

## GUIDELINES FOR DISCERNING AN ORDAINABLE CALL

An individual who is called to ordained ministry is authorized to serve and to lead on behalf of the United Church of Christ and the Church Universal must first receive a **call** for ministerial service. The discernment of an **ordainable call** is a decision empowered to the Committees on Ministry by their Associations. While the discernment of an individual's effectiveness and fitness for ministry is assessed throughout the Member in Discernment process and affirmed through an Ecclesiastical Council, a Committee on Ministry must further discern whether the Member in Discernment who is approved for ordination pending call has secured a ministerial position that serves God, Jesus Christ, the Church Universal and the United Church of Christ in such a way that ordination is needed: that is, an ordainable call. The Church Universal, the United Church of Christ and Committees on Ministry throughout the denomination are coming to understand that the setting for an ordainable call may or may not be the Local Church and may or may not include full-time compensation. *Additionally, it should be noted that ministry in the Armed Services, Federal Board of Prisons and Veteran Administration Health Services are not considered to be ordainable calls (further information about military chaplaincy may be found in the section addressing ecclesiastical endorsement).*

### 1. The call must be covenantal.

The **ordaining call** should require and demonstrate that the individual called is to function as part of a team, to give and receive supervision and to mutually equip and to motivate a community of faith, not necessarily a Local Church. The **ordaining call** should demonstrate that the individual called is to engage in community leadership that is collaborative and transformative.

- the call is covenantal, demonstrated by a **call agreement** or **job description** (for a setting beyond the Local Church);
- the call is covenantal, demonstrated by a **Three or Four-Way Covenant**;
- the **call** demonstrates service to the Church and Church Universal in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ;
- the **ordaining call** should be affirmed by an ecclesiastical council to confirm the decision of the Committee on Ministry and affirm the candidate for ordination;
- the **ordaining call** should *not* be to a ministerial setting considered to be an educational setting. The MESA Team recommends that internships, CPE residencies and educational settings **not** be considered ordainable as these are ministerial settings for designated for furthering the individual's educational development and are for a set/limited time;
- the **ordaining call** is within the capabilities, experiences and capacities of the candidate.

A critical element of the ordaining call is the ministerial setting. The COM would consider an individual for ordination when the call to ministry is presented (with a **Call Agreement** and a **Three or Four-Way Covenant**). The COM then has the

responsibility to determine whether or not the call meets the needs of the Church and the Church Universal.

## 2. The ordainable call meets the needs of the Church and Church Universal.

It is important that the Committee on Ministry determines that the ordaining call meets the needs of the Church and the Church Universal. The call is not necessarily defined by salary or the amount of time (part-time, half-time, quarter-time). Neither is an ordainable call limited by service to the Local Church, the ordaining call may be to a setting beyond the Local Church.

- the ministerial setting requires the practice of ministry, rites, sacraments of the Churches;
- this call to ministry offers opportunities to preach the Good News, to integrate the Biblical, theological and pastoral disciplines;
- this call demonstrates an ongoing commitment to the United Church of Christ;
- this call serves the Church and serves God;
- this call engages in mission and outreach;
- this call brings life to sacred stories and traditions in worship, proclamation and witness;
- this call/ministry preaches/testifies to the Good News, in part through the sacraments, to a broader Christian heritage;
- this call appreciates, practices and passes on traditions of faith while interpreting them in light of the context of a diverse and changing world;
- this call is within the capabilities, experiences and capacities of the candidate.

## 3. The ordainable call demonstrates mutuality in ministry between the minister and the community.

An ordainable call demonstrates tangible commitments to shared concerns and mutual accountability for the sake of sustained ministry. Whether *an individual has been called to a Local Church or a ministerial setting beyond the Local Church (holding membership in the Local Church that supports the called individual and the ministerial setting)*, it is expected that there are ongoing structures of both support and accountability in place to encourage the long-term well-being of the minister (once ordained) and the ongoing viability of the ministry being undertaken.

- this call demonstrates mutuality of ministry through a **Three or Four-Way Covenant**;
- this call demonstrates an understanding of community;
- this call encourages the building of relationships of mutual trust and interdependence;
- this call acknowledges the desire for healthy relationships, good communication and mutual concern for all this call is within the capabilities, experience and capacities of the candidate.

**Tools that can help a Committee on Ministry discern whether a call to ministry is Ordainable:**

- Prayer and Discernment
- Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers
- Position Description and Scope of Work
- Call Agreement/Employment Contract
- Three- or Four-Way Covenants