



Special Dispensation Policy

(Revised 2-2023)

1.0 Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to collaborate with Unity Worldwide Ministries (UWM) ministries in ensuring that their ministry is led by a credentialed UWM Unity minister.

2.0 Persons Affected: This policy applies to:

- 2.2 Ministries seeking to employ a licensed Unity teacher (LUT) as a spiritual leader.
- 2.3 Ministries seeking to employ a leader without Unity credentials.
- 2.4 Individuals who are not Unity ministers who wish to serve as the leader of a Unity ministry.

3.0 Policy:

- 3.1 UWM requires that its member ministries employ Unity ministers. This ensures that our ministries are led by skilled professionals trained in Unity teachings and the essential elements of thriving ministry.
- 3.2 UWM recognizes that at times a member ministry may have difficulty finding a Unity minister to serve in their ministry. If a UWM member ministry is unable to employ a Unity minister, it may retain its membership by obtaining permission from UWM to temporarily employ a LUT or an individual without Unity credentials. This authorization is called Special Dispensation.
- 3.3 Special dispensation is contingent upon a mutual agreement between the ministry, the leader, and UWM. This agreement commits the leader and the ministry to a path and a timeline for the leader to become a Unity minister.
- 3.4 All individuals requesting special dispensation are required to have a psychological examination prior to being approved for special dispensation.

4.0 Definitions:

- 4.1 **Special Dispensation** refers to authorization for a ministry to employ an individual who is not a Unity minister to lead the ministry. This authorization is contingent upon the ministry and the individual entering into an agreement with UWM for the individual to commit to a path to Unity ordination and to follow through on that commitment.

- 4.2 **Unity Minister** refers to individuals who are licensed and/or ordained by UWM.
- 4.3 **Member Ministry** refers to a Unity ministry that has been approved for membership in UWM.
- 4.4 **A Licensed Unity Teacher (LUT)** is an individual who is trained and credentialed through UWM to teach Unity principles and serve under the leadership of a Unity minister.
- 4.5 **A Spiritual Leader** is an individual who is not a Unity minister and has special dispensation to lead a member ministry on a temporary and conditional basis.
- 4.6 **A Ministry Coordinator** is an individual without Unity credentials who has special dispensation to coordinate the activities of a member ministry on a temporary and conditional basis
- 4.7 **The Regional Representative** is a Minister selected by a Region to serve as liaison between UWM members in the region and UWM's central office. This individual serves on UWM's Standards Ministry Team

5.0 Responsibilities:

- 5.1 **The Board of Trustees** of a ministry seeking to employ an individual who is not a Unity minister is responsible for contacting UWM and receiving approval for special dispensation; this includes entering into an agreement and following through with the terms of the agreement.
- 5.2 **LUTs and individuals without Unity credentials who desire to lead a Unity ministry** are responsible for connecting with the Credentialing Coordinator, committing to a path to ordination, and following through on that agreement.
- 5.3 **The Credentialing Coordinator** is responsible for informing ministries and individuals being considered for special dispensation about the paths to ordination that are available, assisting them in selecting a path that is appropriate for them, and supporting them along the path to ordination.
- 5.4 **The Member Support Coordinator** ensures that ministries utilize UWM's employment process and employs Unity ministers to lead their ministries. He/she collaborates with the ministries, the Regional Representative, and the UWM central office staff in this process. He/she also has the authority to approve applications for special dispensation.
- 5.5 **The Regional Representative** provides input into this process and supports the ministries and leaders in moving through the path to ordination.
- 5.6 **UWM's Board of Trustees** grants extensions for special dispensation.

6.0 Procedures:

- 6.1 The ministry's board of trustees sends a letter to UWM's Member Support Coordinator requesting special dispensation. This letter must include the following:
 - 6.1.1 Reason ministry is requesting special dispensation rather than employing a Unity minister.
 - 6.1.2 Qualifications this individual has to serve in this capacity.

Qualification must include demonstrated leadership skills.

6.1.3 To receive special dispensation to serve as a spiritual leader, the individual must meet one of the following criteria:

6.1.3.1 Be a licensed Unity teacher “in good standing.”

6.1.3.2 Have an ordination with another approved denomination that has a similar philosophy to Unity.

6.1.3.3 If the individual does not meet one of these criteria, he/she may be given special dispensation to serve as Ministry Coordinator. The title of spiritual leader can be approved after the individual becomes a LUT.

6.2 The Ministry Development Coordinator discusses the request with the Regional Representative, the Credentialing Coordinator, and UWM’s COO or CEO.

6.3 With a recommendation from Regional Representative, Credentialing Coordinator, and CEO/COO, the Member Support Coordinator grants approval to the ministry and leader for special dispensation.

6.4 A special dispensation agreement is created based on the expertise and experience of the individual. This agreement is for a period of six (6) months.

6.5 As many as three (3) six (6) month renewals requested by the affected Board of Trustees may be granted subject to review and approval of UWM’s Member Support Coordinator. To obtain a renewal, the individual must have fulfilled the terms of the agreement and be making progress toward qualifying for a credentialing path.

6.6 Extensions may be granted after two (2) years if the spiritual leader is actively following through on the designated path to ordination. Requests for extensions must be sent to the Member Support Coordinator.