



TIMELINE FOR BECOMING AN AFFILIATED CONGREGATION OF THE UCC

This timeline has been created to provide a general idea of the two-year process for a church to become affiliated with an Association of the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference. The “Becoming an Affiliated Congregation of the UCC” PSEC resource contains more detailed instructions of the process, please refer to that document, as well.

Committees on Ministry and Executive Committees will try to follow this timeline, however it heavily depends on the church’s willingness to engage fully in the work of exploration and developing covenant. Respecting everyone’s time and energy, a church that does not move through the process at a reasonable rate, may have their “Church in Covenant Development” status revoked. This action would not be taken lightly and would not take place without adequate notice and giving the church an opportunity to continue the process. Additionally, the timeline may have to change based on existing schedules for Association gatherings.

Month 1

Conference Minister Introductory meeting: Local church pastor meets with the Conference Minister to review process for affiliating and determine next steps.

Month 2

Planning meeting for questions: Local church pastor, Association Moderator, members of the Association Committee on Ministry, and church leaders have an informal meeting to begin framing the questions that might arise from the congregation and the Conference and determine a mutual process by which those questions can be addressed. This conversation must include expectations for the Minister(s) to obtain ministerial standing in the UCC.

Exploration Committee is formed: Church forms an Exploration Committee of 3-5 leaders.

COM selects partner church: The Association Committee on Ministry selects a church in the association with a high regard for covenantal connections to partner with the church seeking affiliation.

Months 3-6

Pastor and COM: The pastor and the Committee on Ministry will be in regular conversation to discuss and discern about the process for being granted ministerial standing in the UCC.

Other affiliations: If the church is currently affiliated with another denomination, the Conference Minister, Association Moderator, and church leadership will determine how and when the denomination will be informed about the conversations happening to change affiliation.

Visit by conference staff and Association representative: A conference staff – and possibly a representative from the Association – will visit the church to worship, possibly being invited to preach. Following this service, or at another time during these months, there will be a presentation to the congregation of an overview of the UCC and the resources available through the denomination.

Attendance at Association and Conference spring and fall meetings should begin: It is appropriate for the church leaders to be briefly recognized at the first meetings they attend. If meetings take place before the church has been officially named a “Church in Covenant Development”, then their attendance would be strictly as visitors.

Months 6-9

Being made a Church in Covenant Development: The Committee on Ministry will meet with the church pastor and leaders to discuss the process so far. Following this meeting the COM will recommend to the Association Executive Committee that the church be accepted as a “Church in Covenant Development” and that they be given *voice without vote* in the life of the Association.

Joint event with partner church: The affiliating church and its partner church should schedule a joint event. Suggestions include: sharing a meal, combined youth group activities, holding a special worship service, joining together for a community service project, etc. The church seeking affiliation’s “Exploration Committee” should work together with the partner church to plan these events.

Months 9-12

Continue to regularly check in with the Committee on Ministry regarding affiliating and the pastor’s discernment toward gaining standing.

Continued attendance at Association and Conference spring and fall meetings.

Hold another joint event with partner church.

Months 12-13

Establish Covenant Development Committee: Representatives from the church seeking affiliation, the partner church, the Committee on Ministry, and possible other representative from the Conference, will form a committee to review the process to this point and determine next steps, focusing on open and widespread conversations about the affiliation and full knowledge of and familiarity with the UCC.

Months 13-18

Continue to regularly check in with the Committee on Ministry regarding affiliating and the pastor’s discernment toward gaining standing.

Continued attendance at Association and Conference spring and fall meetings.

Hold one-two more joint event(s) with partner church. (Four total by 18 months into the process.)

Church drafts changes to bylaws: Leaders of the church will propose edits to the church’s constitution and bylaws reflecting their relationship with the Association and the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference UCC. The Covenant Development Committee will review these.

Month 18

Draft Covenant: The Covenant Development Committee will determine if all steps determined at the one-year mark have been met. They will then begin drafting a Covenant between the congregation, Association, and Conference, naming responsibilities and rights to each other.

Month 19

Church determines willingness to proceed: In consultation with the Covenant Development Committee, the local church will determine its readiness to enter into covenant with the Association. The church will hold a congregational meeting, including a vote to:

- Affiliate with the United Church of Christ
- Make a formal request to the Association for standing
- Approve draft of new constitution and bylaws, effective upon granting of standing by the Association.

A representative of the Association should be present at the meeting where the church votes to affiliate.

Month 20

Formal request to the Association is made: The Church in Covenant Development submits a formal request to the Association Executive Committee to be received as a congregation with standing in the Association of the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference. The request will include the fifteen items listed in the “Churches Joining PSEC Associations” document.

Month 21

Association reviews request: The Association Executive Committee reviews the material and meets with church leaders at the next available meeting and determines that all appropriate documents are received. The Executive Committee will vote to send the request to their next Association Meeting.

Next Association Meeting – held in spring (April/May) and fall (October); Executive Committee would need to approve materials at least 30 days before the meeting

Vote to be received: The Association body will vote at its next meeting on whether to grant standing to the local church. This meeting will include a presentation by the Executive Committee on its recommendation, a presentation by the church to introduce themselves to the body, time for questions, and a vote by the Association.

Within 2 months of the vote to accept

Celebration service scheduled: A worship service is planned with the Local Church, Association representative(s), and Conference staff to celebrate the affiliation.

At the next...

PSEC Annual Meeting: The church will be introduced and celebrated.

General Synod: The church will introduced and celebrated.