

Committee on Church & Ministry A (COCAM A)
Report to 2022 Southwest Conference Annual Meeting
For January-December 2021

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Rev. Gail Joralemon, Chair NNM	
Rev. Derrick Elliot, Chair Elect CAZ	Mary Martin SAZ
Chris Sternberg, Secretary SAZ	Martha Phillips NNM
Rev. Brady Abel CAZ	Stan Roberts SNM
Rev. Jim Alexander CAZ	Rev. Jay Wilcher NAZ
Rev. Lynn Brightman SNM	Dr. Ray Littleford, PhD. CAZ
Rev. Dean Hokel SAZ	

Report from the Chair of COCAM A, The Rev. B. Gail Joralemon

We take very seriously our role in authorizing, supporting, and holding authorized persons accountable on behalf of the entire United Church of Christ. We continue to wrestle with issues of theology and practice/policy as they relate to our actions. Among issues we continued to wrestle with this year: demonstration of UCC identity for clergy, the UCC as refuge vs. the UCC as spiritual home, and provision of Boundary Training and Racism training for clergy. New issues arise that affect our deliberation about fitness reviews and ordination. We are in constant review of policies affecting authorized ministers and Members in Discernment. (see end of report for a list of policies under consideration.)

COCAM A, when fully staffed, comprises 12 clergy and laypersons from all areas of the Conference. The Associate Conference minister is designated to work most closely with the committee; the Conference Minister meets with and advises the committee as needed.

Our work includes the care and development of Active, Active-Retired, and Exempt clergy, Members in Discernment, their Discernment committees, ordination determination, review of licensed/commissioned ministers, approving covenants, transfers, and requirements for maintaining standing. In this work, we represent the entire UCC. When an issue arises between an authorized minister and a congregation, this committee determines whether COCAM-B is the appropriate site for a Situational Support Consultation or a Fitness Review is required of COCAM-A.

COCAM A acted on behalf of the Southwest Conference and the wider church by taking the following actions:

2021 Members in Discernment

**Alice Goss
Carlos Sosa
Chris Wickersham**

MIDs Approved for Ordination Pending Call

**Kelly Kahlstrom
Andrew Ponder Williams
Carson Hawks**

Ordinations:

Debby Stinton – Jan. 24, 2021

Shea Darian – June 27, 2021

Transfers of Ordained Ministerial Standing from the Southwest Conference:

Rev. Jim Scovil transferred to the Katahdin Association, Maine Conference

Rev. Debby Stinton transferred to Southern Ohio-Kentucky Association, Heartland Conference

Rev. James Pennington, Orleans Association, South Central Conference

Rev. Michael-Ann Veziroglu transferred to Florida Conference

Transfers of Ordained Ministerial Standing to the Southwest Conference:

Rev. Ann Utke, transfer from Southeast Association, WI Conference

Rev. Bill Utke, transfer from Southeast Association, WI Conference

Rev. Don Riemer, transfer from Chicago Metro Association, Illinois Conference

Rev David Klingensmith, retired chaplain from Northern CA/Nev Conference

Authorization:

Gordon Street, Commissioned Minister renewal

Rev. Gretchen Stephenson four-way covenant renewal

Rev. Abby Conley Ordained Ministerial Partnership Standing renewal

Michael Curry, Lay Minister renewal

Endorsement:

Carlos Sosa for Military Chaplaincy Candidate Program

Granted Exempt Standing:

Rev. Sandi Britton

Rev. Roger Bourland

Rev. Dr. Terri Young

Leave of Absence from Ordained Ministerial Standing:

Rev. Nathan Watts

Resigned Standing:

Rev. Jeanna Kozak from UCC Ordained Ministerial Standing

Butch Sliker from Licensed Ministry

Deaths:

Rev. Dr. Dosa Carlson, 01/13/2021

Rev. Robert Koth, 1/17/21

Rev. Art Ellersieck, 2/11/21

Rev. Pamela Shepherd, 10/25/21

Rev. Jack E. Smith-St.Cyr, 12/24/2021

Significant ordination anniversaries marked by SWC clergy in 2022:

5 years (2017)

Rev. Seth Wispelwey
Rev. Bethany Meier-Evans
Rev. Michael Lonergan
Rev. John Angiulo

10 years (2012)

Rev. Noel Anderson

15 years (2007)

Rev. Gretchen Steffenson
Rev. Sandi Anthony

20 years (2002)

Rev. Julie Parmenter
Rev. Julian Phillips
Rev. Dr. Abby Atkins

25 years (1997)

Rev. Ann Utke
Rev. Jayne Hubbard
Rev. Judith Jennison
Rev. James Briney

30 years (1992)

Rev. Susan Martin
Rev. David Ragan

50 years (1972)

Rev. Steven Davis

60 years (1962)

Rev. Rudy Schnable
Rev. Francis Rath
Rev. Henry Hansen
Rev. Robert Bradstreet

70 years (1952)

Rev. Howard Schenk
Rev. Roger Bourland

Policies March 2021-February 2022:

1. **Racial Justice Training**— 6 hours every five years from what the SWC provides or pre-approved.
2. **Rites of Ordination in the UCC**- the worship service is the ordinand's to create but the UCC ordination rite itself from either the Book of Worship or the supplemental materials from the Manual on Ministry must be used verbatim. Ordination is in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ, the language is common to the denomination, not subject to the desires of the ordinand.
3. **Dual Standing for clergy ordained by the Marshallese and Samoans** serving congregations in the SWC must have a letter of good standing from their denominations. Once received, COCAM-A will approve them for Dual Standing.

4. **Alternative or multiple paths to ordination:** We start with the requirement of an undergraduate college degree. Non-seminary paths are about professional education/training.

Under Discussion for policies:

1. Per the Trauma-Stress Debriefing and Best skills Best Churches course, we should strongly *recommend that clergy be part of a clergy support group*. Recognizing the problems of jobs and location, we can't require it.
2. UCC Manual on Ministry's *fitness review guidelines are usually intended and perceived as disciplinary*, mental health issues should not be included. We need to balance behavioral issues with mental health causation. We need to recognize mental illness that might be affecting a clergy person's capability to perform ministerial duties. Our concerns are for the care of the person as well as the congregation or ministry setting.
3. Members in Discernment requesting COCAM members as *Facebook friends*: we can respond but shouldn't initiate. Facebook use with churches/clergy is addressed in boundary awareness training for clergy. We considered ramifications for COCAM members.
4. *Training of local church discernment committees*: the onus should be on them to make sure a candidate for MID is prepared for COCAM's interview. We continue to discuss tools.
5. *Coming deadline for boundary training and racial justice requirements for clergy at the end of 2022*. This is the first 5 yr. cycle using the Healthy Ministry modules format for Boundary Awareness Training. The cycle ends Dec. 31, 2022. COCAM-A discussed the ramifications for those who do not comply with the requirements by the deadline. In March 2022, we will send an email to all clergy and their local churches to remind them. We will then target communications to clergy in need of completing their required classes and their churches in June or shortly afterwards. We will consider the consequence other conferences are using: an immediate suspension of their standing as of the January COCAM-A meeting in 2023, and a letter to the clergy and their church that ordained ministerial standing will remain suspended until they are compliant.
6. *Transferring clergy standing into a conference without a call* is allowed in the Manual on Ministry. COCAM-A recognizes some of the problems of transferring specifically active

non-retired clergy without a call, including church membership and oversight and accountability, particularly since the Southwest can attract people regardless of whether they have a call or not. However, the committee affirmed that there is a growing and critical need for interim, bridge, and supply pastors, which may be met by active clergy residing in our conference. The committee will rely on the recommendations of the Conference Minister and Associate Conference Minister as in deciding whether to transfer standing of an uncovenanted, non-retired active clergy.

Submitted by The Rev. B. Gail Joralemon,
Chair, Committee on Church and Ministry-A