



## Letter to All Authorized Ministers

I wanted to write to you as your Conference Minister and share some of the additional changes that have been occurring within the Conference, specifically those related to Authorized Ministry.

The Committee on Ministry – Oversight Working Group – has been reaching out to the Penn Northeast Conference authorized ministers in a variety of ways. They have been clarifying the standing requirements and revisions of policies. As you may know, the national setting through the newly revised Manual on Ministry is phasing out licensing and commissioning as methods of authorization.

Here in Penn Northeast we are moving toward compliance with the new Manual on Ministry in the following ways.

### **For Authorized Licensed or Commissioned Ministers:**

1. Currently authorized **ministers licensed or commissioned to a setting** will retain their license or commission as long as they continue to serve in that setting. Once they leave that setting, the licenses or commissions will end and in order to continue serving as an authorized minister, individuals will need to apply to become Members in Discernment working toward ordination.
2. The Licenses of **Retired Licensed Ministers** have not been renewed. Continued licensing is not required in order to claim a pension as a housing allowance.
3. **Authorized Licensed Ministers who are currently licensed to the Conference** should complete a Three-Way Covenant\* with the Conference and the church where they hold membership. Licensing to the Conference will continue in as much as the Conference needs to rely on some individuals to fill ministerial vacancies at the last minute. If the Licensed Minister (currently licensed to the Conference) is no longer engaged in active ministry tasks, their license will not be renewed when it expires.
4. Those individuals more than one year into their **preparation for Licensing Authorization** (a licensing Member in Discernment) may complete the current program and move into their first call. When the first call ends, the license will terminate and the individual will need to apply to become a Member in Discernment moving toward ordination.

### **For Retired Ordained Ministers:**

1. Those **individuals who are retired and no longer active in ministry** may move to “exempt standing” which honors their service to the church but exempts them from Boundary, other training requirements, and continuing education requirements. If you are a retired ordained minister and have not requested “exempt standing,” you are expected to complete all training and continuing education requirements.
2. **All Retired and/or Exempt Ordained Ministers** are required to return a Professional Portfolio Information Review Form (formerly called Information Review Form) annually.

### **For All Authorized Ministers (including Members in Discernment with Lay Ministerial Standing):**

1. All active Authorized Ministers will be **required to submit three documents** to the Conference Office annually, usually by the end of January:

- a. A Three-Way Covenant Form\* which is signed by the minister, the local church, and the Conference Minister, (or in a case if an authorized minister serving in a non-congregational setting, a Four-Way Covenant Form\*\* is used to be signed by the authorized minister, calling body, the minister's church of membership, and the Conference Minister).
  - b. An addendum to the Call Agreement which reflects any changes in salary or benefits for that coming year, and
  - c. Professional Portfolio Information Review Form.
2. **All Authorized ministers** (unless Exempt) now have some **new standing requirements effective 1/1/2019:**
- a. All authorized ministers will be expected to complete **Boundary Training** every three (3) years.
    - i. This training may be taken through one of our partner denominations.
  - b. All Authorized Ministers will be expected to complete **Anti-Racism Training** every three (3) years.
    - i. PNEC will be offering this training. PSEC offers this training as do a number of other agencies. Any training focused on the elimination of racism is acceptable.
  - c. All Authorized Ministers will be expected to complete a **Cultural Competency Training** every three (3) years.
    - i. Cultural competency training includes training about economic justice, gender identity or sexual orientation, mental health awareness, working with the aging, disability awareness, etc.
    - ii. The cultural issues that have little to do with race but with other differences qualify.
    - iii. PNEC will be hosting and sponsoring some training throughout the Conference but we will also make you aware of other organizations and agencies who provide training on these topics.
  - d. In addition to the training requirements listed above, all Authorized Ministers will be required to have **25 hours of continuing education training** each year or 75 hours over three years.
    - i. This continuing education may be on-line, in person, webinar, or self-study sessions.
    - ii. Five of the 25 hours of continuing education must include face-to-face interaction.
    - iii. A community of practice will fulfill one half of this continuing education requirement.
    - iv. The continuing education requirement can be fulfilled through Ministry Day (6 hours); Clergy Convocation (8 hours); Vitality Days (24 hours); Pastoral Leadership in Congregational Systems (21 hours); doctoral courses, and in many other ways.
    - v. Documentation of completion should be submitted with the authorized minister Professional Portfolio Information Review Form.
  - e. Failure to meet these requirements may result in "out of compliance" standing until the requirements are fulfilled.

The United Church of Christ has a tradition of providing a capable and learned clergy to serve our congregations. Penn Northeast, through the development of these policies, hopes to strengthen our authorized ministers, providing them with opportunities to remain current with social and theological issues facing us.

While we know these are new requirements and we understand the challenge some of these expectations may cause, we hope you will partner with us to move forward in covenant with one another. We thank you for your service and ministry in our midst.

In Christ's love,

Bonnie Bates (Rev. Dr.)  
Conference Minister

\*The Three-Way Covenant Form is found at [www.pnec.org](http://www.pnec.org).

\*\*The Four-Way Covenant Form is found at [www.pnec.org](http://www.pnec.org).

A copy of this letter was sent to all PNEC Churches