

Ordination Paper

Thomas A. Mitchell

May 31, 2022

Submitted in preparation for the Ordination Paper requirement of Committee on Ministry for the  
Southeast Conference UCC

**Table of Contents**

**I. Spiritual Journey and Call to Authorized Ministry ..... 3**

**a. Marks in My Ministry ..... 5**

**II. Sacraments ..... 7**

**a. Baptism..... 8**

**b. Holy Communion..... 9**

**c. A Third Sacrament.....11**

**III. Ordination.....12**

**IV. Christology .....13**

**V. Covenant & Autonomy .....14**

**VI. The Future of the Church.....16**

**Works Cited.....18**

## I. Spiritual Journey and Call to Authorized Ministry

*The Lord is my Shepherd*

*I shall not I want...*

Psalm 23:1

I was seven or eight years old when I started to hear that verse on a regular basis. One of the last presents my mamaw gave me before her death was a “prayer bear,” which is exactly what it sounds like. It was a stuffed teddy bear, and each paw would play a bible verse, when it was pressed. The paw I pressed most often was the paw that would play Psalm 23:1. I would be lying if I said I truly understood the power and depth of that prayer as I grew up. I would be lying if I said that I have always believed that prayer to be true. And yet, time and time again, when I think about my journey through faith and life, the presence of that prayer has been an overarching presence. And in many ways, I think that it connects to a familial sense of faith and trust.

My papaw always says, “I just trust in the unchanging hand of God.” That too, was a statement that never quite made sense to me. And yet, I see echoes of the 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm in his statement of faith. Growing up, my family attended a rural United Methodist Church, Pruitt Hill. That church is a sacred space for me. It was literally built by my great-grandfather and his peers. The land around it is the cemetery wherein which most of my ancestors lay. The folks who attended the church were almost all my extended family (on my mother’s side), my childhood babysitter, Ms. Francine, my favorite great aunt Margaret Ruth, and so many other people who have played a part in my life. I see all of them as shepherds too. All quietly guiding me, watching over me, nurturing me along this journey.

Following the death of my mamaw, my family stopped visiting Greeneville as much as we once did. And so, we often found ourselves at an AME Zion church that was a short drive from our home. I remember being enamored by the procession of clergy and choir, as they entered the sanctuary singing:

*We have come into this house  
Gathered in His name  
To worship Christ our Lord*

*Let us lift up holy hands,  
Magnify His name,  
And worship Christ our Lord*

*So forget about yourself,  
Concentrate on Him  
And worship Christ our Lord*

We didn't that church very regularly, as, in hindsight, it was often determined by my mother's interest in going, but it was formative, nonetheless. After my parents' divorce, we started attending the local UCC church in Knoxville, Church of the Savior.

In total transparency, Church of the Savior was a jarring experience. Before then, both churches my family attended had been all Black parishioners. Church of the Savior was nearly all-white. And I remember a sense of excitement from church members that a Black family was now regularly attending. My siblings and I somewhat reluctantly joined the youth group and deepened out involvement in the church through that participation. In my case, I found myself in the church nursery working with Aleigha, the nursery staff person, and roughly five to six toddlers each week. I cannot understate how formative this experience was for my faith. Here, I was introduced to thinking about how to effectively translate stories across generations, while also being a part of the beginning of one's journey in the church. While at Church of the Savior, I was also introduced to the wider UCC. I served as a General Synod delegate for our conference

at two synods and was recently our conference nominee to serve on the General Synod Nominating Committee. Through these experiences, I've been better able to understand the covenantal nature of UCC polity and participate in each of the various settings of the church.

Finally, my experiences as the seminarian at two Boston area churches has helped support my sense of call towards authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ. Prior to these experiences, I was confident that I'd happily continue serving in lay leadership roles and would pursue a career in higher education; however, the past two years have revealed that I am called to preach and teach, to administer sacraments, and provide care to those who might need it. I've been best able to discern my call through the crafting of liturgy. Namely, thinking about how to translate stories across time and space into an effective conversation and lesson for life today. It's also appeared in thinking about how to create sacred spaces online and in person, in a way that responds to various health and public safety measures *as well as* the need to maintain some sense of familiarity and approachability. In all of this, what I have discerned is that I am called to faith formation, particularly as it relates to youth and young adults, and for the whole church as it relates to understanding and combatting Christian nationalism.

#### **a. Marks in My Ministry**

In all honesty, the "Marks" are somewhat intimidating, as they read like a checklist of all the qualities and skills that a person should have in order to honor the nature of their call. Even the full title suggests that without all of them, one may not be faithful or effective in their ministry. That said, I am working to accept that it isn't possible nor expected for someone to embody every single one of them. And so instead, I focus on understanding what marks are currently informing my ministry and what marks are areas that I would like to engage with more intentionally. Below are a few of the marks that I wish to

##### **NURTURING UCC IDENTITY:**

- ***Participating in various setting of the UCC:*** Throughout the past few years, I have enjoyed the ability to be actively involved in local church, association, conference, and national settings of the UCC. These experiences have supported the growth of my understanding the nature of covenant and autonomy in the church, as well as being able to understand the ways that geographic context and history can influence and impact the work of various settings of the church.

On a low-level, this influences how I name the denomination. In the south, I say UCC. In New England, I am prone to say “congregationalist” instead, since the history and culture of the region are more attached and familiar with that terminology. It’s also affected how I engage in ministry settings. During my time at Old South Church, one of the oldest churches in the UCC and the country, I was able to initiate our transition to a gender-neutral Lord’s Prayer, based in part on the prevailing practice in my conference, but also on what I had been exposed to in other settings.

Finally, my current service on the General Synod Nominating Committee has made me more attentive to the various happenings throughout the church as a whole, which has supported the further development of my understanding of the UCC’s work throughout the country.

### **ENGAGING SACRED STORIES AND TRADITIONS**

- ***Maturing in effective proclamation and preaching:*** The first I ever preached was during our Youth Sunday at my home church, Church of the Savior. I think I talked about google and trying to always have an answer for something. Clearly, the content did not leave a lasting impression on my memory. Nonetheless, as I reflect on this “mark,” I think it is important to start there. Since then, the messages I offered whether as a sermon or another part of worship are more intentional in their design and delivery. The development of this mark alongside my ministry practices was most evident in my leadership of the Thursday Jazz Coffee House at Old South Church. There, I was able to rotate through all parts of liturgical leadership and influence the selection of music for our services. In all of this, I found myself adopting the following process in approaching proclamation and preaching: First, I read the scripture for the week and listen to any of the musical selections recommended by the music minister. I then try to step back and think about what events, emotions, feelings, etc. may have arisen within the congregation during the past few weeks and try to imagine those things in conversation with the scripture and music. From there, I draft two or three versions, often changing elements on the day of a service, in an effort to remain open to the call of the Spirit and attentive to any developments that may have occurred after writing the initial drafts.
- ***Leading faith formation effectively across generations:*** One of my favorite parts of ministry has been being able to support different age groups in the development of their faith. As I discussed earlier, I’m now able to recognize that most of my early work in ministry was with young children, and that has progressed through my time in divinity school. Most recently, I designed and led an Advent study group in which the average age of the participants was nearly 40 years older than me. And while that certainly presented some challenges, it helped support the development of my understanding of how to effectively engage different groups of people across various contexts of time and stages of life. This experience, coupled with rotation doing the Children’s Sermon once each month at United Parish has also supported my growth in **understanding and ministering to stages of human development across the life span.**

### **CARING FOR ALL CREATION**

- ***Nurturing care and compassion for God's creation:*** I've been surprised by how this mark has informed my ministry, as it has mostly been related to the environment, rather than individuals. To this end, a great deal of the liturgy that I write includes nods towards creation and the beauty of the earth, particularly when naming or referring to God. On a more personal level, it's also the mark that aligns most neatly with where I most often encounter and experience God's presence. And so, I also try to bring elements of that into the visual aspects of my ministry. For example, I often wear floral shirts or have a flower attached to my backpack in the way that other folks might wear a crucifix.
- ***Practicing self-care and life balance:*** This mark is one that was flagged as needing to be a priority for any minister, regardless of their position. Its influence in my current ministry is evidenced by the ways that I balance my time so that in small groups that meet during the week and on Sunday mornings, I'm able to bring 100% and be fully present. In practice, this means that I maintain Friday as a sabbath from both work and school activities. Instead, I spend that intentionally spending time with friends, or time with myself. I also don't read or return emails after 5 pm and have removed email apps from my phone and iPad, so that work doesn't bleed over into other parts of my life. In addition to those steps, I have maintained a relationship with a counselor on an as-needed basis.

### **PARTICIPATING IN THEOLOGICAL PRAXIS**

- ***Practicing theological reflection and engagement as part of one's sense of ministerial identity:*** Each week, I engage in an hour of theological reflection with a ministry mentor, which has been particularly helpful in being able to ask questions in a "safe space," and be able to develop and deepen my theology in the same space. Conversations have spanned a range of topics, including the eucharist, who can stand in the pulpit, what's the right balance between music and liturgical words in worship, etc.

## **II. Sacraments**

Admittedly, as someone who has many Catholic friends, I have sometimes found the number of sacraments in the UCC to be somewhat wanting. That is to say that I wish we recognized more than baptism and communion. That said, the two that we do recognize are deeply relevant to the identity, nature, and structure of the church. In recognizing those two sacraments, the UCC provides the right structure for maintaining its call to be both a united and uniting church. This is precisely because these are the two base sacraments recognized by Christian denominations, which ensures that UCC members are part of the church universal and

that there aren't unnecessary barriers erected that might harm the ability of members to be in covenantal and sacramental relationship with one another.

**a. Baptism**

*He saved us,  
Not because of any works of righteousness that we had done  
But according to his mercy  
Through the water  
Of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit – Titus 3:5*

Baptism is an act of unification between Christ and his people.<sup>1</sup> It matters that most baptisms are public too. In that way, standing before a congregation, and before God, accepting the immersion or blessing with water of oneself is a testimony of one's desire to be closer to Christ and to Christ's community. One may ask, "what about infants." And even then, I think that there is a desire, expressed in different ways of course, but evident, nonetheless. I saw this during a baptism earlier this year, when the little girl being baptized couldn't stop playing with the baptismal font. Her parents tried everything. They stepped away from the font, she reached out. They gave her a toy; she gave it back. They held her hands, she wriggled free. She wanted the water. The Holy Spirit was present in that water, and I believe she felt that presence. She felt that longing that I believe is innate within all of us, to be closer to our community and Christ. And for all of us, receiving the waters of baptism reconciles us with Christ and the church past, present, and future.

The sacrament of baptism is also one of the ways through which a UCC congregation might accept someone as a new member. It is important to note that the church doesn't require

---

<sup>1</sup> World Council of Churches. Commission on Faith Order. 1982. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, p.1.

someone to be rebaptized, which further illustrates the covenantal relationship that the UCC believes that baptism expresses both within a local congregation, but also among anyone on their faith journey. Holy Communion is another means through which the UCC believes that relationship can be expressed.

**b. Holy Communion**

*Nourish us with sacred story*

*Till we claim it as our own*

*Teach us through this holy banquet*

*How to make Love's Victory known... A stanza from *As We Gather at Your Table**

Communion is an act of union with Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> The UCC church was the first church that I attended where communion was regularly served, and where I could take part. One of the responsibilities of our youth group was to help the deacons serve communion to the younger kids in the Sunday school classes that we were helping. It was gross. Some kids only wanted bread, others just juice. On more than one occasion, a child would manage to take both elements and then leave behind soggy bread in their cup. And, the most common experience, was kids would just keep licking the cup—inside, outside, wherever they thought more grape juice might be. And yet, every month, myself and the other youth were there. We knew which kids were the messiest and simply planned accordingly. Despite the grossness, there was something in those moments that illustrated the beauty of the meal for me. Each of us were able to freely partake of the meal exactly as we were, and we did it together. Prior to divinity school, the last time that I regularly took communion was in high school. This is mostly because I didn't attend church very regularly in college, and, when I did, it was often with Catholic friends. While I could receive a

---

<sup>2</sup> World Council of Churches, p.8

blessing, I could not receive the meal. I didn't fully grasp the significance of that reality until I started attending divinity school.

When I started Divinity School, I found myself attending the Tuesday eucharist service nearly every week(pre-covid). There alongside a small group of roughly a dozen students, faculty, and staff, who were on campus by 9am, we had a small 20-minute service where communion was served. I realized how much I'd missed hearing the words of institution, sitting at Christ's table, and knowing that that meal would always be available for me. It was also an interesting experience because the service was designed to be ecumenical, and so it was the first time that I took communion in a space where everyone was from a different Christian denomination. This too gave me space to think about my relationship to Holy Communion. That said, I don't think that I really developed my theology until my field education experience at Old South Church in my second year of school.

Towards the end of my semester as the Seminarian at Old South Church, I was asked if I'd be willing to join the rotation of clergy who presided at the Sunday morning eucharist each week. At first, I was excited. But the excitement turned to a bit of questioning and anxiety as I thought about the validity of communion on Zoom. Shawn, my field supervisor, asked me a broad but deeply formative question: If you were in charge of setting the doctrine for communion for the whole church, what would be required? And then further, what happens during communion? What are its essential elements?

My Eucharistic theology was further developed in my Meaning Making course, when a classmate, who is an atheist, wondered how he might be able to "blasphemy the Eucharist" as a means of ritual healing because of harm that he experienced within a church. Initially, I was stunned by the question, and committed to not participating in the conversation. However, I

quickly found myself supporting this student in his efforts to understand how he might blasphemy the sacrament, by walking him through what communion looks like and means to me. Throughout the conversation, it also became clearer how significant this meal was as a tool that his former church had used to illustrate his separation from the church and from God. Our conversation shifted my focus on what elements were “important” in communion. When I presided at Old South, I found myself drawn more to the invitation to the table and working to name as many types of people and groups as I could, so that someone like my peer might hear some part of themselves in that invitation and know that they can eat and drink.

That invitation is important, because Holy Communion is the moment where we join with the communion of the saints, believers present, and believers to come in remembering and remembering Christ and our common bond to one another. Although there isn’t a doctrinal position on who can take communion in the UCC, the prevailing (and assumed) practice is that anyone who presents themselves at the Table may also eat and drink at the Table. This open invitation ensures that anyone can enter into a relationship with other members of their congregation and with the church universal simply by presenting themselves to receive and participate in such a relationship.

Together, both baptism and communion form the basis for the more ecclesiological considerations of the UCC covenantal and ecumenical relationships and, thus, are now and always will be deeply relevant in the church.

### **c. A Third Sacrament**

As I noted in the introduction to this section of my theological reflections, I wish that the UCC recognized more than baptism and communion as sacraments. Throughout the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, I worked with an organization that was started by a friend which

focused on providing grief support for young adults and millennials who were grieving the death of a friend or family member due to COVID. Through that experience I listened to people describe not only the immense emotional toll of their loved ones' deaths, but also of the burden of having to make plans and decisions in the absence of wills or testimonies to facilitate the orderly oversight of affairs after death. In this place, I think that the act of preparing for death can and should be a sacrament of the church. To be clear, I do not necessarily mean the adoption of the "Last Rites" of the Catholic Church, rather I mean the act of preparing a will and planning for one's death. It may seem outside the scope of church affairs, but Jesus' life provides support for this. Indeed, the Last Supper provides a template for Christian practice that Christ offered to his disciples *in preparation for His death*. The "Great commission" is a charge given to the disciples *in preparation for Christ leaving this earth*. Our faith is as much about life as it is death, and so it makes sense to begin thinking about the preparation for death as a sacrament, both for its ability to form covenant with those will remain on earth and for its connection to the afterlife.

### III. Ordination

*Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying,  
"Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"  
And I said, "here am I, send me!" – Isaiah 6:8*

Contextually, the above verse is the moment where Isaiah accepts his call to ministry. I think that it's appropriate for all members of the church to reflect upon, as we are, indeed, part of the "priesthood of all believers."<sup>3</sup> Throughout the past few years, I've spent a great deal of time reflecting on what that really means. I think of all the folks who weren't ordained, yet still

---

<sup>3</sup> *The Constitution of the United Church of Christ*. Article VI. The Ministry.

readily practiced ministry in my midst through volunteering as Sunday school teachers, or deacons, or lending their professional expertise to ad hoc conversations in the churches I've been a part of. And the recognition of their service makes the notion of ordination clearer, in that it extends beyond those sorts of volunteer roles, and instead recognizes that one has been called to preach and teach, to administer sacraments, and to provide pastoral care.<sup>4</sup> This process of ordination is, rightfully, not simple. It requires the establishment of covenant between a called person, their local church, and their association/conference, as a Member in Discernment, as a means of support for their discernment of whether their call is ordainable and if their peers affirm that call. To better understand ordination, one must also understand the role of lay ministry.

Lay ministry is a vital part of the life and growth of the Church. Lay ministry is heavily dependent on the context and tradition of individual congregations, so the role can vary throughout the congregation. Lay ministry may include service on church committees, serving as ushers, acolytes, or liturgists during worship, teaching Sunday School programs or organizing children and youth programming. In some contexts, lay ministers may serve in roles typically reserved for ordained ministers, due to location, resource, or some other constraints. In all cases, lay ministry, support many of the routine elements of supporting and developing a vibrant church life, which naturally lends itself to church vitality and growth.

#### **IV. Christology**

##### **Who Is Jesus Christ?**

*And the Word became flesh and lived among us  
And we have seen his glory  
The Glory as of a father's only son  
Full of grace and truth- John 1:14*

---

<sup>4</sup> *The Constitution*, paragraph 22.

Jesus Christ is the physical manifestation of God, the head of the Church, who came in human form to live an earthly life, defeat sin, conquer death, and reconcile creation.<sup>5</sup> I've struggled a lot with understanding who Jesus is. In middle school youth group, I remember we were asked which gospel was our favorite. My answer was John. It is still the answer today. I've loved reading John because, in its departure from the Synoptic gospels, he tells us about Christ's identity. Not just as a teacher, but also a deity, as a God who loves deeply enough to be vulnerable enough to walk alongside their own creation. Indeed, "through the humanity of Christ, we come to know God as [they] have revealed [them]selves to be."<sup>6</sup> It matters that Jesus experiences the messiness of a human birth. It matters that he goes to temple with his parents; that he lashes out in anger; that he cries; that he eats and sleeps; that he experiences heartbreak; that he has moments of despair and doubt. It matters that Jesus Christ experiences the life of creation. This reality is a unique part of the Christian story. Nowhere else in creation literature do we encounter a god who "takes on the burden of the whole of humanity, in [their] own material flesh... at the point of its greatest vulnerability."<sup>7</sup> Indeed, "only by the entry of the Maker of history into that same history can the goal of God for us—a life together that reflects the triune life together—be pursued."<sup>8</sup> In Jesus Christ, we have the example of a God who loves deeply enough that they descend to earth, to literally teach their own creation what it means to live the life that we were called to live. At once, Christ is God Incarnate, teacher, brother, and friend.

## **V. Covenant & Autonomy**

*Therefore encourage one another  
And build each other up,  
Just as in fact you are doing.*

---

<sup>5</sup> See United Church of Christ Statement of Faith, adopted by General Synod of 1959

<sup>6</sup> "Introduction," in *Who Do You Say I Am? : On the Humanity of Jesus*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2020. Eds: George Kalantzis, David B. Capes, and Ty Kieser, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> Fleming Rutledge, "The Body Prepared for Jesus" in *Who Do You Say I Am? : On the Humanity of Jesus*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2020. Eds: George Kalantzis, David B. Capes, and Ty Kieser, p. 22.

<sup>8</sup> Gabriel Fackre, *Who Do You Say that I am, "Jesus Christ in the texts of the united church of Christ"* p.73.

*-1 Thessalonians 5:11*

Covenant & Autonomy are a core component of the United Church of Christ polity. Aside from recognizing that Jesus Christ is the sole head of the church, a commitment to the UCC's vision of the relationship between covenant and autonomy sits at the center of the church's organization and structure. The foundation of those relationships is the acceptance of the position that the "autonomy of the local church is inherent and modifiable only by its own action."<sup>9</sup> That understanding frames all other relationships between local churches and other settings and bodies of the church. I think that it is easy to read that understanding and conclude that every church can act in its own way without any regard to what other churches or settings are doing in the world. Admittedly, I once held a similar interpretation. That said, while it is true that local churches can act independently according to the way they feel called, that ability and freedom does not include the ability to act without regard to others. Where autonomy supports freedom and independence, covenant forms the basis for a mutually informed relationship through which churches might discern their call. Together, both values allow for a fair degree of what I've described to friends as "informed flexibility."

The space for informed flexibility allows for the UCC to live into the spirit of several other key parts of the denominational positioning, including the Statement of Faith, which affirms the responsibility to "make this faith its own" throughout each generation.<sup>10</sup> It also creates space for real and deep theological discernment about how to respond to the various calls in our world, though I admit that I don't fully believe that the UCC as a whole utilizes the full value of that space. Nonetheless, I think that it does create a space free from any sort of economic coercion, as churches can exercise their autonomy without being removed from the denomination or forced to

---

<sup>9</sup> Donald Freeman, "Autonomy in a Covenant Polity," 5.

<sup>10</sup> Preamble, UCC Constitution

turn over land or buildings. Finally, I believe that it also creates a strong balance between disagreement and cohesion, in that churches and other settings can be rather deeply divided on a particular issue and yet still feel the call to be a part of the church. This is, perhaps, best evidenced in the presence of both Open and Affirming and Faithful & Welcoming churches, which present opposing theological perspectives on human sexuality and its influence on ministry, church membership, etc. Where other denominations have faced division over that topic, the UCC has remained relatively intact.<sup>11</sup> Overall, though it is easy to dismiss or take for granted the nature of covenant and autonomy in the UCC, the balance of those concepts provides the structure for a more inclusive, cohesive, and strong church.

## **VI. The Future of the Church**

*So, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation:*

*Everything old has passed away;*

*See, everything has become new!*

- 2 Corinthians 5:17

As a matter of history, the United Church of Christ is the immediate union of the Congregational Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Church. Those churches were themselves the result of earlier church unions. Together, the UCC's primary traditions include Congregational, Christian, Evangelical, and Reform movements; however, the influence of the Afro-Christian tradition and the American Missionary Association shouldn't be understated. Together, each of these elements has played a significant role in the shaping of the contemporary UCC. Going forward, the Afro-Christian and AMA threads will take on even greater significance. This is particularly true, as the most recent UCC Factbook shows that the

---

<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that the Puerto Rico Conference of the UCC withdrew from the denomination in 2005, following that year's General Synod resolution in support of same-sex marriage. That vote has often been cited as the cause for their departure; however, several conversations at the 2019 General Synod revealed that other causal factors included race, colonialism, and perhaps a sense that there was an imbalance between covenant and autonomy.

demographic makeup of the UCC continues to diversify, as disaffiliating churches are largely white, while newer churches tend to be more ethnically diverse.<sup>12</sup>

This demographic reality extends beyond the UCC. While the share of white Christians continues to decline, Black, Latino/a, and Asian numbers are holding steady or growing.<sup>13</sup> If the United Church of Christ remains committed to the call to be both united and uniting, then it must recognize that the future of its ecumenical work is through breaching the racial divide among US Christians. And rather than this being a process where Black and other groups are forced to fight for recognition or to be heard at Synod or in even being called to serve churches, it must be an intentional call for the whole church. The tradition of the Afro-Christian churches and the churches born of the American Missionary Association offer a strong illustration of this kind of effort. Indeed, the Afro-Christian movement of the Christian church not only facilitated the establishment of Black churches, but also supported the role of women in ministry. Many of the majority Black churches in the UCC were birthed out of the Afro-Christian tradition. Alongside the Afro-Christian tradition, the American Missionary Association is the source of many of the current ties between the UCC and HBCUs; as well as the presence of UCC congregations in Hawaii and other areas of the Pacific.

The future of the UCC in the United States lies in these same spaces and in how it approaches the call to justice and witness. How will a denomination that is as racially stratified as the UCC respond to the growing attention to racial injustice and inequity in this country and around the world? How will it address the harms it may have caused through its past action or inaction? Will historically white congregations of the UCC call Black, Latina/o, and Asian

---

<sup>12</sup> UCC Center for Analytics, Research and Data, *A Statistical Profile 2019*, United Church of Christ: Cleveland, p.7.

<sup>13</sup> PRRI, "The American Religious Landscape in 2020" (July 8, 2021).

clergy? Will they support them in their work? Will they be compensated fairly? Will they continue to respond to Rev. Dorhauer's call to address white supremacy in the church? Each of these questions must be answered "head on," if the church is to continue answering its call to be a uniting church.

### **Works Cited**

"The American Religious Landscape in 2020" *PRRI* (July 8, 2021).

Fackre, G. (2006). Jesus Christ in the texts of the United Church of Christ. In S. R. Paeth, Who do you say that I am?: Christology and identity in the United Church of Christ  
Freeman, Donald. "Autonomy in a Covenant Polity."

Kalantzis, George, Capes, David B., and Kieser, Ty, eds. *Who Do You Say I Am? : On the Humanity of Jesus*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2020. Accessed March 3, 2022. ProQuest Ebook Central.

Statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ

The Constitution of the United Church of Christ

UCC Center for Analytics, Research and Data, *A Statistical Profile 2019*, United Church of Christ: Cleveland

World Council of Churches. Commission on Faith Order. 1982. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.