

# **Lead Team & Commissions:**

Identifying, calling, and  
equipping our leaders within  
University Christian Church

# University Christian Church

## Leadership Structure & Philosophy

### **Overview**

Church leaders—elders and pastors—are equippers who serve their congregations by helping all to fulfill their role in God's Kingdom. They see the local church as a hub for shepherding, equipping, and sending, prioritizing the church's spiritual growth and development (discipleship) over Sunday attendance. Leaders in the church serve as consistent, God-honoring models of what life in Christ looks like, teaching others to dwell with and attend to the presence of the Spirit. In other words, leadership in the church is not merely oversight of an institution or a weekly event; it is a pursuit of the heart of God for the sake of God's people.

At UCC, our senior leaders function as a collaborative team of co-equals. This way of leading places a team—made up of individuals with different gifts—together to work cooperatively to equip the entire body for the work of ministry. A leadership team models mutual submission as they learn to listen for the Spirit together for the sake of UCC.

In scripture, leaders are called by God for a purpose not merely to hold an office or a position. As such, the posture of a spiritual leader is one of servanthood. Those who hold positions of leadership at UCC will be seen doing ordinary tasks in the congregation alongside their formal leadership responsibilities. When it comes to leading the church as a Lead Team member or pastor, there are five primary biblical functions:

**Supervisor:** Provides spiritual and organizational oversight (guarding theology, doctrine, mission and vision of the church) while leading the church towards a deeper commitment to God.

**Shepherd:** Loves, cares for, and protects the people entrusted to them by being accessible, available, and praying for the church regularly.

**Teacher:** Provides teaching grounded in sound doctrine in formal and informal ways, in small-group or large-group settings.

**Equipper:** Helps people discern God's calling on their life, walks with them as they pursue that call, trains to aid in accomplishing the call, then unleashes and enables the individual to fulfill the call in service to God's mission.

**Example:** Lives a God-honoring life in relentless pursuit of Jesus' lordship.

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### **Functioning as a Collaborative Leadership Team**

In addition to the five primary functions of a church leader listed above, there are some overarching principles that characterize a collaborative leadership team. It is important that each UCC Lead Team member understand and agree on these principles before beginning their term of service. These principles are:

1. The Lead Team operates as one unit, together making decisions that affect the overall church.
2. No one member has any more authority than another.
3. Lead Team members practice mutual submission, listening for the leading of the Spirit, and weighing their decisions in dialogue with one another and core people from within the congregation.
4. Individual members look for clear giftings among their teammates, allowing for the principle of “first among equals,” to be practiced in good conscience. This means that there will be times when leaders will have special giftings or skills in certain areas, and other members will yield to their leadership. Those who are considered “first among equals” must be held accountable by the rest of the team. Some examples of giftings among a leadership team might include:

- The ability to discern God’s will for the vision and direction for the church
- The ability to teach biblical concepts orally and/or in writing
- The ability to articulate a consensus decision of the Lead Team
- The desire and willingness to devote much of his/her energy to the ministry
- The ability to shepherd people
- The desire to pray for those in need
- The ability to detect false doctrine and teaching
- The ability to render wise judgments on matters requiring church discipline
- The ability to navigate and mediate conflicts of all levels
- The ability to manage and steward financial resources
- The capacity to show compassion on the downtrodden

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### **Defining the Roles**

Two members of the Lead Team will serve as full time, paid pastors. A Directional Pastor and Community Pastor will collaborate to lead the day-to-day operations of UCC, alongside their service on the Lead Team and in partnership with additional paid staff members.

While a collaborative leadership team operates as a team of equals, there are some distinctions that delineate the roles and responsibilities of each team member.

These distinctions are important to take into account when it comes to making decisions:

**Lead Team Level:** Decisions are largely broad, directional, policymaking types of decisions that affect the entire church.

**Co-Pastoral Level:** Decisions are largely operational and should affect and improve the day-to-day operations of the entire church. The co-pastors are most involved in the general adult population of the church and are largely responsible for enfolding, equipping, and instructing the body at large. The co-pastors are also the most directly responsible for the development of the staff.

**Staff Level:** Decisions are largely operational and should affect and improve individual ministries. Staff are assigned specific duties within the church, usually to specific people groups within the body, (students, children, etc.) or roles (financial, worship, etc.). Staff are most responsible for direct implementation of the ministry to the church and community.

There is no scriptural precedence suggesting the right mix of lay versus “professional” elders. However, experience and the wisdom of others have suggested that there remain a mix such that the occupational Lead Team members (pastors) should not outnumber the lay Lead Team members. While no fixed percentage, the makeup of the Lead Team in a variety of dimensions—ethnicity, age, gender, lay/pastoral, etc.—will be considered on a consistent basis. Not every staff member will be part of the Lead Team.

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## Lead Team Selection

The process of selecting Lead Team members is of great significance. UCC Lead Team members are determined by a careful, prayerful process that includes the whole community. While there is an annual rhythm to this selection process (described below), incumbent Lead Team members should prioritize the ongoing cultivation of future Lead Team members by identifying emerging leaders from within the UCC community, speaking words of care into their lives that highlight their development and giftedness, and asking them to consider the role someday, should they be called by the church.

### **Identifying (February)**

Lead Team appoints 2-3 among them who will be joined by 2-3 members of the congregation to serve as a subcommittee to steer this annual process, and serve as main point of contact with the congregation. Subcommittee members need to have attended UCC for at least **three years** and should be actively engaged with one or more ministry areas where they're in ongoing relationship with other members of the UCC community.

Subcommittee works with the Directional Pastor to announce when nominations for Lead Team members are open; how many seats are open; details about the Lead Team role, responsibilities, and qualifications; and how congregation members will submit their nominees—via a simple online form or to a designated email address.

Members of the congregation, along with incumbent Lead Team members, are given **two weeks** to prayerfully consider who among the UCC body they'd like to put forward for consideration to serve.

After the two-week nomination window, the subcommittee updates congregation on the process and moves into the review period.

### **Reviewing (March)**

When discerning the calling of a UCC Lead Team member, subcommittee members first determine if the candidate meets the qualifications for elders found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 and the characteristics outlined in this document. If it is determined that the candidates meet this qualification, they are informed that their name has been put forth and are asked for a follow-up conversation. In advance of that conversation, they are required to read the "UCC Flight Plan" and make note of any questions that arise.

Members of the subcommittee meet with the candidate to ascertain the candidate's interest level and further understand their qualifications. Assessments should be made based on the following:

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## Lead Team Selection

- alignment with UCC's core vision, values, and practices;
- passion for UCC's mission;
- character;
- ministry skills, service, and involvement;
- willingness to serve within a communal leadership structure;
- giftedness and confluence with incumbent Lead Team members.

During these meetings, subcommittee members share their personal experiences as part of the UCC leadership and make space for the candidate to ask questions and share any hesitations and/or enthusiasms they are feeling. Note: Subcommittee is to keep a paper trail of notes from the review period.

After all qualified candidates have been reviewed, the subcommittee puts forth their recommendations to the incumbent Lead Team.

Individuals being recommended are notified and invited to join the Lead Team in prayer and fasting as they take the next two weeks to consider the call.

Individuals who do not meet the qualifications, and therefore are not being recommended for service at present time, are informed, thanked, and encouraged to promote continued engagement and involvement within the UCC ministry.

### **Discerning & Voting (April)**

After the review period, the recommended candidates being put forward for their first year of service are shared with the congregation. The congregation is given two-weeks to prayerfully consider (along with the candidate and incumbent Lead Team) this recommendation.

If congregation members have feedback about a candidate, they are invited to share that with the Lead Team via online form/email address. Follow-up conversations will be set-up as necessary. Lead Team will keep the congregation informed if it is determined that re-evaluation or course correction is needed.

During the annual meeting, new Lead Team members will be announced, brought forward, and officially affirmed by the congregation, appointing them to service for the sake of UCC.

All of the above is done thoughtfully and prayerfully as we seek to follow the Spirit's lead on finding qualified individuals to serve UCC in leadership roles.

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## Lead Team Terms of Service

Once appointed, Lead Team members are considered “elders” of the church. This is a high calling that requires a steadfast commitment. UCC Lead Team members serve a minimum of **two** consecutive years. During this term of service, Lead Team members are subject to an annual review process whereby they will conduct a self-review first; then shall be reviewed by their teammates; and open themselves to feedback from the congregation.

Lead Team members may serve up to **three** consecutive, **two-year** terms (for a total of **six** years of service), after which they must take one year off.

Incumbent Lead Team members must be re-affirmed by the congregation every two-years as part of the Discerning & Voting period of the process described above.

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## Role of Commissions

### **Overview**

Commission teams work alongside the UCC Lead Team and pastoral staff to help UCC fulfill its mission. Commissions are composed of lay-leaders who embody the core values and beliefs of UCC, are in good-standing with the community, and demonstrate what life in Christ looks like in action. Individuals who serve in commission roles must have attended UCC for at least **two** years and should be actively engaged with one or more ministry areas where they're in ongoing relationship with other members of the community. Their lives must display a consistent pattern of spiritual growth and evidence of the fruit of the Spirit.

Those under consideration to serve on a commission will be evaluated by the Lead Team or a subcommittee under the direction of the Lead Team. Candidates will be assessed based on their relationships; their character; their leadership qualities; their commitment to UCC mission, vision, and values; and their experiences within the church community.

Each Commission will have a Lead Team representative. At least one pastoral staff person may be appointed to each Commission. Staff serve by appointment, and are not subject to the typical commission selection process. Staff assignments on Commissions teams will be according to the strengths and passion of the staff person and the needs of a particular Commission. The staff assignments will be determined by the Directional Pastor and approved by a simple majority of the Lead Team.



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## Role of Commissions

### **Defining the Commissions (2023-2024)**

#### **Finance & Business Oversight Team (A-team)**

The Finance & Business Oversight Team is responsible for ensuring the financial health of UCC. This team has a fiduciary duty to ensure the financial matters are inline with the mission of UCC, budgets are up-to-date and transparent, and communications with the congregation are transparent and timely. Note: The Lead Team has the “final authority” to decide how funds are allocated.

#### Responsibilities

- Reviewing UCC financial reports and records for accuracy and completeness
- Helping the Lead Team understand the church’s finances by preparing and presenting accurate, timely, and meaningful financial statements to the Lead Team
- Preparing the primary draft of the UCC annual budget
- Reviewing monthly budget lines, ensuring funds are being used correctly, and anticipating potential financial problems and/or growth opportunities
- Safeguarding the church’s assets by implementing proper accounting policies and procedures and incorporating internal controls
- Complying with federal, state, and other reporting requirements

#### **Building Oversight & Upkeep Team (B-team)**

Members of the Building Oversight & Upkeep Team work on the building as projects arise; hire contractors when needed to take care of repairs; and organize an annual Community Work Day to invite the broader UCC community to engage in the care of our building.

#### Responsibilities

- Roof inspections and upkeep
- Boiler inspections and upkeep
- Fire/safety equipment inspections, training and upkeep
- Air units placed and removed
- Plaster upkeep and repair
- Lighting/electric upkeep and repair (inside and outside)
- Locks/security
- Window/flooring repairs
- Plumbing upkeep and repairs
- Janitorial tasks and organizing volunteers

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## Role of Commissions

### **Prayer Commission**

The UCC Prayer Commission nurtures the spiritual formation of UCC by encouraging a culture of prayer; equipping our people to lead more prayerfully guided lives; organizing all-church times of prayer and fasting when needs arise throughout the year; and praying for the body regularly.

#### Responsibilities

- Praying for individuals within the congregation specifically, the UCC congregation broadly, and the University of Cincinnati campus throughout the year
- Shaping prayer initiatives that invite the congregation into deepening prayer lives (e.g. a citywide Prayer Canopy, prayer walks, Sunday morning prayer team, training retreats, etc.)
- Facilitating prayer practice groups that teach people how to pray and help them explore new ways to pray (e.g. Centering Prayer, Lectio Divina, etc.)
- Promoting rhythms of silence, stillness, and sabbath into the lives of the congregation
- Promoting practices that foster repentance, such as fasting

### **The Community Engagement Commission**

The Community Engagement Commission cultivates a culture of service and outreach within the UCC community, prompting our people to participate in sharing Jesus' love outside the walls of the church with our university neighborhood and beyond.

#### Responsibilities

- Imagining, designing, and implementing unique community engagement initiatives through Rohs Street Cafe and with other missional partners across the city
- Exploring ways to foster connection between UCC and the surrounding campus community through service and outreach (e.g. street clean-ups, serving coffee on campus, etc.)
- Watching for ways members of the UCC community feel called to share their gifts and walking with them to develop those “seed ideas” into something that meets a felt need in the congregation or across the broader neighborhood
- Identifying newcomers at UCC and shaping pathways for engagement (e.g. hosting a newcomers meal, inviting to 1:1 coffee, making personal introductions, etc.)
- Calling forth UCC members to host Summer Sunday (June–August)

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## Commissions Selection

The process of selecting commission members is of great significance. UCC commission members are determined by a careful, prayerful process that includes the whole community. While there is an annual rhythm to this selection process (described below), incumbent commission members should prioritize the ongoing cultivation of future commission members by identifying emerging leaders from within the UCC community, speaking words of care into their lives that highlight their development and giftedness, and asking them to consider a commission role someday, should they be called.

### **Identifying (February)**

Commission leaders work with the Directional Pastor to determine when nominations for commission roles are open and how many seats are available on each commission. During the February commission meeting, commission members nominate candidates based on the criteria listed above.

Members of the congregation are also invited to prayerfully consider who among the UCC body they'd like to put forward for consideration. Nominations are submitted via a simple online form or to an email address.

### **Reviewing (March)**

Once nominations have been submitted, a subcommittee made up of Lead Team members and members of the congregation determine which candidates meet the qualifications, are informed that their name has been put forth, and are asked for a follow-up conversation. In advance of that conversation, they are required to read the UCC "Flight Plan" and make note of any questions that arise.

Members of the subcommittee meet with the candidate to ascertain the candidate's interest level and further understand their qualifications, passions, and heart for UCC's ministry.

During this meeting, subcommittee members share their personal experiences as part of UCC leadership and make space for the candidate to ask questions and share any hesitations and/or enthusiasms they are feeling. Note: Subcommittee is to keep a paper trail of notes from the review period.

After all qualified candidates have been reviewed, the subcommittee puts forth their recommendations to the rest of the incumbent Lead Team.

Individuals being recommended are notified and invited to join the Lead Team in prayer and fasting as they take the next two weeks to consider the call.

Individuals who do not meet the qualifications, and therefore are not being recommended for service at present time, are informed, thanked, and encouraged to promote continued engagement and involvement within the UCC ministry.

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## Commissions Selection

### **Discerning & Voting (April)**

After the review period, the recommended candidates being put forward for service on a commission are shared with the congregation. The congregation is given two-weeks to fast and prayerfully consider (along with the candidate and incumbent Lead Team) this recommendation.

If congregation members have feedback about a candidate, they are invited to share that with the Lead Team via online form/email address. Follow-up conversations will be set-up as necessary. Lead Team will keep the congregation informed if it is determined that re-evaluation or course correction is needed.

During the annual meeting, new commission members will be announced, brought forward, and officially affirmed by the congregation, appointing them to service for the sake of UCC for the next fiscal year.

All of the above is done thoughtfully and prayerfully as we seek to follow the Spirit's lead on finding qualified individuals to serve UCC in leadership roles.

## Terms of Service

Commission members who are not Lead Team members serve **one-year** terms.

Commission members will have the opportunity to renew their term **twice**, for a possible total of **three** terms, after which they must take at least one year off. Returning members will be submitted for approval along with new members by voice vote at UCC's annual congregational meeting. If Commission Members are also Lead Team members, their terms are determined by Lead Team member terms as described in the UCC Leadership Structure and Philosophy section of the UCC Handbook.

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## Character of Leaders

### **Overview**

The biblical approach to leadership rests on the quality of life (character) of the leader. While all of us are in the process of developing and maturing, there are certain qualities that people must possess in order to lead others towards God. Listed below are the core qualities we look for in those being considered for positions of leadership at UCC:

**Surrendered:** Spiritual leaders live surrendered under the lordship of Jesus. The acceptance of a call to leadership at UCC should be done with reverent devotion to Christ and his body, the Church. Leaders at UCC exhibit a life of prayer, repentance, and a willingness to step outside personal comfort zones and risk greatly for God's will to be realized.

**Prayerful:** Leaders at UCC have an ever-deepening dependence on prayer and a developing sensitivity to how the Spirit works. They are committed to seeking the heart of God together and know, through experience, how prayer unifies a team and keeps them on mission.

**Relational:** Those responsible for stewarding the church must be committed to healthy, God-honoring relationships. Leaders at UCC are capable of initiating and sustaining relationships across various age-groups, genders, and cultures. They carry a servant's heart, putting the good of others ahead of themselves, and know that spending un-rushed, quality time together in God's family is a pathway to build trust and strengthen bonds.

**Incarnational:** Ministry is meeting people where they are and journeying with them to where God wants them to be. Leaders oriented around God's mission are committed to being consistently present with others and relating to them in ways they can understand. A significant part of leadership at UCC is considering the university context within which we're a part, and equipping the church to incarnate itself in order to connect the mission of God with the current culture.

**Equipping:** Leaders at UCC are deeply committed to discipleship. They know that a church's health is measured by the quality of their disciples, and have a great passion for helping others fulfill their God-given role in his kingdom. In a similar regard, leaders are equally committed to being disciplined themselves and maintain relationships with mentors, coaches, and other seasoned leaders who are invested in their individual growth and development.

**Audacious:** God is often full of surprises. Those in positions of leadership at UCC hold plans loosely and continue to seek the Lord's will at all stages of the process. They know that courageous leadership requires risk and often means charting ahead into the unknown despite the potential for failure.

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## Character of Leaders

**Reconciling:** The pursuit of oneness is a primary concern of every spiritual leader at UCC. While unity within the body does not mean the absence of conflict or total agreement, it does require leaders to model Christlikeness in the midst of difference. Leaders model grace and forgiveness as they seek redemption in their own lives and in relationships with one another.

**Accountable:** Leaders at UCC demonstrate moral and ethical strength and integrity. They are trustworthy, keeping promises and upholding commitments. They give full effort and time required for the role into which they've been called and/or commissioned. They demonstrate a "here I am" spirit, and have the ability and tenacity to set and complete goals.

**Teachable:** Leaders at UCC saturate themselves in the scriptures, constantly drawing on God's living word for guidance and wisdom. They are learners, who actively open themselves to new ideas and feedback. They are intellectually flexible with the ability to think creatively and adapt. Humble and accessible to the Spirit, those in positions of leadership at UCC are also open to correction and willing to let those whom they're accountable to point out blind spots and areas in their life that might need healing.

**Transparent:** Those in positions of leadership at UCC are honest and open with their life, always discerning what appropriate sharing means for any given situation.