

## **Policy on Ordination and Ecclesiastical Standing**

### **Order of Universal Interfaith, Inc.**

To carry out its ministry, the Order of Universal Interfaith, (the "Order") calls and ordains qualified persons who have i) signified that they are in agreement with the Order's Declaration of Faith, ii) indicated their willingness to actively collaborate in achieving the vision and objectives of the Order, iii) met the educational qualifications, practical experience and other requirements set forth by the Order in effect at the time of application, and iv) whose life and conduct are above reproach.

The Order may also call and grant ecclesiastical standing to qualified persons who were previously ordained through an Interfaith seminary, a different faith tradition or a spiritual community, and who otherwise meet the standards set forth by the Order for ordination. These ministers will have all of the rights, privileges and responsibilities of a minister who was ordained by the Order.

In accordance with the By-Laws of the Order, the Committee on Ordination and Ecclesiastical Standing of the Order (the "Committee") is charged with reviewing the credentials of applicants for ordination and ecclesiastical standing and making recommendations on a case by case basis to confer ordination and/or ecclesiastical standing according to the policies and procedures set forth herein.

#### **1. General Eligibility**

All candidates for ordained ministry and ecclesiastical standing will be considered without regard to personal religious or spiritual beliefs as long as they are not in conflict with the Order's Declaration of Faith. Ordination and standing are never denied based on race, ethnicity, age, physical limitation, gender or gender expression, or sexual orientation.

To be eligible for ordination or ecclesiastical standing in the Order, an individual must:

- a) Be at least 21 years of age.
- b) Have received a bachelor's degree from an undergraduate program approved by the US Department of Education. Although we recognize that many seminaries do not require a bachelor's degree for entry and graduation, we believe that the absence of a college degree will be professionally limiting and thus it is required for all ordination candidates.
- c) Have received a master's level degree in ministry or theology from an Interfaith seminary or from another school as approved by this Committee.
- d) Have not engaged in conduct that would reflect negatively upon the Order and its Declaration of Faith as reflected by a comprehensive background check including but not limited to verification of social security number and identity, educational and employment background, credit report, driving records, and civil and criminal history in any and all federal, state and local jurisdictions.
- e) Pay an administrative fee as implemented from time to time by the board of directors or receive a fee waiver.
- f) Agree to be subject to the ethical standards set forth below in Section 7.

#### **2. Candidates for First Time Ordination and Ecclesiastical Standing**

In addition to the general eligibility requirements stated in Section 1 above, all individuals applying for ordination for the first time must submit for review and approval by the Committee:

- a) A listing of any continuing education courses taken related to ministerial skills, boundary awareness, social justice issues, faith development, spiritual practices or religious beliefs. These may be courses, webinars, workshops, conference attendance, or retreat participation.

- b) A professional resume (with dates) including employment, publications, certifications, and civic, spiritual and community service experience.
- c) Three general letters of reference.
- d) An autobiographical reflection approximately 5-7 pages, double-spaced summarizing a) the applicant's family of origin, current family relationships, and the relationships that make up a support system; b) the applicant's spiritual journey including beliefs and faith practices and the persons and events that have influenced them; and c) the applicant's understanding of ordained ministry.
- e) A Letter to the Committee on Ordination and Ecclesiastical Standing that integrates the applicant's education, experiences and training for ministry with their perceived calling or career path.
- f) Pay an administrative fee as implemented from time to time by the board of directors or receive a fee waiver.

### **3. Candidates Previously Ordained other than through an Interfaith Seminary and Seeking Ecclesiastical Standing with the Order**

In addition to the general eligibility requirements stated in Section 1 above, all individuals who have been previously ordained outside of the Interfaith tradition and who are now applying for ecclesiastical standing with the Order must submit for review and approval by the Committee:

- a) A list of courses taken that give attention to Interfaith studies including title, institution, professor, and a brief description of the course (at least 6).
- b) A list of any continuing education courses taken related to ministerial skills, boundary awareness, social justice issues, faith development, spiritual practices or religious beliefs with dates and sponsoring organization. These may be courses, webinars, workshops, conference attendance, or retreat participation.
- c) A professional resume (with dates) including employment, publications, certifications, and civic, spiritual and community service experience.
- d) A photocopy of their Ordination Certificate.
- e) A list of Interfaith experiences and demonstrated engagement beyond one's own faith tradition or system of beliefs.
- f) A brief integrative paper (2-3 pages, double spaced) summarizing a) their reflections on Interfaith, b) their reasons for seeking ecclesiastical standing through OUNI; and c) how standing through the Order will affect and enhance their ministry.

### **4. Maintenance of Good Standing**

All clergy who have been conferred ecclesiastical standing through the Order must submit a renewal application for approval by this Committee every two years by January 31 said application to include:

- a) Current employment.
- b) Participation in a faith community, if any.
- c) Participation in Interfaith activities and continuing education during the previous two years.
- d) A criminal background check and certification that the applicant has no outstanding child support payments.
- e) An administrative fee as implemented from time to time by the board of directors or a fee waiver.

## **5. Recognition of Previous Standing in the Order**

If an applicant for ecclesiastical standing had been granted such standing previously through the now dissolved Washington, DC corporation "The Order of Universal Interfaith, Inc.," that applicant may apply for ecclesiastical standing by submitting a renewal application per Section 4 hereof.

## **6. Ordination Ceremonies**

Ordination ceremonies shall take place in open, public, community ceremonies that are held at different times of the year at locations around the United States and will be arranged on a case by case basis.

## **7. Ethical Standards of Conduct**

The following standards of conduct are required of all applicants. The committee may revoke ordination and ecclesiastical standing to a person who is shown to have breached these standards of conduct.

To regard all persons with equal respect and concern and to minister impartially.

To honor all confidences.

To not use my position, power, or authority to exploit any person.

To not use my position for personal financial gain, not misuse the finances of the institution which I serve.

To deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and successor.

To not, upon my termination and departure from a ministry position, interfere with nor intrude upon the ministry of my successor.

**Recommended by the Committee on Ordination and Standing and  
Adopted by the Board of Directors on May 17, 2017  
As Amended by the Board of Directors on January 15, 2019**