CLL and the congregation once again specify in writing the exact nature of the CLL's duties.

Once the renewal materials are received by the CLL Committee, the committee will consider the application at the next available scheduled meeting, and inform the CLL of the decision. As before, names of successful candidates are forwarded to the Ohio Meadville District Board of Trustees for final approval.

The CLL Committee extends no exceptions to the requirement for three year renewal, and bestows no permanent status or honorific titles. Anyone who lets a CLL agreement or commissioning expire can renew his or her commissioned status by re-establishing a new Agreement with the congregation, and having that agreement approved by the CLL Committee.

Background to the CLL Program

Purpose of the Program

The purpose of the Commissioned Lay Leadership Program is to strengthen local congregations in the Ohio Meadville District by strengthening their lay leadership. To this end, selected and qualified lay individuals are given special training and mentored experiences so that they may learn to serve their own societies more effectively. Individuals who satisfactorily complete the study requirements and are approved by the Ohio Meadville District Board of Trustees upon the recommendation of the Commissioned Lay Leader Committee are entitled "Commissioned Lay Leader" (CLL).

History

The CLL Program came into being as the Ohio Meadville District Board of Trustees recognized two things:

- *• There are many congregations within the district that cannot afford the services of professional ministers and/or accredited religious education directors. Consequentially, many congregations are served by persons with little training for the tasks they undertake. Many of these leaders have a limited experience with Unitarian Universalism or with holding leadership positions.
- * Both our Universalist and Unitarian traditions have stressed the importance of recognizing the accomplishments and spiritual leadership provided to congregations by persons who are not religious professionals. The Universalist Church of America widely utilized the services of lay preachers, and also emphasized the importance of having and recognizing the leadership of the church as emergent from the body of the church itself. Our Unitarian tradition, while being slightly more insistent on professional ministry, nonetheless has always emphasized the importance of all members of the church assuming the responsibilities for the ministry of that church.

In our congregations, then, many persons from a variety of backgrounds have assumed the mantle of leadership. And yet what had been missing was a vehicle to support these leaders in their efforts to acquire the skills and the knowledge necessary to their tasks, and a means of giving such leaders official acknowledgment of their accomplishments. Thus a plan for the commissioning of lay leaders was adopted by the Ohio Meadville District Board of Trustees in December of 1976, and the Commissioned Lay Leader Committee—a committee comprising of both lay and professional religious leaders and district leadership—was appointed to implement this program.

Code of Ethics for CLLs

Aware of our role as religious leaders and conscious of our obligations to the church community we serve, we, the Commissioned Lay Leaders of the Ohio Meadville District, support this Code of Ethical Conduct

1. Self

Because the religious life is a growing life, I will honor and pursue my own needs for spiritual growth, ethical integrity, and continuing education in order to deepen and strengthen myself and my ministry.

I am committed to fulfilling with integrity, self discipline, and full application of my ability, my responsibilities as agreed upon with the congregation and the Board of Trustees of the church of which I am a member.

I will strive to know and understand myself, with all my strengths and limitations.

I will respect my own needs as a person, value the standards and integrity of my commission, and expect others to honor these in their personal work relations with me.

2. Church Community

I believe that after the tradition of our movement, the church belongs to the congregation; by my example, I will respect congregational tradition and polity.

I will not use the power of my position to promote my own personal agenda, but rather attempt to discern and pursue in all actions what is best for the life of the congregation.

I will respect the confidentiality of communications between myself and members of the church community.

I will facilitate inclusiveness, respect, and openness towards all points of view when planning church programs.

I will encourage active lay participation in all phases of church life.

I will refrain from private as well as public words or actions degrading to the leadership or ministry of my congregation or destructive of congregational life.

3. Colleagues

In sharing religious leadership with the parish minister, other staff persons, and other lay leaders, I will work in cooperation and consultation with them in accordance with mutually agreed upon responsibilities.

I will be supportive to the religious leaders with whom I work, encouraging communication, understanding, and empathy in personal and public situations.

I will not speak scornfully or in derogation of any religious leader or church member in public. In any private conversation critical of such a person, I will speak responsibly and temperately, and only in the interests of congregational health.

I will respect the confidentiality of communications between myself and other religious leaders.

I will share religious leadership endeavors and responsibilities in an open, honest, and ethical manner.

I will not interfere with, nor participate in, any activities or actions in the church that undermine the roles of other church leaders.

I will accept those responsibilities that are agreed to by the congregation, Board of Trustees, and other colleague(s) with whom I may be sharing leadership.

4. Association

As far as possible, I will participate in UUA and OMD activities and programs and encourage church members to do the same.

5. The Larger Community

In word and deed I will live and speak in ways representing the best Unitarian Universalist tradition and principles in the larger community.

I will participate when feasible in community activities, serving as a model of religious and ethical leadership and facilitating a process of openness and trust.

I will encourage and support church members' participation in community activities.

I will live and speak in a way to reflect credit upon the church and encourage church members to do the same.

_____ Signature of CLL _____ Date

SIGNED COPIES TO BE PROVIDED TO:

The CLL Committee

The Board of the local congregation

The Minister(s) of the local congregation, if any

Ohio-Meadville District of the Unitarian Universalist Association

Commissioned Lay Leader Committee

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**Commissioned Lay Leader
Application Form**

Name _____

Address _____

Name and Address of Congregation _____

Date of Application _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

Family Information (*Optional*) _____

List Academic Training (*Institutions, Dates, Degrees*) _____

List Other Relevant Preparation (*Training or Experiences*) _____

List Employment (*Positions held and dates, most recent first*) _____

List churches and fellowships with which you have had membership. Also list any offices or positions held with the church or fellowship.

List the names, addresses and phone numbers or emails for the three persons who will be completing and mailing directly to the district office the Commissioned Lay Leader Application Reference Form

Free Response

Please evaluate your own strengths and weaknesses, as well as your motivation for pursuing the CLL Program, by considering and responding to the following questions.

1. You would not be interested in entering the CLL Program without a deep feeling of commitment and emotion. How did these feelings develop?

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Application Reference Form

Please evaluate this candidate on the following attributes in the space below, and return to address listed above:

1. Interest in and ability to relate to people of all ages.
2. Commitment to local church/fellowship and to Unitarian Universalism.
3. Ability to listen to others' points of view and to take them into consideration.
4. Ability to express ideas clearly.
5. Ability to take initiative and to bring others along with enthusiasm.
6. Willingness to learn.
7. Any further comments you wish to make

Signature of Person Providing Reference _____

Date _____ Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

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Congregation/CLL Candidate Agreement

_____ (*Name of Prospective CLL Candidate*)
has applied to enter the Commissioned Lay Leader Training program of the Ohio Meadville District of the Unitarian Universalist Association. As a part of that process the CLL Committee requests that the Minister and/or the Board and the prospective CLL candidate enter into a signed agreement between the CLL candidate and the Congregation. Please outline below the obligations of the CLL towards the Congregation for the duration of the training period and/or the next three years (whichever is shorter) as well as the Congregation's responsibility towards the CLL for the same time period. Please send this signed agreement to the district office at the address listed above by _____ (Date). Please also note that entering into this agreement implies the endorsement of the congregation of this candidate as someone of good standing and recognition in the congregation, and the congregation's belief that this is a person who would make good use of this training opportunity, and who is appropriately recognized as a leader.

_____ Signature of Minister or President _____ Date

_____ Printed Name _____ Congregation