

**Draft 3.1 – Progress to Date  
Materials Shared for Use and Comment  
May 2009**

**IMPLEMENTING THE PRONOUNCEMENT:  
“MINISTRY ISSUES: FORMING AND  
PREPARING PASTORAL LEADERS FOR  
GOD’S CHURCH”**

**MATERIALS TO AID  
THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
IN FINDING, PREPARING AND AUTHORIZING THE  
LEADERS GOD IS CALLING FROM AND FOR IT**

**A Working Paper from the  
Ministry Issues Implementation Committee  
in collaboration with  
The Parish Life and Leadership Team  
Local Church Ministries**

**United Church of Christ**

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## Resources to Come

Items will be added to this draft as they are ready for review and testing. Currently in process or under consideration are sections to address at least the following:

- assessment for commissioning,
- resources for Committees on the Ministry meeting persons with disabilities, and
- suggestions for organizing Committees on Ministry and managing the work load.

Materials in this current draft are in various stages of development; some have had much more refinement than others. As the work continues, readers share suggestions, and new ideas are incorporated, changes will be made.

We are sure there are more subjects needing attention; please let us know if you have a particular request or concern.

Thank you for sharing this project with us and all in the United Church of Christ.

-- The Implementation Committee

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October 20, 2008

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3 For three years now the Ministry Issues Implmentation Committee has been at work to  
 4 provide resources and tools for the United Church of Christ to test as it lives into the  
 5 commitments made in adopting the General Synod 25 Pronouncement, “Ministry Issues:  
 6 Forming and Preparing Pastoral Leaders for God’s Church.” In February, 2007, a  
 7 Ministry Issues Draft was circulated in the church for comment and response. We are  
 8 grateful for the suggestions received and for the ways in which many in the UCC are  
 9 contributing to the welfare of all.

10 This current draft uses some of the materials from 2007, but is greatly expanded to  
 11 address many of the issues raised for the committee’s attention by the pronouncement  
 12 itself or by responders to the earlier materials. We hope that you will read and use these  
 13 materials as you participate in calling, preparing, and supporting leaders for the United  
 14 Church of Christ. We invite you to let us know what works well, what needs more  
 15 attention, what you suggest as improvements. Start where you are – with new Members  
 16 in Discernment, with currently authorized ministers, with persons seeking privilege of  
 17 call, with communities new to the UCC. Try the things which seem appropriate to your  
 18 setting and community. Build on your own experience as well as the materials offered  
 19 here. Share your experiences and suggestions.

20 This draft will be revised from time to time as new materials are written and current  
 21 drafts improved. It will continue to be available with the Parish Life and Leadership  
 22 Team resources at UCC.org.

23 Some of the commitments of the Pronouncement require changes in the ministry  
 24 provisions of the Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ. To  
 25 accomplish this, recommended amendments will be presented to General Synod 27 in  
 26 2009. If adopted by the Synod, the Constitutional amendments will be forwarded to the  
 27 Conferences for ratification.

28 We look forward to hearing from you and to continuing to work with you as together we  
 29 strive to respond to God’s call to the United Church of Christ in this time.

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Ministry Issues Implementation Committee  
 Marti Baumer, Chair

32

33

34 Committee Members ((April 2009)

35 Henrietta Andrews	42 Michelle Hintz	49 Esther
36 Lee Barrett	43 Veronica Jefferson	50 Rendón-Thompson
37 Barbara Blodgett	44 Kekapa Lee	51 Bruce Saunkeah
38 Phil Campbell	45 Rosemary	52 Richard Sparrow
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40 Sheldon Culver	47 Holly MillerShank	54 Richard Weis
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# Response Form

**Ministry Issues Draft 3.0**

**October 2008**

Date of Response\_\_\_\_\_

Section of Draft\_\_\_\_\_

Group/Person Responding\_\_\_\_\_

Email address or other contact information\_\_\_\_\_

Brief Description of your Experience/Situation

What works, seems helpful

What is problematic, and why.

Suggestions for new materials

Please use this format and respond to Ministry Implementation Committee, Parish Life and Leadership, Team, United Church of Christ via email or snail mail. And, thank you!

## The Ministry Issues Project: A Narrative Overview

The Ministry Issues Project encompasses the authorized ministries of the United Church of Christ – licensed, commissioned, ordained – and the varied processes involved in calling, preparing, authorizing, and maintaining covenant for those ministries and with those ministers. The work is based upon the Pronouncement adopted by General Synod 25, “Ministry Issues: Forming and Preparing Pastoral Leaders for God’s Church.”

Since the Ministry Issues Implementation Committee developed and tested its initial drafts within the Church (February 2007), a set of “Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ” has emerged. This set of “Marks,” to be further tested and refined, is expected to guide the movements related to authorizing ministers for the Church, from the beginnings of a possible call through one’s “retirement.” These Marks will be used variously as guides for discernment of call, preparation and formation for ministry, the determination and act of authorization, continuing personal assessment and guidance, and the continuing covenantal relationship of authorized ministers and the Church. They will serve as suggestions and marks along the way with the understanding that no one will ever be “finished” or “complete.” They are to be understood and applied variously as Associations, local churches, and members carefully consider the differing forms of ministerial authorization and the diverse settings, communities, traditions, theologies, and other characteristics of the UCC.

The following “movements” indicate a progression from one stage to another, even as many characteristics of each movement continue through all. The “Marks” are guides continually along the way. Discernment continues, with times of greater or lesser intensity. The use of particular assessment tools, such as the portfolio, continues. The practice of assessment to inform discernment and decision continues, though it may well change in character and design. The covenantal relationships among members and various settings of the church certainly continue, again with variations; and all is, finally and always, dependent upon our continuing relationship to the living, speaking God known in Jesus Christ.

1. **The first movement** of the Ministry Issues Project is the recognition and encouragement of a lively Culture of Call within the church, based upon the convictions that all God’s people are called to ministry and that the church requires leaders who bring particular gifts and who are called by God and the church to particular service within the church. The discernment of a call to ministry is communal, involving at least the member who may be called, the local church, and the Association. It may well include persons representing educational settings and others, such as family and friends. Discernment of call is ongoing and open-ended, requiring continuing attention throughout preparation for, and service in, ministry.

Background and tools among these materials:

- The Call to Authorized Ministry in the United Church of Christ
  - A Biblical Understanding of “Call”

- 1                   ○ Call to Ministry in the United Church of Christ
- 2                   ○ Who is Called? How?
- 3                   ○ New Relationships, New responsibilities
- 4                   • Creating a “Culture of Call” in the Local Church
- 5                   2. **The second movement** of the project provides for the preparation and formation for
- 6                   ministry of members who are called to authorization as licensed, commissioned, or
- 7                   ordained ministers of the United Church of Christ. Preparation is understood to include
- 8                   continuing discernment of the particulars of one’s call and thus is open-ended with
- 9                   decision points along the way. Associations of the United Church of Christ are charged
- 10                   with the responsibility of authorizing ministers on behalf of the entire Church and will
- 11                   maintain and faithfully fulfill that role as the leading partner in the Covenant of
- 12                   Discernment and Formation.
- 13                   Background and tools among these materials:
- 14                   • A Narrative Summary of the New “In Care”: A Covenant of Discernment and
- 15                   Formation
- 16                   ○ Understanding and Practicing Discernment
- 17                   ○ Local Church Ministry Discernment Committee with a Member in
- 18                   Discernment
- 19                   ○ Advisor in Discernment
- 20                   ○ Covenanting for Discernment and Formation
- 21                   • Assessment of Persons Seeking Authorization
- 22                   ○ Introduction
- 23                   ○ Assessing a Member in Discernment’s Gifts, Needs and Circumstances and
- 24                   Shaping an Educational and Formational Plan
- 25                   ○ On-Going Assessment of a Member in Discernment While in an Educational
- 26                   Program
- 27                   ○ Assessment for Authorization: Ordination
- 28                   ○ Licensed Ministry in the United Church of Christ
- 29                   • Resources for Assessing College and Seminary Programs
- 30                   3. **The third movement** of the project recognizes that all authorized ministers are in
- 31                   continuing covenant with the Church through a Local Church and an Association
- 32                   (Covenant of Ministerial Standing). They are participants in these mutually accountable
- 33                   relationships with one another as well as with those formally representing particular

1 settings of the Church. The Marks become a basis for guiding the continuing  
2 discernment of call, the relationships and responsibilities, the formative practices, and the  
3 continuing education of the minister as well as the participation, support and encour-  
4 agement of the Church.

5 Background and tools among these materials

- 6 • Ministerial Standing as a Covenantal Relationship
- 7 • Using the Marks for Authorized Ministers, Post-Authorization
- 8 • Renewal of License

9 Several particular concerns were included in the general considerations leading to adoption of the  
10 Ministry Issues Pronouncement at General Synod 25 (2005). They included the needs and  
11 diversity of the Church requiring full recognition of multiple paths of preparation for authorized  
12 ministry, the character of the covenantal responsibilities of authorized ministers and the United  
13 Church of Christ, and the understanding and practice of Licensed Ministry.

14 In response to the concern for multiple paths of preparation, Associations are asked to determine  
15 readiness for authorization not on the basis of the particular educational program the candidate  
16 has completed, but upon the candidate's readiness for that authorization. The Marks and a set of  
17 tools to assist in assessment with persons and in assessment of educational programs are offered  
18 as guides to help accomplish this task.

19 In response to the concern for the covenantal responsibilities of authorized ministers and the  
20 Church, the Implementation Committee offers the concept of ministerial standing as an ongoing  
21 covenant of mutual accountability among the minister, the Association, and the local church, with  
22 the Marks guiding consideration of what it means to be an authorized minister of the United  
23 Church of Christ and what it is that the Church needs to be and to do in support of those  
24 ministers. The Committee also offers guidance on what might be included in the preparation and  
25 formation of authorized ministers in their understanding of and relationship to the UCC.

26 And, in response to the concern for licensed ministry, the Committee proposes that the UCC Con-  
27 stitution read:

28 A Licensed Minister of the United Church of Christ is one of its members whom God has  
29 called and who has been recognized and authorized by an Association to perform  
30 specified duties in a designated Local Church or within that Association, mainly  
31 preaching and conducting services of worship, for a designated time under the  
32 supervision and guidance of that Association. The license may be renewed.

33 A licensed minister may seek ordination if there is such a call acknowledged by the minister, the  
34 Local Church, and the Association and achieving readiness for ordination. At the same time,  
35 some persons are called to licensed ministry and not to ordination and are to be given full  
36 recognition and regard as licensed ministers. A proposed amendment to the constitution changes  
37 "Voting membership in that Association may be granted," to "Voting membership in that  
38 Association is granted," to recognize the full responsibility and relationship of licensed ministers  
39 and the Church.



1 Throughout the Ministry Issues Project to date, major attention has been given to licensed and  
2 ordained ministries. However, the Implementation Committee always includes commissioned  
3 ministry when referring to the authorized ministries of the United Church of Christ. The  
4 provisions for call, discernment, covenants of discernment and formation, authorization itself, and  
5 continuing covenants with authorized ministers apply equally to all forms of authorized ministry.  
6 Work still to be done includes identifying in more particular ways the use of the Marks and other  
7 tools in relationship to commissioned ministry and ministers (as well as to each of the other au-  
8 thorized ministries).

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## CORE UNDERSTANDINGS

### ***I. Call to Ministry (The First Movement)***

1. The United Church of Christ and all its members are called by God to be ministers, serving in God's mission in and to this world.
2. Faithful discernment of and response to God's call to ministry involves both individuals and the church itself. Such discernment and response is an on-going practice.
3. Some members are called by God and the United Church of Christ to serve on the Church's behalf as authorized (ordained, commissioned, or licensed) ministers as the UCC participates in God's mission.

### ***II. Call to Authorized Ministry (Ordination, Commissioning, Licensing) in the United Church of Christ (The Second Movement)***

1. When a member's call leads to consideration of authorized ministry, the Church and that member together seek to discern God's particular call to that person. Such discernment and response is an ongoing practice.
2. The primary question guiding discernment is, "To what ministry is this person called?" And then, "Does this ministry require authorization? If so, what form of authorization?"
3. The particular program of formation and preparation for possible authorization of that member is determined by the Committee on Ministry, in consultation with the member and the Local Church, according to the needs of the UCC, the gifts of the person, and the "Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ." It is anticipated that a seminary degree program will continue to be the preferred primary educational process for most potential candidates for ordination.
4. As the member who is called prepares for possible authorization, discernment continues within a covenant among the person, the Association (through its Committee on Ministry) representing the UCC, and the Local Church.
5. The Covenant of Discernment and Formation replaces the current UCC practice of a "Student In Care." A Covenant of Discernment and Formation is the process to be followed for all forms of authorization.

### **III. Readiness for Authorization (The Second Movement)**

1. Throughout the time of Discernment and Formation, the Committee on Ministry, in continuing conversation with the member and the Local Church, engages in discerning the member's call, determines an appropriate and effective program of preparation for that member, and assesses progress toward readiness for authorization.
2. In determining readiness for authorization, the Committee on Ministry focuses on the potential candidate's qualifications for that particular authorization rather than on the completion of one particular educational process. This determination is guided by the "Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ" and the needs of the Church.
3. Each authorization (licensing, commissioning, and ordination) is defined by the UCC Constitution and Bylaws.
4. The Association determines whether and when to proceed to authorization on behalf of the United Church of Christ.

### **IV. Authorized Ministerial Standing in the United Church of Christ (The Third Movement)**

1. Ministerial Standing in the United Church of Christ is a covenant of an Association, an authorized minister, a local church and the calling body (if other than a local church).
2. The Covenant of Ministerial Standing is guided by the Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ, the "Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ," and the policies of the Association.
3. All the covenant partners are responsible to each and all of the other partners.
4. All Covenants of Ministerial Standing include, but are not limited to, appropriate support of the minister, faithfulness of all to the United Church of Christ, and the continuing discernment of call and formation for ministry.

### **V. UCC Identity and Authorized Ministry (All Movements)**

1. All authorized ministers of the United Church of Christ, commissioned, licensed, or ordained, serve on behalf of the whole United Church of Christ.
2. UCC identity and relationships are a fundamental component of the call to, the preparation for, and the practice of authorized ministry.
3. The United Church of Christ is committed to fostering an environment that celebrates diversity of expressions of Christian faith and promotes mutually enriching interaction of various Christian cultures, theologies, spiritualities and ideologies.

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**THE GUIDE IN EVERY  
MOVEMENT**

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5

**THE MARKS OF FAITHFUL AND  
EFFECTIVE AUTHORIZED MINISTERS**

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The “Marks” were revised as of April 29, 2009.

8

This document includes those revisions.

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12

*Introduction*

13

*Background Information*

14

*Using the Marks*

15

*Applying the Marks in Relation to Commissioning, Licensure  
and Ordination*

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19

*The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers*

# THE MARKS OF FAITHFUL AND EFFECTIVE AUTHORIZED MINISTERS

## *Introduction*

The “Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ” is a tool intended for the United Church of Christ to use in many settings as together the Church seeks to provide faithful leadership for the Church in God’s mission. This tool is based upon the wisdom of the whole church gathered through the ongoing work of the Ministry Issues Implementation Committee in regard to the Pronouncement adopted by General Synod 25, “Ministry Issues: Forming and Preparing Pastoral Leaders for God’s Church.” Based on materials and feedback shared with the committee from many persons and groups in many settings of the church, these Marks reflect much of what the church as a whole sees as characteristic of faithful and effective ministry in these times.

The “Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers in the United Church of Christ” is a framework for the work that we do as a church in calling, preparing, authorizing, and remaining in continuing covenant with commissioned, licensed and ordained ministers in all settings in the UCC. Associations, local churches, other settings of the Church, and individual members are invited and urged to review this tool and to use it. The Marks will be interpreted variously in the particular contexts in which they are used. For instance, interpretation will vary among the three authorized ministries themselves (see further below), among differing theological or ecclesial traditions, and in different locations. No one is ever expected to have completed or finished the Marks; ministry, as life, is a continuing journey of transformation.

The Marks may be used in any number of ways. Examples of such uses include but are not limited to, the following:

- to generate conversation regarding effective authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ (for example, as part of an adult education class or by a local church Pastoral Relations Committee);
- as a guide for discernment groups in local churches as they meet with a member who may be called to ministry;
- for self-assessment by prospective and authorized ministers;
- by Association Committees on the Ministry as they work with both Members in Discernment and authorized ministers;
- to guide the planning for continuing education by authorized ministers, and by others.

## *Background Information*

In July, 2005, the twenty-fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ, meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, adopted the pronouncement “Ministry Issues: Forming and Preparing Pastoral Leaders for God’s Church.” In the pronouncement’s Statement of Christian Conviction the Synod affirmed “that our baptism calls us all to minister in Christ’s name. Within the church, some are called to particular leadership roles in order to ‘equip the saints for the work of ministry’ (Ephesians 4:12, NRSV).” The forms of authorized ministry within the United Church of Christ are

1 commissioning, licensure, and ordination. Each of these forms of authorized ministry requires  
2 formation and preparation, as well as ongoing covenantal accountability, appropriate to the needs  
3 of the church. In the United Church of Christ, Associations, through their Committees on Minis-  
4 try, have primary responsibility for forming, preparing, assessing, authorizing, and remaining in  
5 covenantal relationship with commissioned, licensed and ordained UCC ministers.

## 6 ***Using the Marks***

7 The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers are intended to be used for all forms of  
8 authorization: commissioned, licensed and ordained. They are organized into four main catego-  
9 ries: Spiritual Foundation for Ministry, UCC Identity for Ministry, Personal and Professional For-  
10 mation for Ministry, and Knowledge and Skills for Ministry. These Marks will be most helpful to  
11 Committees on the Ministry when they use them developmentally, that is, throughout their rela-  
12 tionship with Members in Discernment and formation, rather than saving their consideration for  
13 the end of the process. They are also intended to be used in conversation with authorized minis-  
14 ters as part of their continuing covenant with the church through the Association Committee on  
15 the Ministry. When used throughout the relationship, the Marks become an effective tool for  
16 helping to identify areas where growth is needed.

17 Committees on the Ministry are encouraged to apply the Marks dynamically in their work with  
18 the persons whom they accompany. No single individual will exhibit all of these Marks fully or  
19 equally well. Indeed, even at the end of a lifetime as an authorized minister, no individual will ex-  
20 hibit all of these Marks fully or equally well. Moreover, the patterns of strength and weakness in  
21 relation to the Marks will differ from one individual to the next. Thus committees should expect  
22 individuals to show different profiles of strength and weakness in relation to the Marks, and  
23 should use the Marks in ways that promote realistic assessment and encourage continuing devel-  
24 opment. Committees are also encouraged to adapt the substance of the Marks into the idioms of  
25 particular cultural communities as appropriate for their setting, as well as to the particularities of  
26 each minister's call, whether it be licensed, ordained or commissioned ministry.

## 27 ***Applying the Marks in Relation to Commissioning, Licensure or*** 28 ***Ordination***

29 Although the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers are characteristics of good  
30 authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ in all three of its forms, they characterize the  
31 three forms (commissioned, licensed, ordained) differently. That the Marks can characterize all  
32 three forms of authorized ministry is due to the essential parity and theological identity of the  
33 three forms. That the Marks characterize them differently is due to the different definitions of  
34 commissioned, ordained and licensed ministry as set forth in the Constitution of the United  
35 Church of Christ.

36 Thus in using the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers, Associations, Commit-  
37 tees on the Ministry, local churches, individual ministers, and Members in Discernment must nec-  
38 essarily keep in mind the form of authorization for which a person is preparing or holds, and read  
39 the Marks through the lens of the constitutional definition of that form of authorization. The de-  
40 termination of the degree to which a member needs to manifest particular Marks before s/he is  
41 judged ready for authorization or is judged to be acting consistently with the authorization s/he  
42 holds is always a matter of judgment by the person, committee or other group involved. This is  
43 not an exact science, but is a discernment grounded in the knowledge and wisdom of God's  
44 people concerning the ministries of God's church. Nevertheless, thinking of the definition of

1 each form of authorization, and reading the Marks through these lenses can give individuals and  
2 committees a sense of direction in making such judgments.

3 The Constitution currently defines commissioned ministry in this way:

4 A Commissioned Minister in the United Church of Christ is one of its lay mem-  
5 bers who has been called by God and commissioned for a specific church-related  
6 ministry.<sup>1</sup>

7 When reading the Marks through this lens, it becomes important to take account of the responsi-  
8 bilities of the “specific church-related ministry” for which a member is being, or has been, com-  
9 missioned. Not every Mark may be relevant to the specific work for which the member is com-  
10 missioned, and thus not every Mark need be considered in relation to that individual. For the  
11 Marks that are relevant, the degrees to which the commissioned minister will need to manifest  
12 them would also be determined by the nature of the work to which s/he is called. Since different  
13 ministers are commissioned to different ministries, necessarily there will even be variation from  
14 one individual to the next in judgments about which Marks apply and the degree to which they  
15 should be manifested.

16 The Constitution currently defines licensed ministry in this way:

17 A Licensed Minister of the United Church of Christ is one of its lay members  
18 whom God has called and who has been recognized and authorized by an Asso-  
19 ciation to perform specified duties in a designated Local Church or within that  
20 Association, mainly preaching and conducting services of worship, for a desig-  
21 nated time under the supervision and guidance of that Association.<sup>2</sup>

22 As with commissioned ministry, reading the Marks through the lens of the definition of licensed  
23 ministry suggests that the particular set of duties for which the member is licensed (foreseen as  
24 preaching and worship leadership, but not always limited to that), the particular context in which  
25 those duties are performed, and the degree of supervision and guidance deemed appropriate are  
26 the crucial factors here. Depending on those factors it is possible that, as with commissioned  
27 ministry, not all of the Marks will be judged relevant for consideration. Similarly, the degree to  
28 which the relevant Marks need to be manifested will be determined by these same factors that  
29 define licensed ministry. For example, a licensed minister who serves as an occasional supply  
30 preacher within an Association will not need to manifest Marks related to aspects of  
31 administering a congregation to the same degree that s/he will need to manifest Marks relating to  
32 preaching and worship leadership.

33 The Constitution currently defines ordained ministry in this way:

34 An Ordained Minister of the United Church of Christ is one of its members who  
35 has been called by God and ordained to preach and teach the gospel, to adminis-

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<sup>1</sup> Constitution of the United Church of Christ, Article 6, §23.

<sup>2</sup> Constitution of the United Church of Christ, Article 6, §30.

1           ter the sacraments and rites of the Church, and to exercise pastoral care and lead-  
2           ership.<sup>3</sup>

3   Ordained ministry is focused on a set of responsibilities that are as broad as the scope of the  
4   Marks themselves. Moreover, although it is always exercised in specific contexts and with sets of  
5   duties particular to those contexts, this form is not defined by a specific sub-set of those responsi-  
6   bilities, nor by a particular location. Thus it seems most likely that, when individuals and com-  
7   mittees read the Marks through the lens of this definition, they will conclude that all of the Marks  
8   need to be taken into consideration. It also seems likely they will conclude that variations in the  
9   degrees to which persons should manifest the Marks will be defined more by the varying profiles  
10  of individual gifts and frailties than by the definition of the ministry being authorized.

11

12   PLEASE NOTE: The Marks themselves were revised by the Ministry Issues Implementation  
13   Committee as of April 29, 2009, reflecting feedback received and other learning since mid-2008.  
14   The Marks following are the revised wording.

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<sup>3</sup> Constitution of the United Church of Christ, Article 6, §23.



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**THE MARKS OF FAITHFUL AND EFFECTIVE  
AUTHORIZED MINISTERS OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF  
CHRIST (Revised, April 2009)**

***SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION FOR MINISTRY***

- 1. A lived faith showing love of God, trust in Jesus, and openness to the Holy Spirit.
- 2. Devotion to the word of God as revealed through scripture and Christian traditions.
- 3. Commitment to life-long spiritual growth and practice, individually and in community.
- 4. A sense of being called by God and the community to authorized ministry in the church.
- 5. Openness to continuing discernment of one's call in community.

***UCC IDENTITY FOR MINISTRY***

- 1. Acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as sole Head of the Church.
- 2. A passion for the oneness of the body of Christ as expressed through commitment to ecumenism, justice, and the full embrace of all persons in the radical hospitality of God.
- 3. Active membership in a local church of the United Church of Christ.
- 4. An understanding of the concept of covenant and how it informs the nature, purpose, and polity of the United Church of Christ.
- 5. A willingness to live in the covenants of mutual accountability that characterize authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ.
- 6. Ongoing demonstration of commitment to the United Church of Christ.
- 7. Stewardship of resources, including financial support of the church in all of its settings.
- 8. Participation in the various settings of the United Church of Christ, including the conference/association and local church.

1 The ability:

2 9. to articulate diverse histories that comprise the United Church of Christ, to situate them  
3 in the broader evolution of faith traditions and to relate them to the theology, polity, and  
4 practices of the Member's local church, association, and conference.  
5

6 10. to explain and work within the current polity of the UCC and its denominational  
7 structure, and to describe the covenantal relationships among the General Synod, national  
8 setting, conferences, associations, and local congregations of the UCC.  
9

10 11. to share key elements of the UCC's statement of faith, constitution with its preamble, and  
11 bylaws regarding the governance, mission, and theologies of the UCC and their  
12 implications for the life of the church.  
13

14 12. to articulate the UCC's commitment to being a united and uniting, multiracial and  
15 multicultural, open and affirming, accessible to all and just peace church.  
16

17 13. to envision how the UCC in its various settings may respond to religious, social,  
18 economic, and political trends, changing demographics, and other emerging factors.  
19

20 14. to use and promote the informational and educational resources available through UCC  
21 publications and websites.  
22

## 23 ***PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL FORMATION FOR MINISTRY***

24 1. A healthy sense of self as shaped by God, community, and personal experience.  
25

26 2. A sense of theological identity and authority, while being responsive to the opinions and  
27 values of others, including those whom the Member will serve.  
28

29 3. A healthy awareness of strengths, weaknesses and limits, and assumption of  
30 responsibility for one's body, mind and spirit.  
31

32 4. Knowledge and observance of personal and professional boundaries in interpersonal,  
33 congregational, and community settings.  
34

35 5. A commitment to continuing education, professional development, and life-long learning.

36 6. Demonstrated moral maturity, including integrity in personal and public life and  
37 responsibility to self, family, church, and community.  
38

The ability:

- 1 7. to affirm the identities of others, including others very unlike oneself.  
2
- 3 8. to engage in self-reflection and to seek and use feedback from others appropriately.  
4
- 5 9. to engage productively in public discourse, expecting to grow and be transformed  
6 through the exchange of viewpoints.  
7
- 8 10. to take initiative in leadership, and to frame and test a vision in community.  
9
- 10 11. to listen empathically, communicate appropriately, and keep appropriate confidences.  
11
- 12 12. to function as part of a team, to give and receive supervision, and to mutually equip and  
13 motivate the community of faith.  
14
- 15 13. to be resourceful and adaptable, and know where to locate additional resources and seek  
16 consultation when needed.  
17
- 18 14. to accept and promote diversity, to inspire others to do so, and to minister in a  
19 multicultural and multiracial, open and affirming, just peace, accessible to all, united and  
20 uniting church.  
21

## 22 ***KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR MINISTRY***

### 23 **General Knowledge and Skills**

24 The Ability:

- 25 1. to understand and appreciate a variety of perspectives of life.  
26
- 27 2. to understand the profound differences that physical, psychological, gender identity,  
28 sexual orientation, age, class, cultural, religious, racial, and ethnic factors make in the  
29 ways that human beings experience the world.  
30
- 31 3. to comprehend the impact of historical change upon the thoughts, feelings, and actions of  
32 individuals and societies.  
33
- 34 4. to perceive how a person's perspectives and interests shape communication, and to  
35 appreciate the virtues and limitations of those perspectives and interests.  
36
- 37 5. to grasp and evaluate the justifications that people give for their opinions.

1

2 6. to apply basic concepts of psychology to the understanding of oneself, others, and human  
3 interactions.

4 7. to appreciate the importance of symbols and images in human culture(s).

5

6 8. to understand various meanings and purposes of the arts.

7

8 9. to analyze social, political, environmental, and economic dynamics, using the tools of the  
9 social and natural sciences.

10

11 10. to use respectfully and relationally a basic knowledge of specific human cultures.

12

13 11. to communicate clearly and effectively with appropriate media and technologies.

14

15 **Knowledge and Skills Specific to Authorized Ministry**

16 1. A thorough knowledge of, and personal engagement with, the Bible.

17

18 2. Skill with methods of biblical interpretation, including the historic interpretive traditions of  
19 the church and contemporary methods, particularly those from historically  
20 underrepresented communities.

21

22 3. A deepening familiarity with the global history of the Christian churches through the ages  
23 and across cultures, including the newest Christian populations, and an understanding of  
24 the evolution of Christian communities in the United States.

25

26 4. A deepening familiarity with contemporary theological ways of thinking and with the rich  
27 and varied theological heritages, creeds, liturgies, and spiritual practices of the Christian  
28 churches.

29

30 5. An understanding of other religions and their foundational documents.

31

32 The ability:

33 6. to articulate a theological understanding of authorized ministry, and to relate it to the  
34 practice of ministry.

35

36 7. to analyze, evaluate, and integrate the biblical, historical, theological, and pastoral  
37 disciplines and practices in ways that contribute to fruitful and faithful Christian ministry.

- 1
- 2 8. to understand the nature, use, and misuse of power and authority, and to exercise them  
3 appropriately and effectively in authorized ministry.  
4
- 5 9. to engage in community leadership that is collaborative and transformative.  
6
- 7 10. to engage in respectful ecumenical and interfaith dialogue.  
8
- 9 11. to celebrate the unique features of local faith communities while encouraging them to be  
10 receptive to perspectives from the broader church and world.  
11
- 12 12. to appreciate, practice, and pass on traditions of faith while interpreting them in light of the  
13 context of a diverse and changing world.  
14
- 15 13. to adapt the practices of ministry to the unique social, cultural, environmental and  
16 ecclesiastical aspects of particular settings.  
17
- 18 14. to discern God's mission in the world and, in response, to lead ministries of compassion,  
19 nurture, justice, and proclamation that support fullness of life for all people.  
20
- 21 15. to preach the good news, lead worship and participate in the sacraments in a manner  
22 faithful to the broader Christian heritage and appropriate to the characteristics of a specific  
23 culture and setting.  
24
- 25 16. to provide effective and appropriate pastoral care and Christian education, and to equip and  
26 motivate others to share in these ministries.  
27
- 28 17. to organize and implement programs, administer the operations of a complex organization,  
29 and initiate change when appropriate.  
30
- 31 18. to read the contexts of a community's ministry and creatively lead that community through  
32 change or conflict.  
33
- 34 19. to lead and encourage ministries of evangelism, service, stewardship and social  
35 transformation.  
36
- 37 20. to understand and participate in the financial administration of the church and other  
38 religious organizations.

1                                   **THE FIRST MOVEMENT**

2                                   **THE RECOGNITION AND**

3                                   **ENCOURAGEMENT OF A LIVELY**

4                                   **CULTURE OF CALL**

5

6                                   **CORE UNDERSTANDINGS**

7    ***I. Call to Ministry (The First Movement)***

- 8                   1. The United Church of Christ and all its members are called by God to be ministers,  
9                    serving in God’s mission in and to this world.
- 10
- 11                  2. Faithful discernment of and response to God’s call to ministry involves both individuals  
12                   and the church itself. Such discernment and response is an on-going practice.
- 13
- 14                  3. Some members are called by God and the United Church of Christ to serve on the  
15                   Church’s behalf as authorized (ordained, commissioned, or licensed) ministers as the  
16                   UCC participates in God’s mission.
- 17

18    ***V. UCC Identity and Authorized Ministry (All Movements)***

- 19                  1. All authorized ministers of the United Church of Christ, commissioned, licensed, or  
20                   ordained, serve on behalf of the whole United Church of Christ.
- 21
- 22                  2. UCC identity and relationships are a fundamental component of the call to, the  
23                   preparation for, and the practice of authorized ministry.
- 24
- 25                  3. The United Church of Christ is committed to fostering an environment that celebrates  
26                   diversity of expressions of Christian faith and promotes mutually enriching interaction of  
27                   various Christian cultures, theologies, spiritualities and ideologies

1     **THE CALL TO AUTHORIZED MINISTRY IN THE UNITED**  
 2                   **CHURCH OF CHRIST<sup>4</sup>**

3     ***A Biblical Understanding of “Call”***

4     The experience of God intentionally reaching out to the human family with guidance, warning,  
 5     comfort, direction and inspiration is foundational to the biblical narrative. The nature of this  
 6     reaching out, this “call,” is varied, unpredictable, and directed to both individuals and  
 7     communities, who each and together must discern its intent. All authorized and lay ministries in  
 8     the United Church of Christ assume the faithful are called by God to service, witness, and fully  
 9     engaged discipleship in the world.

10    In both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, ours is a God who calls each of God’s  
 11    people to faithfulness: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are  
 12    mine.” (Isaiah 43:1); “No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his  
 13    master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have  
 14    made known to you.” (John 15:15); “He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are  
 15    called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.” (Hebrews 9:15).

16    While scripture makes clear that God’s call to faithfulness comes to all disciples, the biblical  
 17    witness affirms that some are called to respond to that call in specific ways: “And his gifts were  
 18    that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers.”  
 19    (Ephesians 4:11) To Jeremiah God says, “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and  
 20    before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” (Jeremiah 1:5)  
 21    The call is related to the context as God calls Esther “for such a time as this.” (Esther 4:13-17) A  
 22    sense of such call is the critical foundation, inspiration and ongoing guide to all who consider,  
 23    prepare for and become authorized for ministry in the United Church of Christ

24    ***Call to Ministry in the United Church of Christ***

25    The United Church of Christ seeks to respond faithfully to the call of God to participate in God’s  
 26    mission in this world. We claim that reality and relationship in our UCC Constitution:

27           The United Church of Christ recognizes that God calls the whole Church and  
 28           every member to participate in and extend the ministry of Jesus Christ by wit-  
 29           nessing to the Gospel in church and society. The United Church of Christ seeks  
 30           to undergird the ministry of its members by nurturing faith, calling forth gifts,  
 31           and equipping members for Christian service. (Paragraph 20, 2005 edition)

32    In the United Church of Christ Statement of Faith we testify that we experience God as active and  
 33    God’s call as life-giving and life-shaping:

34           “You call the worlds into being,” *we affirm.*  
 35           *And later we add:*  
 36           You call us into your church  
 37           to accept the cost and joy of discipleship,

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<sup>4</sup> From Ministry Issues, Draft Two, February 2007

1 to be your servants in the service of others,  
2 to proclaim the Gospel to all the world  
3 and resist the powers of evil,  
4 to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table,  
5 to join him in his passion and victory.  
6 (UCC Statement of Faith as a Doxology, 1981)

## 7 ***Who is called? How?***

8 God's call comes to every Christian. God's call comes in various voices, at various times,  
9 inviting, challenging, urging persons and communities to respond faithfully. That call is, at the  
10 same time, both an invitation to and the gift of the possibility or potential to respond. From  
11 ancient times as recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures, God is heard "calling" individuals and  
12 communities to serve God in various ways. People in all walks of life, at various stages of life,  
13 and in all times hear God's Spirit inviting or urging or even commanding them to respond  
14 obediently. God is known and active as creator, judge, redeemer, and God's people are called to  
15 participate in God's activity in this world. The call is not always clearly understood. The  
16 response is often a mixture of faith and fear; but the tradition continues. God calls us to be God's  
17 people in whatever time and place God chooses.

18 Individual Christians and the whole Christian Church continue to hear God's call. We, too,  
19 respond in mixed ways. Sometimes we find it difficult to determine whether the call we hear is  
20 from God, from ourselves, or from other powers. Sometimes we find it difficult to understand the  
21 character of a faithful response. Sometimes we lack the courage or openness to proceed in new  
22 directions or even to stay faithfully in place. When we hear and respond, it is God's grace at  
23 work within us. Every Christian is "called" to ministry, to participate in God's work in the world.

24 God speaks, and persons hear, in various ways. God speaks through Scripture, through friends  
25 and family, through teachers, through enemies, through silence, through nature, through art,  
26 through the Christ, and infinitely more. This holy experience is often intensely personal, perhaps  
27 also private. It may be overwhelmingly powerful or mildly confusing. Later testimony may  
28 express the experience with "I know," or "I knew," words of certainty and conviction. Or  
29 individuals may look to others in the community of faith to help them to listen, hear, and  
30 understand what it is that God is saying. Time is a factor. When God is ready, the persons or  
31 community being called may find themselves doggedly pursued and unable to resist. The  
32 knowledge of God's leading is real, often on multiple levels, and commands response.

33 Persons are also called, as God speaks to us, through and by the particular gifts they have. The  
34 New Testament reminds us in more than one place that the Spirit gives gifts, that the gifts are  
35 varied, and that the gifts are given to individuals for the life of the whole community. Indeed,  
36 one's "secret" and individual/personal call may be verbalized by another who recognizes God's  
37 call in the individual's gifts. The observation that "You'd make a good . . ." or the invitation  
38 suggesting "Have you ever thought about . . . ?" is often the Spirit's calling through that  
39 recognition. Particular ministries, whatever their character and context, require particular gifts  
40 and the reality of such gifts is, itself, also God's call.

41 The Church strives to be faithful to God's mission in this world. As it is both the Body of Christ  
42 and a human community, the Church requires leaders who themselves are called by Christ into  
43 the Church and who are also called by both Christ and the Church to become authorized  
44 ministers. Their particular role and work is to "equip the saints for the work of ministry." These  
45 persons are called in this four-fold sense:



- 1 1. They are members of the Church who are called in their baptisms and membership  
2 promises to be a member of the Body of Christ in ministry in and to God's world;
- 3 2. They are persons of faith who know God in their individual experience and hear God's  
4 particular call to them;
- 5 3. They are persons whose gifts are those required by the Church in order for it to be that  
6 which God calls and commands it to be; and finally
- 7 4. They are persons called by the Church as it, too, responds to God's call to mission.<sup>5</sup>

8 When all these facets of God's call are heard in the community, the Church proceeds toward  
9 authorizing such persons for ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ. In the  
10 United Church of Christ, authorization is by ordination, commissioning, or licensure.

### 11 ***New Relationships, New Responsibilities***

12 Once the call is heard and recognized, the person is in a new relationship with God, and,  
13 therefore, with all that God loves. In the sacrament of baptism the one being baptized now  
14 belongs to Christ and Christ's church; that one is "called." In the rite of confirmation and in other  
15 liturgies of uniting with a congregation, the individual is "called" yet again and invited to respond  
16 faithfully. In countless ways, formal and informal, we are called by God again and again and all  
17 of life becomes a process of continuing to respond. When a person is authorized by ordination,  
18 commissioning or licensure within the United Church of Christ, the Church and the person enter  
19 an ongoing covenant of mutual accountability and responsibility in service to God's mission.

20 As persons experience God's call, the Church and its members must be continually listening and  
21 sharing their experiences and understandings. Often we have interpreted being "called to  
22 ministry" only in terms of the Church's authorized ministries. We have not honored the  
23 importance of witnessing to Christ in the many ways we encounter God's world. Nor have we  
24 recognized the many forms of work and participation in the world which God may be using to  
25 bring new life to humanity and all creation. The tradition of the Protestant reformers, based upon  
26 their reading of the New Testament and claimed by the United Church of Christ, affirms the  
27 vocation of the whole body, of all members, of the "priesthood of all believers." All Christians  
28 are called to ministry. The issue for discernment is to *what* ministry is this person, or is this  
29 community, called at this time. By the power of the Spirit we are graced to hear the particulars of  
30 the call and to respond. We almost never do that alone.

31 Typically many participants, individuals and communities, are involved in the process of one  
32 person being called to ministry. However, in the United Church of Christ, Congregations and  
33 Associations have particular responsibility for authorization itself and, therefore, must assume  
34 primary roles and work together in accompanying persons who may be called to such ministries.  
35 All participants are required to be faithful to Christ, to the whole Church, and to one another in  
36 this endeavor. As they listen together for God's call, they will keep in mind these dimensions of  
37 the call to authorized ministry:

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<sup>5</sup> See *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry*, by H. Richard Niebuhr, c. 1956.)

- 1           1. *Call occurs in many ways, many circumstances, and many seasons of life.* Jeremiah and  
2 Samuel were called by God at an early age, but it is not assumed that a call to authorized  
3 ministry must be heard from youth. Paul’s transformation in Acts 9 is a pivotal  
4 illustration of the about-face which call can precipitate after an initial path through life  
5 has already begun. Peter and Andrew were busy “casting a net into the sea,” and James  
6 and John were “mending their nets” when Jesus called to them and they chose to follow.  
7 (Matthew 4:18-22). The changing nature of ministry in the church, and the need for  
8 leaders who are experienced in varied ways, will demand that both Members and  
9 Committees on Ministry be open to calls which come in nontraditional and unexpected  
10 life circumstances.
- 11           2. *Call is not a single moment, but a continuing openness to hearing God’s direction.*  
12 Those preparing for authorized ministry and those already authorized must recognize that  
13 vital and engaged spiritual leadership requires attentiveness to the ongoing nature of call.  
14 Long after his conversion and initial call, Paul continued to listen for new direction: “A  
15 vision appeared to Paul in the night... and when he had seen the vision, immediately we  
16 sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel  
17 to them.” (Acts 16:9-10) Discernment of call is a perpetual task for those who lead in the  
18 church; processes of preparation and formation and the everyday practice of authorized  
19 ministry to and within the United Church of Christ may lead to unexpected results and  
20 changes of course.
- 21           3. *Call to authorized ministry is discerned with others.* The UCC is committed to shared  
22 and accountable leadership in the church, beginning with the understanding of call  
23 outlined in these documents. Members considering authorized ministry, those in a formal  
24 process of preparation, and those already authorized, must be in consistent relationship  
25 and regular conversation with Committees on Ministry, local church leaders, trusted  
26 guides, mentors, teachers and supervisors in order to follow the biblical example of  
27 communal discernment of call. “Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life  
28 to which you were called when you made the good confession in the presence of many  
29 witnesses.” (1 Timothy 6:12) The community of faith participates in the call of God  
30 when Matthias is called to discipleship following Jesus’ resurrection. (Acts 1:15-26)  
31 While personal reflection and decision-making is a key component of discernment of  
32 call, from the earliest days of the Christian church through to the last edition of the  
33 Manual on Ministry, personal call is shaped and confirmed in the community of those  
34 representing the church in which ministry is to be practiced.
- 35 It is critical that those preparing for and practicing authorized ministry in the United Church of  
36 Christ affirm that God’s personal call is ongoing and unpredictable, that discernment of call in  
37 community may lead to unexpected results and varied tasks, and that one must always be able and  
38 willing to articulate one’s evolving understanding of call for those served by that ministry.

## 1                   **CREATING A “CULTURE OF CALL” IN THE LOCAL** 2                   **CHURCH**

3                   The effectiveness, faithfulness and vitality of the United Church of Christ begin in the local  
4                   church with the partnership between committed laity and capable and well-prepared clergy. Most  
5                   every authorized minister in the UCC can point to a member of the clergy who inspired and  
6                   influenced them at some point in their journey, perhaps who even encouraged them to consider a  
7                   vocation as an authorized minister.

8                   As many search committees of local churches can confirm, the number of available and qualified  
9                   candidates for pastoral positions has diminished in the last generation, and the trend promises to  
10                  continue. This is often more pronounced for congregations with smaller membership and/or  
11                  outside metropolitan areas, but the trend is evident throughout the church. As current clergy  
12                  retire, there are fewer younger professionals to replace them. In 2006 the Wesley Theological  
13                  Seminary conducted a study of leadership in mainline Protestant denominations over the previous  
14                  decade, and the results are illustrative. Ministers younger than 35 represented only seven percent  
15                  of these denominations supply of pastors, while those between the ages of 35 and 54 comprise 52  
16                  percent of the supply, and those 55 and older, 41 percent [citation on record]

17                 Especially for the United Church of Christ, the challenges of a dwindling supply of pastoral  
18                 leaders must be met in the context of every local congregation, in which faith is first formed and  
19                 nurtured in young people. Congregations which are ably equipped to speak the language of call  
20                 and to take intentional steps to nurture and identify future leaders will contribute to the health and  
21                 vitality of their own communities and the wider denomination.

22                 At the heart of the understanding of Christian ministry in the United Church of Christ is the  
23                 theological conviction that God calls *all* disciples to serve, and equips and empowers them to do  
24                 so not only as active members of local congregations, but in their work and witness in daily life,  
25                 wherever that may take them. For some the call to Christian ministry may be to a ministry in the  
26                 church requiring specific education, formation and, perhaps, authorization. The vitality of the  
27                 whole church depends upon identifying, nurturing and empowering those who may feel such a  
28                 call to pursue ordained, commissioned or licensed ministry. The *culture of call* in each local  
29                 church is the ongoing commitment of that congregation to identify and nurture future leaders of  
30                 the church, long before they reach the point of connection with Committees on Ministry.

31                 No matter the size or circumstance of a congregation, there are some fundamental characteristics  
32                 which reflect a living culture of call:

- 33                 • Belief in the priesthood of all believers and the call that comes to every disciple is  
34                 regularly expressed and acted out through the language, worship, and established  
35                 relationships within the congregation.
- 36                 • There is an intergenerational approach to the ministries of the local congregation, and  
37                 youth and young adults are invited and enabled to be involved in the work and mission of  
38                 the church. The church has an identifiable mission which provides opportunity for  
39                 meaningful involvement.
- 40                 • The congregation as a whole is connected to the life of the wider church, including a  
41                 familiarity with the process by which members may move into intentional forms of  
42                 vocational ministry.

- 1       • The pastor and the congregation are aware of the needs for future leadership and  
2       committed to identify and nurture—in any number of ways—such leaders from within  
3       their membership, on behalf of both the local church and the wider church.

4       Depending on a congregation's setting and circumstances, mentoring, internships, and residency  
5       programs may be helpful tools for developmentally appropriate exploration of call and practice of  
6       ministry. Churches in college towns or with seminaries nearby may be able to invite and support  
7       students at various stages of discernment. Some congregations have partnered with others to  
8       support a student minister, and others have developed youth programs which keep the option of a  
9       career in ministry consistently present.

10      It is not only congregations in geographic proximity to colleges and seminaries that can develop a  
11      culture of call, however. Indeed, congregations that may be farther away from traditional sources  
12      of education and preparation have a particular opportunity and challenge to identify, raise up and  
13      support those in their congregations who manifest potential for authorized ministry. In  
14      implementing the Ministry Issues pronouncement, the United Church of Christ is developing  
15      innovative paths of preparation and a variety of resources to equip leaders for the church. Every  
16      local church holds both potential future church leaders in its midst, and the capacity to make their  
17      identification, nurture and support part of their ongoing mission and witness. A productive  
18      culture of call can be expressed through a variety of simple practices, including:

- 19      • Helping persons of all ages, but especially the young, recognize they are already  
20      ministers
- 21      • Developing eyes to see individuals with potential for ministry
- 22      • Providing appropriate opportunities for persons to engage in leadership
- 23      • Recognizing that language is world-creating, and choosing to use the language of call in  
24      the varied settings of the church
- 25      • Making the most of potentially transformative experiences like mission trips
- 26      • Avoiding negative stereotypes of careers in ministry (overemphasis on low pay, long  
27      hours, etc.) and providing affirmative support for active and retired authorized ministers
- 28      • Encouraging and supporting members in Association and Conference activities, including  
29      service on Committees on Ministry
- 30      • Engaging in one-on-one conversations between clergy and members about the possibility  
31      of ministry.
- 32      • Inviting ordained, licensed, and commissioned ministers in the congregation to tell their  
33      own stories of call
- 34      • Giving explicit descriptions and invitations from the pulpit
- 35      • Highlighting authorized ministers who have been raised up in a congregation
- 36      • Being aware of and supporting seminary education

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2

# THE SECOND MOVEMENT

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4

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## THE PREPARATION AND FORMATION FOR MINISTRY OF MEMBERS WHO ARE CALLED TO AUTHORIZED MINISTRIES

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### Core Understandings

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#### *II. Call to Authorized Ministry (Ordination, Commissioning, Licensing) in the United Church of Christ (The Second Movement)*

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1. When a member's call leads to consideration of authorized ministry, the Church and that member together seek to discern God's particular call to that person. Such discernment and response is an ongoing practice.
2. The primary question guiding discernment is, "To what ministry is this person called?" And then, "Does this ministry require authorization? If so, what form of authorization?"
3. The particular program of formation and preparation for possible authorization of that member is determined by the Committee on Ministry, in consultation with the member and the Local Church, according to the needs of the UCC, the gifts of the person, and the "Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ." It is anticipated that a seminary degree program will continue to be the preferred primary educational process for most potential candidates for ordination.
4. As the member who is called prepares for possible authorization, discernment continues within a covenant among the person, the Association (through its Committee on Ministry) representing the UCC, and the Local Church.
5. The Covenant of Discernment and Formation replaces the current UCC practice of a "Student In Care." A Covenant of Discernment and Formation is the process to be followed for all forms of authorization.

1 **III. Readiness for Authorization (The Second Movement)**

- 2 1. Throughout the time of Discernment and Formation, the Committee on Ministry, in  
3 continuing conversation with the member and the Local Church, engages in discerning  
4 the member's call, determines an appropriate and effective program of preparation for  
5 that member, and assesses progress toward readiness for authorization.  
6  
7 2. In determining readiness for authorization, the Committee on Ministry focuses on the  
8 potential candidate's qualifications for that particular authorization rather than on the  
9 completion of one particular educational process. This determination is guided by the  
10 "Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ"  
11 and the needs of the Church.  
12  
13 3. Each authorization (licensing, commissioning, ordination) is defined by the UCC  
14 Constitution and Bylaws.  
15  
16 4. The Association determines whether and when to proceed to authorization on behalf of  
17 the United Church of Christ.  
18

19 **V. UCC Identity and Authorized Ministry (All Movements)**

- 20 1. All authorized ministers of the United Church of Christ, commissioned, licensed, or  
21 ordained, serve on behalf of the whole United Church of Christ.  
22  
23 2. UCC identity and relationships are a fundamental component of the call to, the  
24 preparation for, and the practice of authorized ministry.  
25  
26 3. The United Church of Christ is committed to fostering an environment that celebrates  
27 diversity of expressions of Christian faith and promotes mutually enriching interaction of  
28 various Christian cultures, theologies, spiritualities and ideologies.

# 1        **A NARRATIVE SUMMARY OF THE NEW “IN CARE”:** 2        **A COVENANT OF DISCERNMENT AND FORMATION<sup>6</sup>**

## 3        ***History and Background***

4        For some time, “student in care of an Association” has referred to both the designation and the  
5        process through which a candidate for ministry has been in covenant with the authorizing body of  
6        an Association during his or her period of preparation. As the most recent edition of the Manual  
7        on Ministry indicates, the purpose of this relationship is “to provide support, counsel, and  
8        assistance to the student during the time of the student’s academic preparation for the ordained  
9        ministry.” [Section 2, page 1] The Ministry Issue Pronouncement adopted by the 25th General  
10       Synod in 2005, recognizing the changing needs of the wider church and the variety of  
11       circumstances in which those considering authorized ministry may find themselves, demands  
12       reevaluation of the traditional in care model.

## 13       ***A New Model for Discernment and Formation***

14       A new model for responsible nurture of those considering authorized ministry—a “Covenant of  
15       Discernment and Formation”—will address three particular areas of concern in the current model.  
16       First, though the present Manual clearly defines the in care relationship as one existing between  
17       the person in care, the local church in which he or she is a member, and the Association, in  
18       practice the current model does not meaningfully engage the local church in shared nurture or  
19       accountability, beyond initial recommendation to the Committee on Ministry, usually at the  
20       initiative of the person in care. A new model must create true partnership with the local  
21       congregation in the nurture of potential candidates for ministry.

22       Secondly, the present in care model assumes the person in care, prior to coming to a Committee  
23       on Ministry to be brought in care, “has been called by God and... is preparing for the ordained  
24       Christian ministry.” [Section 2, page 1] The call to ministry in the in care process is assumed, as  
25       is the person’s trajectory toward ordained Christian ministry, in many cases to the local church  
26       setting. The new model maintains that discernment of call is itself the primary task throughout  
27       this covenantal relationship, not just during the initial phase. The task of ongoing discernment  
28       will expand the responsibility, training and focus of mentors, advisors, and Association  
29       committees; necessarily involve the local congregation in an ongoing intentional relationship in  
30       which recognition and differentiation of call can be explored; and require potential candidates to  
31       remain open to the movement of the Spirit in evolving self-understanding of call without  
32       predetermination of a particular form of ministry and, consequently, authorization.

33       A key characteristic of the “new in care” is, therefore, continuing openness to a variety of  
34       outcomes, even ones that are unexpected. Clear understanding of what discernment is, and  
35       provision of the necessary tools to do it among covenant partners, is fundamental to the intent of  
36       the new model. Within this process of discernment and formation all covenant partners provide a  
37       community of mutual accountability—which may include alternative agencies or entities in  
38       which the individual may be working during this period.

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<sup>6</sup> From Ministry Issues Draft Two, February 2007.

1 Lastly, the present in care model assumes a guiding relationship “during the time of the student’s  
 2 academic preparation.” [Section 2, page 1] Because the Ministry Issues Pronouncement of 2005  
 3 clearly recognizes both a variety of valid pathways to ministry and a diversity of settings and  
 4 needs of the churches to be served, the traditional academic assumptions of the period of in care,  
 5 though still applicable to many, are no longer exclusive. The new model must be relevant and  
 6 meaningful for all circumstances and settings for those discerning, responding to and potentially  
 7 seeking authorization of a call to ministry.

8 ***The Ministry of Nurture and Support of Members in Discernment***

9 The new model for nurture of those considering ministry in the United Church of Christ  
 10 necessitates changes in the traditional model of in care in four distinct areas: new terminology,  
 11 new focus, new process, and new understandings of the need for authorization. Foundational to  
 12 these changes is the fundamental conviction that the work of nurture and support of those  
 13 discerning a call to ministry is a ministry in and of itself; not merely guidance in meeting  
 14 practical requirements, but personal engagement, sharing of faith, and challenge and growth for  
 15 all partners in the covenant.

<b>From:</b>	<b>To:</b>
Applicant/Student In Care	Member in Discernment
Preparation for Authorization	Discernment of Call and Formation
Meeting Educational Requirements	Developing & Assessing Readiness
Preparation Ending in Authorization	Ongoing Formation & Lifelong Learning

16

17 The Manual’s current terminology of “applicant” and “student in care of an Association”  
 18 embodies and assumes a person has a well-defined call, an academic orientation, a trajectory  
 19 toward ordained Christian ministry, as well as nurture in the form of meeting uniform  
 20 requirements on an agreed upon schedule. The new model begins from the assumption that  
 21 individuals come to their local congregations and then to Committees on Ministry with only a  
 22 clear sense of call and a desire to engage that belief with others of faith and experience in the  
 23 tradition. The new model, therefore, requires the individual have openness to discernment with  
 24 covenant partners around the nature and direction of that call — even if the vocational trajectory  
 25 seems clear initially. “Member in Discernment” more aptly describes the individual not only in  
 26 the initial phase of their relationship with a Committee on Ministry and their home congregation,  
 27 but throughout the process toward authorization—and beyond.

28 An opening period of discernment lasts for as long as is necessary for all three covenant partners  
 29 to become satisfied—through a process of mutual engagement—that the MID has a call, and that  
 30 call has been affirmed by all. At that point the Committee on Ministry has responsibility to  
 31 answer the question, “Is the Member called to ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of  
 32 Christ?” The Committee may discern at this point that the MID’s call as a baptized Christian is  
 33 not to an authorized ministry. Therefore, since authorization is not required, no further  
 34 relationship with a Committee on Ministry is necessary — though the Committee may act as a  
 35 resource to the local church to help the individual find a means of acting on her or his particular  
 36 call.

37 The Committee may also discern that the MID does have a call to authorized ministry in and on  
 38 behalf of the UCC, and the work of discernment may turn to potential setting and type of



1 ministry. Is it word and sacrament in a local church or other setting? Chaplaincy, missionary or  
2 conference work? A ministry requiring commissioning, licensure, or ordination? Again,  
3 outcome is not assumed and a period of intentional discernment is needed. This ongoing focus on  
4 discernment allows for a distinctly non-linear process when appropriate, in which the Member in  
5 Discernment may be led to amend initial trajectories, and, in turn, move the covenant partners to  
6 revise the process best suited for preparation and possible authorization.

7 For example, if the MID, Committee on Ministry, and local congregation come to clarity on  
8 setting or type of ministry, discernment may become focused on formation. A MID, guided by  
9 the Committee with input and affirmation from the local congregation, might be led to establish a  
10 program of mentoring, study, and nurture as is appropriate to prepare responsibly for the  
11 particular form of authorized ministry. For many this preparation will be a continuation of  
12 academic studies, but for others there will be more emphasis on practical experience, guidance  
13 from those experienced in the specific field of ministry, and other forms of formation as are  
14 deemed appropriate. Conversely, an agreed-upon path of formation might lead to experiences  
15 that do not confirm assumptions of setting or type of ministry, and return the Member to  
16 continued covenantal discernment of how best to respond to a call. Unlike the previous in-care  
17 model, the Covenant of Discernment and Formation assumes no static trajectory toward a  
18 particular outcome.

19 The new model insists that this part of the process for all MIDs include UCC identity formation,  
20 including courses in UCC history, theology, polity and practice; experience in the denomination  
21 at all levels; knowledge of and engagement with UCC issues; and integrity and accountability to  
22 the covenants embodied in authorization to ministry within the denomination. A MID must  
23 discern if the United Church of Christ is truly the denomination of his or her heart, and if the MID  
24 has the capacity to help others embrace the same appreciation and enthusiasm.

25 When a MID completes the program of formation worked out in covenant with the Committee on  
26 Ministry and the local congregation, that MID may request authorization, be it ordination,  
27 commissioning or licensure.

28 The elements within a Covenant of Discernment and Formation are decidedly nonlinear, allowing  
29 the partners in the covenant to adapt to the unique gifts and needs of the MID and the  
30 communities from which they have come, and to which they may be called. Bearing in mind that  
31 discernment is by definition not a sequential, predictable process, certain moments of discernment  
32 can nonetheless be identified. A formal beginning, an entry point for the Covenant of  
33 Discernment and Formation; a covenant of formation, in which an appropriate learning plan is  
34 defined; assessment of readiness, using the collection of "Marks" provided specifically for this  
35 purpose; formal authorization appropriate to the particular ministry; and an ongoing covenant of  
36 mutual accountability, which the authorized minister is then bound to for the duration of  
37 authorization. It is critical to understanding this new model that between beginning and the  
38 ongoing covenant, the middle moments of discernment can and will occur in many permutations,  
39 depending on the MID's circumstance, the needs of the community, and the collective wisdom of  
40 the Committee on Ministry. Since this process is a sacred journey guided by the Holy Spirit,  
41 Committees on the Ministry may wish to celebrate simple rituals that mark the Member's  
42 movement through the process, such as an affirmation of Baptism, a commitment to covenant,  
43 even a ritual of separation should the COM discern that the Member is not called to an authorized  
44 ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ. At that moment, it will be important to  
45 reaffirm the call that each Christian receives in Baptism and encourage the Member to heed and  
46 follow that call, with the support of their local congregation.

1 ***Points of Discernment in the Covenant of Discernment and***  
 2 ***Formation***

3 While discernment is a fluid and ongoing process, there are some specific points that identify  
 4 transitions on the path of discerning a call to authorized ministry and readiness for authorization.  
 5 These include:

<b>A New Model: Covenant of Discernment and Formation</b>	
<b>Mutual Covenant of Discernment</b>	This is the entry point to the process that is agreed upon by the Member in Discernment (MID), the MID’s home church community and the Association Committee on Ministry. NOTE: Prior to this step, the church community will engage with the MID in a process of discernment both about recommending the MID to the Association and their own willingness to be active partners in the Covenant of Discernment and Formation.
<b>Covenant of Formation</b>	Prior to entering this phase, a decision is made about whether the MID’s call is to a form of UCC authorized ministry and what that form might be: licensed, ordained, commissioned. At this point a learning plan is defined including educational expectations as well as mentoring/experience and an outline of other areas of ministerial readiness needing further formation. A specific plan will be agreed upon by all covenantal parties.
<b>Assessment of Readiness for Authorization</b>	Using the collection of “Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers,” the COM, in covenant with the MID and her/his local church, discerns the MID’s readiness for authorization. By this point in the process, the Committee on the Ministry will have used multiple tools for discernment: psychological assessment, reports from such experiences as field education or supervised ministry, reviews from seminaries or other educational programs, reports from CPE supervisors and MID mentors, feedback from the MID’s church community as well as their own relationship with the MID and intentional times of prayer and reflection.
<b>Authorization</b>	Pending a call from a specific body, the COM determines the MID is ready for authorization. At this point, the MID becomes a Candidate for Authorized Ministry. Authorization is celebrated in a rite of commissioning, licensure, or ordination.
<b>Ongoing Covenant of Accountability</b>	ALL persons holding UCC ministerial authorization enter into this covenant that includes accountability to their Association and the Wider Church, agreement to engage regularly in continuing education and a commitment to ongoing nurture and formation.

6  
 7 These phases are not necessarily linear. However, all the phases of discernment, whenever they  
 8 occur and for whatever duration, are significant.

9 ***Expectations of Committees on Ministry***

10 The new model of nurturing individuals for possible authorized ministry within the UCC—the  
 11 Covenant of Discernment and Formation—demands much of Committees on Ministry, including:

- 1       1. **Commitment** to and capacity for enabling formal processes of discernment, not only as a  
2       Committee in its own work, but as a body tasked with enabling local congregations and  
3       individuals to do the same;
  
- 4       2. **Clarity** about the need for and types of authorization to various ministries within the  
5       denomination, and the most appropriate means of providing formation for each;
  
- 6       3. **Conviction** about the fundamental importance of formation about UCC identity and  
7       loyalty;
  
- 8       4. **Courage** to put the needs of the church above the desire of the individual, particularly in  
9       relation to the need for patience in discernment and the possibility of discernment leading  
10      to unexpected outcomes.
  
- 11

# 1        **UNDERSTANDING AND PRACTICING DISCERNMENT**<sup>7</sup>

## 2        ***Introduction: The Ministry of Discernment***

3        There is no dimension of Committee on the Ministry work where discernment is more essential -  
4        and more difficult - than working with persons discerning a call to authorized ministry. The work  
5        of a Committee on the Ministry is organized around essential and measurable expectations:  
6        educational preparation, practical experiences, mentoring relationships, psychological  
7        assessments, theological competence, and UCC identity formation, but discernment as to  
8        readiness for ministry is not always easily quantifiable.

9        In light of the 2005 Ministry Issues Pronouncement, Forming and Preparing Leaders for God's  
10       Church, this ministry has become even more important and complex. Committees on the Ministry  
11       must listen carefully and prayerfully **during this time** to determine: whether they can identify  
12       within each Member in Discernment (MID):

13       **1)** the stirrings and gifting of God;

14       **2)** the right amount and kind of preparation;

15       **3)** the maturity of faith and person that indicates a MID is ready to be authorized for ministry in  
16       and on behalf of the United Church of Christ and, if ready,

17       **4)** for which kind of authorized ministry.

18       Discernment of these elements is not easily reduced to a "Requirement Check List."

19

## 20       ***Core Understandings:***

- 21       • When a member's call leads to consideration of authorized ministry, the Church and  
22       that member together seek to discern God's particular call to that person. Such  
23       discernment and response is an ongoing practice.
- 24       • The particular program of formation and preparation for possible authorization of that  
25       member is determined by the Committee on the Ministry, in consultation with the  
26       member and the Local Church, according to the needs of the UCC and the gifts of the  
27       person.
- 28       • As the member who is called prepares for possible authorization, discernment  
29       continues within a covenant among the person, the Association (through its  
30       Committee on Ministry) representing the UCC, and the Local Church.
- 31       • A Covenant of Discernment and Formation replaces the current UCC practice of a  
32       "Student In Care." A Covenant of Discernment and Formation is the process to be  
33       followed for all forms of authorization.

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<sup>7</sup> Revised from Ministry Issues Draft Two, February 2007

1 Committees on the Ministry touch holy ground when they prayerfully seek to discern God’s will  
2 in their work with individuals. Each person who encounters the Committee hopes to meet on that  
3 holy ground as they engage in a mutual discernment process, faithfully seeking to understand  
4 God’s call in their own lives.

5

## 6 ***Background, Principles and Practices of Discernment***

7 Discernment is an ancient spiritual practice in the life of the church. The Hebrew word for  
8 discernment, *bin*, meaning understanding and judgment, appears 247 times in the Hebrew  
9 Scriptures. In the New Testament, discernment is identified as a spiritual gift given by God  
10 through the Holy Spirit for the good of the whole Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:10).  
11 Discernment is a spiritual practice used by the early church to settle fundamental disputes (Acts  
12 15:1-35) and to choose and “authorize” new deacons (Acts 6:1-7). Discernment in these settings  
13 happens out of concern for the common good of the community, not the good of an individual in  
14 isolation.

15 A simple definition of discernment can be found in the dictionary: (1) to perceive or recognize  
16 and (2) to separate one thing from another. In the New Testament there are two main Greek  
17 words which are commonly translated into the English word "discern:" *Anakrino*, meaning to  
18 examine or judge closely, and *diakrino*, to separate out, to investigate, to examine. Christians who  
19 practice discernment carry out a particular way of perceiving and separating one thing from  
20 another, which may be understood as “...the intentional practice by which a community or  
21 individual seeks, recognizes and intentionally takes part in the activity of God in concrete  
22 situations” (Practicing Our Faith by Dorothy Bass, ed.). Another way to describe Christian  
23 discernment is simply to seek to bring our desires, our will into harmony with God’s desires and  
24 God’s will. By contrast, discernment is not making a decision and then praying to God that what  
25 has been decided is God’s will.

26 Committees on the Ministry are called to practice the spiritual gift of discernment as part of their  
27 own vocation. They are charged to join with the Member in Discernment and her/his home  
28 congregation and faith community to discern the desire of God for that person with regard to the  
29 ministry to which he or she has been called. In order to do this faithfully, members of the  
30 Committee on the Ministry must first be persons who practice discernment in their own lives and  
31 ministries. They must be individuals who can truly listen – listen to potential candidates and to  
32 covenantal partners, listen to one another, listen to the needs of the Church and, most importantly,  
33 listen for and to the voice of God.

34

1 ***A Mutual Journey of Discernment: Words Make a Difference***

2 There are several factors that contribute to a faithful process of mutual discernment. The  
 3 following exercise may help a Committee on the Ministry focus on the characteristics that mark a  
 4 faithful process of discernment:

Respect	Think of a time when you were treated with value and respect by others. What was that like for you? How does your Committee convey a sense of value and respect for persons who sincerely believe that God has called them to ministry in the UCC?
Trust	Think of a time when someone trusted you. What was that like? What effect did that have on your relationship with that person or persons? How do you establish trust with Members in Discernment (MIDs)?
Honesty	Think of a time when either you spoke a hard truth to someone else or they spoke such truth to you in a way that was redemptive. Relate this to another Committee member. How do you communicate concerns or reservations in a way that is straightforward and honest? How do you encourage an answering honesty and openness from MIDs?
Sensitivity	Think of a time that an encounter with someone of a different cultural or racial background or a different sexual orientation or a person with a disability changed you. How do you examine assumptions you may have about ministry within racial/ethnic communities whose composition/language/cultural background differ from that of the majority of your Committee members? How do you include members of a MID's community in the discernment process? <sup>2</sup>

<p>Consistency</p>	<p>Think about a time when you were completely clear and consistent in describing and following a process or project. What difference does consistency make in the relationship with others who are part of the project or process? How do you relate to MIDs in such a way that expectations are clear? How does your Committee work with a MID in such a way that evaluation and assessment become valuable tools of mutual discernment?</p>
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1

2 <sup>2</sup> Under the Proposals for Action in the Ministry Issues Pronouncement, these words appear:

3                   Adapt their procedures of discernment and decision-making by including members of the  
 4                   candidate’s own community in the decision-making processes, taking the time and effort to  
 5                   educate themselves concerning the community’s traditions and needs, and acknowledging the  
 6                   validity of the community’s discernment when a candidate is a member of a racial/ethnic  
 7                   community which is not represented in significant numbers (50% or more) among the  
 8                   members of the Committee on the Ministry;

9                   Adapt their procedures of discernment and decision-making when a candidate is disabled so as to  
 10                   honor that person’s gifts and needs, taking the time and effort to educate themselves  
 11                   appropriately and including other individuals with disabilities in the processes

12

13

14 ***The Process***

15 Committees on the Ministry, local churches, and Members in Discernment, in fulfilling their  
 16 mutual ministry of discernment, will approach major decisions from the perspective of what God  
 17 wills for their lives and the life of the Church. Discerning God’s will is greatly enhanced by the  
 18 following practices:

19 ☉ Listening to God in regular times of prayer and meditation and adopting practices of prayer  
 20 that become part of the fabric of the group

21 ☉ Becoming comfortable with silence; avoid the feeling of needing to rush the process.

22 ☉ Talking over decisions with covenantal partners (COM, MID, and the member’s local church)  
 23 who can help one listen for God’s desire;

24 ☉ Working regularly with a spiritual director; for support and/or guidance/encouragement so that  
 25 as individuals there is a developing comfort level with the spiritual questions and seeking that  
 26 would be helpful in understanding the process of discernment for the church and ministry or  
 27 the local church.

1 Discernment is a spiritual discipline rather than a mechanical process.

2

3 What does consensus look like in the United Church of Christ? There are a variety of traditions of  
4 discernment that the UCC can draw upon as it makes this practice its own.

5

6 One approach makes use of the “movements” outlined by Ignatius of Loyola in his Spiritual  
7 Exercises:<sup>8</sup>

8 o Consolation: when we feel a sense of rightness, a “fit,” an inner confirmation;

9 o Desolation: when we are confronted with an inner feeling of imbalance, unease, anxiety  
10 or depression.

11 Ignatius also tells us that we need to keep several things in mind if we are to truly practice  
12 discernment. These things have to do with our openness to God and our attitude when seeking  
13 God’s guidance. Three things are needed:

14 ☉ Commitment to follow God and to know God’s desire;

15 ☉ An attitude of indifference – a letting go of preconceived ideas and desires as to the “right”  
16 outcome to truly be free to listen for [begin to recognize](#) and follow God’s desire;

17 ☉ A deep sensitivity to the ways and being of God.

18

19 Another approach is the Quaker practice of the clearness committee. A clearness committee  
20 process is rooted in the convictions that each person has an “inner teacher” that can be accessed,  
21 and that all are capable of growth and change. Discernment does not involve instruction or the  
22 giving of advice. Rather, it includes careful listening, encouragement and the asking clarifying  
23 questions. When a committee works with a member in discernment it prays to be a channel of  
24 divine guidance for the member. When a committee is seeking to “become of one mind” in its  
25 own decision making, it becomes the communal context for the discernment process for each  
26 individual member. In either case, advanced communication is necessary. The member seeking  
27 clearness writes or reports orally prior to the meeting about the issues the member is wrestling  
28 with. This allows the committee to begin at a better informed place.

29

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<sup>8</sup> Ignatius of Loyola was a 15<sup>th</sup> century priest who founded the Society of Jesus. The Spiritual Exercises were a part of the discipline of the order. The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola are available in print from several publishers, including Paulist Press. Other writers on the practice of discernment include Dorothy Bass, ed. (*Practicing our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*, 1997, Jossey Bass) and Parker Palmer (*Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*, 1999, Jossey Bass).



## 1 **A Clearness Committee Process**

2 The following is a description of a clearness committee process that a Committee on the Ministry  
3 can adapt for its work with a Member in Discernment

4 After beginning the meeting in prayer,

5 all settle into a period of centering silence. When the member in discernment is ready,  
6 s/he begins with a brief summary of the question or concern. The discipline for  
7 committee members is very simple—but difficult to follow: members may not speak in  
8 any way except to ask the focus person a question, an honest question. That means no  
9 presenting solutions, no advice, no “Why don't you...?” no “My uncle had the same  
10 problem and he...” no “I know a good book/diet/therapist that would help you a lot.”  
11 Nothing is allowed except honest, probing, caring, challenging, open, unloaded  
12 questions! And it is crucial that these questions be asked not for the sake of the  
13 questioner's curiosity but for the sake of the focus person's clarity. Caring, not curiosity,  
14 is the rule for questioners. The task is to serve as a channel for the Light to help the  
15 member in discernment clarify his or her inner truth...

16 Do not be afraid of silence in the group. In fact, value it, treasure it. The pace of questions  
17 and answers should be gentle, relaxed, humane...If there is silence in the group, it does  
18 not mean nothing is happening. It may very well mean the most important thing of all is  
19 happening, inside of people.

20 Well before the end of the session...ask the member in discernment how s/he wishes to  
21 proceed. This is an opportunity for the member in discernment to choose a mode of  
22 seeking clarity other than questions, which have characterized the session to this point.  
23 Other possibilities for seeking clarity are:

- 24 a. silence out of which anyone can speak...
- 25 b. silence out of which people share images which come to them as they focus on  
26 the member in discernment;
- 27 c. the committee being asked to reflect on what has been said;
- 28 d. the committee being asked to affirm the member in discernment's gifts;
- 29 e. the member in discernment asking questions of the committee.

30 Before the session ends, the member in discernment may share any clarity reached. S/he  
31 and the committee should agree on next steps. If another meeting seems right, it should  
32 be scheduled at this time; additionally, how the member in discernment is engaging with  
33 her/his local church and/or advisor may also be explored.

34 A clearness committee process works best when everyone approaches it in a prayerful  
35 mood (which does not exclude playful!), affirming the reality of each person's inner  
36 guidance and truth, and the Spirit's capacity to strengthen and sustain. This process  
37 invites the relinquishment of the notion that we know what is best for another person and  
38 the attempt, through prayerful listening and speaking, to help remove anything that  
39 obscures their inner light.

40 - adapted from notes on Clearness Committees by Jan Hoffman, New England Yearly Meeting

1

2 ***Marks of Faithful Discernment***

3 Sometimes, discernment is best known/recognized in retrospect, when individuals look back at  
 4 decisions they have made and recognize their “rightness” or “wrongness.” Yet, discernment is an  
 5 act of faith, one in which we are called upon to trust the Holy Spirit and our opening to the  
 6 Spirit’s stirrings and to move forward. How do we know if we have truly discerned God’s desire?  
 7 Several criteria are listed in Practicing Our Faith, edited by Dorothy Bass:

- 8 ☉ Fidelity to scripture and tradition: Decisions are in harmony with the essence of the scriptures  
 9 and our own faith traditions. This is not about adherence to dogma but rather about knowing  
 10 the continuity with our faith even as we await “more light and truth to break forth from God’s  
 11 holy word” and the Still Speaking God.
- 12 ☉ Fruit of the Spirit: Galatians 5:22-23 points us toward this “fruit.” If our decisions are in line  
 13 with God’s desire, we should see such evidence in the lives of those involved.
- 14 ☉ Inner authority and peace: This is another way of speaking of Ignatius’ consolation. Does the  
 15 decision feel “right” not only for the MID but also for the church?
- 16 ☉ Communal harmony: Has the decision led to a feeling of harmony among participants?  
 17 Further, has it enhanced your clarity and commitment to the Mission of God in the United  
 18 Church of Christ?
- 19 ☉ Enhancement rather than diminishment of life: Decisions should contribute to the well-being,  
 20 empowerment and health of those involved as opposed to contributing to diminished self-  
 21 insight, creativity and functioning. This needs also to be viewed from the perspective of the  
 22 church on whose behalf we do this work. Does your decision contribute to the overall health  
 23 and well-being of the church or does it diminish or place the church in jeopardy?

24

25 ***Application***

26 How can Committees on the Ministry, Members in Discernment, and Local Churches apply the  
 27 tools of discernment to their work?

28 First, all parties in the covenant are called upon to examine their commitment to practicing  
 29 discernment. They might ask the following questions:

- 30 ☉ Are we passionately committed to listening for God’s desire?
- 31 ☉ Are we willing to follow what we believe God is calling us to do and to be faithful to the  
 32 needs of the church in this time and as revealed to us by the Spirit?

33

34

## 1 ***Discernment and Consensus Decision Making***

2 The question remains as to how the committee on ministry will come to decisions after a process  
3 of discernment. The approach to decision making most in keeping with discernment is consensus.  
4 Consensus is not voting; it is not majority rule. Consensus is taking the time necessary for true  
5 discernment.

6 Discernment is committed to each hearing the other rather than assuming consensus has been  
7 achieved when it has not actually emerged. Siefert and Clinebell (*Personal Growth and Social*  
8 *Change*) warn against the “tyranny of the verbose” that can masquerade as consensus when  
9 louder voices dominate. Further, the search for consensus can be thwarted by a premature  
10 assertion by a dominant group member such as, “As I’m sure we all agree..,” or “I know I can  
11 speak for the group when I say...”

12 By contrast, discernment does not defer to dominant voices; instead, discernment creates the time  
13 and space for all voices to be heard. It calls for the expenditure of the mental and spiritual effort  
14 necessary for the group “to be of one mind,” rather than settling for a “least common  
15 denominator” compromise that may result in a conclusion that everyone begrudgingly expresses  
16 willingness to live with instead of a decision that all can fully support. Consensus does not  
17 require unanimity but it is committed to finding those affirmations that all can support. It means  
18 arriving at a place of “knowing” and of “readiness.”

19 In order to be ready to engage in consensus decision making, a Committee on Ministry is  
20 encouraged to devote a session to Bible study and spiritual nurture as they seek the wisdom  
21 necessary for making careful decisions. The Committee also needs to affirm that HOW decisions  
22 are made is as important as making the decisions. Consensus works when there is maturity,  
23 flexibility, a willingness to give way for the good of the group, to listen rather than to hold forth,  
24 and to invent rather than insist. Consensus calls forth the best that is in us.

25 Prerequisites for a committee use of consensus include:

26                   Unity of purpose within the group.

27                   Equal access to power.

28                   Autonomy of the group from external hierarchical structures.

29                   Time for process as well as tasks.

30                   Commitment to cooperation, trust, sense of community, and openness to  
31 change.

32                   Willingness in the group to learn and practice skills communication and,  
33 facilitation skills

34

35 For more on this understanding of consensus decision making, visit  
36 <http://www.liveoakuu.org/consensus.html>.

1

2 ***A Process for Consensus***

3 (adapted from Local Church Ministries Guide for Search Committees)

4

5

- Introduction of the information needed by the group

6

- Discussion of the material.

7

- The facilitator's role is critical as all voices should be heard

8

- The facilitator asks for a non-binding vote to gain a sense of where the group is in their thinking. A non-binding vote is not a decision; rather it gives the group an idea as to whether they might already have reached consensus.

9

10

11

- Are all in full agreement

12

- Are most in agreement

13

- Can those not in agreement support the majority view – can they

14

- live with it? If not, their thoughts should be shared

15

- If any remain in strong opposition then the committee will have to determine its response.

16

## 1 **LOCAL CHURCH MINISTRY DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE** 2 **WITH A MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT**<sup>9</sup>

3 This document is offered for local churches with members whose call they have nurtured and  
4 who are interested in being received into a Covenant of Discernment and Formation as the initial  
5 step on the path to authorization for ministry. Experience suggests that it is valuable for the well-  
6 being of the Member in Discernment for the church in which he or she holds membership to form  
7 a *Ministry Discernment Committee* as soon as the member makes his/her interest known rather  
8 than assigning this discernment to an existing group or committee within the church.

9 The *Ministry Discernment Committee* should be appointed by the governing body of a local  
10 church whenever a member of that church is interested in being received into a covenant of  
11 discernment and formation with the Association. This Committee (MDC) assumes responsibility,  
12 together with the pastor, for fulfilling the steps analogous to those detailed in the current *Manual*  
13 *on Ministry* regarding the local church's role in the in care process.

14 The makeup of the MDC will vary depending on the structure of a local church. One model for  
15 composing the committee calls for 4 to 6 members; one or two chosen by the person considering  
16 the covenant of discernment and formation, one or two chosen by the governing body from the  
17 church's membership who exhibit maturity of faith and commitment to the Church of Jesus  
18 Christ, one member of the governing body itself, and the pastor. The MDC will be trained in its  
19 responsibilities by a representative of the Committee on the Ministry.

20 The MDC should meet regularly with the candidate for Member in Discernment status. The  
21 Committee's purpose is to create a caring and exploratory environment in which the candidate  
22 can risk testing his/her vocational aspirations. The committee represents the local congregation in  
23 helping this individual discern the particular *gifts* for ministry which God has given the candidate;  
24 it also provides a forum for exploring the individual's *call to authorized* ministry. This  
25 exploration includes discussing the meaning of ministry in general and looking specifically at  
26 differences between the call to authorized ministry and the baptismal call of all Christ's people.  
27 The MDC also reviews with the candidate his/her personal history, experience in the local church,  
28 and spiritual journey.

29 There are varieties of discernment practices among UCC congregations. Discernment will look  
30 different in the various setting of the United Church of Christ and will reflect the multiracial and  
31 multicultural diversity of our church. Approaches to discernment will be shaped by the culture  
32 and tradition of the congregation as well as the specifics of the relationship the congregation has  
33 with the member (how long the member has been part of the congregation, how s/he has  
34 participated, etc.). [To be done: Share a variety of examples of discernment committees from a  
35 variety of UCC congregations.]

36 Discernment is a way to arrive at understandings, decisions and outcomes that is different from  
37 processes that some will have used previously. Discernment starts with the desire to become  
38 aware of God's will. Discernment requires deep and careful listening. It involves asking questions  
39 not in isolation but within community. It is rooted in prayer and it is comfortable with silence as  
40 member and committee take the time needed to ponder questions and to wait for God's will to be

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<sup>9</sup> Adapted from the process recommended by the SW Wisconsin Association.

1 made manifest. Member and Committee listen for God by listening to each other and by sharing  
2 the silence together where God's still small voice may be heard.

3 Discernment requires trust in the goodwill of the covenant partners and a willingness to accept  
4 the outcomes of the discernment process. Discernment is open to God's surprises. Discernment  
5 calls for flexibility. A rigid format may thwart the movement of the Spirit. Discernment emerges  
6 from a relaxed posture that is willing to allow direction to be known according to God's timeline.  
7 Discernment rests in the joyous and supportive assurance of Emmanuel, God-with-us.  
8 Discernment invites covenant partners into mutual sharing and unfolding awareness.

9 Within the frame of such discernment and in keeping with the traditions and practices appropriate  
10 to the local church, the MDC will carry out the necessary functions analogous to those described  
11 on pages 3-5 (Section 2) of the Manual on the Ministry and help the member realistically and  
12 prayerfully examine the challenges s/he will face as s/he considers preparation for authorized  
13 ministry. Areas of discernment to explore with the member include (the list which follows is  
14 suggestive, not exhaustive):

- 15 • The member's understanding of Christian faith and practice including beliefs about God,  
16 Christ, and church, and commitments to a Christian life including worship, prayer, and  
17 service.
- 18 • The member's sense of call
- 19 • Exploration of the member's gifts for ministry, including ways the gifts have been used  
20 in and beyond the church, and how others have have understood and affirmed these gifts.
- 21 • The member's understanding of her/his call to authorized ministry as distinctive from the  
22 call to ministry of all God's people within the community of the church.
- 23 • Exploration of licensure, commissioning and ordination, the authorized ministries of the  
24 UCC. Final determination regarding authorization will entail ongoing discernment.
- 25 • How the member envisions functioning as an authorized minister. Understandings of  
26 faithful and effective authorized ministry.
- 27 • Questions about authorized ministry. Particular challenges anticipated as the member  
28 imagines fulfilling the office of an authorized minister.
- 29 • Experience in conflicted situations and the member's approach to conflict.
- 30 • Experiences in leadership.
- 31 • Understandings of the physical and emotional stamina and maturity that are needed to  
32 function effectively as an authorized minister.
- 33 • Anticipated preparation for authorized ministry. Seminary? Regional Education Pro-  
34 grams? Mentoring? Is relocation possible?
- 35 • Examination of financial realities. Preparation can be expensive. What is the initial plan  
36 to finance the time of preparation and formation?

- 1           • Issues of employment during the time of preparation and experience and concerns with  
2           balancing academic preparation and working. How might balance be achieved?
- 3           • Household and relationship issues. If the member is part of a household or has a partner,  
4           children, or other covenantal relationships, how do the others in the relationships feel  
5           about a decision of the member to pursue authorized ministry? What does the member  
6           envision regarding balance in household commitments and the maintaining of  
7           relationships during the time of preparation?
- 8           • Reflection on some of the authorized ministers the member admires and respects, and  
9           exploration of how the member sees her/himself as similar to/different from them.

10       It is vital that the member and the Committee enter and continue in discernment as the open-  
11       ended spiritual practice that it is. No one truly knows the outcome at the beginning. Discernment  
12       is a process of conversation, prayer, listening, waiting, gathering and sharing information and  
13       insights, and, most especially, being open to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

14       At the appropriate time, if/when the MDC believes the member is ready to pursue a covenant of  
15       discernment and authorization with the Association, the Committee recommends the member to  
16       the governing body of the local church. The governing body will make the formal request to the  
17       Association Committee on the Ministry that the member be received as Member in Discernment.  
18       If the member enters into the covenant with the Association, the role of the MDC will change.  
19       Because the whole discernment process can be exciting, difficult and sometimes confusing for the  
20       member, it is vital that the local church and the Association seek to support the member all along  
21       the way, not just at the beginning of exploration. The MDC of the local church can stand with the  
22       person if/when she/he becomes discouraged, loses their way or feels put upon or disregarded by  
23       “the system.” MDC will both challenge and support the Member in Discernment and will serve  
24       as a communication link between the member and the congregation, maintain contact with the  
25       Association Committee on the Ministry, and interpret the process as the member’s discernment  
26       and formation continues. The MDC will play a particularly important role during times in the  
27       process when decisions are called for such as a decision to recommend the member for  
28       authorization or a decision that more preparation is needed, or that the covenant of discernment  
29       and formation has ended without the member proceeding to authorization.

1

## ADVISOR IN DISCERNMENT

2 The Advisor-in-Discernment is appointed by the Association Committee on the Ministry and  
3 serves many functions analogous to the role of the in care advisor as identified in the current  
4 *Manual on Ministry*. The role of the Advisor-in-Discernment is critical in the Member-in-  
5 Discernment's exploration of various forms of ministry and preparation for the possibility of  
6 authorized ministry. The Advisor performs several essential functions in this spiritually rich and  
7 multi-dimensional process.

8 Most importantly, the Advisor serves as a trusted companion and guide on the discernment  
9 journey, listening to the Member-in-Discernment's aspirations, anxieties, and uncertainties, and  
10 helping to clarify the individual's sense of God's calling to a particular form of ministry. The  
11 Advisor helps the Member-in-Discernment discover whether authorized ministry is the most  
12 appropriate response to the individual's call, and what type of authorization (licensure,  
13 commissioning, ordination) is most suited to that individual's gifts and graces. This spiritual  
14 companionship involves the encouragement of the Member-in-Discernment's prayer life, habits  
15 of disciplined study, participation in corporate worship, meditation, and other devotional  
16 practices. The Advisor fosters an atmosphere of trust and candor in which the Member-in-  
17 Discernment can raise and explore questions concerning faith, the Christian life, ministry, and the  
18 church. In conversation, the Member-in-Discernment and the Advisor will discuss the Member's  
19 educational plans in the broader context of the Member's spiritual and vocational formation. In an  
20 ethos of mutuality, the Advisor will help the Member-in-Discernment connect theory and  
21 practice, vocational and personal life, and study and action. In short, the Advisor serves as a  
22 coach and counselor throughout the discernment process and the preparation for the possibility of  
23 authorized ministry.

24 The Advisor is an essential component in the network of covenant relations between the Member-  
25 in-Discernment, the Association, the Association's Committee on Ministry, and the local  
26 congregation. Most centrally, the Advisor serves as a link between the Member-in-Discernment  
27 and the Association's Committee on Ministry. In many ways, the Advisor represents the  
28 Association and its Committee on Ministry. The Advisor embodies the church's support for the  
29 Member-in-Discernment. The Advisor will help the Member in Discernment explore ways to  
30 implement the recommendations of the Committee on Ministry regarding the individual's plan of  
31 preparation. A crucial aspect of this advisement process is the determination of which specific  
32 combination of educational opportunities (seminary courses, regional theological educational  
33 programs, mentoring possibilities, etc.) will be most appropriate to the member's unique path of  
34 preparation for ministry.

35 The Advisor also helps represent and interpret the Member-in-Discernment to the Association  
36 and its Committee on Ministry. The Advisor helps the Member-in-Discernment clarify for the  
37 Committee the ways in which the Member's educational experiences are addressing the  
38 Association's requirements and recommendations concerning preparation for ministry. With the  
39 possibility of preparing for authorized ministry through multiple educational experiences (not just  
40 college and seminary courses), this role will become more critical and may require more intensive  
41 collaborative advisement and monitoring.

### ***Responsibilities of the Advisor-in-Discernment:***

- 43 • Receive orientation from the Association regarding the advisor's role and seek ap-  
44 propriate training (spiritual direction, life coaching, listening skills workshops, etc.) for  
45 the work of advisement.



- 1       • Act on behalf of the Committee on Ministry with the Committee's full and current  
2       knowledge of the MID's progress and the AID's practices, advice and role.
- 3       • Maintain frequent contact with the MID via e-mails, telephone calls, written  
4       communication, and face-to-face meetings.
- 5       • Offer on-going advice and counsel.
- 6       • Provide guidance, in consultation with the Association's Committee on Ministry,  
7       concerning course work and other educational opportunities.
- 8       • Help the Member-in-Discernment understand the expectations of the Committee on  
9       Ministry concerning the individual's path of preparation for authorized ministry.
- 10      • Help the Member-in-Discernment understand the United Church of Christ's procedures  
11      for the authorization of ministries.
- 12      • Encourage the Member-in-Discernment to participate in the life of his/her local con-  
13      gregation.
- 14      • Encourage the Member-in-Discernment to be active in Association and Conference  
15      activities.
- 16      • Help the Member-in-Discernment secure financial support for the preparation process.
- 17      • Help the Member-in-Discernment evaluate and select appropriate educational op-  
18      portunities from among the possible paths of preparation for ministry (seminary courses,  
19      regional theological education programs, mentoring, etc.).
- 20      • Help the Member-in-Discernment prepare the necessary documentation and reports  
21      required by the Association and the broader church.
- 22      • Accompany the Member-in-Discernment to meetings of the Committee on Ministry in  
23      order to review progress.
- 24      • Foster the deepening of the Member-in-Discernment's Christian faith and life.

1

2

## COVENANTING FOR DISCERNMENT AND FORMATION

3 A Covenant of Discernment and Formation is a commitment made ultimately by three parties, the  
4 Member in Discernment, the member's local church, and the Association; the initial covenant is  
5 between the member and the local church. Each party to the covenant has particular roles and  
6 responsibilities within the covenant made. The member, in consultation with her/his local church  
7 and Association is discerning what form her/his ministry will take and is preparing for it. The  
8 member's local church is that expression of the United Church of Christ that should best know  
9 the member. It recommends the member to the Association and provides the nurture and support  
10 the member needs to pursue her/his path to ministry. It also provides opportunities for the  
11 member to exercise her/his gifts for ministry within the life and witness of the church. The  
12 Association receives the request from the local church regarding its member's desire to explore a  
13 call to authorized ministry. If the Association enters into the covenant, it works with the member  
14 to develop a plan of preparation for the authorization sought (licensure, commissioning, ordi-  
15 nation). If the member's covenant of discernment and formation continues toward authorization,  
16 it is the Association that is charged, on behalf of the entire United Church of Christ, with  
17 bestowing that authorization, as well as providing ongoing oversight for the ministry and  
18 ministers so authorized.

19 For the local church and the Association, particular entities within these bodies carry primary  
20 covenantal responsibilities. The local church is urged to appoint a special discernment  
21 committee<sup>10</sup> to work with the member that will represent the governing body and will play a  
22 central role in implementing the covenant. The Association's responsibilities are primarily  
23 discharged by its Committee on the Ministry. Association Committees are reminded that the  
24 Ministry Issues Pronouncement of 2005 called on them to take particular care when meeting with  
25 members. They were asked to:

26         Adapt their procedures of discernment and decision-making by including mem-  
27         bers of the candidate's own community in the decision-making processes, taking  
28         the time and effort to educate themselves concerning the community's traditions  
29         and needs, and acknowledging the validity of the community's discernment when  
30         a candidate is a member of a racial/ethnic community which is not represented in  
31         significant numbers (50% or more) among the members of the Committee on the  
32         Ministry;

33         Adapt their procedures of discernment and decision-making when a candidate is  
34         disabled so as to honor that person's gifts and needs, taking the time and effort to  
35         educate themselves appropriately and including other individuals with disabilities  
36         in the processes

37 Along the way, others will participate in the covenant. An advisor will be appointed by the  
38 Committee on the Ministry to walk with the member during discernment and preparation. The  
39 member will remain in relationship with her/his pastor. S/he will interact in significant ways with  
40 teachers, mentors, and/or supervisors, be they at seminary, regional educational programs,

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<sup>10</sup> See document on Local Church Ministry Discernment Committee, p. 45.

1 individual tutorials or apprenticeships, and/or field education sites. The member will likely  
2 develop important collegial friendships with other students or mentees who are in their own  
3 covenants of discernment and formation. When a candidate is a member of a racial/ethnic  
4 community which is not represented in significant numbers (50% or more) among the members  
5 of the Committee on the Ministry, members of the candidate's own community will play a  
6 prominent role in the covenant of discernment.

7 In all these covenant relationships the church affirms that God is the primary partner as together  
8 church and member seek to increase the love of God and neighbor and to walk together in all  
9 God's ways.

### 10 ***Member in Discernment's Covenantal Responsibilities***

- 11 • Engage in disciplines of discernment regarding a possible call to authorized ministry.
- 12 • Receive the counsel of her/his local church and others regarding the possible call.
- 13 • Meet with the designated body in the member's local church regarding the member's call.
- 14 • Meet with the Association Committee on the Ministry.
- 15 • Explore with the covenant partners what type of authorization (licensure, commissioning,  
16 ordination) is the most appropriate response to the member's call.
- 17 • Work with the Association to develop an educational plan for the authorized ministry  
18 sought.
- 19 • Engage in the study and action prescribed in the education plan.
- 20 • Discern through prayer and reflection with covenant partners throughout the process.
- 21 • At the appropriate time, prepare and submit documentation to the Association and be  
22 interviewed by the Association regarding readiness for authorization.

### 23 ***Local Church's Covenantal Responsibilities***

- 24 • Interact with the member as s/he undertakes initial exploration of her/his call;
- 25 • If the exploration proceeds, the local church recommends the member to the Association.
- 26 • After/if the Association enters into the covenant, the local church continues to provide  
27 support (including financial and spiritual) as the member engages in preparation for  
28 her/his ministry.
- 29 • Discern through prayer and reflection with covenant partners throughout the process.

1 ***Association's Covenantal Responsibilities (primarily carried out***  
2 ***through the Committee on the Ministry)***

- 3 • Receive the recommendation and supporting materials from a local church regarding its  
4 member's request to enter a covenant of discernment and formation
- 5 • Interview the member; if the Association enters the covenant, work with the member to  
6 discern the form of authorization (licensure, commissioning, ordination) most appropriate  
7 for the members call.
- 8 • Appoint an advisor to guide the member during the covenantal period.
- 9 • When a candidate is a member of a racial/ethnic community which is not represented in  
10 significant numbers (50% or more) among the members of the Committee on the  
11 Ministry, adapt its procedures of discernment and decision-making by including members  
12 of the Member in Discernment's own community in the decision-making processes,  
13 taking the time and effort to educate itself concerning the community's traditions and  
14 needs, and acknowledging the validity of the member's community's discernment.
- 15 • When the Member in Discernment is a person with disabilities, adapts its procedures of  
16 discernment and decision-making so as to honor that member's gifts and needs, taking  
17 the time and effort to educate itself appropriately and including other individuals with  
18 disabilities in the processes of discernment.
- 19 • Work with the member to develop a plan of preparation.
- 20 • Meet at agreed upon intervals with the member and representative of the local church to  
21 review the member's progress on her/his path of preparation.
- 22 • Discern through prayer and reflection with covenant partners throughout the process.
- 23 • At the appropriate time, request appropriate documentation from member and interview  
24 member to determine readiness for authorization.
- 25 • Decide whether to proceed with authorization in covenant with the member, her/his local  
26 church and, when appropriate, the member's particular community.

27

1 ***A Service Recognizing the beginning of a Covenant of***  
 2 ***Discernment and Formation***<sup>11</sup>

3  
 4 \_\_\_\_\_ United of Christ, after carefully considering the call to explore authorized  
 5 ministry of \_\_\_\_\_ respectfully requests that the \_\_\_\_\_ Association  
 6 receive \_\_\_\_\_ as a Member in Discernment of this Association, according to the  
 7 faith and order of the United Church of Christ

8 Association Representative

9 The recognition of the establishment of a Covenant of Discernment and Formation is the way an  
 10 Association affirms the process of a member responding to God's call to explore authorized  
 11 ministry and to explore it in covenant community with her/his local church and the Association.  
 12 The \_\_\_\_\_ Association celebrates this covenant with \_\_\_\_\_ (member) and  
 13 \_\_\_\_\_ (church).

14 (To the member) Your intention to prepare yourself for authorized ministry will require diligent  
 15 and prayerful work. This Association, through its committee on the ministry, joins with your  
 16 local church in promising to assist you in your pilgrimage of education and formation. With you,  
 17 we seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit as the future opens before all of us in this covenant. We  
 18 invite you to call upon the Association wherever we may be helpful to you in your preparation  
 19 and formation.

20 Vows

21 *Association Representative addressing the Member in Discernment*

22 As you enter into this covenant with \_\_\_\_\_ (church) and this Association, do you promise  
 23 to seek the guidance of the congregation and Association, to receive support of both, and to  
 24 communicate regularly with each?

25 I do with the help of God.

26 *Association Representative addressing the local church representative*

27 As a representative of \_\_\_\_\_ (church) entering into this covenant of discernment and  
 28 formation with one of your members and with this Association, do you promise on behalf of your  
 29 congregation to encourage your member in her/his preparation for authorized ministry,  
 30 undergirding her/him with prayer, support and nurture?

31 We do with the help of God.

32 *Association Representative addressing a representative of the Committee on the Ministry*

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<sup>11</sup>Adapted from *Book of Worship* service recognizing In Care relationship. The Ministry Issues Implementation Committee anticipates that, as the project moves forward, new liturgies will be created and offered to the Church.

1 As a representative of this Association's Committee on the Ministry, do you promise to faithfully  
2 engage in this covenant with \_\_\_\_\_ (member) and \_\_\_\_\_ (church)? Will you be  
3 generous with your counsel, supportive of the member's preparation, honest in your feedback,  
4 and diligent in your assessing the readiness of this Member in Discernment for authorized  
5 ministry?

6 We will with the help of God.

7 *Association Representative addressing the Member in Discernment's advisor*

8 As advisor of this Member in Discernment, do you join this covenant, pledging to support, guide,  
9 and walk alongside this member as s/he continues the pilgrimage of education and formation,  
10 maintaining regular contact both with her/him and the Association's Committee on the Ministry?

11 I do with the help of God.

12 *Association Representative addressing the members of the Association*

13 Do you the ministers and delegates of this Association confirm the covenant made this day  
14 among this Association, \_\_\_\_\_ (church) and \_\_\_\_\_ (Member in Discernment)? Do  
15 you offer encouragement for this Member in Discernment, and will you pledge to sustain her/him  
16 in the continued preparation for authorized ministry in the church of Jesus Christ, to pray for  
17 her/him and to recognize this special covenant into which s/he enters with her/his congregation  
18 and this Association?

19 We do and we will with praise the thanksgiving to God.

20 Prayer

21 Enter, O God, into this covenant made today. Pour out your Holy Spirit on this Association,  
22 congregation and \_\_\_\_\_ (member), that the promises we have made today will bear the  
23 fruit of ministry in your name, ministry of the whole people of God and ministry of those au-  
24 thorized for specific callings. Equip \_\_\_\_\_ (member) to be diligent in her/his discernment  
25 and preparation and \_\_\_\_\_ (church) and this Association to be faithful in offering  
26 encouragement and guidance. May our mutual ministry manifest mighty and gentle works of  
27 justice, compassion and peace, service in the service of others, and a witness to your realm that  
28 has no end. Blessing and honor, glory and power, be unto you, Amen.

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**A COVENANT OF DISCERNMENT AND FORMATION**

**LOCAL CHURCH**

We, the members of the \_\_\_\_\_, promise to support \_\_\_\_\_ (Church)

and nurture \_\_\_\_\_ in her/his \_\_\_\_\_ (Member in Discernment)

period of discernment and formation as s/he explores a call to authorized ministry.

We covenant with him/her and the \_\_\_\_\_ Association of the United Church of Christ as a sign of our mutual ministry in Christ’s name.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Moderator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**ASSOCIATION**

We the members of \_\_\_\_\_ Association of the United Church of Christ, covenant with the people of

\_\_\_\_\_,  
(Church)

and \_\_\_\_\_  
(Member in Discernment)

to explore a call to authorized ministry in the United of

Christ. We will develop an educational plan with \_\_\_\_\_ (member) and accompany her/him as s/he engages in a path of preparation and formation. We will provide counsel and support and will meet with the member at appropriate intervals to discern readiness for the authorized ministry sought. When the \_\_\_\_\_ (member) is ready, we will authorize her/him for ministry according to the faith and order of the United Church of Christ.

We covenant with him/her and the \_\_\_\_\_ (Church)

as a sign of our mutual ministry in Christ’s name.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Association Moderator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, promise to continue to faithfully discern with my covenant partners my call to ministry, including exploration regarding which form of authorized ministry may be the most appropriate response to my call. I will engage in the educational plan and formative practices developed with the Association that will prepare me for this calling. During this time I will continue to participate with my Local Church, contributing to its life and witness as possible and appropriate. I will maintain contact with the Association Committee on the Ministry and provide materials as requested that reflect my progress.

I covenant with \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_  
(Church) (Association)  
 as a sign of our mutual ministry in Christ's name.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Member in Discernment Date

**REPORTS REQUIRED:**

**TO ASSOCIATION**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, will meet with  
(Member in Discernment)  
 and submit reports as necessary and agreed upon to the \_\_\_\_\_  
 Association Committee on the Ministry.

**TO LOCAL CHURCH**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, will meet with and  
(Member in Discernment)  
 submit reports as necessary and agreed upon to the Ministry Discernment  
 Committee of my local church.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Member in Discernment Date



# ASSESSMENT OF PERSONS SEEKING AUTHORIZATION

## INTRODUCTION

Through the pronouncement of the twenty-fifth General Synod on Ministry Issues the Spirit calls us to shift focus **from** a particular educational path by which persons move toward ordination **to** the persons preparing for authorization themselves. Thus Committees on Ministry are asked to look at persons who covenant with them in a process of discernment through the lens of the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers, asking the question, “Does this person display the characteristics of someone who is ready for authorization?” This focuses concern on whether persons coming for authorization have reached a state of readiness for the particular form of authorization through which they will serve the United Church of Christ as it goes about God’s mission in the world regardless of the process of preparation which they followed.

This change in focus offers Committees on Ministry more than a mechanism for providing equitable assessment of persons with diverse backgrounds of preparation for authorization. It actually opens the door for Committees on Ministry to carry out more effectively their ministry of discernment on behalf of the whole church. The resources that follow are intended to offer committees practical approaches to this vital ministry of assessing persons’ readiness for authorized ministry in and on behalf of the whole church.

## ***BASIC PRINCIPLES***

Before discussing the specific processes of assessing readiness it might be useful to reflect on the overall approach that will best serve Committees on Ministry in their role on behalf of the whole church. Here are some basic principles to keep in mind.

1. **Assess the readiness of Members in Discernment at every step along your journey with them rather than saving it for some big “event” at the end.** This will allow you to engage the assessment task in manageable portions, and will promote persons’ development more effectively because you and they will be in conversation about their gifts and growing edges all along the way.
2. **Assess a member only in relation to those Marks where it is timely to do so.** For example, assessment of some Marks under spiritual and personal formation might happen effectively at almost any point in your journey with a Member in Discernment. On the other hand, it makes no sense to assess a person in relation to Marks having to do with knowledge and skill in Biblical studies until they have done the necessary study to gain that knowledge and skill.
3. **Assess how a member manifests the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers in relation to actual ministry.** The Marks have been written with a focus on what is actually important to ministry. You are encouraged to look for their manifestation in ways that have to do with actual ministry. For example, assess a person’s abilities in Biblical studies by asking to hear a sermon or see them teach a Bible study class. If you take this approach, you will be assessing their readiness based on what the future recipients of their ministry will experience. Committees will also find that every member

- 1 of the committee can contribute to effective evaluation because it will be based on the  
2 experience of good ministry, not simply technical expertise.
- 3 4. **Gather knowledge and judgment from other persons and communities who have**  
4 **knowledge of the Member in Discernment.** You are not alone in this ministry, so you  
5 need not rely only on your own knowledge and experience. However, when seeking the  
6 knowledge and judgment of others, you will always want to share the Marks of faithful  
7 and effective authorized ministers with them. By doing so you will equip them to share  
8 with you the information that you need because they will know the questions you are  
9 asking. Remember also the importance of drawing members of a member's cultural  
10 community into your process of discernment, and of learning yourself about the situation,  
11 needs and perspectives of distinct cultural communities in order to undergird wise  
12 judgments about particular members' manifestation of the Marks.<sup>12</sup>
- 13 5. **Apply the Marks dynamically.** No single individual will exhibit all of these Marks  
14 equally well. No single minister who is currently ordained exhibits all of these Marks  
15 equally well. Instead, you should expect individuals to show different profiles of strength  
16 and weakness in relation to the Marks, and should use the Marks in ways that promote  
17 realistic assessment and encourage continuing development.
- 18 6. **It will be most useful to think of the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized**  
19 **Ministers as characteristics that a Member in Discernment might be expected to**  
20 **display with varying degrees of consistency or depth,** rather than as things that a  
21 person displays either entirely or not at all. So for each Mark or set of Marks a committee  
22 will find it more helpful to ask "How consistently does this person display this  
23 characteristic?" rather than "Does this person display this characteristic – yes or no?"
- 24 7. **Make your aim the promotion of growth.** Your goal should be to have the Member in  
25 Discernment ready for authorization, but do not authorize the person until they are truly  
26 ready. This means applying the Marks developmentally, as a set of standards by which to  
27 measure where growth is needed.
- 28 8. **Let the decision when someone is ready for authorization emerge out of a process of**  
29 **mutual discernment of degrees of readiness and need for growth that is fed by these**  
30 **assessments.** This process will serve the church equally by promoting greatest growth

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<sup>12</sup> Remembering in particular these points from the Proposals for Action in the pronouncement:

**In addition, Conferences and Associations are called upon to:**

- c. Adapt their procedures of discernment and decision-making by including members of the candidate's own community in the decision-making processes, taking the time and effort to educate themselves concerning the community's traditions and needs, and acknowledging the validity of the community's discernment when a candidate is a member of a racial/ethnic community which is not represented in significant numbers (50% or more) among the members of the Committee on the Ministry;
- d. Adapt their procedures of discernment and decision-making when a candidate is disabled so as to honor that person's gifts and needs, taking the time and effort to educate themselves appropriately and including other individuals with disabilities in the processes;

1           among those whom God calls to lead it, and greatest clarity about when they are truly  
2           ready to take up that ministry. Note that the decision is always a judgment by the  
3           Association and its committee based on their collective experience and wisdom. The  
4           Marks help frame that judgment more clearly and carefully. They do not remove the  
5           need for it.

## 6           **OVERVIEW OF ASSESSMENT IN THE PERIOD OF** 7           **DISCERNMENT AND FORMATION**

8           Assessment is an important dimension of a Committee on Ministry's work with Members in  
9           Discernment throughout your process within them. It proceeds in three distinct phases, however,  
10          each with its own purpose and dynamics. Initial assessment takes place at the beginning of your  
11          relationship with a Member in Discernment, and helps set the agenda for your work together  
12          throughout the relationship. On-going assessment takes place annually as long as the member  
13          remains in a discernment relationship with your committee. These two phases are the same for  
14          all three forms of authorized ministry and should contribute to the discernment of the member's  
15          particular call, as well as to your judgment about the member's readiness for ministry. The third  
16          phase, assessment for authorization, is differentiated by the type of initial authorization that may  
17          be conferred. It grounds the decision about that authorization, and lays a foundation for  
18          continuing assessment in a covenant relationship of accountability post-authorization. The  
19          following three sections guide you concretely through the steps in each of the three phases.

### 20          **Initial Assessment**

21          Initial assessment is an extensive process of evaluation in relation to the Marks of Faithful and  
22          Effective Authorized Ministers that serves the purpose of identifying the gifts and developmental  
23          needs the Member in Discernment brings into the process of mutual exploration of call and  
24          appropriate forms of authorization. Initial assessment will be focused in terms of the  
25          Committee's and the Member in Discernment's initial sense about the form of authorization to  
26          which the member may be called (ordained, licensed, commissioned), applying the Marks of  
27          Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers through the lens of the constitutional definition of the  
28          relevant form of authorization.

29          Insofar as the member's gifts are reflective of God's call to her or him, initial assessment  
30          provides important information in the process of mutual discernment of God's call to the  
31          member. It also provides a clear definition of the needs for growth that should be addressed  
32          before the member would be ready for authorization. When combined with your assessment of  
33          the various educational options available for the Member in Discernment, this definition of needs  
34          informs the educational and formational plan that you and the member will develop to guide the  
35          member's preparation.

### 36          **On-going Assessment**

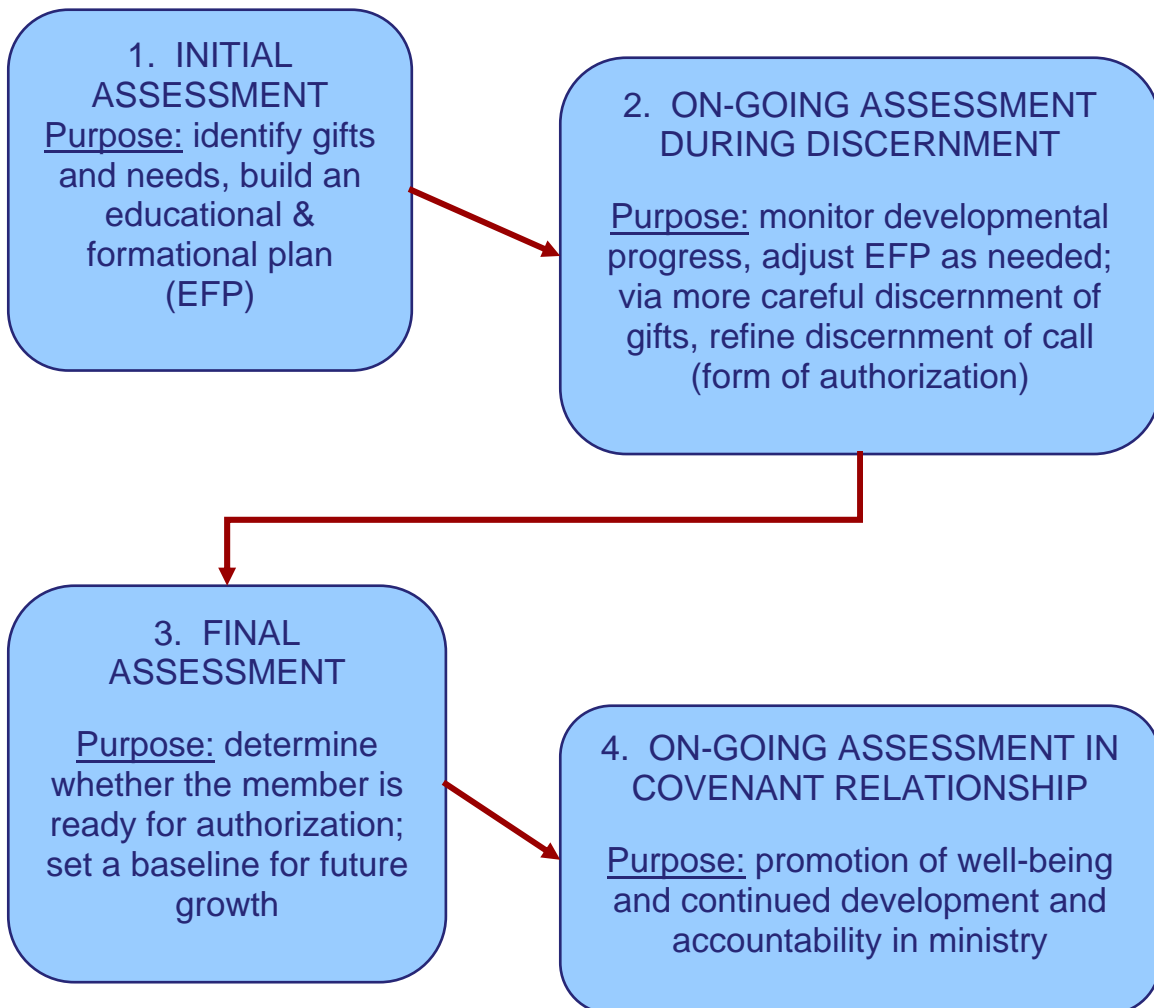
37          On-going assessment is a manageable process of annual review that allows the Committee to  
38          monitor the member's development in relation to the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized  
39          Ministers as s/he progresses through the educational and formational plan. These annual reviews  
40          permit you to adjust the member's educational and formational plan as needed, and provide more  
41          information for your on-going process of discernment of call and readiness to take up the call.  
42          On-going assessment, by tracking the evolving picture of the Member in Discernment's gifts for  
43          ministry, should contribute to your mutual discernment of the ministry to which the member is  
44          called, whether that needs authorization by the Association, and the most appropriate form of  
45          authorization for it.

1 **Assessment for Authorization**

2 A summative assessment for authorization builds on and reviews your committee’s history of  
 3 assessment of the Member in Discernment from initial assessment through every on-going  
 4 assessment. It assesses the member’s performance in terms of the Marks of Faithful and  
 5 Effective Authorized Ministers from a more holistic and integrated perspective. Its purpose is to  
 6 ground your final decision whether to proceed with authorization, and if you proceed to  
 7 authorization, to set an initial agenda for the member’s continuing growth and development.

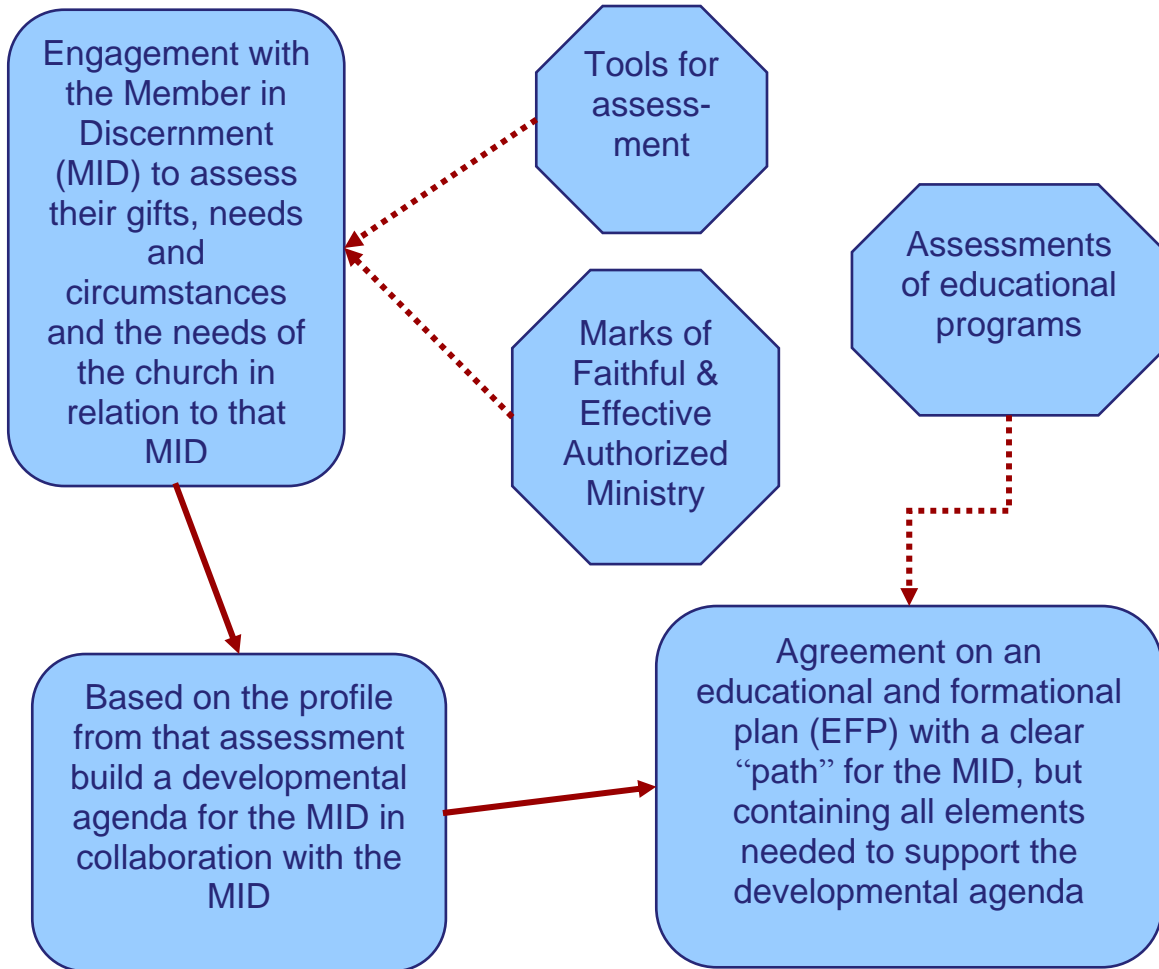
8 This stage of assessment is differentiated according to the form of authorization sought. The  
 9 processes of assessment for authorization for licensure, ordination and commissioning have much  
 10 in common. However, differentiation at this stage is appropriate because of the differences  
 11 between the three forms, and the different application of the Marks of Faithful and Effective  
 12 Authorized Ministers needed for each. By this stage in your journey with a Member in  
 13 Discernment you and s/he should have substantial clarity about the form of authorization that is  
 14 appropriate to the member’s call, so an assessment focused in terms of that particular form makes  
 15 good sense.

16  
 17 The following diagram illustrates these three phases of assessment, as well as the fourth phase  
 18 that follows initial authorization.





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4 **ASSESSMENT OF GIFTS AND NEEDS and HOW THAT LEADS**  
 5 **TO A PLAN**

6 The initial assessment of a Member in Discernment’s gifts and needs that should inform the  
 7 educational and formational plan your Committee develops with that member to prepare her/him  
 8 for authorized ministry begins with “The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers.”  
 9 These Marks are organized in five broad categories. These are:

- 10 • Spiritual Foundation for Ministry
- 11 • UCC Identity for Ministry
- 12 • Personal and Professional Formation for Ministry
- 13 • Knowledge and Skills for Ministry: General Knowledge and Skills
- 14 • Knowledge and Skills for Ministry: Knowledge and Skills Specific to Authorized
- 15 Ministry

1 In each of these areas a Member in Discernment eventually needs to have particular knowledge,  
2 particular skills, and a particular character in order to be ready for authorization. However, the  
3 approach you take to assessing knowledge, skill and character varies, depending on which section  
4 of the Marks you are looking at. The guidance that follows describes some approaches for doing  
5 an initial assessment in each of these areas, drawing especially on the various tools for assessment  
6 described in Appendix D of these resources. This is followed by ways to turn that assessment  
7 into a plan of specific educational and formational experiences to prepare your Member in  
8 Discernment for authorization.

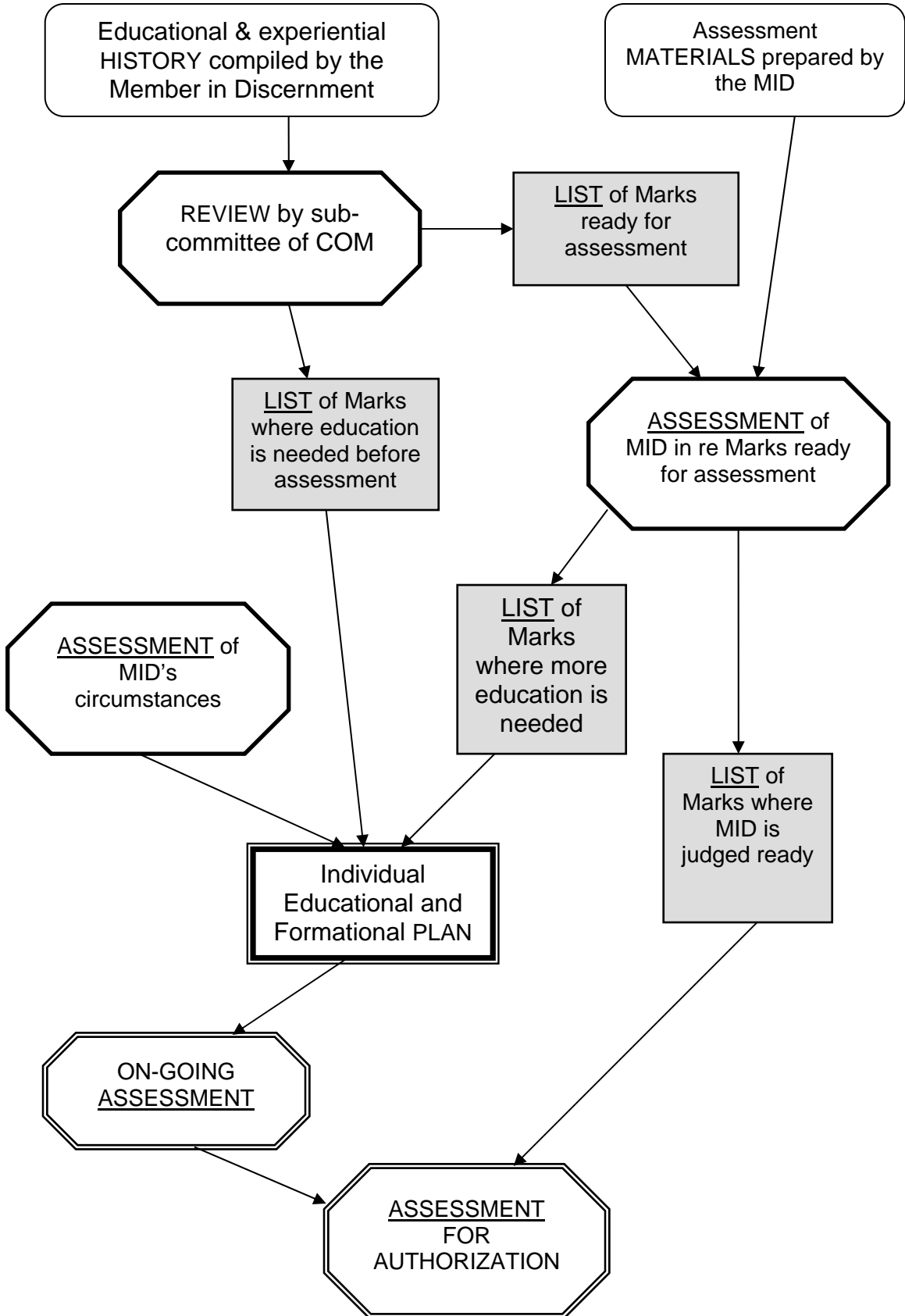
9 For ease of description the approaches to assessing each group of the Marks will be discussed  
10 separately. However, just as there are relationships and connections among the various groups of  
11 Marks, so the approaches to assessing them will overlap and connect. You may want to think of  
12 this assessment, not as four separate steps, but as in integrated package. The latter approach will  
13 probably save a certain amount of duplication.

14 The time of initial assessment is the occasion to set patterns of mutuality and history-building that  
15 should characterize this shared process of discernment that you and the Member in Discernment  
16 are beginning. In each section there will be forms of self-assessment that you will ask the  
17 Member in Discernment to do, forms of assessment of the member that you will ask others to  
18 engage in, and forms of assessment of the member that you will engage in as a committee. You  
19 will want to compile all of these materials into a portfolio about the Member in Discernment and  
20 share and discuss the contents of that portfolio with the member as you make decisions together  
21 about plan for that member's educational and formational path toward authorization. (See  
22 Appendix D for more on the "Use of Portfolios.")

23 As you go through the assessment process you will be invited to keep a written record using  
24 charts such as those found in Appendix A. Keeping this kind of record of each assessment  
25 session is important to charting the member's progress, and will make the work of final  
26 assessment much easier.

27 This process of initial assessment should lead to a two-part picture of the Member in  
28 Discernment's readiness for authorization. For a number of Marks you may discover that the  
29 member already has attained a level that is sufficient for authorization. These are gifts that you  
30 can celebrate from the outset. For other Marks it will be clear that the member needs further  
31 work before they will be ready. These then become the focus of your work with the member to  
32 see that s/he finds the educational and formational experiences needed to promote the growth that  
33 will lead to readiness for authorization.

34 The diagram on the next page offers a more detailed picture of the flow of the process of initial  
35 assessment, and its relation to the on-going assessment phases and assessment for authorization  
36 phases.





## 1 **Assessing Knowledge and Skills for Ministry**

2 We begin with the two sections on “Knowledge and Skills for Ministry.” The knowledge, skills  
3 and character described in these two sections are things that typically persons are able to acquire  
4 through formal educational processes. Some may be acquired by self-study. Some may also be  
5 acquired through practical experience. Indeed, some are best acquired in this way.

6 Throughout your Committee on the Ministry’s work with a Member in Discernment your focus  
7 ought to be on what this individual actually knows and can do and on what sort of person they  
8 are. However, when you are doing an initial assessment of the Member in Discernment for the  
9 purpose of defining an educational and formational plan, for many of these knowledge and skills  
10 categories, it will be most efficient to begin by looking first at the member’s educational and  
11 experiential history. This lets you identify the areas where immediate assessment of the  
12 member’s actual knowledge and abilities makes sense, and those where that should wait until  
13 after a program of study.

14 In compiling an educational and experiential history for a Member in Discernment here are the  
15 basic things to look for:

- 16 • What is the member’s history of leadership in the church (or other contexts), noting  
17 especially any prior service as an authorized minister.
- 18 • Do they have a high school diploma?
- 19 • Do they have any education beyond high school? What courses? What concentration of  
20 subjects? What degrees?
- 21 • What, if any, Conference-based educational programs has the Member in Discernment  
22 completed or studied in (e.g., a lay academy)? What were the contents of those  
23 programs?
- 24 • What, if any, structured United Church of Christ training programs has the Member in  
25 Discernment completed? What were the contents of those programs?
- 26 • What formal, but perhaps non-academic educational or training programs has the  
27 Member in Discernment completed through her or his work site or for professional or  
28 technical certification? What were the contents of those programs?
- 29 • Are there other educational or training programs which the Member has completed?  
30 What are they? What sorts of knowledge, skills, or understandings did they nurture?

31 Ask the Member in Discernment to compile for you his or her educational and experiential  
32 history, including these elements and documentation:

- 33 1. Identification of all the educational credentials and programs s/he has  
34 received/completed/participated in;
- 35 2. For each academic degree or certificate received above the high school level, an official  
36 transcript (sent to you from the educational institution), along with full course titles and –  
37 so far as possible – course descriptions for each course that appears on the transcript(s);
- 38 3. For each non-academic program taken or credential received, appropriate documentation  
39 of the member’s participation, and some description of the content of the educational  
40 experience;

- 1           4. A narrative description of experiences of leadership in the church or other contexts. This  
2           narrative may be written or oral, but if oral, it should be recorded and the recording added  
3           to the member's portfolio.

4           Note that for individuals whose formal study occurred years ago, it may not always be possible  
5           for them to obtain every piece of information in this list. In that case, just work with can be  
6           obtained. With the information contained in the Member in Discernment's educational and  
7           experiential history, you will be able to identify two things:

- 8           • Those areas of knowledge, skill and character where the Member in Discernment seems  
9           to have had sufficient educational experience to make it worth the effort to conduct a  
10          direct personal assessment of the state of their knowledge, skill or character in relation to  
11          the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers;
- 12          • Those areas of knowledge, skill and character where the Member in Discernment has had  
13          relatively little education or experience so that there is little point in assessing their  
14          individual performance just now. Move to identifying educational work they need to do.

15          Here is a simple procedure you can use to correlate educational experiences with the Marks of  
16          Faithful and Effective Ministers.

- 17          1. Make a table using the Marks listed in the categories called, "General Knowledge and  
18          Skills," and "Knowledge and Skills Specific to Authorized Ministry." Leave space after  
19          each Mark to write down the course(s), programs, and/or experiences from the member's  
20          history that you think might have covered the knowledge or skill identified in this Mark.  
21          (See Appendix B for a sample of such a chart.)
- 22          2. For each Mark go through the information from the member's educational and  
23          experiential history looking for courses, programs, and experiences that seem to you –  
24          based on the titles and/or descriptions – perhaps to have covered that Mark. Note also  
25          what kind of course or program that was (e.g., a 3-credit graduate course, a lay academy  
26          course, an afternoon workshop, a period of time in a leadership role) so you have some  
27          general idea of the depth of knowledge and skill possibly acquired.
- 28          3. Once you have gone through every Mark in your list and identified the courses and  
29          programs that are relevant to each, you are ready to make two lists. The first list includes  
30          all those Marks where you think that the member's history has given them enough of a  
31          foundation that you think it is worthwhile to assess their performance personally. The  
32          second list includes all those Marks where you think that there is not enough of a  
33          foundation in the member's previous history to make it worthwhile to assess them  
34          personally until they have completed further study.

35          Here are several rules of thumb that may give you a few short cuts within this process:

- 36          • A Member in Discernment who has only a high school diploma or who has a bachelor's  
37          degree that contains very few or no courses in subjects such as literature, history,  
38          philosophy, the arts, sociology, and the like, may very well need formal educational work  
39          in the areas related to "General Knowledge and Skills." If the MID has substantial life  
40          experience (e.g., they are over forty years of age), it will be worth it to conduct a personal  
41          assessment for them in relation to some of the Marks in "General Knowledge and Skills"  
42          (specifically items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 11) since these can often be acquired as a matter of  
43          life experience. These can be assessed as part of the process described below for  
44          assessing "Knowledge and Skills for Ministry," or as part of the process for assessing  
45          "Personal and Professional Formation for Ministry." Marks 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 in this

1 section are more likely to require formal study in the social sciences, arts and humanities  
2 to acquire.

- 3 • A MID with a bachelor's degree with a reasonable number of courses in subjects such as  
4 literature, history, philosophy, the arts, sociology, and the like is probably ready for  
5 personal assessment in relation to "General Knowledge and Skills" right now. See below  
6 for how to do this.
- 7 • A MID with no formal graduate theological study or lay school of theology work, and  
8 little leadership experience will most probably need formal educational work related to  
9 all or nearly all of the areas related to "Knowledge and Skills Specific to Authorized  
10 Ministry." You can proceed to the section below on how to consider the best form of  
11 educational program given the life circumstances of the Member in Discernment and the  
12 needs of the church.
- 13 • A MID who has completed an appropriate college degree and has completed graduate  
14 theological study, but not a Master of Divinity degree, will most probably need only  
15 specific formal educational work in particular areas to acquire the remaining knowledge  
16 and skills identified in areas related to "Knowledge and Skills Specific to Authorized  
17 Ministry." For such a Member you will want to do personal assessment now for those  
18 Marks where they have already done study. A Member who has previously served some  
19 years as a licensed minister, and is now coming for ordination, depending on the nature  
20 of his or her preparation and subsequent service, may be in a parallel situation.

21 Your work so far should generate two lists. One is the list of the Marks where the Member in  
22 Discernment has had educational or life experiences that give her or him enough preparation that  
23 it is worthwhile at this beginning stage to personally assess his or her knowledge, skills, practices  
24 and dispositions. This process will be described below. The other list contains those Marks  
25 where the Member in Discernment has had no prior preparation so that educational work is  
26 needed before further assessment. Hold this list for the time being. You will add to it based on  
27 the rest of your initial assessment work.

28 Now turn to the list of Marks for which the Member in Discernment's previous educational  
29 experiences have provided reasonable preparation. To determine the member's level of  
30 achievement in relation to these Marks you should organize a series of assessment activities.  
31 These will be drawn from those described in detail in Appendix D. In practice you will want to  
32 coordinate and combine the activities used for assessing "Knowledge and Skills for Ministry"  
33 with those for Marks from other sections (described below).

34 The Marks pertaining to "Knowledge and Skills for Ministry" will be most helpfully assessed by  
35 letters of reference from instructors, discussion of student papers and projects, discussion of case  
36 studies, and observing the student engaging in the practice of ministry. To solicit letters of  
37 reference look at your chart that correlates the courses and programs the MID has taken with the  
38 Marks. Then ask for letters from the instructors of those courses that directly address the  
39 student's achievement of those specific Marks. For some courses the most helpful thing might be  
40 for the student to share copies of a term paper or project with you for discussion. Especially for  
41 the Marks pertaining to "Knowledge and Skills Specific to Authorized Ministry," discussion of  
42 case studies and the observation of the student's ministerial practice will be helpful assessment  
43 activities. Look at the Marks you need to assess in this section and see which ones relate to each  
44 other in the actual practice of ministry. Depending on what those are you can select a scenario  
45 from ministerial practice to explore with the member, or perhaps if it is right for the combination  
46 of Marks you want to assess ask the member to write and preach a sermon for you, or write and

1 lead a worship service, and then discuss that activity with the member. These approaches will be  
2 especially important where the member's learning has come through experience in leadership.

3 Whatever the combination of assessment activities you use, you want to record your judgment of  
4 the degree to which the Member in Discernment displays this Mark. Use a chart such as the one  
5 found in Appendix A for this purpose. Add to it whatever notes or comments you think will be a  
6 helpful part of the record. For those Marks where you are satisfied with the member's level of  
7 achievement, there is no need for further educational work. You can celebrate the member's  
8 achievements that have brought them this far on the way. Moreover, you have completed your  
9 assessment of the member in relation to these Marks for the time being. Ordinarily, you will not  
10 need to assess these things again until you come to the final assessment for authorization. Those  
11 Marks where you are not satisfied with the member's performance should be added to the list of  
12 Marks for which the member needs further education.

13 Now you have a list of the specific areas in which you judge your Member in Discernment needs  
14 further preparation to develop the knowledge and skills needed for authorized ministry. This can  
15 be turned into a list of courses or other forms of study using the list in Appendix C that correlates  
16 the various Marks with educational subjects that would cover the needed knowledge and skills.  
17 Later, after we have described assessment of needs in the three other areas of the Marks of  
18 Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers, and have discussed other factors that should weigh  
19 in your planning as well, we will offer some ideas about how to turn this into an individual  
20 educational and formational plan.

## 21 **Assessing UCC Identity for Ministry**

22 Initial assessment of a Member in Discernment in relation to the Marks pertaining to "UCC  
23 Identity for Ministry" should also begin with the member's educational and experiential history.  
24 You want to ask the member to compile for you the same kinds of information as for the educa-  
25 tional and experiential history relating to "Knowledge and Skills for Ministry." However, in this  
26 case you want to ask only about courses, programs and workshops pertaining to the history, theol-  
27 ogy, polity, life and resources of the United Church of Christ. (For more possibilities see  
28 Resources, UCC Identity Formation.)

29 If the member has not had appropriate course work in the history, theology and polity of the  
30 United Church of Christ, it is highly unlikely that s/he would meet the Marks in this section  
31 sufficiently well to satisfy you that s/he is ready for authorization. If s/he has not taken such  
32 courses, you should simply plan on including these as a requirement in the member's educational  
33 and formational plan. Of course these may be at a seminary, in a regional educational program or  
34 part of a mentoring program, depending on other factors that we will consider later.

35 At the same time there are Marks of "UCC Identity for Ministry" that cannot simply be learned in  
36 a course, and are more complex than the ability to express certain knowledge. Thus, even if it is  
37 clear that the member will need to engage in formal study of UCC history, theology and polity,  
38 you will want to engage in some direct, personal assessment at this stage to determine the  
39 member's degree of progress in relation to the Marks in this section.

40 The most useful means of assessment here are likely to be these:

- 41 • Ask the member to write a statement of theological beliefs: specifically including his or  
42 her understanding of the nature of God, the nature of the church, and the nature of  
43 covenant, and then discuss that statement with them. Alternatively you may ask the

1 member to tell you this orally. In that case record the statement and include the recording  
2 in the member's portfolio.

- 3 • Ask the member to write the story of her or his history of church participation, including  
4 participation in the United Church of Christ, but also including the story of participation  
5 in any other denominations, and then discuss this with the member. Alternatively you  
6 may ask the member to tell you this orally. In that case record the statement and include  
7 the recording in the member's portfolio.
- 8 • Seek references from the member's pastor, and leaders of the member's congregation  
9 asking specifically for their assessment in relation to the Marks of "UCC Identity for  
10 Ministry."

11 If the member has already had formal educational work in UCC history, theology and polity, you  
12 can also ask to seek references from the instructors of those courses/programs/workshops. You  
13 might also ask the member whether there are term papers or projects that would display his or her  
14 achievement in relation to the Marks and discuss those with him or her. Finally, discussion of a  
15 suitable case study or case studies in terms of UCC history, theology and polity would be another  
16 good way to assess the member's progress in relation to these Marks.

17 In the end you want to record your judgments from this assessment in the same way suggested in  
18 the previous section, on a chart such as that found in Appendix A. Again you should identify  
19 those Marks where you think the member has achieved a satisfactory degree of progress, and  
20 those where you think further work is indicated. For those where progress is already satisfactory,  
21 no activities need to be added to the educational and formational plan, and you are pretty much  
22 finished with assessment of these Marks until final assessment for authorization. Celebrate these  
23 gifts that the Member in Discernment brings into the process with you. Those Marks where  
24 further work is needed should be added to your growing list of areas where the Member in  
25 Discernment needs further preparation.

## 26 **Assessing Spiritual Foundation for Ministry**

27 An educational and experiential history gives no short cut to assessing the spiritual formation of a  
28 Member in Discernment. From the outset of your relationship with a Member in Discernment  
29 this aspect of her or his development will need to be the focus of assessment activities that help  
30 you see the member clearly in relation to the Marks of "Spiritual Foundation for Ministry."

31 On the one hand, your assessment here should be based on your understanding of how the  
32 Member in Discernment sees him- or herself, and on the other hand, how they are seen by others.  
33 Requesting several kinds of narratives are a useful way to gain a picture of the member's self-  
34 understanding. First, you might have the member write a spiritual autobiography, emphasizing  
35 significant transitions and developments in their spiritual life, and the persons, events and other  
36 factors that have shaped them spiritually. Asking the member for a detailed, written self-  
37 assessment of her or his spiritual formation in relation to the Marks of "Spiritual Foundation for  
38 Ministry" would also be useful. Perhaps a narrative about the place of God in the member's life,  
39 the practices s/he engages in to nurture life in the Spirit, the member's prayer life and spiritual  
40 authorities would be useful as well. In some cases these narratives will be better communicated  
41 to you orally. In such cases record the narratives and keep the recording in the member's  
42 portfolio. With any of these narratives that you ask of a Member in Discernment, you then want  
43 to discuss it with them before coming to a judgment of where s/he stands in relation to the Marks.

44 You will also want to know how others see the spiritual formation of the Member in  
45 Discernment. The obvious device for obtaining this information is the solicitation of references.

1 Here again it is important that you not ask just for general references, but ask for persons'  
2 assessment of the Member in Discernment in relation to the specific Marks for "Spiritual  
3 Foundation for Ministry." Best practice would seek references from a wide variety of persons  
4 who know the member in different life settings. This would include the member's pastor, lay  
5 leaders of her or his congregation, congregants who know the member well, co-workers, and  
6 friends.

7 When you put together the results of your discussion with the member of his or her narratives  
8 with the information from the references, you should have a good basis for making judgments  
9 about the degree to which the member displays each of the Marks of "Spiritual Foundation for  
10 Ministry." Record these on a progress chart such as that found in Appendix A. You can  
11 celebrate with the member those Marks where you are satisfied that the member already shows a  
12 level suitable for authorization. In the ordinary course of events you will not need to devote  
13 attention to these until you review everything at final assessment for authorization. Those Marks  
14 where you believe that the member needs to develop further before authorization should be added  
15 to the list of Marks that the member's educational and formational plan needs to address.

### 16 **Assessing Personal and Professional Formation for Ministry**

17 Although development of a number of the characteristics identified in the Marks relating to  
18 "Personal and Professional Formation for Ministry" can be promoted by formal educational  
19 experiences (in particular numbers 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14), the primary approach to assessing a  
20 Member in Discernment in relation to the Marks of "Personal and Professional Formation for  
21 Ministry" will be similar to that for Marks of "Spiritual Foundation for Ministry." Before  
22 embarking on that assessment, however, it makes good sense to review the member's educational  
23 and experiential history that you took as part of your assessment process for the Marks of  
24 "Knowledge and Skills for Ministry." If any of the Marks of "Personal and Professional  
25 Formation for Ministry" appear to have been addressed by the member's prior education and  
26 experiences, you will want to be sure to pay particular attention to those in your assessment  
27 activities for this section. You will want to think of three streams of information flowing into this  
28 assessment: self-assessment and information provided by the Member in Discernment,  
29 assessment of the member by others, and discussion with the member of leadership situations that  
30 will let you see these Marks on display.

31 From the Member in Discernment you would do well to ask for several kinds of narratives. You  
32 will certainly want to receive an autobiographical statement that focuses on influential persons  
33 and experiences in the member's life. Also ask the member to assess her- or himself in relation to  
34 the Marks of "Personal and Professional Formation for Ministry." In some cases these narratives  
35 will be better communicated to you orally. In such cases record the narratives and keep the  
36 recording in the member's portfolio. Whatever their format, you should then discuss these  
37 statements with the member.

38 From others you should certainly seek references, asking each referee to assess the member in  
39 relation to the Marks of "Personal and Professional Formation for Ministry." Ask these  
40 references from a variety of people who know the Member in Discernment in different ways. In  
41 particular, think of seeking references from the member's pastor(s), co-congregants, co-workers,  
42 friends, and, perhaps, family. This is also the part of your assessment of the Member in  
43 Discernment where psychological inventories are particularly helpful. See the section on this in  
44 Appendix D for details. Ideally, you want to make arrangements for such assessments with a  
45 ministry development center that is a member of the Ministry Development Council. These  
46 centers have great experience and expertise focused on ministry, and will gladly consult with you  
47 about the most helpful forms of assessment for you and your Members in Discernment.

1 Finally, this is another place where sharing case studies of incidents in pastoral leadership with  
2 the Member in Discernment and asking him or her to reflect on how s/he would analyze and  
3 approach this if s/he were in the leadership role. Another useful approach would be to ask the  
4 member to write or tell you a story or stories of an occasion when s/he exercised leadership  
5 effectively and to evaluate their performance in that incident, indicating both what s/he believes  
6 was done well and what could have been done better. If you invite the member to tell this orally,  
7 be sure to record it and include the recording in the member's portfolio. Again, you will want to  
8 discuss these accounts with the Member in Discernment.

9 These three streams of information should come together to provide you a solid basis for judging  
10 the degree to which the Member in Discernment displays each of the Marks of "Personal and  
11 Professional Formation for Ministry." Record these judgments on a chart such as that found in  
12 Appendix A. Celebrate those Marks where you believe that the Member in Discernment has  
13 already attained a level needed for authorization, and add those where you think more  
14 development is needed to the list you have been compiling.

## 15 **ASSESSMENT OF CIRCUMSTANCES**

16 The object of the process of discernment and preparation for ministry is to provide the United  
17 Church of Christ with all the leaders whom God calls to ministry in and on behalf of the U.C.C.,  
18 and to ensure that those leaders whom God calls are prepared as fully as possible for the  
19 ministries for which they are authorized. From your assessment work so far you should have a  
20 complete list of the areas where you think further work is needed by the Member in Discernment  
21 with whom you are engaged. This signals the content of the work (the "what") that the member  
22 needs to do to be fully prepared for the work to which God calls them. Before making an actual  
23 plan for that work, however, there are a few other factors to consider. These factors will help you  
24 determine the best way for that work to be done (the "how"). In general, these factors have to do  
25 with the member's life circumstances.

26 Here are some questions you should consider for each Member in Discernment as you carry out  
27 the initial assessment for the purpose of developing their educational plan.

- 28 1. If the MID has a bachelor's degree or its equivalent, is it a degree from an accredited  
29 undergraduate institution or institutions?
- 30 2. If the MID does not have a completed bachelor's degree, but some college study and  
31 substantial life experience or on-the-job training, does your state/region have a university  
32 that specializes in assessing such experience and training for the purpose of granting it  
33 college credit? Can the MID connect with this institution, and establish thereby a basis  
34 for seminary admission?
- 35 3. If he or she does not have a bachelor's degree, has she or he done enough college study to  
36 gain admission at a seminary that will accept applications from students without a  
37 finished undergraduate program?
- 38 4. If you think the MID needs to study in areas that are best found in a college, rather than a  
39 seminary, context (e.g., study of world civilizations), is there a community college or  
40 undergraduate institution that offers what the MID needs that is accessible to the MID?
- 41 5. Can the MID go to seminary, i.e., can he or she move to the campus of a suitable  
42 seminary, or is there a suitable school to which she or he can commute effectively, or is

- 1           there a suitable seminary with an M.Div. degree that he or she can obtain through  
 2           distance education? If at first glance the answer to this question seems to be “no,” does  
 3           that answer change with some additional research of the options, or with concrete support  
 4           for the MID from your Association or other source (e.g., financial aid)?
- 5           6. How long can the church wait for the MID to go through a process of preparation before  
 6           taking up his or her ministry, or is there an urgent need in the church for their ministry  
 7           now – before even completing preparation?
- 8           7. How does the MID’s nearness to retirement age, or how does some other similar factor,  
 9           affect the balance between the number of years she or he will spend in preparation and  
 10          the number of years she or he will spend in ministry after authorization?
- 11          8. Of the available options for educational programs, including available seminaries,  
 12          regional educational programs and mentoring programs, which will be the most culturally  
 13          effective preparation for this particular MID?
- 14          9. If the MID has already done some other theological or graduate education, and going to  
 15          seminary is the most appropriate way to complete his or her preparation for authorization,  
 16          which option makes the most sense:
- 17               a. completing the M.Div.,
- 18               b. completing a different (and shorter) theological masters degree,
- 19               c. completing specific courses designed to complement the work she or he has  
 20               already done?

21          These questions highlight factors that you will want to weigh as you develop an educational and  
 22          formational plan for each Member in Discernment with whom you journey. There is no formula  
 23          whereby certain answers always mean that a MID must follow a particular educational path.  
 24          Instead you need to consider these factors as you strive to best meet the needs of the churches for  
 25          which you are responsible so that they are served by the best leaders possible.

## 26          ***TURNING ALL THIS INTO AN EDUCATIONAL AND*** 27          ***FORMATIONAL PLAN***

28          A simple way to think about how all this information comes together in a plan is to see all this  
 29          assessment work as providing your Committee on the Ministry with two kinds of information and  
 30          guidance. Your assessment of the Member in Discernment’s gifts and needs tells you what the  
 31          member needs to learn and develop. Your assessment of their life circumstances helps you define  
 32          the educational contexts within which s/he should do that learning and development.

33          Your aim here is to develop, together with the Member in Discernment, an individual educational  
 34          and formational plan that will identify the various activities required for the member to  
 35          experience the growth you believe is needed for authorization. The plan should be put in writing  
 36          and should organize into a clear schedule the Marks that are to be addressed, the educational and  
 37          formational content that needs to be learned, and the specific educational contexts in which that  
 38          learning should happen. The purpose of such a plan is both to give the member clear guidance  
 39          about what they need to do, and to give you a clear structure for monitoring and assessing the  
 40          member’s progress.



1 The list of Marks where you believe the Member in Discernment needs further growth before  
2 authorization is your starting point for defining the “what” of their educational and formational  
3 plan. In Appendix C you will find a table that correlates the “Marks of Faithful and Effective  
4 Authorized Ministers” with educational and formational experiences that enable a member to  
5 develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions indicated. This allows you to translate the list of  
6 Marks on which the member needs to work into a list educational content and experiences. Once  
7 you have done that translation you have the beginnings of your educational plan.

8 In order to turn this list of needed educational content and experiences you need to draw on  
9 another body of information. This is your knowledge of available and effective colleges,  
10 seminaries, regional educational programs and mentoring programs. The sections of this  
11 document that offer guidance on assessing the quality and character of colleges and seminaries,  
12 assessing the quality and character of regional educational programs, and assessing the quality  
13 and character of mentoring programs will give you some good ways to develop and refine this  
14 knowledge of programs available to your members. As you start out in this approach to working  
15 with Members in Discernment it may not feel to you as though you have much knowledge of  
16 educational programs, but over time, as you follow some of the practices described in the sections  
17 on assessing programs, you will find that your committee builds up quite a collective memory and  
18 expertise in this. Indeed, you probably already have more than you are immediately conscious of  
19 based on your experience with previous persons “in care” and their experiences of colleges,  
20 seminaries and other educational programs.

21 Deciding the best combination of educational and formational contexts in which a member might  
22 accomplish goals of his or her educational and formational plan is not a neat, formulaic process.  
23 In many cases, the result will look much like what you have been accustomed to up until now.  
24 The member will be going to seminary (and before that college) to study for an M.Div. degree,  
25 and the critical questions will be: which seminary is the best choice for that individual, and what  
26 else should s/he do in order to be best prepared for authorization. In some other cases, the  
27 educational and formational plan will be more of a composite although a particular educational  
28 program (seminary, regional educational program or mentoring program) will be at its core. In  
29 some other cases, the plan will probably be very much *ad hoc*. Nevertheless, there are some  
30 useful rules of thumb that can guide you through the decision-making process.

- 31 1. If the Member in Discernment has no college degree, or has a college degree that lacks  
32 courses in the humanities, social sciences and the arts, then the plan will probably need to  
33 include some college courses in those areas, or their equivalent. These topics are not  
34 typically covered in regional educational or mentoring programs. However, such courses  
35 would be readily available at most community colleges, and therefore are usually  
36 accessible for the member. So in this instance the plan will probably include a few  
37 college courses.
- 38 2. If the Member in Discernment needs to do work related to most of the Marks for  
39 “Knowledge and Skills Specific to Authorized Ministry,” then s/he most probably needs  
40 to do educational work equivalent to a seminary M.Div. degree (whether by going to  
41 seminary or through some other program). Note that in some circumstances some  
42 seminary M.A. degrees may cover enough of what is needed.
- 43 3. If the Member in Discernment needs to do work related only to a portion of the Marks for  
44 “Knowledge and Skills Specific to Authorized Ministry,” then s/he most probably needs  
45 only specific courses of study, whether taken at a seminary, in a regional educational  
46 program or through mentoring.

- 1 4. If the Member in Discernment is going to be going to seminary to do a M.Div. degree,  
2 but needs significant work in Marks related to “Spiritual Foundation for Ministry,” “UCC  
3 Identity for Ministry,” and/or “Personal and Professional Formation for Ministry,” be  
4 aware that seminary M.Div. programs will vary widely in the degree to which they attend  
5 to such matters. In this case you will need to take care to make specific provisions in the  
6 member’s educational and formational plan for activities that ensure the member is  
7 supported in the needed growth in these areas.
- 8 5. In general, as long as the member can get to a college and seminary, can gain admittance  
9 to the necessary programs of study, can afford that education, will have a reasonable  
10 number of years of service after graduation, finds the schools culturally appropriate, and  
11 the church does not have an urgent and immediate need for his or her ministry, sending  
12 the Member in Discernment to do the study they need at college and seminary is the  
13 preferred approach. The educational resources for students at such institutions are  
14 usually greater than are available in most regional educational programs or in mentoring  
15 programs. The resources for collaboration with your committee in terms of guiding the  
16 member and tailoring a program to her or his needs, and assessing his or her progress will  
17 also be quite substantial. The section of these resources describing assessment of col-  
18 leges and seminaries will offer your Committee some guidance on how to relate  
19 effectively to these schools in ways that support your MID’s development. For these  
20 members the educational and formational plan will consist centrally of enrollment in one  
21 or more educational institutions for particular degree programs. The rest of the plan may  
22 include guidance about particular courses to take and instructions about activities to seek  
23 out and engage in order to fully address all the educational and formational needs you  
24 and the MID have identified.
- 25 6. In any event keep before yourself these three questions:  
26 What does this program that we are thinking of as the core of the member’s plan do well?  
27 How good a match is that for this member’s educational/formational needs and  
28 circumstances?  
29 What do we need to add to the plan to supplement this program where it is not sufficient  
30 for the member’s needs to be well prepared for leading the church?

31 At the same time, you must remember that all the conditions identified in the section on  
32 “Assessment of Circumstances” (see above) need to be taken seriously as well. You will have  
33 Members in Discernment where simply packing them off to college and seminary is not the  
34 answer to their needs. For example, circumstances may genuinely prevent them from attending  
35 the relevant educational institution. Or the education and formation they need to be effective  
36 authorized ministers in the contexts where they are likely to be called cannot be gained at college  
37 and seminary. In many of these cases matters of age, distance to educational institutions, and the  
38 cultural appropriateness of available educational programs will probably loom large. Here you  
39 will need to be more creative and individual. You should not be afraid to ask for help from  
40 resource persons among Conference, national UCC, college and seminary staff, and in the  
41 member’s own cultural community. In each of these cases, the educational and formational plan  
42 you develop with the MID will be much more highly individualized, and may literally be a longer  
43 document because you will need to develop it in much greater detail. As the church’s educational  
44 institutions continue to progress toward becoming more truly multiracial and multicultural, and in  
45 distributing their education at a distance, there may be more and more resources available for  
46 your work with Members in Discernment who need such highly individualized plans.

47

## 1 **RESOURCES**

2 The faculty and staff of the seven seminaries of the United Church of Christ provide a helpful  
3 source of consultants on assessment and the design of educational and formational plans. The  
4 office of the academic dean at any of the seven seminaries is a good contact point if you would  
5 like to find someone to help you with your process. The colleges of the United Church of Christ  
6 are another good source of resource persons, especially those colleges that offer a Masters degree  
7 in theology. Again the office of the academic dean is a good contact point. Local colleges and  
8 universities, especially those that specialize in serving adult learners returning to college from the  
9 work force, are often a good source of resource persons on doing assessment. However, they  
10 may well not have much, if any, background in assessment related to the church and theological  
11 matters.

12 There is also a great host of literature on assessment coming out of academic contexts. Here are  
13 three works that may prove useful if you want to delve into the details of this (although you can  
14 do well at the process described here without this). Remember that these are written for academic  
15 contexts, and thus may need some “translation” for your purposes.

16 Whitaker, Urban. *Assessing Learning: Standards, Principles, and Procedures*. Council for Adult  
17 and Experiential Learning, 2006.

18 Moran, Joseph J. *Assessing Adult Learning: A Guide for Practitioners*. Professional Practices in  
19 Adult Education and Human Resource Development Series. Krieger Publishing, 2001.

20 Merriam, Sharan B., editor. *The New Update on Adult Learning Theory*. New Directions for  
21 Adult and Continuing Education Series. Jossey-Bass, 2001.

22

## 23 **STORIES OF ASSESSMENT AT WORK IN THE DEVELOPMENT** 24 **OF INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL AND FORMATIONAL PLANS**

25 Here are some stories of how all these factors come into play in actual cases. We hope this will  
26 give you a more concrete sense of how this works.

### 27 **Case Study A:**

28 T.J.B. retired from the Coast Guard after 20 years of military service. With pension and benefits  
29 package that were adequate, T.J. returned to Ames, Iowa where T.J. had grown up. After two  
30 years of retirement, regular attendance and membership at the local United Church of Christ and  
31 some regional lay schools courses, T.J. talked to the pastor and consistory about a path to  
32 ordination and possible missionary work in some underserved region. After some time in  
33 discernment, the congregation, consistory and pastor recommended T.J. to the Association’s  
34 Committee on Ministry as a Member in Discernment.

35 The Committee on Ministry met with T.J. B. and conducted a get-acquainted session. Pleased  
36 with their conversation, they encouraged T.J. to be active in the Association and Conference  
37 during their season of discernment. They selected a mentor from the Committee on Ministry.  
38 They asked T.J. B. to provide a brief chronological overview of his life experiences and a return  
39 visit.

40 This is what the committee on ministry learned from the overview of T.J.’s life experiences.

1 TJB grew up in Ames, Iowa attending a United Church of Christ Church, going through  
2 confirmation and all the activities of church until T.J.B. went off a UCC-related college and  
3 earned a liberal arts degree. Subsequently he joined the Coast Guard. T.J. attended UCC  
4 churches when they were available, Presbyterian and Lutheran churches when they weren't. He  
5 had been to General Synod a few times and toured the national headquarters in NYC and  
6 Cleveland.

7 In college, T.J. had taken survey courses in the Old and New Testaments, religious ethics, and  
8 humanities courses in church and society and human sexuality. Of course, that was 25 years ago.

9 In the Coast Guard, T.J.B. advanced through the ranks. He taught life skills to those joining the  
10 Coast Guard. T.J. took courses every year in leadership, diversity training, first aid, and CPR,  
11 and he kept up with new rules and regulations for the mounds of paperwork. T.J. attended church  
12 as often as possible without elected responsibilities.

13 At the regional school, T.J. took what was offered: UCC History and Polity, Bible courses on  
14 Beatitudes, the epistles, and Advent and Lenten lectionary courses.

15 The Committee on Ministry and the Member in Discernment met throughout the year, watched  
16 T.J. as T.J. became active in the Association. They worked with T.J. on a portfolio of  
17 experiences and an Individual Education Plan.

18 T.J. B's IEP:

19 Attend two years of seminary at one of the UCC-related seminaries which would include  
20 appropriate psychological testing and boundary training.

21 \*Serve an internship in the Association (near Ames)

22 \*Teach in the regional lay ministry school

23 \*Seek a call in the Association.

24 \*Scholarship Aid would be contingent on T.J. B. wanting to come back to the Association to seek  
25 a call.

## 26 **Case Study B:**

27 Pat and Jan Farmer, a young adult couple, run a small truck gardening business with their  
28 extended family. Pat and Jan use the computer and internet for advertising, marketing,  
29 contracting, licensing and bookkeeping.

30 As early as their teens, Pat and Jan were called on to fill in for the vacationing pastors in area  
31 UCC and Lutheran churches. When their UCC church was between pastors, Pat and Jan took  
32 turns leading worship and helped the church conduct business. After the second interim, Jan and  
33 Pat presented themselves to the local church as wanting to be licensed or ordained pastors.

34 After considerable time of discernment, visits from the Conference minister, and the Committee  
35 on Ministry, the church agreed to support this couple during their discernment period. The  
36 church recommended them to the Committee on Ministry as Members in Discernment.

1 The Committee on Ministry and Jan and Pat agreed that they would seek licensure as a path to  
2 ordination. They covenanted to follow the following Individual Education Plan.

3 Four settled UCC pastors in the 100 mile radius of the couple agreed to serve as mentors over a 2  
4 year period: preaching, church administration for a small church, visitation in the home and  
5 hospital, working with youth.

6 They agreed to take online courses for two from UCC-related seminaries on UCC History and  
7 Polity, Survey of Hebrew and New Testament scriptures, and other courses their mentors and  
8 regional lay school did not offer.

9 The regional lay school was 100 miles away and so Pat and Jan agreed to alternate between the  
10 two of them attending.

11 They agreed to a conversation with a psychologist, not for testing, but for assessing healthy  
12 relationships and boundaries, as well as view "A Sacred Trust" videos.

13 They were encouraged to take an active role in the Association.

#### 14 **Case Study C:**

15 James Forrest is a licensed supply pastor serving small churches on an American Indian  
16 reservation for the past 10 years. Having grown up in the culture of his native nation and tutored  
17 by a Catholic priest on how to conduct services, his ministry was to serve his people. He cannot  
18 afford to move away to go to school. School must come to him.

19 James' life experiences were as a recovering addict, an addictions counselor, and a native  
20 language teacher. He participated in community empowerment activities and attended Catholic  
21 led bible studies. He also was active in spiritual and cultural activities of his nation, well-  
22 respected and appreciated by his people.

23 A three-way covenant was negotiated between the Council for American Indian Ministry, the  
24 Association and James Forrest.

25 An Individual Education Plan was created for James Forrest.

26 The Council for American Indian Ministry would seek and provide funding for James to attend  
27 culturally-relevant educational events for three years. These would include meetings of  
28 ecumenical Indian groups, National Congress of the American Indian meetings, and Indian  
29 Health Service programs. These would be less than 5 days away from home over a three year  
30 period.

31 The Association would provide funds and transportation for Association meetings and training  
32 events over a three year period.

33 Three mentors, two of them from the native community, would be selected and tutored to be  
34 mentors and they would mentor James through culturally relevant ways to conduct wakes and  
35 funerals, provide counseling to families, and to work with at-risk youth.

36 The mentor from the Committee on Ministry would make regular visits with James to verbally  
37 review the meetings attended and the lessons learned. James will meet with the Committee on  
38 Ministry annual to report his progress.

# ON-GOING ASSESSMENT OF A MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT WHILE IN AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

## ***INTRODUCTION***

On-going assessment refers to the periodic assessment of the progress toward authorization a Member in Discernment makes as s/he pursues the tasks in the individual educational and formational plan developed in the process of initial assessment. On-going assessment is a less extensive and targeted annual process that should be part of every Annual Review (*MOM*, section 2, pp. 10-11) that the Committee on the Ministry, or its authorized representative(s), conduct with the Member in Discernment. This annual on-going assessment allows you to do several things:

- to monitor a member's development as s/he works through the agreed educational and formational experiences in preparation for possible authorization;
- to make mid-course adjustments in the member's educational and formational plan to maximize the member's growth during the process of preparation;
- to contribute – by a more refined and on-going discernment of gifts for ministry – to your continuing discernment of the appropriateness of authorization, as well as of the most appropriate form of authorization, for this Member in Discernment;
- to compile a history of assessment that creates a solid foundation for the final assessment and decision for authorization.

Effective on-going assessment presupposes that your Committee will ask each Member in Discernment in your care to provide you in advance of the meeting for her or his Annual Review with certain specified materials. It also presupposes that you will spend a good amount of time discussing those materials with the member and reaching a mutual assessment of his or her progress in relation to the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers. This is an occasion for celebrating the progress made, for affirming or revising the member's educational and formational plan to ensure that s/he receives the best possible preparation, and for continuing discernment of the nature of the call the member has received.

## ***The On-Going Assessment in the Context of Annual Review***

Remember that on-going assessment of a Member in Discernment is a targeted process. You are not assessing the member in relation to all of the "Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers." You will focus on those Marks that set the agenda for the past year's work in the member's educational and formational plan. Those Marks where you judge the member to have already reached a satisfactory level need not concern you greatly, and it is premature to assess the member's achievement of Marks for which the educational and formational work is in the future. However, it does make sense to keep the Marks of "Spiritual Foundation for Ministry," and of "Personal and Professional Formation for Ministry" always in view. Your attention to these need not be as intense as in initial assessment unless they were part of the past year's learning agenda.

The best combination of assessment resources that you need to use will probably vary from year to year based on the Marks on which you are focusing. So it would be good to consult the full range of options discussed in Appendix D in addition to considering the proposals here. You may find the differentiation of approaches to assessment among the different sets of Marks in the instructions for initial assessment a helpful guide in determining which resources to use for particular Marks now.

1 For your assessment of the member's work on the educational and formational plan you will  
2 certainly want to ask for the member's written self-assessment of their progress in relation to the  
3 Marks that set the year's agenda. You will certainly also want references from instructors,  
4 supervisors and others who worked with the member during the year, and those references should  
5 address specifically the Marks engaged by the work they did with the member. Beyond this you  
6 are most likely to want to see various forms of information from the member's educational  
7 program (see Appendix D for a fuller discussion). Depending on the nature of the program and  
8 the year's work, these would include transcripts, evaluations of the student in course work,  
9 evaluations of his or her supervised practice of ministry, various annual and summative  
10 assessment processes, and – if the member completed a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)  
11 – CPE evaluations. Especially in the middle and later years of the student's educational and  
12 formational plan (such as the last two thirds of full-time seminary education), you will probably  
13 find it fruitful to send the member a case study in pastoral leadership and ask for an analysis of it  
14 from various perspectives.

15 You want to receive all of these materials in advance of the Annual Review meeting, which then  
16 should include a discussion with the member of this information about the member's progress in  
17 relation to the Marks. The results of your mutual assessment of progress should be recorded on a  
18 progress chart such as that found in Appendix A. That and all the written materials should go  
19 into the member's portfolio.

20 If you want to keep the Marks for "Spiritual Foundation for Ministry," and "Personal and  
21 Professional Formation for Ministry" in view annually, even when they are not in the year's  
22 learning agenda, then you will want to seek additional assessment information. From the  
23 Member in Discernment you can ask for her or his assessment of how s/he stands in relation to  
24 those Marks. You can also ask for brief narratives concerning the member's spiritual life and  
25 practices during the last year, the member's emotional and relational life, and/or any experiences  
26 of significant impact on the member's life during the last year and how s/he responded. To this  
27 you should add references that speak to the member's conduct and disposition in relation to the  
28 Marks in these areas. These materials should then also become a subject of discussion with the  
29 member during the Annual Review. Your judgments about the degree to which the member is  
30 displaying each of these Marks should be recorded on a progress chart, and that record should be  
31 added to the member's portfolio.

32

33

## 1 **STORIES OF ON-GOING ASSESSMENT AT WORK**

2 Here are some stories of how on-going assessment plays in actual cases. We hope this will give  
3 you a more concrete sense of how this works.

### 4 **Case Study A:**

5 T.J.B. retired Coast Guard member now fulltime seminary student and Association's Member in  
6 Discernment is closely adhering to his IEP, except for meeting periodically with his assigned  
7 mentor and the Committee on the Ministry. Because the Committee has a balance of clergy and  
8 lay persons, and at present, the chairperson is a new lay leader, T.J.B. finds her persistent  
9 questioning and invitations to meet regularly annoying and intrusive. He is excelling in all of his  
10 classes, having hired someone to tutor him in Greek. As recommended by the Committee on the  
11 Ministry, he serves on an Associational planning committee, voluntarily teaches biblical studies  
12 (Old Testament Prophets and the Gospel of Mark) at the regional lay ministry school and as time  
13 and finances allow he attends lectures by prominent, progressive, biblical scholars. He always  
14 volunteers to preach at the Association and Conference annual meetings.

15 The Committee on the Ministry see T.J.B. in his various public roles, but for quite some time he  
16 has been unable to attend the Committee on the Ministry meetings as requested. He had been curt  
17 with the lay leader, the chairperson of the Committee on the Ministry, when she called to invite  
18 T.J.B. to their last meeting. The chairperson had heard that he was aggressive and self-promoting  
19 at the Associational meetings. The Committee noted that physically his appearance had changed,  
20 notably his weight gain and paled coloring. Since these observations and hearsay are not covered  
21 in the "check list from the new manual" they moved on to address what they could and should,  
22 but didn't call him to accountability.

23 The Committee on the Ministry used the "check list from the new manual" to mark the  
24 knowledge and skills area where they thought T.J.B. had done well in the public arena. The  
25 chairperson and his assigned mentor sent him a supportive letter and a summation of their  
26 assessment and asked him to call them when he was ready to meet with them.

### 27 **Case Study B:**

28 Pat and Jan Farmer, a young adult couple in rural America, are Members in Discernment with an  
29 Association Committee on the Ministry. Pat, Jan and the Committee are struggling with their  
30 agreed upon IEP that prepared them for licensure and toward ordination. Being licensed pastors  
31 at their local church, meeting with mentors, going to the regional lay school, and taking online  
32 courses, plus running a small truck farm was too much! It seemed everything that could go  
33 wrong, in fact, did. The Committee members knew the circumstances also since a member of Pat  
34 and Jan's church served on the Committee on the Ministry.

35 A more protracted IEP was negotiated and some expectations were modified. More at-home  
36 reading, listening to assigned podcasts, time on the UCC website and [www.textweek.com](http://www.textweek.com) were  
37 recommended. The four mentors, Pat and Jan would "chat" on the internet or telephone once-a-  
38 month. Pat and Jan would continue to alternate attending the regional lay school.

39 The Committee on the Ministry agreed to hold their meetings periodically at the church where  
40 Jan and Pat served and at least some Committee members would attend the morning worship  
41 service to assess the relevant Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers.



1 **Case Study C:**

2 Felecia Francis Franklin had been a member of another denomination for all of her childhood and  
3 young adult life. She was into her third year of seminary when she learned of the United Church  
4 of Christ's General Synod support for Marriage Equality. Felecia immediately joined the nearby  
5 UCC congregation. Seeing her enthusiasm, warmth, and readiness, they commended her to the  
6 Association Committee on the Ministry.

7 The Committee on the Ministry quickly met with her and put together a portfolio of Felecia's  
8 Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers. Since they had not seen her in her  
9 preparatory stages, the Committee gave her two options for her last semester of seminary. One  
10 was shadowing a UCC pastor who was in a church near the seminary. The pastor would also  
11 mentor Felecia and give her opportunities to work with the youth and occasionally preach. The  
12 second option was to conduct a short-term book study sponsored by the UCC church at the  
13 shelter for battered and abused spouses. She chose the latter.

14 With Felecia's knowledge and permission, certain members of the Committee on the Ministry  
15 accepted assignments to drop in on the book study, have lunch with her at the seminary, and one  
16 person agreed to talk with Felecia's former pastor and former regional director to verify her level  
17 of participation.

18 Among the Committee, they were able to gather enough information to make informed decisions  
19 about her Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers.

# 1           **ASSESSMENT FOR AUTHORIZATION: ORDINATION**

2

## 3           ***INTRODUCTION***

4           The Member in Discernment with whom you are working has completed the educational and  
5           formational plan you laid out as a result of the initial assessment process. At each annual on-  
6           going assessment you have held with the member, s/he has shown steady progress, and you have  
7           grown in your conviction that the ministry to which God is calling them is one requiring  
8           authorization in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ. Further, you are convinced that the  
9           ministry to which God has called this member is one requiring the authorization of ordination.  
10          What now?

11          You have reached the stage of assessment for ordination. While this is a major moment of  
12          assessment, you and the member should be reaching it with a firm foundation from the processes  
13          of initial and on-going assessment. If these processes have worked well, then you ought to be  
14          arriving at this point with considerable clarity of mind that the member is called to ordained  
15          ministry and is ready for ordination. This will be a time of celebration and affirmation of the gifts  
16          the member brings to the ministry of God's church, even as the assessment is still rigorous and  
17          careful. It is a time also for clarity about the member's needs for continuing learning so that they  
18          continue to grow and develop beyond ordination.

19          Concerns from the outset or that emerged along the way should have been surfaced and dealt with  
20          appropriately before this point. The presence at this stage of serious concerns about whether the  
21          member is called to ordained ministry, or whether they are ready for ordained ministry may be a  
22          sign that there is important educational and formational work yet to be done. If that is the case,  
23          you should consider a careful review of your assessment of the member in the light of each one of  
24          the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers to try to identify the source of your  
25          uneasiness, and determine whether to proceed with final assessment or to extend the discernment  
26          period.

## 27          ***A PRELUDE TO ASSESSMENT FOR AUTHORIZATION***

28          There are actually two steps here. The first is a regular Annual Review on-going assessment  
29          covering the results of steps in the member's educational and formational plan completed since  
30          the previous Annual Review. If this raises no concerns, and satisfactory progress was made in  
31          relation to the Marks concerned, then you and the member are ready to proceed to assessment for  
32          authorization. If this last on-going assessment raises concerns that are sufficient to make  
33          assessment for authorization and ordination unwise at this moment, then this should result in a  
34          modification of the educational and formational plan and an extension of the discernment period  
35          so that the member can make the necessary progress toward readiness for ordination.

## 1 **THE PROCESS OF ASSESSMENT ITSELF<sup>14</sup>**

2 Assessment for ordination takes a global look at the Member in Discernment, but builds on an  
3 extensive foundation. Its purposes are three:

- 4 • by review of the history of piece by piece assessment with this Member in Discernment  
5 to substantiate the judgment that authorization is appropriate and that the member is  
6 ready for authorization;
- 7 • by a fresh assessment that examines the member's performance and readiness holistically  
8 to confirm the judgment that authorization is appropriate and that the member is ready for  
9 authorization;
- 10 • to provide clarity about the member's gifts for ministry and growing edges for the sake of  
11 supporting the member's wise choices about discernment of call to a specific ministry,  
12 and for the sake of identifying areas for future learning and development.

13 The process includes two major sources of information. First, the portfolio of the Member in  
14 Discernment coming for final assessment should contain records of the judgments of initial  
15 assessment and on-going assessments. These are the pieces out of which a composite picture can  
16 be developed of those "Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers" that the member  
17 displays strongly and those that are in need of further growth. Review this picture as a  
18 committee, asking three questions:

- 19 • Is this picture of strengths and weaknesses in relation to the Marks of Faithful and  
20 Effective Authorized Ministers sufficient for ordination?
- 21 • What do we particularly want to affirm and celebrate with this member?
- 22 • Which, if any, of the areas for growth should the member be addressing post-ordination?

23 Second, it is important to confirm the picture you have from your past experience with the  
24 Member in Discernment by a new assessment in relation to the Marks of Faithful and Effective  
25 Authorized Ministers based on more holistic assessment mechanisms. This will look a good deal  
26 like the process outlined in the current *Manual on Ministry* (section 3) for the ordination  
27 examination.

28 Ask the Member in Discernment to provide you with the following written documents:

- 29 • a self-assessment in relation to the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers;
- 30 • a worship service that s/he has designed, and the sermon (to be) preached in it along with  
31 a description of the congregation for which it is intended and the aims of the service and  
32 sermon in relation to that congregation;
- 33 • an analysis of a case study in pastoral leadership that you have provided;
- 34 • an ordination paper (as currently defined in *MOM*, section 3, pp. 4-5).

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<sup>14</sup> Note to the reader. This process would more or less replace the current process called "Ordination Examination" on pp. 6-10 of *MOM*, section 3.

1 In addition, obtain a final set of references for the Member in Discernment. You may also wish  
2 to ask the Member in Discernment to take a second round of psychological assessments as a way  
3 to measure progress in areas of “Personal and Professional Formation” since the assessments  
4 done in the initial assessment stage. For more information on this process see the section on  
5 initial assessment, or consult Appendix D.

6 When you meet with the Member in Discernment for final assessment have him or her preach the  
7 sermon to the committee. Then discuss all of the written materials with the Member in  
8 Discernment. On the basis of that discussion review each of the Marks of Faithful and Effective  
9 Authorized Ministers and make a final judgment about the degree to which the Member in  
10 Discernment displays each. Record this on a chart such as that shown in Appendix A. Review  
11 this assessment asking the following questions:

- 12 • How does this compare to the picture that emerged from initial and on-going assessment?
- 13 • Is the total picture of strengths and weaknesses in relation to the Marks of Faithful and  
14 Effective Authorized Ministers sufficient for ordination?
- 15 • What do we particularly want to affirm and celebrate with this member?
- 16 • Which, if any, of the areas for growth should the member be addressing post-ordination?

17 The result should lead you to a faithful decision about ordination and some good advice for the  
18 new ordinand about possibilities for future growth that s/he should pursue through continuing  
19 education and other forms of professional development.

**LICENSED MINISTRY**  
**IN THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

***UCC Constitution Provisions, with Proposed Amendments***

(Sections to be revised are underlined; proposed wording is in italics)

29 28 Licensing is the act whereby the United Church of Christ through an Association, in cooperation with a person and a Local Church of the United Church of Christ, recognizes and authorizes that member whom God has called to perform specified duties in a designated Local Church or within that Association, mainly preaching and conducting services of worship, for a designated time under the supervision and guidance of that Association. The license may be renewed. Voting membership in that Association may be granted.

*. . . within a covenant of mutual accountability that includes appropriate supervision and guidance of that Association. The license may be renewed. Voting membership in that Association is granted.*

30 29 A Licensed Minister of the United Church of Christ is one of its lay members whom God has called and who has been recognized and authorized by an Association to perform specified duties in a designated Local Church or within that Association, mainly preaching and conducting services of worship, for a designated time under the supervision and guidance of that Association. The license may be renewed.

*Delete "lay" to read: "one of its members. . . "*

*. . . within a covenant of mutual accountability that includes appropriate supervision and guidance of that Association.*

151 A person seeking recognition and authorization as a Licensed Minister applies through his or her Local Church to the Association in which that church is a member.

*141 A Member in Discernment seeking recognition and authorization as a Licensed Minister applies with his or her Local Church to the Association of which that church is a member.*

152 The Committee on the Ministry of the Association examines the applicant with respect to Christian faith, character, ability to do the work expected, and knowledge of the history, polity, and practices of the United Church of Christ. If the applicant is found to be qualified, a license is granted by the Association for not more than one year at a time to serve in a designated Local Church or within that Association. Following a review by the Committee on the Ministry, the license may be renewed.

1           142 *The Committee on the Ministry of the Association examines the Member in*  
2           *Discernment with respect to Christian faith, character, ability to do the work expected,*  
3           *preparation to meet the responsibilities of the office, educational and theological*  
4           *attainments, and knowledge of the history, polity, and practices of the United Church of*  
5           *Christ. If the applicant is found to be qualified, a license is granted by the Association for*  
6           *not more than one year to serve in a designated Local Church or within that Association.*  
7           *Following a review by the Committee on the Ministry, the license may be renewed*  
8           *annually for two more years after which the Association may grant the license for a time*  
9           *determined to be appropriate.*

10

11

12           153 In special cases and at the request of the Local Church which the person serves, the  
13           Association may grant the Licensed Minister the right to administer the sacraments and rites of  
14           the Church for this Local Church.

15

16           143 *At the request of the Local Church which the person serves, the Association may*  
17           *grant the Licensed Minister the right to administer the sacraments and rites of the Church*  
18           *for this Local Church.*

19

20           154 144 A Licensed Minister is listed separately from Ordained Ministers and from  
21           Commissioned Ministers on the rolls of the Association which has licensed him or her. A Licensed  
22           Minister is eligible for service only in the category of laymen or laywomen for all positions referred  
23           to in the Bylaws.

24

25           *service only in lay categories*

26

27

## 1      **LICENSED MINISTRY: DEFINITION AND COMMENTARY**

2

3      Licensed Ministry is an authorized ministry of the United Church of Christ for a particular time,  
4      in a particular place, and in covenant with an Association (which both authorizes that ministry  
5      and offers appropriate supervision and/or guidance) and the congregation extending the call. As  
6      an authorized ministry of the UCC, licensed ministry exists to meet the needs of the Church for  
7      faithful and effective leadership and Licensed Ministers serve primarily, though not exclusively,  
8      as pastors of local churches. Since a license may be renewed, a minister may remain licensed for  
9      as long as the Association, the congregation, and the Licensed Minister choose to continue in that  
10     covenant. Licensed Ministers who, in the judgment of the Association Committee on Ministry  
11     and in their own discernment, may be called to ordination may prepare for that ministry while  
12     licensed and serving.

13     A member of the UCC called to be licensed proceeds with the Church through the same  
14     movements of call, preparation and authorization, and continuing covenant as other authorized  
15     ministers. The local church and the Association join in the discernment of call and in  
16     determining appropriate plans and activities of preparation and formation, as well as in all the  
17     other movements. Assessment of gifts and needs is done with the Marks of Faithful and Effective  
18     Authorized Ministers of the UCC as the guide, while considering the particular context and needs  
19     of the setting to which the member is called and the opportunity beyond initial authorization for  
20     continuing education and formation in ministry.

21     The supervision and guidance of the Licensed Minister by the Association is shaped by the needs  
22     of the local church, the calling body if other than the local church, the United Church of Christ,  
23     and the minister. In the case of a Licensed Minister who is preparing for ordination, that  
24     supervision and guidance will also be shaped by the plan of preparation which is in place. When  
25     the minister is not preparing for ordination but has achieved appropriate understanding,  
26     experience, knowledge, and skills for ministry in accord with the Marks, supervision and  
27     guidance take a different form, similar to the covenant among the Association and its other  
28     authorized ministers.

29     Licensed Ministers can be called to varied settings of ministry, including but not limited to the  
30     following:

- 31     ▪ Pastoral leadership for a local church, including the ministry of word and sacrament, church  
32     administration, and other pastoral duties as outlined in the call by the local church and  
33     authorized by the Association.
- 34     ▪ Supply preaching in local churches needing someone to lead worship only on occasion  
35     (usually when the installed pastor is away or the church is between installed pastors).
- 36     ▪ Special assignments within the Association which require authorization to perform pastoral  
37     functions

38

39     As an authorized ministry of the United Church of Christ, licensure follows discernment, call,  
40     formation, and demonstration of readiness. It has its own integrity, delineated in the particular  
41     call of the individual and in the covenant among the Licensed Minister, the local church, and the  
42     Association. A license is initially granted for a limited period, usually one year, at the end of  
43     which it may be renewed. After three or more years of annual review, the license may be granted  
44     for the duration of that call.

1

## 2 ***Particular Responsibilities of the Committee on Ministry***

3 The Committee on Ministry on behalf of the Association:

- 4   ▪ Joins in covenant with the Member in Discernment for licensure by making an initial  
5   assessment of the member’s gifts, needs and circumstances (see section on “Initial  
6   Assessment), developing an individual educational and formational plan for the member,  
7   providing appropriate support – including annual reviews at which on-going assessment is  
8   carried out (see section on “On-Going Assessment”), guiding the building of a portfolio, and  
9   discerning a call;
- 10   ▪ Reviews the request for licensure by receiving the call from the local church, interviewing the  
11   candidate (with his/her portfolio), asking the candidate to demonstrate his or her marks of  
12   readiness for licensure, and making sure boundary training, psychological testing (if  
13   necessary), and background checks are done or will be done in a timely manner;
- 14   ▪ Grants standing and recognition to the Licensed Minister and covenants to work with the  
15   person during her/his tenure in the association;
- 16   ▪ Provides supervision or guidance, as appropriate for the individual and the context of the  
17   ministry, to the licensed minister for the duration of the call.
- 18   ▪ Throughout its work, is particularly attentive to the needs of persons and faith communities  
19   not represented among the majority of COM members and to the need of COM members to  
20   be welcoming. (See Additional Resources of this draft, “When a Committee on Ministry  
21   Meets Communities and Individuals not Currently Represented among the Majority of  
22   Committee Members”)

23

24

## 25 ***Movement of Licensed Ministers***

26 A license is not “transferred” from one setting to another. When a member who has been  
27 licensed is called to a new ministry, a license may be granted for the new call. An Association  
28 may choose to include Licensed Ministers, or persons who are approved for licensure, as  
29 candidates to serve as pastor in a local church within that Association. The Office of Parish Life  
30 and Leadership will provide a profile form for such persons to complete and keep on file with  
31 their Association and Conference. If the Association has such a policy, the profile of a Licensed  
32 Minister or Member approved for licensure may be submitted to search committees with the  
33 approval of the potential candidate.

34

35 If an individual who has served as a Licensed Minister in one Association hears a potential call to  
36 ministry in another Association, that Association may “recognize” the individual’s call, formation  
37 for ministry, and experience as a Licensed Minister as witnessed in the person’s portfolio (see  
38 below). Each Association determines whether and how such a person may seek a call within its  
39 bounds. If the Association determines that the person is called to licensed ministry within its  
40 boundaries, and if the person’s call, formation, and experience demonstrate the person’s readiness  
41 for licensure to the satisfaction of that Association, the Association may proceed to license the  
42 person.



1

2 ***From Licensure to Ordination***

3 Licensure may be granted to an individual called to licensed ministry by God and the Church and  
4 the person may serve for the duration of that call, seeking no other authorization. Or, licensure  
5 can be granted to a Member in Discernment who is preparing for ordained ministry while serving  
6 as a Licensed Minister. Seminary students, students in mentorship, and students in regional  
7 educational programs, for example, can be licensed to be the pastor of a local church while  
8 preparing for ordination. In such cases, the student's ministry is one element of her/his path of  
9 preparation and will be the focus of disciplined reflection by the student and supervisor(s).

10

11 Experiences of licensed ministry provide a rich resource for those preparing for ordination. The  
12 individual's plan of preparation, approved and monitored by the Association, will provide for  
13 disciplined, rigorous, guided reflection on the practice of ministry, including, for example, the  
14 relationship of theological and Biblical understandings, the use of related disciplines (such as  
15 sociology, psychology), the communication of the Gospel in particular communities, and  
16 expressions of faith. It will also include opportunities to grow in those areas identified through  
17 the Marks as requiring attention before authorization. Years of service alone do not necessarily  
18 prepare one for ordination; years of service including an intentional plan of preparation faithfully  
19 pursued offer a rich opportunity. As with all forms of authorized ministry and all members called  
20 to such, the key questions to be asked include: To what ministry is this member called? Is this  
21 member adequately prepared to take these particular vows and enter this continuing covenant  
22 with the UCC?

23

24

## Preparation for Licensed Ministry

Preparation for licensed ministry of the United Church of Christ requires the same care as preparation for any authorized ministry. The Committee on Ministry and the Member in Discernment will enter into the process of initial assessment and agree upon an individualized plan of education and formation (see section on “Initial Assessment,” pp. xx-xx). The Committee will take care that the plan is balanced appropriately between responsiveness to the particular circumstances of the Member, including the nature of his or her call, and those of the community in which ministry is likely to take place. It will also be clear and consistent with the qualities expected of all Licensed Ministers, as guided by the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ.

In most circumstances, those admitted to a program of preparation for licensed ministry study will have:

1. High School Diploma or equivalency
2. Membership and active participation in a United Church of Christ congregation for at least one year
3. Written recommendation of a local UCC church pastor
4. Written recommendation of local UCC church lay leadership
5. Statement of one’s faith journey (which may be presented orally and may include participation of the MID’s faith community sharing testimonies about the MID’s faith journey)

The Member’s individual educational and formational plan will be related to the Member’s geographic, cultural, social and economic context, as well as those of the community in which licensed ministry is likely to occur. Following the process of initial assessment (see section on “Initial Assessment,” pp. xx-xx), this individual educational and formational plan is developed by the Committee on Ministry in consultation with the Member and the local church. and the plan may use, as is appropriate, regional training programs, college courses, continuing education offerings, seminary coursework, mentoring, self-directed and directed study, internships, and other opportunities which enable the member to reasonably attain the desired outcomes, and to demonstrate the corresponding Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ as they apply to licensed ministry.

Particularly for those preparing for licensed ministry and those so authorized (but useful and recommended for MID’s and all authorized ministers), the creation and maintenance of a “portfolio” is strongly urged as a means of documenting preparation for and experience in licensed ministry (see section on “The Use of Portfolios” in Appendix D, pp. 159 - 161). Unlike a ministerial profile, which is a standardized document kept on file with a Member’s Conference, a licensed ministry portfolio remains in the possession of the Member and is used in various ways, including as a means of introduction to other Committees on Ministry with whom the Licensed Minister may interact. Contents of such portfolios will be quite individual, but may include illustrations and documentation used in the initial process of authorization; evaluations by supervisors, local church leaders, and members of Committees on Ministry; sermons, correspondence, journals and reflections as appropriate; stories, art work, and any other materials the Member or Licensed Minister believes best describes their call to, preparation for, and

1 experience in licensed ministry. Portfolio contents are organized and presented in relationship to  
2 the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ.

3 The Member in Discernment preparing for licensure will proceed through the time of discernment  
4 and formation with the Committee on Ministry, moving through initial and ongoing assessment  
5 (see sections on Initial Assessment and Ongoing Assessment, pp. xx-xx), engaging in prayerful  
6 consideration of call to ministry, and developing their gifts and skills for ministry in the United  
7 Church of Christ. The particular focus will be upon those Marks the Committee has determined  
8 most significant for the particular ministry to which this Member may be called or most  
9 significant for this Member to address. When the Committee discerns that the Member may be  
10 ready, the Committee will proceed with the Member to Assessment for Authorization: Licensure.

11

## 1 **ASSESSMENT FOR AUTHORIZATION: LICENSURE**

2

3 The Member in Discernment with whom your committee is working has completed the  
4 educational and formational plan you created as a result of the initial assessment process. (See  
5 guides to initial and on-going assessment.) At each annual ongoing assessment the Member has  
6 shown progress and you and the Member continue to discern a call to licensed ministry. Perhaps  
7 there is a local church also convinced that God is calling this person to licensed ministry in their  
8 midst. You believe that this is an appropriate moment to determine whether to authorize the  
9 Member as a Licensed Minister of the United Church of Christ.

10 Ideally by now you have been in a Covenant of Discernment and Formation with the Member for  
11 two or more years. If previous assessment and the individual educational and formational plan  
12 have been done carefully and faithfully by all the parties, you are arriving at this moment with  
13 some clarity about the Member's call and readiness. It may be that you have not had such an  
14 extended relationship. If there is significant doubt as to the readiness of the Member, you will  
15 need to consider carefully whether to proceed with a full assessment for authorization at this time.  
16 In any case, you will want to review your procedures and develop a time line and expectations to  
17 be followed so that all involved can proceed with confidence that they are moving together.

18 This is a time to gather the relevant materials which provide witness to the Member's readiness  
19 for licensing. These materials should include dates to which they apply and dates when they were  
20 prepared. It is important that those dates provide both a historical and a contemporary picture of  
21 the Member and are not all 20 years ago, nor all this year, for instance. These materials will  
22 include many or all of the following:

- 23 • The Member's Portfolio (which may include many of the items listed below, see section  
24 on Portfolios)
- 25 • Reports of previous assessments with the Committee on Ministry (include, if relevant and  
26 possible, assessments done by other UCC Associations or other church bodies)
- 27 • Documentation of formal education
- 28 • Documentation (written, oral recordings, personal testimony by the individual and other  
29 responsible and knowledgeable persons) of other educational and life experiences related  
30 to particular Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church  
31 of Christ
- 32 • Testimony of the person's Christian faith and call to ministry, from the individual and  
33 from others within the community of faith
- 34 • Testimony of the person's gifts for licensed ministry
- 35 • Assessments of the person's knowledge, experience, strengths, weaknesses, and  
36 development related to the Marks
- 37 • One or more case studies prepared by the Member which demonstrate particular Marks as  
38 understood and engaged by the Member
- 39 • Sermons, lesson plans, or liturgies
- 40 • Evidence of satisfactory, and recent, completion of Boundary Training
- 41 • Psychological Assessment
- 42 • Background check

1 Your Committee will want to take some time considering these documents in relation to the  
2 Marks most pertinent to the particular ministry to which the individual may be licensed. For  
3 instance, most Licensed Ministers are called to serve as pastors in a local church and so the Marks  
4 related to the ability to lead worship and to preach faithfully and effectively, to offer appropriate  
5 pastoral care, and to represent knowledgeably the United Church of Christ in that place will  
6 require particular attention. At the same time, a Licensed Minister is called to a particular time  
7 and place and so may not require the same extent of formal education as a Commissioned  
8 Minister, for instance. All authorized ministers must be persons open to transformation through  
9 disciplined learning and responsible participation in covenanted community where their growth  
10 may be nurtured. All must be persons of some spiritual maturity and of personal integrity. All  
11 must be committed to the mission of God and to the United Church of Christ.

12 In addition to the various kinds of data suggested above, a conversation occurs with the Member,  
13 who may be accompanied by one or more persons from his or her faith community, and the  
14 Committee. The purpose of the conversation is to provide the Committee and the Member  
15 opportunity to continue to discern the Member's call to licensed ministry and actual readiness for  
16 that authorization. The documentation and testimony will be discussed. The Member may  
17 preach and/or lead worship, present a case study, or make an oral statement. The conversation  
18 will be guided by the chair, according to an agenda previously shared with the Member.

19 Some Associations may require an Ecclesiastical Council in order to authorize licensing. Should  
20 this be your practice, it is vital that your Committee and the Member be very comfortable with the  
21 format, the expectations of the participants, and preparedness of the Member so that no one finds  
22 the Council to be demeaning for any person in any way whatsoever. (The same should be true for  
23 all encounters of individuals with your Committee on Ministry.) Many Associations authorize  
24 the Committee on Ministry to authorize Licensed Ministers on its behalf, according to well-  
25 prepared, adopted policies and procedures. Adopting the Manual on Ministry, or the Manual with  
26 additions or amendments, or sections of the Manual, as Association policy and then entrusting the  
27 work to the Committee on Ministry is appropriate.

28 Following the conversation for authorization, your Committee on Ministry will take time by itself  
29 to discern whether this is the moment to license this Member. The Committee will need to do  
30 this carefully, considering the call of God to the church and to this person, the needs of the church  
31 (including the particular setting currently desiring to call this person), the gifts and readiness of  
32 the person in relationship to the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the  
33 United Church of Christ and the needs of the particular setting, and the possibilities for the  
34 person's growth in ministry while serving as a Licensed Minister.

35 The decision may be

- 36 • "Yes, this person is called to licensed ministry in this time and place with these  
37 provisions for supervision and/or guidance,"
- 38 • "Yes, this member will be licensed at this time, with the expectation that particular Marks  
39 will be addressed before the license may be renewed and with suggested provisions for  
40 that to happen."
- 41 • "No, the Member will not be licensed at this time but a plan of continued discernment  
42 and of education and formation will be initiated or continued."
- 43 • "No, we do not discern that this Member is called to this licensed ministry." This "no"  
44 will include shared observations about the ways in which participants in the conversation  
45 discern that God is calling this Member."

- 1           • Or, some other response faithful to the discernment of the group.

2 If the decision is to license the Member at this time, your Committee will join the Member and  
3 the local church in preparing to recognize and celebrate this authorization of ministry in and on  
4 behalf of the United Church of Christ with an appropriate service of recognition and (if  
5 appropriate) installation. You now also enter a new covenant with the Licensed Minister in  
6 which all parties are responsible to each other for the authorized ministries of the United Church  
7 of Christ, for the care of its ministers and members, and for particular provisions in relationship to  
8 this ministry.

9 Ideally the Committee, the local faith community representatives and the Member will have  
10 reached a consensus. Sometimes persons and communities honestly differ in their discernment.  
11 While the Association is responsible on behalf of the United Church of Christ to make the  
12 determination concerning authorization, in covenant with members and other settings of the  
13 Church we listen and speak respectfully, honestly, and hopefully together, knowing that “God is  
14 still speaking.” Appropriate confidences must be kept. None of us can speak for the other  
15 without that one’s agreement. Committee members must not assume too much for themselves  
16 but speak and act only on behalf of the Committee as has been agreed. Your Committee will  
17 want to do all that it can faithfully do to be sure that all the parties have access to appropriate  
18 pastoral care and to remain in faithful covenant with the individuals and communities involved.

19 From time to time, Associations are asked to license an individual quickly to meet a pressing and  
20 particular need, often of a local church. When such is the case, your Committee will want to  
21 proceed with care, even if with haste, and not be pressed into a truly unwise decision. Try to be  
22 sure that all parties understand the seriousness of authorizing ministry on behalf of the United  
23 Church of Christ as well as the particular considerations involved. You will want to have some  
24 confidence about the person’s spiritual and personal formation as well as UCC identity before  
25 granting any license. And, should you be convinced that it is right and appropriate to grant a  
26 license in such a situation, you might do so for a period shorter than one year to provide for  
27 mandated, continuing attention to all the considerations involved. Faithful follow up is,  
28 obviously, imperative.

29

# THE THIRD MOVEMENT

## CONTINUING COVENANT WITH THE CHURCH

### ***IV. Authorized Ministerial Standing in the United Church of Christ (The Third Movement)***

1. Ministerial Standing in the United Church of Christ is a covenant of an Association, an authorized minister, a local church and the calling body (if other than a local church).
2. The Covenant of Ministerial Standing is guided by the Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ, the “Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ,” and the policies of the Association.
3. All the covenant partners are responsible to each and all of the other partners.
4. All Covenants of Ministerial Standing include, but are not limited to, appropriate support of the minister, faithfulness of all to the United Church of Christ, and the continuing discernment of call and formation for ministry.

### ***V. UCC Identity and Authorized Ministry (All Movements)***

1. All authorized ministers of the United Church of Christ, commissioned, licensed, or ordained, serve on behalf of the whole United Church of Christ.
2. UCC identity and relationships are a fundamental component of the call to, the preparation for, and the practice of authorized ministry.
3. The United Church of Christ is committed to fostering an environment that celebrates diversity of expressions of Christian faith and promotes mutually enriching interaction of various Christian cultures, theologies, spiritualities and ideologies.

## STANDING OF AUTHORIZED MINISTERS OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST AS A COVENANTAL RELATIONSHIP

The United Church of Christ understands itself to be a covenantal community, called into being by God. In formative documents of predecessor bodies, in the UCC Statement of Faith, and in the UCC Constitution and Bylaws, covenant is one of the basic understandings of the way in which the United Church of Christ is formed, with Jesus Christ as its head, and charged to live its common life. Other images of the church, including its identity as the body of Christ and as an instrument of God's mission, also embody extremely important aspects of the character of the Church's being. Covenant is about our relationships; it is how we live together. The UCC Constitution frames these covenantal relationships in relationship to the various settings or "expressions" of the church. (See also, *United Church of Christ Manual on Church, Perspectives and Procedures for Association and Local Church Covenantal Partners*, Draft 2, January 1, 2005.)

The idea of living in covenant is based in the Scriptures. The New Testament tells of the covenant offered by Christ, a covenant into which his followers are called to live "in Christ." It is a way of experiencing God's gift of new life and human participation in receiving and living that gift in Christ's name. Within the traditions of the Old Testament Scriptures, God is experienced repeatedly proclaiming, "I am your God; you are my people." Such a relationship is life-giving as it provides exodus from slavery, gift of land, home-coming, identity. Within that primary, covenantal, life-giving relationship offered by this faithful God, all Christians find themselves in covenant with one another. The United Church of Christ and its forebears have long claimed that understanding as foundational to its common life. Covenant, whether formal or informal, honors the relationship of individuals to God, the relationship of communities to God, and the relationships of individuals and communities to one another. Covenant means that all parties are regarded and treated with integrity because of the gift of life given each by God. Covenant means that all parties care for the others, again because of the life given each by God. As God offers God's self in covenant pledge for the life of humanity and creation, so God's people respond by accepting that relationship and sharing it with one another and all creation. So we enter into covenantal relationships with one another, not really knowing what the future of the relationship will bring other than walking faithfully together in the name of Christ and in trusting God's faithfulness.

As all expressions of the United Church of Christ live in covenant with one another, all members of the United Church of Christ live in this covenant community called into being by God in Jesus Christ. Such a covenant requires that each covenant partner, whether an individual person or a community, bring the integrity of that one's being into the relationship. In order to be a "partner," each must bring and maintain individual identity, integrity, and responsibility – often called "autonomy." The covenant community expects that all will keep their word and yet knows that the community may also be a place of healing when any fail. Each partner binds one's self to the other in this called community, honoring the being both of the other and of the self, and striving to walk together in the way of Jesus Christ, wherever that may lead.



1 Covenant partners each have integrity as given life and called by God and each, therefore,  
2 requires appropriate respect. God is the primary partner, giving life and love, calling persons and  
3 communities to follow the Christ and to join God in loving this world. God's steadfast love,  
4 shown forth in creation, documented in scripture, found uniquely in Jesus of Nazareth, and  
5 offered to all, becomes the primary character as well as purpose of this covenanted community.  
6 That love is without limit, reaching out, always, to and through UCC covenanted communities  
7 into God's world.

8 Covenantal relationships are open-ended at the same time they are binding. They are living,  
9 dynamic and personal. A covenant belongs to all the covenant partners and the covenant partners  
10 all belong to one other. The covenant community and all its members depend upon the  
11 faithfulness of God and of each other, upon forgiveness and the possibility of newness.

12 It is within this covenantal character of the United Church of Christ that authorized ministers  
13 (commissioned, licensed, ordained) serve as ministers representing the UCC, as leaders of  
14 communities, as persons charged to minister in the name of Jesus Christ on behalf of the UCC.  
15 The ongoing relationship of authorized ministers to the Church is called "ministerial standing."  
16 While the responsibility to determine the ministerial standing of each individual minister in the  
17 United Church of Christ belongs to the Associations (or Conferences acting as Associations), the  
18 particular terms of the Covenant of Ministerial Standing are drawn from the definitions and  
19 expectations of authorized ministry in each of its three forms. The beginning and ending of each  
20 Covenant will usually be celebrated liturgically.

21 Authorized ministers live in multiple covenantal relationships, including their own local church,  
22 the calling body (which may be their congregation or an agency or organization), the Association,  
23 and the Conference. The Ministry Issues Implementation Committee recommends that all  
24 authorized ministers be voting members of their Association and Conference as one of the marks  
25 and responsibilities of the covenantal relationship.

26 The covenantal nature of authorized ministerial standing shapes its life and characteristics.  
27 Authorized ministry exists to serve the leadership needs of the church; it is the church's ministry,  
28 and so authorized ministers and the church are accountable to one another. Each authorized  
29 minister is a person in covenant with a setting or "expression" of the church (e.g., Association),  
30 which is itself a covenant community. There is always the risk of the covenants of ministerial  
31 standing becoming very impersonal – and, therefore losing an important mark of their character –  
32 since the setting is represented, usually, by a committee with rotating membership or, perhaps, by  
33 a staff person with a large portfolio of responsibilities, or even simply by documents of policy  
34 and procedures. The relationship can become formal, dogmatic, faceless. On the other hand, it is  
35 also possible that the relationship may become only personal, focusing so completely on an  
36 individual that the responsibility to the church and its mission is lost.

37 Partners in a Covenant of Ministerial Standing might want to consider together the following  
38 questions: How do authorized ministers relate to the Association? How do they relate to one  
39 another? How does the Association support and encourage them? What are the mutual  
40 responsibilities and what gifts might each expect to receive from and within the community?  
41 What gifts will each offer? How? How are persons nurtured to realize and live their full gifts as  
42 children of God, called into the ministry of the Church? How are they asked to care for other  
43 covenant partners? To care for the community and for its mission? How are they to be faithful  
44 within the several covenants, personal and ecclesial, within which they live? The particular  
45 patterns of Covenants of Ministerial Standing surely will vary with geography, call, kinds of

1 ministries, and other particulars. But for the covenant to be real, all partners must faithfully offer  
2 themselves to the others, even knowing the risks and vulnerability of that posture.

3 As in all covenantal relationships, all partners share responsibility for the Covenant of Ministerial  
4 Standing. All partners honor the others in community; being present to and for one another,  
5 paying respectful attention to the others' needs and joys and sorrows; offering and receiving  
6 counsel and correction, assistance, and encouragement; joining together in response to God's call  
7 to the United Church of Christ. Such care requires time, commitment and active participation on  
8 the part of each partner, whether an individual person or a community/setting of the church. The  
9 covenant partners live together, finally, only by relying upon God's grace and sharing that with  
10 one another and the world.

11 Within these Covenants of Ministerial Standing of the United Church of Christ, Associations,  
12 local churches, and authorized ministers look to one another to be appropriately responsible for  
13 their own ministries, relationships and actions; to continue to be attentive to discernment of call  
14 and formation for ministry; to be actively supporting one another in ministry; to be accountable to  
15 one another as agreed together; to care for the whole United Church of Christ; to respond to  
16 God's call to each and all. The covenantal relationships will be lived in formal and informal  
17 ways, including worship, prayer, meetings, conversation groups, continuing education, mission  
18 outreach, pastoral care, regular reviews, and much more. The covenant partners will be  
19 accountable to one another, trusting the Spirit of Christ to flow through all.

## 1           **USING MARKS FOR AUTHORIZED MINISTERS POST-** 2           **AUTHORIZATION**

3       The Marks for Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers in the United Church of Christ is a  
4       document designed to assist in leadership development from the moment of initial entry in  
5       exploring a call to authorized ministry through the span of one's career. Every authorized  
6       minister will seek to continue to learn and to grow spiritually, personally, and professionally.  
7       This continuing process will be nurtured by the development of "formative practices" such as  
8       maintaining disciplines of prayer and study, regularly seeking wise counsel, being an active  
9       member of a faith community committed to discerning and following God's call. Every setting of  
10      the church will want to encourage and support such development not only for the benefit of the  
11      minister but to strengthen the church's faithfulness as it responds to God's call.

12     This document suggests some of the ways in which the Marks for Faithful and Effective Author-  
13     ized Ministers can be used after the point of authorization. The basic purpose is not to ask,  
14     "What's wrong with this person?" but rather, "What do the Marks show about this person in  
15     ministry? Where are there opportunities for growth and development? Which Marks show  
16     strengths to be utilized or weaknesses to be addressed, given the needs of the church, the context  
17     of the minister's service, and the gifts and hopes of the minister? What do they say about the  
18     minister's particular call at this time?" What practices might enhance this minister's gifts for the  
19     life of God's church and world?

20     **Communal Assessment:** The Marks can be a helpful piece for shaping a conversation around  
21     ministry within the context of one's place of call. Whether this be a dialogue with a Pastoral  
22     Relations Committee, a Peer Review Committee, a Periodic Review, Fitness Review or another  
23     form of communal assessment, the Marks can help to demonstrate areas of strength and or sub-  
24     sets of a particular ministry which may merit additional attention.

25     **Self-Assessment:** God's call upon our lives is dynamic rather than static. There may be times  
26     when one feels God call to a new and different direction. Using the Marks during these times may  
27     help to discern whether one's call is to a new ministry setting, to a new call within authorized  
28     ministry, or simply to reassess where one is in the current placement. The Marks may also serve  
29     as a conversation partner when one is discerning the call to retirement from active ministry.

30     **Continuing Education:** As part of both communal and self-assessment the Marks may help  
31     authorized ministers seek out and explore various forms of continuing education as a result of  
32     their discernment on where their ministry is heading and what skills or characteristics may need  
33     strengthening for the minister to be faithful and effective in the current or future setting. The  
34     Marks can also be a helpful way for Associations or Committees on Ministry to select educational  
35     events, whether it be a speaker for an annual meeting or a book-of-the-month that all ministers  
36     with authorization are encouraged to participate in because there is an obvious place for  
37     continued learning for the majority of the ministers as revealed by the Marks.

38     **Profile:** The Marks will become a valuable tool not only in the act of assessment, both communal  
39     and individually, they will also assist authorized ministers in updating their profiles for  
40     circulation. It is the expectation of the Ministry Issues committee that the UCC profile will be  
41     reshaped to reflect the work done on the Marks.

42     **Call Process:** By design, using the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized ministers is a fluid  
43     and evolving process of gauging one's growth in several different areas. Conversation on this

1 growth process, like the sharing of one's faith journey, may be a positive way of engaging with  
2 Committees on Ministry, Area Conference Ministers and Mentors in seeking out possible initial  
3 calls for the MID at the point of authorization, as well as for discerning that a call is concluding  
4 and that a new call (and what that call might be) is to be accepted at any time after authorization.

5 **Ministerial Standing:** Committees on Ministry will be very familiar using Marks with their  
6 Members in Discernment. The Marks can also be an effective document when interviewing an  
7 authorized minister for standing in an Association / Conference, including not only those seeking  
8 transfer of standing from other Associations within the United Church of Christ but also for those  
9 seeking privilege of call from other denominations. Here the Marks are a guide for the interview  
10 and may become a basis for further conversations in the future.

11 **Coaching / Peer Relationships:** Many authorized ministers in the United Church of Christ are  
12 currently involved in one or more of various forms of communal accountability. This may be a  
13 self-selected group of authorized ministers (UCC or ecumenical) or a more formal program such  
14 as new minister groups or interim minister groups which are sponsored by seminaries and  
15 Conferences throughout the denomination. Whether these groups are two or twelve people the  
16 Marks can be a way to check in with each other on joys and challenges of ministry and  
17 encouraging one another to grow in areas of their work.

18 Note: The Ministry Issues Implementation Committee requested Dr. Joretta L. Marshall,  
19 Professor of Pastoral Theology and Pastoral Care and Counseling at Brite Divinity School to  
20 prepare a paper on "formation" for ministry in the United Church of Christ. Dr. Marshall's paper,  
21 "Formative Practices" with an appendix, "On Formation" follows in the Additional Resources  
22 this document.

23

## RENEWAL OF LICENSE

1

2

3 Since licensed ministry is authorized for a particular period of time, initially one year, your  
4 Committee on Ministry needs a procedure to follow when renewal of the license is requested by  
5 the calling body. Your procedure should include the time in advance of expiration by which  
6 application must be made, the documentation or testimony required to show how the covenant  
7 has been lived by the Licensed Minister, the calling body, and others; whether or not a face to  
8 face meeting with your Committee is expected and, if so, its purpose and the preparation required.  
9 Your Committee may follow procedures similar to those presented in the sections on Assessment  
10 and in the Use of the Marks following authorization. Again, the purpose is to discern to what  
11 ministry this person is called (by God and the church) and whether that ministry requires  
12 authorization, as well as the ways in which this person demonstrates faithful service and  
13 appropriate growth in relationship to the Marks and to the particular context of service. An  
14 Ecclesiastical Council is not expected to convene for the purpose of renewing a license.

15 The renewal of the license is the initiation or continuation of a covenant of mutual accountability  
16 with the Licensed Minister and the local church which includes appropriate supervision and/or  
17 guidance by the Association. If, in the discernment of your Committee, the local church, and the  
18 Licensed Minister, it is appropriate, after three years you may grant a license for a period longer  
19 than one year, even for the duration of the call to this particular ministry. For a long-experienced,  
20 faithful and effective Licensed Minister, the continuing covenant may be very similar to the  
21 covenant among the Association and all its Commissioned and Ordained Ministers in relationship  
22 to mutual accountability and expectations.

23 Should the Licensed Minister also be a Member in Discernment for Ordination or  
24 Commissioning, the assessment for the renewal of license and the ongoing assessment relating to  
25 preparation and formation for the new authorization may be, but are not necessarily, related.  
26 Since licensing and ordination, particularly, are so closely related, many of the same issues will  
27 be raised, especially if service as a Licensed Minister is considered a major portion of the  
28 person's path of preparation toward ordination. However, great care needs to be taken in such a  
29 case. Do the same members of your Committee act in both instances? If not, do you have  
30 separate or joint procedures? Do not expect the minister to duplicate efforts for you, if at all  
31 possible. Provide for the appropriate sharing of materials and experiences. Also take care as to  
32 when the issue of license renewal is under discernment and when it is not. Be open and fair with  
33 one another and the minister. Speak clearly with one another and with the minister so as to avoid  
34 mixed messages, confusion, and frustration. When Committee membership rotates, new  
35 members require training, history, and relevant information so as to be current and helpful. Good  
36 written records and documentation carefully maintained are, always, mandatory.

37 In those rare instances when the Committee discerns that the license is not to be renewed, honest,  
38 clear, and fair communication is the first requirement. Appropriate pastoral care for all parties  
39 must be offered. Helpful suggestions as to what the next steps might be should be shared, though  
40 they might be difficult for anyone feeling rejected to accept. In such cases, the Association will  
41 need to be diligent in being faithful to the local faith community, the individual, and the United  
42 Church of Christ. Remember, service as a member of the Committee on Ministry is considered,  
43 itself, to be a ministry. May God be gracious to us all.

1                   **RESOURCES FOR ALL**  
2                   **MOVEMENTS**

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Authorized Ministry of the United Church of Christ

UCC Identity Formation

Developing Formative Practices in the United Church of  
Christ, with Appendix: On Formation

Meeting Communities New to Committee on Ministry  
Members

# **AUTHORIZED MINISTRY OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

3

4 The Constitution of the United Church of Christ asserts: “God calls the whole Church and every  
5 member to participate in and extend the ministry of Jesus Christ.” The ministry of the Church  
6 and all its members exists in order to pursue the mission of Christ in the world. In their baptism,  
7 all Christians are called to be ministers of Christ, pledged to participate in Christ’s mission in the  
8 world. This consecration of all Christians to the sharing of Christ’s work in the world is the  
9 essential meaning of “the priesthood of all believers.”

10 In addition to this baptismal calling of all believers, the United Church of Christ also “recognizes  
11 that God calls certain of its members to various forms of ministry in and on behalf of the Church  
12 for which ecclesiastical authorization is required,” to provide leadership for the ordering of its  
13 common life. Authorization is the designation and consecration of certain individuals for  
14 particular leadership in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ. Authorization identifies  
15 certain persons who are to have particular responsibilities for at least one of the following  
16 functions: ensuring the unity, good order, and continuity of the Church; calling the Church to  
17 faithfulness to God’s mission; representing the Church and its commitments to justice and peace  
18 in society; ensuring the integrity of theological and sacramental traditions; encouraging and  
19 equipping God’s people for the work of ministry; and serving others in and on behalf of the  
20 Church. These ministries of leadership take place in and/or are undertaken on behalf of particular  
21 faith communities, while they also are activities of and for the whole Church.

22 Authorization involves the shared, communally covenanted nature of certain ministries. This  
23 shared, covenanted nature involves a preparatory and on-going process of discernment,  
24 formation, and decision; the acquisition and enhancement of relevant knowledge and skills; a rite  
25 or service of initiation into the form of authorized ministry; and an on-going relationship of  
26 covenantal accountability between an individual and settings of the Church. In other words,  
27 processes of preparation and on-going development, an initiatory rite, and communal  
28 accountability typify all forms of authorized ministry. The responsibility for all authorized  
29 ministries of leadership is covenantally shared by the individual, a local faith community, and the  
30 broader Church.

31 The United Church of Christ recognizes three forms of authorized ministry: licensed ministry,  
32 commissioned ministry, and ordained ministry.

# UCC IDENTITY FORMATION<sup>15</sup>

## ***Core Understandings***

### **V. UCC Identity and Authorized Ministry (All Movements)**

1. All authorized ministers of the United Church of Christ, commissioned, licensed, or ordained, serve on behalf of the whole United Church of Christ.
2. UCC identity and relationships are a fundamental component of the call to, the preparation for, and the practice of authorized ministry.
3. The United Church of Christ is committed to fostering an environment that celebrates diversity of expressions of Christian faith and promotes mutually enriching interaction of various Christian cultures, theologies, spiritualities and ideologies.

### ***Elaboration***

Part of the covenant of discernment and formation process for Members in Discernment, the Committee on the Ministry, and those sharing in that journey is the need to discern a call for a particular individual into a particular denomination, the United Church of Christ. Profound knowledge, commitment, and engagement with the UCC are essential parts of the formation process for any Member in Discernment for authorized ministry. Attaining a sufficient level of knowledge, commitment and engagement is not possible without the support of a larger community. Gaining a stronger sense of denominational formation cannot be accomplished solely through independent study or on-line communication. There is a deeper, richer shared experience of the church that is necessary for authorization to serve the church.

When a MID first expresses desire to pursue authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ it may be helpful for the individual, peers, faith communities, Committees on Ministry, and partners in discernment to discuss the initial faith journey of the MID and how that journey relates to the United Church of Christ. This is an on-going process which would relate to materials highlighting call, discernment and paths to authorized ministry. However, it may be helpful to highlight how one's faith journey is shaped by or could be better informed by an understanding of UCC identity.

In addition, the materials included in this section will be instrumental during a MID's period of discernment and formation and also serve as useful tools for engaging with the life of the United Church of Christ after authorization has taken place. These materials will serve to enhance one's experience throughout their ongoing covenant of mutual accountability and responsibility in service to God's mission.

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<sup>15</sup> Except for Core Understanding V.3., this material is from Ministry Issues Draft Two, February 2007.



1 UCC identity is also a critical element in the conversations of Committees on Ministry with  
2 persons who are seeking Privilege of Call within the United Church of Christ. While those  
3 persons may or may not be in a formal Covenant of Discernment and Formation with a COM,  
4 Committees will want to use these same tools with those individuals, adapted as appropriate for  
5 each situation.

## 6 ***Basic Principles***

- 7 • **United Church of Christ Formation:** Local Churches, COMs, and other partners in the  
8 Covenant of Discernment and Formation will want to spend time reflecting on the UCC  
9 Statement of Faith and the second paragraph of the Preamble to the UCC Constitution  
10 with Members in Discernment or persons seeking Privilege of Call. Topics such as  
11 covenant, diversity, mission, as well as General Synod actions relating to identity and the  
12 commitment of the denomination to become a Multi-racial, Multi-cultural, Accessible to  
13 All, Open and Affirming, Just Peace Church will also be helpful in shaping discussions.
- 14 • **United Church of Christ in Context:** Since the United Church of Christ does not exist  
15 in isolation, Members in Discernment and those accompanying them in the discernment  
16 process should demonstrate and understand the United Church of Christ within the  
17 context of the larger religious community. Members in Discernment should be able to  
18 express a working knowledge of world religions besides Christianity and also  
19 demonstrate an understanding of the ecumenical relationships to which the UCC is  
20 bound.
- 21 • **Courage to love the UCC:** Courage to love the UCC, while not synonymous with  
22 subscribing to a doctrine of the UCC, could include dialogue / reflections with peers,  
23 faith communities, COMs and mentors on covenant, significant firsts of the UCC and its  
24 predecessor denominations, or value and respect for the diversity of the UCC and the  
25 body of Christ. This, as with each of the areas covered under UCC Identity, is not a once  
26 and done conversation as it requires engagement on many levels throughout the  
27 discernment and formation process as well as after authorization takes place.
- 28 • **Histories, theologies, politics and practices:** The United Church of Christ is formed  
29 through the long and varied histories, theologies, politics and practices of several  
30 forerunner denominations and local contexts. It is important to understand that while many  
31 resources exist documenting and describing the histories, theologies, politics and  
32 practices of the United Church of Christ there is no universal “whole” to describe the  
33 UCC in each of its local expressions. MIDs as well as partners in discernment may find  
34 the materials listed below helpful resources in understanding the UCC but should  
35 remember that simply using one resource or resources from only one setting of the church  
36 will not adequately explain the variety of expressions within the United Church of Christ.  
37 Emphasis on understanding the local history, theology, polity and practices of the UCC  
38 within one’s local church, Association, and Conference and how those ideas fit into the  
39 larger context of the United Church of Christ is encouraged.
- 40 • **Experiencing UCC in various settings and communities:** Because the authorized  
41 ministers represent the United Church of Christ, it is imperative that MIDs learn and  
42 understand the various dimensions of this denomination. The United Church of Christ  
43 often refers to different expressions of the church including: the National Setting,  
44 Conference /Association Setting, and the Local Congregation of the wider Church. A

- 1 Member in Discernment must experience these general aspects of the life of the church  
2 including involvement in events and / or personal contact when and where possible.
- 3 • **Knowledge of / engagement with current UCC practices:** The United Church of Christ  
4 is continually growing and changing in each of its settings. Mentors, peers, and COMs  
5 can assist Members in Discernment in keeping up with relevant materials from the UCC  
6 by providing access to and / or information about General Synod, National Setting  
7 Materials, Conference and Association Resources and current activities of the local  
8 congregation of which the MID is a member.
- 9 • **Being a teacher / interpreter of UCC identity in various settings:** Having a firm grasp  
10 on the histories, theologies, polities and practices of the United Church of Christ will  
11 enable a Member in Discernment to be a better teacher and interpreter of how the UCC  
12 fits into a larger Ecumenical / Interfaith / and Secular context.
- 13 • **Faithfulness to the United Church of Christ:** The essential covenantal agreement,  
14 spirit, and praxis within the UCC afford great freedom to the clergy to use their gifts and  
15 serve in the myriad of ways in which they believe they are called. While there are some  
16 differences among the three authorized ministries, every authorization for ministry is  
17 related in some way to the whole church and not just to a local setting. Thus each  
18 includes mutual accountability to and respect from and for denominational structure and  
19 polity. Members in Discernment should be committed to active participation in the  
20 United Church of Christ beyond the local congregation (Association, Conference,  
21 National Setting, etc).

## 22 ***Resources for Cultivating UCC Identity***

23 The polity and covenantal relationship of the United Church of Christ understands that God is  
24 present and works through individuals and communities in their context. Therefore, the materials  
25 and suggestions included in this resource are by no means designed to be exhaustive or  
26 prescribed. They are guidelines intended not to create a dogma or universal understanding of the  
27 United Church of Christ but rather to serve as tools for Members in Discernment and their  
28 partners in engaging in the life and history of the United Church of Christ.

## 29 **Histories, theologies, polities and practices:**

- 30 • Polity Classes with historical and present concepts of governance, journeys of polity  
31 development of the antecedents of the UCC leading to the current denominational  
32 structure and implications for program development, stewardship, finances, and  
33 sustainability
- 34 • Historical development and sociology of faith systems in the United States in order to  
35 contextualize the presence of the UCC
- 36 • UCC History /Theology books, including those published by Pilgrim Press
- 37 • Reference and source materials as published in the bibliography of the UCC Polity  
38 Teachers Network
- 39 • UCC Book of Worship
- 40 • Worship Ways

- 1 • Histories and profiles of a sampling of local congregations
- 2 • Theological materials from multiple cultural contexts within the UCC, (i.e. Native
- 3 American texts, African-American theologians, Mercersburg Theology)

#### 4 **Interfaith and Ecumenical Context for the UCC:**

- 5 • Foundational Ecumenical Documents including but not limited to: *Baptism, Eucharist,*
- 6 *and Ministry* (World Council of Churches); *The COCU Consensus* (Churches Uniting in
- 7 Christ); Formula of Agreement, and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) – UCC
- 8 Partnership.
- 9 • United and Uniting Church Materials
- 10 • Interfaith Materials

#### 11 **Experiencing the UCC in various settings and communities:**

- 12 • The National Setting of the UCC
  - 13 ○ General Synod and the Executive Council
  - 14 ○ Covenanted Ministries of the United Church of Christ
  - 15 ○ Conferences of the UCC Insurance Board
  - 16 ○ UCC Pension Boards
  - 17 ○ UCC Foundation
  - 18 ○ Offices of UCC Covenanted, Associated, and Affiliated Ministries in Cleveland,
  - 19 Indianapolis, Washington DC, North Carolina (Franklinton Center), New York
  - 20 ○ Other Bodies as listed in the current UCC Constitution and By-laws
- 21 • Specialized Ministries of the UCC: Meeting leadership, attending events:
  - 22 ○ Council for Racial and Ethnic Ministries (COREM)
  - 23 ○ Council of for Hispanic Ministries (CHM)
  - 24 ○ Council for American Indian Ministries (CAIM)
  - 25 ○ Pacific Islander and Asian American Ministries (PAAM)
  - 26 ○ United Black Christians (UBC)
  - 27 ○ Ministers for Racial, Social, and Economic Justice (MRSEJ)
  - 28 ○ UCC Coalition for Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Concerns
  - 29 ○ UCC Disabilities Ministries

- 1           ○ Council for Health and Human Service Ministries
- 2       • Distinct networks within the UCC
- 3           ○ 20/30 Clergy
- 4           ○ Musicians Network
- 5           ○ Church Educators Network
- 6           ○ Confessing Christ
- 7           ○ Order of Corpus Christi
- 8           ○ Biblical Witness Fellowship
- 9           ○ Christians for Justice Action
- 10       • National and Regional events
- 11           ○ Women’s Gatherings
- 12           ○ Men’s Gatherings
- 13           ○ Seminarian’s Conferences
- 14           ○ National Youth Event
- 15           ○ Regional Youth Events
- 16       • UCC Related Agencies and Academic Settings
- 17           ○ CHHSM Ministries
- 18           ○ Seminaries of the UCC & Historically Related Seminaries
- 19           ○ Members of the Council for Higher Education
- 20           ○ AMA Colleges and Universities
- 21           ○ Lay Study Centers
- 22           ○ Campus Ministries
- 23       • The Conference
- 24           ○ Conference Educational Events
- 25           ○ Conference Board of Directors Meetings
- 26           ○ Conference Annual Meetings

- 1           ○ Conference Websites and Newsletters
- 2           ○ Conference Partnerships
- 3           ○ Conference Committees and Initiatives
- 4       • The Association
- 5           ○ Association Meetings
- 6           ○ Association Educational Events
- 7           ○ Association Council / Board Meetings
- 8           ○ Annual visits with Committee on the Ministry
- 9           ○ Association newsletters / mailings
- 10          ○ Association Committees
- 11       • Local Congregation
- 12          ○ Local Church Worship
- 13          ○ Mission Statements for local churches
- 14          ○ Local Church Events
- 15          ○ Local Church Special Worship Services
- 16          ○ Local Church Websites / Newsletters
- 17          ○ Local Church Annual Meetings
- 18          ○ Local Church Governing Bodies (Consistory, Church Council, Elders, Deacons,  
19             Church and Ministry, Spiritual Council etc)

## 20 **Knowledge of / engagement with current UCC practices:**

- 21       • Responses by Conferences, Associations, local congregations and individuals to General  
22         Synod resolutions, pronouncements, proclamations, etc.
- 23       • Impact of prophetic activities such as the Still Speaking Initiative, Common Global  
24         Ministries, etc.
- 25       • Forecasting of how the UCC may respond/react to faith, social, economic, and political  
26         trends; changing demographics, and other emerging factors.
- 27       • New models for ministerial formation and pastoral services
- 28       • UCC National Staff- including convocations, national gatherings, regional events

- 1 • Materials from Covenanted Ministries
- 2 • UCC Website and related sites (i.e. Still Speaking, Take Action, etc)
- 3 • UCC Desk Calendar and the Calendar of Prayer
- 4 • UC News
- 5 • Stewardship and Financial Sustainability (i.e. OCWM, Neighbors in Need, One Great
- 6 Hour of Sharing, Christmas Fund, Strengthen the Church, etc)
- 7 • National All Church Mailings
- 8 • Conference Staff, UCNews Wrap, Monthly Mailings, Board and Annual Meetings
- 9 • Association Officers and Meetings
- 10 • Representatives to Covenantal Ministries Boards of Directors and other UCC Bodies and
- 11 Ministries
- 12 • UCC Related Websites
- 13 • Seminaries- Seminars, continuing education, lectures

14 **Being a teacher / interpreter of UCC identity in various settings:**

- 15 • Common Global Ministries
- 16 • Conference Partnerships
- 17 • Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Relationship
- 18 • Formal UCC Ecumenical & Interfaith Partnerships
- 19 • Councils of Churches (World, National, Regional, Local)
- 20 • Campus Ministries in universities and colleges
- 21 • Outdoor Ministries
- 22 • Local Interfaith and Ecumenical Settings
- 23 • Local / Regional Advocacy Groups

24 **Preamble to The Constitution of the United Church of Christ, Para-**  
25 **graph 2:**

26 The United Church of Christ acknowledges as its sole Head, Jesus Christ, Son of God and Savior.  
27 It acknowledges as kindred in Christ all who share in this confession. It looks to the Word of God  
28 in the Scriptures, and to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, to prosper its creative and  
29 redemptive work in the world. It claims as its own the faith of the historic Church expressed in

1 the ancient creeds and reclaimed in the basic insights of the Protestant Reformers. It affirms the  
2 responsibility of the Church in each generation to make this faith its own in reality of worship, in  
3 honesty of thought and expression, and in purity of heart before God. In accordance with the  
4 teaching of our Lord and the practice prevailing among evangelical Christians, it recognizes two  
5 Sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion.

6 **United Church of Christ Statement of Faith in the form of a doxology**

7 We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God, and to  
8 your deeds we testify:

9 You call the worlds into being, create persons in your own image, and set before each one the  
10 ways of life and death.

11 You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

12 You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.

13 In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and  
14 shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.

15 You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding  
16 in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

17 You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the  
18 service of others, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in  
19 Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

20 You promise to all who trust you forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle  
21 for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm which has  
22 no end.

23 Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you.

24 Amen.

1                   **DEVELOPING FORMATIVE PRACTICES FOR**  
2                   **AUTHORIZED MINISTRY IN THE UNITED CHURCH OF**  
3                   **CHRIST<sup>16</sup>**

4  
5                   *Joretta L. Marshall*  
6

7 Randy has worked in a mid-level corporate position for over 15 years. Down-sizing has led to a  
8 shift in his position from full-time to part-time. At the same time, Randy has become more  
9 involved in a United Church of Christ congregation and begins to feel a “call” into ministry. He  
10 seeks out a pastoral mentor and begins to consider what this call means for his life. At 55, he feels  
11 he cannot afford to attend seminary or take on the debt load that seminary would require and he is  
12 compelled to begin “serving.” Hence, he ventures into another path of preparation. Randy is not  
13 clear whether he will move toward chaplaincy, social justice work, or leadership in a small  
14 congregation. He understands himself to be bi-vocational at the moment and has lots of questions  
15 about the next steps. Partners on the journey – his family, pastoral mentor, congregation,  
16 association and conference leaders, and others – wonder how best to help shape and form the  
17 deeper commitments, disciplines, and skills required for those who lead as authorized ministers.

18 The journey Randy and his partners face in vocational discernment is best met by an intentional  
19 and coherent development of formative practices. Formation has become a more significant word  
20 in Protestant theological education during the last decade.<sup>17</sup> It seems apparent that in the United  
21 Church of Christ, like other mainline Protestant movements in America, formation has been  
22 assumed as a part of one’s spiritual journey rather than articulated as a primary concern for those  
23 preparing for leadership.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Written at the request of the Ministry Issues Implementation Committee, June 2008.

<sup>17</sup> See the Appendix of this paper for a brief statement on “formation.”

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, the work of: Daniel L. Johnson and Charles Hambrick-Stowe, eds., *Theology and Identity: Traditions, Movements, and Polity in the United Church of Christ*, (Cleveland: United Church Press, 1990) and Charles A. Maxfield, *A Pilgrim People: A History of the United Church of Christ and its Antecedents* (Cortland, NY: Maxfield Brooks, 2005).



1 Formative practices are intentional disciplines developed by authorized ministers, those preparing  
2 for authorization, their partners on the journey, and the church that assist in the development of  
3 patterns of living and being that sustain and nurture a deepened capacity for faithful leadership.<sup>19</sup>  
4 In this sense, formative practices are life-long disciplines that change shape and texture over time,  
5 but are a constant presence in the life of those called to leadership in the church.

6 This paper notes, first, that a focus on formative practices provides a dynamic way to imagine  
7 alternative paths and structures, dependent on variables such as educational context, vocational  
8 direction, individual experience, and more. Second, a brief look at the distinctiveness and  
9 interconnectedness of personal, spiritual, and professional formation will provide a way to reflect  
10 on questions and concerns pertinent to shaping integrative leaders for the church and its ministries  
11 in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The paper will conclude with some suggestions about the importance of  
12 having partners in formative practices and the accountability structures that can enhance  
13 vocational identity.

## 14 ***Context and Formative Practices***

15 The concept of formation suggests that there is a purpose and endpoint toward which practices  
16 are shaped. However, concentrating on the end of a process can unnecessarily limit conversations  
17 and imaginations. Shifting the language to focus on formative practices reflects the continual,  
18 unfolding, and ever-evolving nature of the process of formation. This more dynamic  
19 understanding (rather than a linear developmental model) avoids some of the temptation to think  
20 that formation can be contained in one process or one educational endeavor. Formative practices  
21 recognize that the complexity of the human condition invites us always to continue to examine  
22 who we are called to be at any moment in time.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>I will use several words – ministerial, pastoral, and authorized minister – in a rather interchangeable fashion. These words suggest the telos, or direction, of formative practices. In other words, the formative practices talked about here are those that help nurture persons called to leadership in the ministry of the church. The word “pastoral” or “ministerial” is not understood to be confined to ordained ministers who serve local congregations in leadership. Instead, the terms suggest the theological and communal nature of leadership which these persons provide in the context of church or community, whether lay or ordained. The word connotes that pastoral leaders reflect theologically about their roles and functions in ministry, and that their vocational identities are integrally linked to the traditions and faith communities in which they participate. See also, Joretta L. Marshall, “Toward the Development of a Pastoral Soul: Reflections on Identity and Theological Education,” *Pastoral Psychology*, 43/1 (September 1994), 11-28.

<sup>20</sup> In a research study by McKenna, Yost, and Boyd, there is clear indication that the most significant leadership development for pastors occurs in the midst of ministry and not before. Focusing on the ongoing development of pastors is an essential component of formation. See, Robert McKenna, Paul Yost, and Tanya Boyd, “Leadership Development and Clergy: Understanding the Events and Lessons that Shape Pastoral Leaders,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 35/3 (2007), 179-189.

1 The focus on practices has also seen a renewal in much the same way as the concept of formation.  
2 Practices are defined by Dorothy Bass as “constituent elements within a way of life that is  
3 responsive to and illuminated by God’s active presence for the life of the world.”<sup>21</sup> Conversations  
4 about formation ask, “what process can we create that will achieve our goal of formation?” The  
5 question is broadened when considering formative practices and becomes, “what formative  
6 practices can persons and communities intentionally engage in that will deepen understandings of  
7 vocational identity, open persons to the ongoing experiences of God’s activity in the world, and  
8 develop the commensurate skills necessary for authorized ministry?”

9 Attending to the contexts that shape formative practices is central to their development.  
10 Contextual realities such as an authorized minister’s social location (geography, economics, race,  
11 ethnicity, education, gender, age, etc.) as well as the particular ministry which one serves and  
12 how that ministry is connected to the United Church of Christ inform the concrete formative  
13 practices that are developed. Any development of formative practices must also connect with the  
14 context of one’s life experiences and journey prior to considering ministry. Similarly, the context  
15 of a particular ecclesial understanding of the nature of the church and ministerial leadership, its  
16 form and function, ought to be reflected in the creation of formative practices of a particular  
17 denomination.

18 Given this latter notion, the United Church of Christ offers clues into what might be important to  
19 consider in developing formative practices within the training of its ministerial leadership. For  
20 example, the theological anthropology that grounds the denomination rests in deep affirmation of  
21 the richness and importance of diversity in human life. As a result, any attention to formation has  
22 to always rest in a prior commitment to examine the particularities and contextual realities of  
23 diversity in ministry contexts and individual leadership. This is so not simply because diversity is  
24 real in our world; rather it is true theologically because the denomination understands attention to  
25 diversity and particularity to represent and embody God’s activity in the world.

26 For this reason, formative practices must embody multiple approaches and multiple avenues  
27 toward authorized ministry. The formation of a Euro-American military chaplain whose  
28 congregation includes military women and men in combat from all walks of life might be quite  
29 different from the formation of an African-American theological educator for a seminary related  
30 to the United Church of Christ or for a pastoral leader in a Hispanic congregation in rural Iowa.  
31 Formative practices constructed in the context of the UCC ought to hold together theologically  
32 across cultural differences while, at the same time, taking seriously the particularity of context  
33 and the need for flexibility. The underlying tension this creates adds richness to the particularities  
34 of formative practices.

35 Finally, as noted earlier, there is a temptation to focus on the end result of formation rather than  
36 the practices that support one in a life-long process of openness to shaping and forming. It is not  
37 that the end result of formation is not important; indeed, one wants to have some sense of the  
38 telos toward which formation is moving. At the same time, it is impossible to suggest where the  
39 movement of God will end in a particular human creature, in a ministry context, or in the church

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<sup>21</sup> Dorothy Bass, “Introduction,” in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, Miroslav Volf and Dorothy Bass, eds., (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 3.

1 at large. Since God is still speaking, formation must always be open-ended and it cannot be  
2 contained only in formal or informal theological education.

### 3 ***Personal, Spiritual, and Professional Formative Practices***

4 What formative practices are important in shaping ministerial leadership for the United Church of  
5 Christ in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? What kinds of questions and curiosities might assist the UCC in  
6 imagining formative practices that are diverse and responsive to multiple contexts and  
7 communities? The move toward an integrative model of formative practices that supports the  
8 lifelong journey of openness and growth in personal, spiritual, and professional “knowledge,  
9 skills, dispositions, and habits” (language from Foster and colleagues) provides a framework for  
10 vocational development and education.<sup>22</sup> Five claims shape this understanding of formative  
11 practices.

12 First, formative practices are not limited to formalized educational settings, although they ought  
13 to be part of these contexts in particular ways. The focus is on developing intentional, ongoing  
14 and sustainable lifelong formative practices for vocational identity that deepen personal, spiritual,  
15 and professional development. Attending to these broad categories (personal, spiritual, and  
16 professional) helps construct wholistic visions of authorized ministers over the lifetime of one’s  
17 vocation, not simply while one is in formal settings of education.

18 Second, and related to this, formative practices need to engage the whole person of the pastoral or  
19 ministerial leader and not simply the “spiritual” aspects. For example, to focus only on the  
20 spiritual aspects of one’s being neglects the intersection of other aspects of vocational identity  
21 such as personal or professional development. The hope is that persons craft practices that engage  
22 them in their fullness as human beings and do not limit formative practices to one aspect of  
23 ministerial identity or split identities between the spirit, the body and the mind. For this reason,  
24 what follows invites a consideration of personal, spiritual and professional development as  
25 integral to vocational identity.

26 Third, I draw upon words like “integration” and “wholeness” to talk about the goal of formative  
27 practices for authorized ministers. While these words speak of my own theological commitments,  
28 I believe they offer a valuable over-arching goal without foreclosing the possibilities of various  
29 paths toward integration. What I mean by integration is that the internal world and commitments  
30 of ministerial leaders ought to align with various activities in the community and the church.  
31 Likewise, the work of the pastoral leader ought to reflect the particularity of context and  
32 denominational commitments not simply for the sake of feeling good about one’s self or for the

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<sup>22</sup> For a deeper understanding of formation as a part of theological education, see: Charles R. Foster, Lisa E. Dahill, Lawrence A. Golemon, and Barbara Wang Tolentino, *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination*, (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2006).

1 sake of loyalty, but for the sake of moving the community toward justice and the embodiment of  
2 the realm of God.<sup>23</sup>

3 Fourth, attending to formative practices is not the job of individuals or committees; rather it is the  
4 gift of the community. Carroll notes in his study how pastoral leaders are shapers of the culture  
5 and community around them.<sup>24</sup> In similar ways, it should be understood that the best formative  
6 practices are not isolative, but communal. How the community participates in the formative  
7 practices of authorized ministers provides structures of accountability and context. More will be  
8 said about this in the last section of this paper.

9 Finally, it seems helpful to move toward curiosities and imaginative questions that assist in  
10 developing intentional formative practices rather than focusing prematurely on specific plans or  
11 activities. Curiosities and questions can engage persons and their supportive network to identify  
12 aspects of vocational identity that might need more attention than others. These kinds of  
13 questions can help at two levels: 1) assessment of strengths and vulnerabilities in someone's  
14 journey as they take on leadership in the church; and 2) the development of an intentional plan for  
15 life-long formation (that is reviewed, revised, and renewed periodically). A brief look, then, at  
16 each of the three aspects identified in this paper offers a vision for how one might reflect on  
17 formative practices from different vantage points, as well as on the integration of the three into a  
18 wholeness for ministry.

### 19 ***Personal Formative Practices***

20 Too often, attention to personal formative practices is placed at the end of conversations about  
21 ministerial education. By placing them first in this paper I am not suggesting that they are more  
22 important; the placement is only an indication of my understanding that human beings are called  
23 into ministry and they bring with them a personhood that has already been engaged in a formative  
24 process of some kind. Personhood is critical to the authorized ministry's sense of leadership,  
25 participation in the community, and connection to others.

26 It is important to note that I am less concerned with psychological understandings of the pastoral  
27 leader at this point and more interested in asking questions that open up conversations about how

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<sup>23</sup>This is similar to the notion of the undivided life developed by Parker Palmer, *Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*, (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1998).

<sup>24</sup> See: Jackson Carroll, *God's Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2006).

1 one's sense of personhood participates in the shaping and forming of one's sense of ministerial  
2 leadership. As some suggest, "Who you are" is more important than "what you do."<sup>25</sup> Hence, the  
3 following questions are the kind that sparks my curiosity about those engaged in paths of  
4 authorized ministry:<sup>26</sup>

- 5 ○ Where and how has this person experienced God's activity in her or his personal  
6 life and how does that connect with a deepened sense of call?<sup>27</sup> What practices  
7 and disciplined ways of reflecting continue to assist this person in discernment  
8 about vocational call? What partners join this person in this discernment?
- 9 ○ What understandings have shaped this person's sense of who they are in the  
10 world and how does that have an impact on their understanding of ministry?  
11 What practices in her or his life in the church have enhanced their sense of well-  
12 being or fullness of discipleship?
- 13 ○ What practices in this person's life enhance a sense of ministry as articulated in  
14 the "marks of faithful and effective authorized ministers" and what tends to get in  
15 the way of the development of that identity? What formative practices might a  
16 person engage in that would enhance self-awareness and self-understanding?
- 17 ○ What ongoing practices in this person's life engage them in the task of examining  
18 their personal way of being and its impact on their ministry (i.e., personal self-  
19 examination, honest confrontation and affirmation through support group, family,  
20 pastoral counselor, etc.)? How does this person attend to care for self, soul, body,  
21 relationships and mind at personal levels?
- 22 ○ What practices and experiences enhance multicultural and intercultural  
23 perspectives and understandings of the world? How might this person grow in  
24 self-awareness of the influence of social location on her or his personal and  
25 theological perspectives?<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See McKenna, Yost, and Boyd, 185.

<sup>26</sup> These questions are not to be understood as limiting or exhaustive, but as invitations to think about formative practices with an intentional heart.

<sup>27</sup> I find the work of Dorothy Bass and Craig Dykstra (along with others in this particular text) helpful as they raise questions about practices that are a "way of life shaped by a positive response to God." See Volf and Bass, eds., *Practicing Theology*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 15-16.

<sup>28</sup> Colleagues at McCormick Seminary offer a helpful focus on "multi-cultural" understandings of personhood that are insightful. See David V. Esterline and Ogbu U. Kalu, eds., *Shaping Beloved Community: Multicultural Theological Education*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006).

- 1                   ○ What about this person’s life seems congruent with the particular beliefs and  
2                   values of the UCC tradition? Where are there tensions or incongruities? How will  
3                   those be addressed in the context of ongoing formative practices?  
4

## 5 ***Spiritual Formative Practices***

6 An intentional focus on formative practices that deepen and enhance one’s spirituality is essential  
7 in ministerial leadership. Spiritual practices are distinct, yet inter-related, to practices that  
8 enhance one’s personal sense of well-being. For example, working with a spiritual director who  
9 focuses on how God’s spirit is being experienced in a particular situation can contribute to the  
10 personal development of an individual.

11 Again, in developing a plan for spiritual formative practices, a set of questions can guide thinking  
12 about how best to proceed:

- 13                   ○ What habits of faith support and challenge this person’s spiritual resilience?  
14                   ○ How does this person intentionally attend to the content of spirituality and not just seek a  
15                   “feeling” of spirituality?  
16                   ○ Are there indigenous practices that have shaped this person’s spiritual life? How might  
17                   those practices be supported and nurtured? How might they become part of a person’s  
18                   intentional and disciplined formative life journey? What parts of a previous journey  
19                   might need to be grieved or let go of?  
20                   ○ How does this person’s connection with community engage spiritual formative  
21                   practices?<sup>29</sup>  
22                   ○ Two questions seem helpful in pastoral authority and identity: “Who are we called to be  
23                   as persons and communities of faith? What are we to do with this call?”<sup>30</sup> How does this  
24                   person invite reflection on these questions in her or his spiritual life?  
25                   ○ What is particular to the UCC about spirituality and how does this fit with, or create  
26                   tensions in the spiritual imagination of this ministerial leader?  
27

## 28 ***Professional Formative Practices***

29 To be a “professional” in our culture suggests certain understandings and norms. Professionals,  
30 for example, possess a body of knowledge that they have studied, wrestled with, and engage in  
31 continuously in ways distinct from the general population. Professionals have skills and ways of

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<sup>29</sup> Carroll’s study notes, in particular, that the lack of spiritual practices results in a negative impact on the effectiveness of religious leadership.

<sup>30</sup> For a helpful understanding of pastoral identity and authority, see: Jill Crainshaw, *Keep the Call: Leading the Congregation without Losing your Soul*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007).

1 thinking that mark the signs of their professional identities. Similarly, professionals have codes of  
2 ethics, colleagues and peers who have similar self-understandings and serve as critical  
3 conversation partners.

4 Many would argue that ministry is a way of life and not a profession. I would argue that ministry  
5 is a vocation that connects one to a professional community. Ministry is a way of life only in-so-  
6 far as one's function in the role of pastoral leader in a community engages one differently than  
7 others. The danger is that when pastoral leaders think that ministry is a way of life that knows no  
8 boundaries, they become dangerous to themselves and others.<sup>31</sup> Hence, the questions and  
9 curiosities I bring to formative practices for professional life reflect my own theological  
10 commitment to a way of being that is guided by principles and norms for the profession of  
11 ministry. Questions that are helpful include:

- 12 ○ How are persons practicing and cultivating the desire for lifelong learning? What  
13 formative practices might encourage an intentional engagement with reflecting,  
14 questioning, and wrestling with the development of ongoing knowledge?
- 15 ○ How does this person engender theological curiosity? How do they remain open to the  
16 God who is still speaking to and through faith communities and how do they hone their  
17 theological leadership in these contexts? What disciplined practices (educational and  
18 otherwise) encourage this person to ask theological questions?<sup>32</sup>
- 19 ○ How are understandings of the profession of ministry dependent on one's previous  
20 religious heritage, experiences, and realities? What is the difference between someone  
21 who has entered a denomination later in life and someone who grew up in the  
22 denomination? What do they hold in common and what does each need differently as  
23 they come to terms with the theological dispositions of a particular culture called the  
24 UCC?
- 25 ○ What practices enhance an ethical perspective on the pastoral and ministerial role? How  
26 does this pastoral leader reflect on the gifts and potential problems with pastoral  
27 authority? What formative practices might be developed that create an ongoing  
28 conversation within the collegium of pastoral leaders with attention to ethical  
29 understandings and behaviors in pastoral leadership in various forms of ministry?<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> In particular, it is helpful to note the connections here with clergy who cross boundaries with parishioners in multiple ways such as borrowing money from parishioners, inappropriate sexual contact, participating in gossip, and other activities harmful to the community of faith.

<sup>32</sup>See Crainshaw, 67, 70

<sup>33</sup> For an illustration of articulating clear norms in ministerial practice see Victor J. Klimoski, Kevin J. O'Neil, and Katarina M. Schuth, *Educating Leaders for Ministry: Issues and Responses*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005) 48ff.

- 1           ○ What formative practices assist in the ongoing reflection of pastoral leaders in their role  
2           as “public theologians?”  
3

#### 4           ***Reflections and Implications For Developing Intentional*** 5           ***Formative Practices***

6           Individuals engaged as authorized ministers have ultimate responsibility, of course, for  
7           developing formative practices that are concrete and particular for their own journeys. However,  
8           formative practices at their best are not individualistic or isolative practices. Hence, the way in  
9           which others participate in the development of intentional formative practices and the  
10          accountability structures that surround those practices are important to the work of integration  
11          and wholeness. Joanne Lindstrom from McCormick Seminary, in a chapter entitled, “The  
12          Formation of Ministerial Authority and Identity: Cross-Cultural Experiential Education,” suggests  
13          that supervisor/mentors, community, students, and the seminary have a role to play in developing  
14          a ministerial identity.<sup>34</sup>

15          If formative practices are to be critical to the ongoing vocational development and growth of  
16          authorized ministers for the United Church of Christ, it will be important to develop coherent and  
17          flexible models for the future. Whatever models are created, enlisting and engaging the various  
18          partners in the formative processes will be essential to any coherency and depth that is sustained.  
19          For example, reflecting on the roles of supervisors and mentors in disciplined reflection and  
20          discernment can assist in crafting formative practices for individuals that are sustainable,  
21          connected to others, and reflective.

22          Similarly, it is important to reflect on the role of communities of faith and congregations, as well  
23          as other contextual places of ministry and to discern how best to engage them in the formative  
24          processes for those in ministry in their midst. Accountability at this level requires not so much a  
25          “reporting in” or marking off a checklist of practices of disciplines as it does a sustained and  
26          engaged conversation within the community about how best to enhance the formative practices of  
27          those in ministerial leadership. At the same time, this is not a one-way street; the conversations  
28          ought also to assist communities and contexts in self-reflection about what it means to be a  
29          community that engages and nurtures formative practices for itself and for others.

30          The denomination, of course, also has a stake in the quality and shape of the formative practices  
31          of its membership, lay and ordained. Reflecting on what makes the UCC particular and distinct in  
32          the midst of a culture that does not lack for alternatives of faith or perspective can guide the  
33          denomination and its embodied representatives in modeling ongoing formative practices as well  
34          as engaging and nurturing systems and structures of support for the processes of others.

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<sup>34</sup> See Joanne Lindstrom, “The Formation of Ministerial Authority and Identity: Cross-Cultural Experiential Education,” in *Shaping Beloved Community: Multicultural Theological Education*, David Esterline and Ogbu U. Kalu, eds., (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 199-210.



## 1 **Conclusion**

2 The development of formative practices is not a plan that is created one time. Instead, formative  
3 practices change shape and texture over time as the seasons of authorized ministry and the life of  
4 the person engaged in that ministry change. In the process of creating formative practices that  
5 continue to deepen vocational identity and that assist in developing patterns of living and  
6 leadership that can be sustained and nurtured it is important to discern how best to review and re-  
7 visit formative practices over time. In some seasons, a focus on personal formative practices may  
8 be more important than other areas of a ministerial leader's life. Formation is not a once-for-all or  
9 everything-fits-all process; rather it is an invitation to think about how one develops reflective  
10 moments over time to stop, assess, and develop new formative practices in a particular moment.

11

## 12 **Appendix: On Formation**

13

14 The word “formation” is a word with a rich history in the context of the church. Unfortunately,  
15 the word has often been narrowly associated with a structured way of shaping clergy from Roman  
16 Catholic traditions into their roles as pastoral leaders. Protestants have witnessed a resurgence of  
17 attention to formation as is witnessed in the formal educational standards which most seminaries  
18 follow. Attention to formation has captured the imagination of many in denominational structures  
19 who are engaged in nurturing leadership for the church.<sup>35</sup>

20 In a far-reaching project sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation, Charles R. Foster, Lisa E. Dahill,  
21 Lawrence A. Golemon, and Barbara Wang Tolentino engaged in a qualitative study on the  
22 education of clergy in the United States.<sup>36</sup> While the focus of this particular project was on

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<sup>35</sup> One can look at the standards set forth by the Association for Theological Schools and see that formation in multiple ways has taken a more prominent role. See, for example, ATS Standard 4.2.1, where it is noted that ministerial degree programs should “provide opportunities for formational experiences through which students may grow in those personal qualities essential for the practice of ministry, namely, emotional maturity, personal faith, moral integrity, and social concern.” <http://www.ats.edu/Accrediting/documents/standards/05GeneralStandards.pdf>, accessed July 2008/

<sup>36</sup> The qualitative research team “conducted a comprehensive review of literature on Jewish and Christian clergy education; created survey instruments and conducted a survey of faculty, students, and alumni and alumnae from a cross-section of eighteen Jewish and Christian seminaries; interviewed faculty, students, and administrators; observed classes; participated in the life of the community at ten of the eighteen seminaries; and contributed questions to a survey sent to half of all United States and Canadian seminary educators . . .”, Charles R. Foster, Lisa E. Dahill, and Lawrence A. Golemon, and Barbara Wang Tolentino, *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination*, (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2006), 15.

1 formal training, the implications for ministerial education along multiple paths are persuasive.  
2 The team uncovered four important pedagogical practices that inform formal theological  
3 educators: Pedagogies of formation, interpretation, contextualization, and performance. In  
4 *Educating Clergy*, Foster and his colleagues suggest that pedagogical practices of formation,  
5 “focus on *forming* in students the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and habits needed for such  
6 activities as ‘gathering the community in prayer and worship,’ and ‘facilitating discussion and  
7 expression of feelings.’”<sup>37</sup>

8 In examining formative pedagogical approaches in theological education, the team identified  
9 three pedagogical strategies “intended to lead the student to practice the presence of God, practice  
10 holiness, and practice religious leadership.”<sup>38</sup> Foster and his colleagues noted that pedagogies of  
11 formation “foster the professional identity and integrity that functions as a lens or framework  
12 through which students view and appropriate the knowledge and skills associated with the work  
13 of the profession.”<sup>39</sup> What is intriguing about the work of this collaborative is their attention to  
14 formation and its connection to spirituality, holiness, and particular practices of religious  
15 leadership. Again, the work has implications for anyone engaged in the nurturance of religious  
16 leadership.

17 The team noted that there are multiple models of “formation” in formal theological education  
18 with a range of structures. Some are highly structured, with formal experiences and curriculum  
19 from the beginning of one’s seminary life until the conclusion that shape and form a particular  
20 kind of pastoral leader. On the other hand, some institutions are wary of their role as “formative  
21 agents” in the life of students and assume that the church ought to be responsible for this part of  
22 ministerial education and not the seminary or divinity school. In the middle, of course, are many  
23 institutions that recognize the importance of formation and may have ways to address formation  
24 through formal and informal avenues without over-structuring it into the curriculum.

25 Perhaps one of the most instructive footnotes in *Educating Clergy* is found on page 125 where the  
26 authors note the diversity of the content attached to “formation”. As they suggest, many “Roman  
27 Catholic schools use the term to encompass the entire program of priestly development. Thus  
28 they speak of academic, pastoral, spiritual, and human formation as the four key elements of their

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<sup>37</sup>Foster, Dahill, Golemon and Tolentino, 68.

<sup>38</sup>Foster, Dahill, Golemon and Tolentino, 103 and following.

<sup>39</sup>Foster, Dahill, Golemon and Tolentino, 101.

1 programs.”<sup>40</sup> Non-Catholic seminaries may approach theological education this way; but are  
2 more likely to speak of “pastoral formation” as a way of talking about identity or “spiritual  
3 formation” referring to the formation of the spirit rather than an all-encompassing understanding  
4 of that is multi-layered.<sup>41</sup>

5 The authors also note that few are satisfied with the word formation and its complexity. They  
6 identify three overall categories of objections: 1) an implication that students are “passive and  
7 more or less infinitely malleable, plastic to the will or power of some superior shaping force;” 2)  
8 a concern about “spiritual formation” and who is responsible for this in seminary education  
9 including questions of hierarchy, potential abuses of power, competency and training; and, 3) an  
10 assumption that a “preordained pattern or ‘form’ exists to which the most diverse human  
11 sensibilities and vocations and personalities must somehow be ‘conformed.’”<sup>42</sup> These concerns  
12 are present in many involved in the education of ministerial leaders. While the word formation  
13 does raise concern, instead of simply throwing out the word another option is to clarify the scope,  
14 content, and telos (or goal) of formation in ministerial leadership.

15 When focusing the conversation around scope, content, and telos, what becomes clear is that  
16 understandings about formation for ministerial leadership rest on at least two theological  
17 commitments: 1) a theological anthropology that grounds understandings of the human creature  
18 and complementary notions of particularity, change and growth, alongside, 2) an ecclesial  
19 understanding of the nature of ministerial leadership, its form and function. Hence, ultimately, the  
20 theological commitments of a particular denomination ought to be reflected in understandings  
21 about formation.

22 From within the United Church of Christ, the various tracks into ministry, the breadth of ministry  
23 settings and contexts, and the particularities of individuals who are called into ministry make it  
24 impossible to design one “formation” program to fit all persons in all types of ministry. The

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<sup>40</sup> For an extremely insightful examination of this model, see Victor J. Klimoski, Kevin J. O’Neil, Katarina M. Schuth, *Educating Leaders for Ministry: Issues and Responses*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005). Their insight into formation includes attention to the four aspects of theological education including, one’s heritage (e.g., racial, ethnic, age, religion), socio-cultural background (e.g., place of origin, economic status), educational background (e.g., natural abilities, openness to learning, learning styles or problems, educational background), and ecclesial understanding (e.g., deeply rooted or recently converted to faith, theological perspective).

<sup>41</sup>Foster, Dahill, Golemon and Tolentino, 125.

<sup>42</sup> Foster, Dahill, Golemon and Tolentino, 126.

1 “authorized ministry” of the United Church of Christ extends to multiple settings with complex  
2 realities. Jackson Carroll, in *God’s Potters*, talks about ministry as an “occupation in flux.” By  
3 this he means to suggest that in contemporary culture there is diversity in even reflecting on what  
4 kind “occupation” or profession ministry is. He suggests there are three models: Pastoral  
5 leadership as an office, ordained ministry as a profession, and ministry as a calling (drawing in  
6 particular upon some of H. Richard Niebuhr).<sup>43</sup>

7 As an outsider to the UCC, my own hunch is that this tradition historically rested more on the  
8 latter of these three and less on the first two. However, like many mainline denominations there is  
9 a growing awareness of diversity and multiplicity in ways that call us into a future that honors  
10 and values God’s activity in diverse ways. What this suggests, is that ministry – or the one who  
11 serves in ministry – can never be overly identified with one path or one venue; rather ministry  
12 expands toward the particularity of individuals and communities. Hence, formation must have  
13 multiple approaches and multiple avenues.

14 There is a tendency in much of post-liberal Protestantism to focus only on “spiritual” formation  
15 rather than on the interconnected aspects of the whole person (spiritual, professional, ethical, and  
16 personal). Once again, from the documents provided, I am led to believe that the UCC is moving  
17 toward an integrated and multi-dimensional model for theological anthropology and formation  
18 rather than focusing only on one aspect. I am concerned that formation attends to various aspects  
19 of human identity and their relationship and influence on vocational identity.<sup>44</sup> Additionally,  
20 formation is not the sole property of those who are ordained; rather formation occurs in the  
21 context of the church and its communities. It is possible, for example, to reflect on the formation  
22 of communities.

23 Finally, what is noted in the previous paper can be repeated: there is a temptation in ministerial  
24 leadership to focus on the end result of formation rather than the practices that support one in a  
25 life-long process of openness to shaping and forming. It is not that the end result of formation is  
26 not important; indeed, one wants to have some sense of the telos toward which formation is  
27 moving. At the same time, it is impossible to suggest where the movement of God will end in a  
28 particular human creature, in a ministry context, or in the church at large. Since God is still  
29 speaking, formation must always be open-ended; it cannot be accomplished in formal or informal  
30 theological education.

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<sup>43</sup> Jackson W. Carroll, *God’s Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 16 and following.

<sup>44</sup> This may feel close to the Roman Catholic model in some ways. However, I suggest it is the content of theology around ministry and human personhood that makes for a particular impact on the content of formation for those within the United Church of Christ.

# MEETING COMMUNITIES NEW TO THE COMMITTEE ON THE MINISTRY

## When a Committee on the Ministry Meets Communities and Individuals not Currently Represented among the Majority of Committee Members<sup>45</sup>

### ***Preface***

The Pronouncement adopted by General Synod 25, “Ministry Issues: Forming and Preparing Pastoral Leaders for God’s Church” called the attention of the whole church to the importance of improving the ways in which we receive one another within the UCC’s call and commitment to being a “multi-racial, multi-cultural, open and affirming, uniting and uniting, accessible to all, just peace church.” The Ministry Issues Implementation Committee knows that many within the UCC are striving to be more faithful in honoring all persons and communities because we truly desire to welcome all. The Implementation Committee is developing all its materials for testing with that same commitment.

In addition to the drafts which directly address issues of call, discernment and assessment, preparation and formation, and ongoing Covenants of Standing for authorized ministries, the Committee offers here the first of what is anticipated to be a series of commentaries with observations and suggestions for procedures on the part of Committees on Ministry and others who carry responsibilities for representing the United Church of Christ. Readers are asked to respond to this draft with suggestions for changes or additions and for additional topics to be explored. Please share your experience and your wisdom for the benefit of all.

### ***Introduction***

Increasingly, individuals and churches seeking authorization from the Committee on Ministry have characteristics that may not be shared by a majority of people in the Conference or on the Committee. They may:

- be from a different ethnic/cultural group;
- be conversant in a primary language other than English;
- be a recent immigrant to the USA;
- be a licensed minister who is seeking ordination following new guidelines;
- be younger, from a new generation;
- be laypeople representing a congregation with primary experience of a very different polity with differing expectations of authorization;

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<sup>45</sup> The initial draft of this section was prepared at the request of the Ministry Issues Implementation Committee by Dorothy Lester.

- 1 • be gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender individuals;
- 2 • be individuals experiencing opposition to their ordination because of their gender, age, or
- 3 sexual orientation.
- 4

5 Any of these situations can make both Committee on Ministry members and Members in  
6 Discernment feel awkward, uncomfortable, even fearful. Members in Discernment may also face  
7 anxiety about unfair treatment, hostility or alienation, whether perceived or actual.

8

### 9 ***Addressing Needs of Committee, Member, Community***

10 There are two aspects of dealing with underrepresented Members in Discernment: the needs of  
11 the Committee on Ministry and the needs of the Members in Discernment (and, often, of the  
12 MID's community). The needs of the Church are best served when these aspects are faithfully  
13 addressed. The Committee may need to confer with others to understand issues related to the  
14 candidacy. Members in Discernment need to feel that they are going to be heard and treated fairly  
15 by the Committee on Ministry, especially when no one on the Committee on Ministry shares their  
16 experience. While it is a false assumption that any one person can represent a whole group, an  
17 advisor, support person, or translator may be helpful both to provide support and assistance for  
18 the Member in Discernment, and to provide needed information for the Committee. Members in  
19 Discernment are more likely to feel that they will be treated fairly if more than one member of the  
20 Committee shares their situation.

21 Committees on Ministry should be sensitive to the diminished feeling people have when invited  
22 to serve on the Committee because they represent a particular group rather than for their God-  
23 given gifts and developed skills. As members of Committees on Ministry are nominated, care  
24 needs to be taken to include people who represent the breadth of the Association so that by the  
25 time Members in Discernment meet with the Committee, all its members will have become  
26 acclimated to the norms of the Committee on Ministry, and the Committee will have experienced  
27 their gifts and skills.

28 Nominating Committees likely will need to be trained to broaden the membership on the  
29 Committee on Ministry. However, early preparation may not be possible when an ethnic group  
30 new to the community seeks to be accepted as a local church of the UCC or brings a pastor for  
31 authorization.

32 Conversations with Members in Discernment before they meet with the Committee on Ministry  
33 are essential in determining their comfort in meeting with the Committee. Individuals are  
34 different in their desire to be trailblazers. They may be happy to be the first and have pride in  
35 standing alone. Some will want to be better and do more than expected because they feel they  
36 represent a group and don't want to let the group down. Others may feel intimidated and, in turn,  
37 try to intimidate the Committee on Ministry by demanding special treatment to right the wrongs  
38 of the past. In a few, anger at previous treatment may spill out on the Committee. This is less  
39 likely to be seen as appropriate when committee members share their backgrounds. Some will  
40 want to discuss their differences, and others will want to focus on the similarities of all God's  
41 children. The Committee on Ministry will be better able to treat all Members in Discernment  
42 equally if the Committee on Ministry has determined how to apply guidelines fairly and has  
43 worked to understand the experiences of the individuals coming to the Committee for  
44 authorization.

1 The Committee on the Ministry may wish to confer with the MID's community directly to hear  
2 from them their expectations of the Member and of the Committee. The Committee will seek to  
3 be sensitive to communal values that bind together communities of under-represented individuals.  
4 In addition to having members on the Committee that reflect the candidate's community, the  
5 Committee should also welcome these encounters as teaching and learning opportunities for  
6 everyone involved in the process.

7

### 8 ***Distinguishing between Cultural and Theological Beliefs***

9 Each Committee on Ministry makes decisions on behalf of the whole United Church of Christ.  
10 Cultural practices within the UCC-USA are varied, and they may be represented in the  
11 Committee on Ministry in ways that are unconscious. Cultural practices may be presented as  
12 theological certainties on issues such as child baptism, use of wine in communion or of alcohol  
13 generally, or acceptable sexual practices for religious leaders. Before Members in Discernment  
14 come to the Committee on Ministry, talk about practices and have theological discussions about  
15 the cultural impact on beliefs represented in the Committee on Ministry.

16 Take time for Committee on Ministry members to understand the beliefs of the United Church of  
17 Christ that underlie the guidelines for Committees on Ministry. These discussions, prior to  
18 meeting with Members in Discernment, will prepare the Committee for discussions with  
19 Members in Discernment from various backgrounds. Leave room for the Holy Spirit to infuse the  
20 thoughts of Committee members as the Committee meets with Members in Discernment.

21 While the United Church of Christ is often identified as a "liberal" or "progressive"  
22 denomination, in reality there is a wide diversity of theological beliefs among UCC local  
23 churches and pastors. Understanding this will help in welcoming pastors and churches with  
24 beliefs at the far ends of the spectrum. Determine that pastors and churches are appreciative of  
25 the stances of the United Church of Christ and can affirm being part of the United Church of  
26 Christ.

27 Be prepared to talk with members in discernment about how their own cultural experiences have  
28 shaped their theological and spiritual development. Discuss ways the Committee can encourage  
29 practices to continue or help the Member in Discernment mourn the loss of practices that no  
30 longer seem appropriate.

31 Keep in mind the fullness of oral and written tradition as cultures vary in the way meaning is  
32 conveyed. Sometimes there is tension, but often there is richness in communicating both orally  
33 and visually. One without the other may be incomplete.

34

### 35 ***Difficulties in Accepting Committee on Ministry Procedures***

36 The process for authorization in the UCC, while well thought out and reasonable to Committee on  
37 Ministry members, may have little meaning for Members in Discernment. Because some  
38 immigrant churches still are churches of a denomination back home (sometimes described as the  
39 "mother church"), they may come to the USA expecting to be welcomed because our shared roots  
40 go to the same predecessor bodies. If a pastor comes to the USA through appointment or approval  
41 by the mother church, there may be no perceived need for authorization through a UCC process.

1 For some from these cultures, the rules, guidelines, and steps that the Committee on Ministry  
2 holds dear are unanticipated and meaningless. They may also seem unnecessarily restrictive to  
3 young adults or others who have gone against their culture or moved to a new denomination to  
4 respond to God's call to ministry. It is likely that more time will be required for meaningful  
5 conversations as all involved learn to know one another and each other's ways better. Ignoring  
6 differences may lead to damaging misunderstandings; concluding too quickly may mean missing  
7 out on gifts God is offering to all through one another.

8 Sometimes, too, it is difficult for newcomers to the UCC to understand that different Associations  
9 often follow different procedures. When they hear of the practices of one UCC setting, they may  
10 well expect an identical or closely similar experience in another, yet may find something quite  
11 different. UCC members will need both to listen carefully and to speak humbly and honestly as  
12 communities and individuals come to know one another to discern what their relationships and  
13 roles might be. Sensitivity to, and appreciation for, oral and written traditions and wisdom  
14 continues to be very important.

15 Churches that have been the center of a community where everyone knows everyone else and  
16 where the pastor is related to most villagers may not understand or appreciate the need to be  
17 legally incorporated entities with bylaws and written procedures. Pastors may come from a  
18 Pacific Island culture where they are pastor by virtue of their royalty, and house, car, and meals  
19 are provided by the villagers/parishioners/relatives. A call agreement would be unnecessary in  
20 that culture, as would be plans for retirement, provision for health care benefits and keeping  
21 financial records, which Committees on Ministry expect.

22 In some churches and cultures, standard concepts may not have the same connotation as in the  
23 UCC-USA. For example, in some cultures, church membership is more complex than it is in the  
24 average UCC-USA local church. A large worshiping congregation may have standards for  
25 membership that admit only a few members. It is the responsibility of the Committee on Ministry  
26 to discover such differences.

27 When immigrant churches seek to relate to the UCC-USA, there may be individuals who, because  
28 of language skill or personal experience in the home country, become mentors for the immigrant  
29 churches. Because of their ability to speak the language of the immigrants, they will be the  
30 Committee on Ministry's best contact person with the congregation. However, Committee on  
31 Ministry language and procedures may be as foreign to these mentors as the immigrant language  
32 and culture are to Committee on Ministry members. As soon as the Conference or Association  
33 sees mentors emerging, the Committee on Ministry should start training the mentors about  
34 procedures. If this does not occur, later the Committee on Ministry may find that misinformation  
35 has been transmitted and correcting that information is difficult.

36

### 37 ***“Offering an Extravagant Welcome”***

38 While the United Church of Christ identifies itself as a welcoming church, the Committee on  
39 Ministry atmosphere may not be welcoming for people from cultures where business is only  
40 begun after protocols (such as formal greeting speeches) are completed or after a meal is shared  
41 or conversations of ancestors and relatives have made connections.

42 Committee on Ministry expectations and procedures for authorization may give the appearance of  
43 keeping or pushing Members in Discernment out rather than welcoming them in. By making



1 seemingly small gestures of welcome, the Committee may be in a better position to have its  
2 actions accepted. Consider these and think of others:

- 3 • Before meeting together, learn about appropriateness of welcoming hugs, handshakes,  
4 and other gestures.
- 5 • Pray and read the Bible together.
- 6 • Meet in a more welcoming place than around a conference table in a conference room.  
7 Don't assume, either, that sitting in a large open circle makes everyone feel welcome.
- 8 • If the Committee is meeting prior to the arrival of the Members in Discernment, take a  
9 break to greet them outside the formal meeting space so all can come into the meeting  
10 space together.
- 11 • Share food and conversation prior to discussing business, making sure some of the food  
12 is comfort food for everyone.
- 13 • Determine whether the level of serious conversation usually held in the Committee on  
14 Ministry is appropriate for the Members in Discernment. It can be either too formal or too  
15 informal, depending on cultural expectations.
- 16 • Avoid humor, which is very cultural. In some cultures, laughter is a sign of nervousness  
17 or embarrassment.
- 18 • Be prepared to accept and offer small gifts.
- 19 • Participate in worship services and ceremonies in churches to understand their practices.
- 20 • Be alert to the use of color for special occasions. A color in one culture that represents  
21 life may represent death in another. Ask before preparing bulletins and announcements of  
22 ecclesiastical councils and worship services. On special occasions in some churches,  
23 leaders wear white. Instructions for worship leaders to "wear red," may be confusing.
- 24 • Understand that certain numbers in some culture represent negative aspects of life, and  
25 even death. If worship services or welcoming ceremonies take place in another church's  
26 worship space, inquire about an appropriate number of candles or other symbols on the  
27 altar and elsewhere in the worship center.

28  
29 Committees on Ministry are often where Members in Discernment first encounter the wider  
30 United Church of Christ. The Committee has both the responsibility to uphold expectations and  
31 responsibilities of authorized ministry in the UCC in order to meet the Church's needs in service  
32 to God's mission and the opportunity to extend God's extravagant welcome. Good preparation,  
33 understanding, and openness can help the Committee on Ministry as it invites Members in  
34 Discernment to move with them toward justice and God's realm.

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# **APPENDICES**

## **APPENDIX A**

### **SAMPLE CHART FOR RECORDING ASSESSMENT RESULTS**

- 1 **Directions:** Place a check mark in the column that most accurately reflects one’s competencies and capacities for each characteristic at this time.  
 2 Use the column for Notes for further explication or to record the basis on which the assessment was made (e.g., self-assessment, review of  
 3 transcripts, letter of reference, case study, direct observation, etc.). Remember, this is a developmental assessment tool and not a test. No  
 4 individual is expected to demonstrate full expertise in all areas. (Note: Wording of the “Marks” was revised as below as of April 29, 2009.)  
 5

<b><i>SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION FOR MINISTRY</i></b>	<b><i>No Progress Evident</i></b>	<b><i>Occasional or Beginning</i></b>	<b><i>Periodic or Moderate</i></b>	<b><i>Consistent or Deep</i></b>	<b><i>Notes</i></b>
1. A lived faith, showing love of God, trust in Jesus Christ, and openness to the Holy Spirit.					
2. A devotion to the word of God as revealed through scripture and the Christian traditions.					
3. Commitment to life-long spiritual growth and practice, individually and in community					
4. A sense of being called by God and the community to authorized ministry in the church.					
5. Openness to continuing discernment of one’s call in community.					
<b><i>UCC IDENTITY FOR MINISTRY</i></b>	<b><i>No Progress Evident</i></b>	<b><i>Occasional or Beginning</i></b>	<b><i>Periodic or Moderate</i></b>	<b><i>Consistent or Deep</i></b>	<b><i>Notes</i></b>

1. Acknowledgement of Jesus Christ as the sole Head of the church.					
2. A passion for the oneness of the body of Christ as expressed through commitment to ecumenism, justice, and the full embrace of all persons in the radical hospitality of God.					
3. Active membership in a local church of the United Church of Christ.					
4. An understanding of the concept of covenant and how it informs the nature, purpose, and polity of the United Church of Christ.					
5. A willingness to live in the covenants of mutual accountability that characterize authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ.					
6. Ongoing demonstration of commitment to the United Church of Christ					
7. Stewardship of resources, including financial support of the church in all of its settings.					
8. Participation in the various settings of the United Church of Christ, including the conference/association and the local church.					
The Ability: 9. to articulate diverse histories that comprise the United Church of Christ, to situate them in the broader evolution of faith traditions, and to relate them to the theology, polity and practices of the Member's local church, association, and conference.					

<p>10. to explain and work within the current polity of the UCC and its denominational structure, and to describe the covenantal relationships among the General Synod, national setting, conferences, associations and local congregations of the UCC.</p>					
<p>11. to share key elements of the UCC’s statement of faith, constitution with its preamble, and by-laws regarding the governance, mission and theologies of the UCC and their implications for the life of the church.</p>					
<p>12. to articulate the UCC’s commitment to being a united and uniting, multiracial and multicultural, open and affirming, accessible to all and just peace church.</p>					
<p>13. to envision how the UCC in its various settings may respond to religious, social, economic, and political trends, changing demographics, and other emerging factors.</p>					
<p>14. to use and promote the informational and educational resources available through UCC publications and websites.</p>					
<p><b>PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL FORMATION FOR MINISTRY</b></p>	<p><i>No Progress Evident</i></p>	<p><i>Occasional or Beginning</i></p>	<p><i>Periodic or Moderate</i></p>	<p><i>Consistent or Deep</i></p>	<p><i>Notes</i></p>
<p>1. A healthy sense of self as shaped by God, community and personal experience.</p>					

2. A sense of theological identity and authority, while being responsive to the opinions and values of others, including those whom the Member will serve.					
3. A healthy awareness of strengths, weaknesses and limits, and assumption of responsibility for one's body, mind and spirit.					
4. Knowledge and observance of personal and professional boundaries in interpersonal, congregational, and community settings.					
5. A commitment to continuing education, professional development, and life-long learning..					
6. Demonstrated moral maturity, including integrity in personal and public life and responsibility to self, family, church, and community.					
The Ability:					
7. to affirm the identities of others, including others very unlike oneself.					
8. to engage in self-reflection and to seek and use feedback from others appropriately.					
9. to engage productively in public discourse, expecting to grow and be transformed through the exchange of viewpoints.					
10. to take initiative in leadership, and to frame and test a vision in community.					
11. to listen empathically, communicate appropriately, and keep appropriate confidences.					

12. to function as part of a team, to give and receive supervision, and to mutually equip and motivate the community of faith.					
13. to be resourceful and adaptable, and know where to locate additional resources and seek consultation when needed.					
14. to accept and promote diversity, to inspire others to do so, and to minister in a multicultural and multiracial, open and affirming, just peace, accessible to all, united and uniting church.					
<b><i>KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR MINISTRY</i></b>	<b><i>No Progress Evident</i></b>	<b><i>Occasional or Beginning</i></b>	<b><i>Periodic or Moderate</i></b>	<b><i>Consistent or Deep</i></b>	<b><i>Notes</i></b>
<u>General Knowledge and Skills</u>					
The Ability:					
1. to understand and appreciate a variety of perspectives on life.					
2. to understand the profound differences that physical, psychological, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, class, cultural, religious, racial, and ethnic factors make in the ways that human beings experience the world.					
3. to comprehend the impact of historical change upon the thoughts, feelings, and actions of individuals and societies.					

4. to perceive how a person’s perspectives and interests shape communication, and to appreciate the virtues and limitations of those perspectives and interests.					
5. to grasp and evaluate the justifications that people give for their opinions.					
6. to apply basic concepts of psychology to the understanding of oneself, others, and human interactions.					
7. to appreciate the importance of symbols and images in human culture(s).					
8. to understand the various meanings and purposes of the arts.					
9. to analyze social, political, and economic dynamics, using the tools of the social and natural sciences.					
10. to use respectfully and relationally a basic knowledge of specific human cultures.					
11. to communicate clearly and effectively with appropriate media and technologies.					
<u>Knowledge and Skills Specific to Authorized Ministry</u>					
1. A thorough knowledge of, and personal engagement with, the Bible.					
2. Skill with methods of biblical interpretation, including the historic interpretive traditions of the church and contemporary methods, particularly those from historically underrepresented communities.					



<p>3. A deepening familiarity with the global history of the Christian churches through the ages and across cultures, including the newest Christian populations, and an understanding of the evolution of Christian communities in the United States.</p>					
<p>4. A deepening familiarity with contemporary theological ways of thinking and with the rich and varied theological heritages, creeds, liturgies, and spiritual practices of the Christian churches.</p>					
<p>5. An understanding of other religions and their foundational documents.</p>					
<p>The Ability: 6. to articulate a theological understanding of authorized ministry, and to relate it to the practice of ministry.</p>					
<p>7. to analyze, evaluate, and integrate the biblical, historical, theological, and pastoral disciplines and practices in ways that contribute to fruitful and faithful Christian ministry.</p>					
<p>8. to understand the nature, use, and misuse of power and authority, and to exercise them appropriately and effectively in authorized ministry.</p>					
<p>9. to engage in community leadership that is collaborative and transformative .</p>					
<p>10. to engage in respectful ecumenical and interfaith dialogue.</p>					
<p>11. to celebrate the unique features of local faith communities while encouraging them to be receptive to perspectives from the broader church and world.</p>					

12. to appreciate, practice, and pass on traditions of faith while interpreting them in light of the context of a diverse and changing world.					
13. to adapt the practice of ministry to the unique social, cultural, environmental, and ecclesiastical aspects of particular settings.					
14. to discern God's mission in the world and, in response, to lead ministries of compassion, nurture, justice, and proclamation that support fullness of life for all people.					
15. to preach the good news, lead worship and participate in the sacraments in a manner faithful to the broader Christian heritage and appropriate to the characteristics of a specific culture and setting					
16. to provide effective and appropriate pastoral care and Christian education, and to equip and motivate others to share in these ministries .					
17. to organize and implement programs, administer the operations of a complex organization, and initiate change when appropriate.					
18. to read the contexts of a community's ministry and creatively lead that community through change or conflict.					
19. to lead and encourage ministries of evangelism, service, stewardship, and social transformation.					
20. to understand and participate in the financial administration of the church and other religious organizations.					

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**APPENDIX B**

**SAMPLE CHART FOR CORRELATING EDUCATIONAL AND EXPERIENTIAL HISTORY WITH MARKS FOR “KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR MINISTRY”**

<i><b>KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR MINISTRY</b></i>	<i><b>Course(s) or Workshop(s) Taken or Experience</b></i>	<i><b>Institution or Context</b></i>	<i><b>Date</b></i>	<i><b>Amount of Work</b></i>
<u>General Knowledge and Skills</u>				
The Ability:				
1. to understand and appreciate a variety of perspectives on life.				
2. to understand the profound differences that physical, psychological, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, class, cultural, racial, and ethnic factors make in the ways that human beings experience the world.				
3. to comprehend the impact of historical change upon the thoughts, feelings, and actions of individuals and societies.				
4. to perceive how a person’s perspectives and interests shape communication, and to appreciate the virtues and limitations of those perspectives and interests.				
5. to grasp and evaluate the justifications that people give for their opinions.				
6. to apply basic concepts of psychology to the understanding of oneself, others, and human interactions.				
7. to appreciate the importance of symbols and images in human culture(s).				
8. to understand the various meanings and purposes of the arts.				
9. to analyze social, political, and economic dynamics, using the tools of the social and natural sciences.				

10. to use respectfully and relationally a basic knowledge of specific human cultures.				
11. to communicate clearly and effectively with appropriate media and technologies.				
<b><u>Knowledge and Skills Specific to Authorized Ministry</u></b>				
1. A thorough knowledge of, and personal engagement with, the Bible.				
2. Skill with methods of biblical interpretation, including the historic interpretive traditions of the church and contemporary methods, particularly those from historically underrepresented communities.				
3. A deepening familiarity with the global history of the Christian churches through the ages and across cultures, including the newest Christian populations, and an understanding of the evolution of Christian communities in the United States.				
4. A deepening familiarity with contemporary theological ways of thinking and with the rich and varied theological heritages, creeds, liturgies, and spiritual practices of the Christian churches.				
5. An understanding of other religions and their foundational documents.				
The Ability:				
6. to articulate a theological understanding of authorized ministry, and to relate it to the practice of ministry.				
7. to analyze, evaluate, and integrate the biblical, historical, theological, and pastoral disciplines and practices in ways that contribute to fruitful and faithful Christian ministry.				
8. to understand the nature, use, and misuse of power and authority and to exercise them appropriately and effectively in authorized ministry.				

9. to engage in community leadership that is collaborative and transformative.				
10. to engage in respectful ecumenical and interfaith dialogue.				
11. to celebrate the unique features of local faith communities while encouraging them to be receptive to perspectives from the broader church and world.				
12. to appreciate, practice, and pass on traditions of faith while interpreting them in the light of the context of a diverse and changing world.				
13. to adapt the practice of ministry to the unique social, cultural, environmental, and ecclesiastical aspects of particular settings.				
14. to discern God's mission in the world and, in response, to lead ministries of compassion, nurture, justice, and proclamation that support fullness of life for all people.				
15. to preach the good news, lead worship and participate in the sacraments in a manner faithful to the broader Christian heritage and appropriate to the characteristics of a specific culture and setting.				
16. to provide effective and appropriate pastoral care and Christian education, and to equip and motivate others to share in these ministries.				
17. to organize and implement programs, administer the operations of a complex organization, and initiate change when appropriate.				
18. to read the contexts of a community's ministry and creatively lead that community through change or conflict.				
19. to lead and encourage ministries of evangelism, service, stewardship, and social transformation.				
20. to understand and participate in the financial administration of the church and other religious organizations.				

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**APPENDIX C**

**CHART CORRELATING THE MARKS OF FAITHFUL AND EFFECTIVE AUTHORIZED MINISTERS WITH EDUCATIONAL CONTENT**

<i>The Marks</i>		<i>Educational Content or Experiences to Promote the Marks</i>
<b><i>SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION FOR MINISTRY</i></b>		
1. A lived faith showing a love of God, trust in Jesus, and openness to the Holy Spirit.		
2. Devotion to the word of God as revealed through scripture and Christian traditions.		
3. Commitment to life-long spiritual growth and practice, individually and in community.		
4. A sense of being called by God and the community to authorized ministry in the church.		
5. Openness to continuing discernment of one's call in community.		
<b><i>UCC IDENTITY FOR MINISTRY</i></b>		
1. Acknowledgement of Jesus Christ as sole Head of the church.		
2. A passion for the oneness of the body of Christ as expressed in the work of ecumenism, justice, and the full embrace of all persons in the radical hospitality of God.		
3. Active membership in a local church of the United Church of Christ.		

<p>4. An understanding of the concept of covenant and how it informs the nature, purpose, and polity of the United Church of Christ.</p>		<p>Courses in UCC theology and polity</p>
<p>5. A willingness to live in the covenants of mutual accountability that characterize authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ.</p>		
<p>6. Ongoing demonstration of commitment to the United Church of Christ.</p>		<p>See Resources on UCC Identity</p>
<p>7. Stewardship of resources, including financial support of the church in all its settings.</p>		
<p>8. Participation in the various settings of the United Church of Christ, including the conference/association and local church.</p>		<p>See Resource on UCC Identity</p>
<p><b>The Ability:</b></p>		
<p>9. to articulate diverse histories that comprise the United Church of Christ, to situate them in the broader evolution of faith traditions, and to relate them to the theology, polity and practices of the Member's local church, association, and conference.</p>		<p>courses in UCC history, church history</p>
<p>10. to explain and work within the current polity of the UCC and its denominational structure, and to describe the covenantal relationships among the General Synod, national setting, conferences, associations and local congregations of the UCC.</p>		<p>courses in UCC polity</p>
<p>11. to share key elements of the UCC's statement of faith, constitution with its preamble and by-laws regarding the governance, mission and theologies of the UCC and their implications for the life of the church.</p>		<p>courses in UCC theology and polity</p>
<p>12. to articulate the UCC's commitment to being a united and uniting, multiracial and multicultural, open and affirming, accessible to all, and just peace church.</p>		<p>courses in UCC polity; courses in social justice issues related to the UCC's commitments</p>
<p>13. to envision how the UCC in its various settings may respond to religious, social, economic, and political trends, changing demographics, and other emerging factors.</p>		<p>See Resource on UCC Identity</p>

<p>14. to use and promote the informational and educational resources available through UCC publications and websites.</p>		<p>courses in UCC polity</p>
<p><b>PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL FORMATION FOR MINISTRY</b></p>		
<p>1. A healthy sense of self as shaped by God, community and personal experience.</p>		
<p>2. A sense of theological identity and authority, while being responsive to the opinions and values of others, including those whom the Member will serve.</p>		<p>courses in constructive theology; courses in theological method</p>
<p>3. A healthy awareness of strengths, weaknesses and limits, and assumption of responsibility for one's body, mind and spirit.</p>		<p>units of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE); supervised practice of ministry</p>
<p>4. Knowledge and observance of personal and professional boundaries in interpersonal, congregational, and community settings.</p>		<p>a basic course in pastoral care; courses in pastoral ethics, courses in ministry; courses in ministerial practice/leadership</p>
<p>5. A commitment to continuing education, professional development, and life-long learning.</p>		
<p>6. Demonstrated moral maturity, including integrity in personal and public life and responsibility to self, family, church and community.</p>		<p>courses in Christian ethics help one think about this, but do not necessarily produce the practice</p>
<p><b>The Ability:</b></p>		
<p>7. to affirm the identities of others, including others very unlike the one's own self.</p>		<p>a basic course in pastoral care</p>
<p>8. to engage in self-reflection and to seek and use feedback from others appropriately.</p>		<p>courses in pastoral care, CPE</p>
<p>9. to engage productively in public discourse, expecting to grow and be transformed through the exchange of viewpoints.</p>		<p>courses in speech, writing and critical thinking could help</p>
<p>10. to take initiative in leadership, and to frame and test a vision in community.</p>		<p>courses in pastoral leadership could help; contextual or field education with appropriate supervision and reflection</p>



11. to listen empathically, communicate appropriately, and keep appropriate confidences.		a basic course in pastoral care
12. to function as part of a team, to give and receive supervision, and to mutually equip and motivate the community of faith.		courses in leadership and/or administration; supervised practice of ministry
13. to be resourceful and adaptable, and know where to locate additional resources and seek consultation when needed.		courses in leadership and/or administration; supervised practice of ministry
14. to accept and promote diversity, to inspire others to do so, and to minister in a multi-cultural, multi-racial, open and affirming, just peace, accessible-to-all, united and uniting church.		courses in UCC history, theology and polity will educate on these specific commitments; courses on ethical issues related to the named commitments; courses in nurturing and leading multicultural, multiracial congregations may impart more specific skills
<b><i>KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR MINISTRY</i></b>		
<b><u>General Knowledge and Skills</u></b>		
<b>The Ability:</b>		
1. to understand and appreciate a variety of perspectives on life.		
2. to understand the profound differences that physical, psychological, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, class, cultural, racial, and ethnic factors make in the ways that human beings experience the world.		psychology courses, cultural studies courses
3. to comprehend the impact of historical change upon the thoughts, feelings, and actions of individuals and societies.		survey courses in history
4. to perceive how a person's perspectives and interests shape communication, and to appreciate the virtues and limitations of those perspectives and interests.		literature courses, communications courses, writing courses, courses in critical thinking
5. to grasp and evaluate the justifications that people give for their opinions.		writing courses; courses in critical thinking, philosophy courses

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6. to apply basic concepts of psychology to the understanding of oneself, others, and human interactions.		basic psychology courses
7. to appreciate the importance of symbols and images in human culture(s).		art appreciation courses, cultural studies courses, literature courses
8. to understand the various meanings and purposes of the arts.		arts appreciation courses, art history courses
9. to analyze social, political, and economic dynamics, using the tools of the social and natural sciences.		sociology courses, political science courses, economics courses
10. to use respectfully and relationally a basic knowledge of specific human cultures.		cultural studies courses, anthropology courses
11. to communicate clearly and cogently with appropriate media and technologies.		communications courses, writing courses, speech courses
<b><u>Knowledge and Skills Specific to Authorized Ministry</u></b>		
1. A thorough knowledge of, and personal engagement with, the Bible.		courses in Old Testament literature, history and theology; courses in New Testament literature, history and theology
2. Skill with methods of biblical interpretation, including the historic interpretive traditions of the church and contemporary methods, particularly those from historically underrepresented communities.		courses in Old Testament interpretation; courses in New Testament interpretation; courses in Biblical interpretation
3. A deepening familiarity with the global history of the Christian churches through the ages and across cultures, including the newest Christian populations, and an understanding of the evolution of Christian communities in the United States.		courses in church history; courses in American church history or religious histories; courses in global Christianity
4. A deepening familiarity with contemporary theological ways of thinking and with the rich and varied theological heritages, creeds, liturgies, and spiritual practices of the Christian churches.		courses in historical theology or history of Christian thought; courses in contemporary global theologies; courses in Christian ethics; courses in worship; courses in spiritual practices
5. An understanding of other religions and their foundational documents.		courses in world religions; courses in specific non-Christian religions

<b>The Ability:</b>		
6. to articulate a theological understanding of authorized ministry, and to relate it to the practice of ministry.		UCC history, theology, and polity; course of study about the pastoral office
7. to analyze, evaluate, and integrate the biblical, historical, theological, and pastoral disciplines and practices in ways that contribute to fruitful and faithful Christian ministry.		constructive theology courses, pastoral theology courses, integrative courses of various types
8. to understand the nature, use, and misuse of power and authority, and to exercise them appropriately and effectively in authorized ministry.		supervised practice of ministry with appropriate reflection; courses in theology, philosophy, social sciences
9. to engage in community leadership that is collaborative and transformative.		courses in leadership of religious communities
10. to engage in respectful ecumenical and interfaith dialogue.		courses in ecumenics, courses in comparative religions, courses from an interfaith perspective
11. to celebrate the unique features of local faith communities while encouraging them to be receptive to perspectives from the broader church and world.		courses in congregational dynamics; courses in contextual analysis; courses in the global diversity of faith traditions
12. to appreciate, practice, and pass on traditions of faith while interpreting them in light of the context of a diverse and changing world.		courses in historical theology
13. to adapt the practice of ministry to the unique social, cultural, environmental, and ecclesiastical aspects of particular settings.		courses in the leadership of religious communities, courses in contextual analysis
14. to discern God's mission in the world and, in response, to lead ministries of compassion, nurture, justice, and proclamation that support fullness of life for all people.		courses in mission, courses in leadership of religious communities, courses in contextual analysis
15. to preach the good news, lead worship and participate in the sacraments in a manner faithful to the broader Christian heritage and appropriate to the characteristics of a specific culture and setting.		courses in preaching, courses in worship
16. to provide effective and appropriate pastoral care and Christian education, and to equip and motivate others to share in these ministries.		courses in pastoral care, courses in Christian education

<p>17. to organize and implement programs, administer the operations of a complex organization, and initiate change when appropriate.</p>		<p>courses in administration and leadership of religious communities</p>
<p>18. to read the contexts of a community's ministry and creatively lead that community through change or conflict.</p>		<p>courses in conflict transformation, courses in contextual analysis</p>
<p>19. to lead and encourage ministries of evangelism, service, stewardship, and social transformation.</p>		<p>courses in evangelism, courses in stewardship, courses in social justice advocacy and mobilization, Christian ethics</p>
<p>20. to understand and participate in the financial administration of a church and other religious organizations.</p>		<p>courses in organizational finance</p>

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## APPENDIX D

### RESOURCES FOR ASSESSMENT OF PERSONS

#### ***OBTAINING USEFUL INFORMATION FROM A PERSON'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM***

Committees on the Ministry can gain an enormous amount of helpful information and evaluative material to feed their assessment of persons' readiness for ministry by contacting the educational institutions and programs in which Members in Discernment study. The kinds of information, and the possibilities and processes for a Committee on the Ministry to obtain it will vary depending whether the Member in Discernment is studying in a college or seminary, a regional educational program, a mentoring program or a Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) program. There will also be some variation from individual program to individual program. The major difference will be between the rules about sharing information about students that regulate colleges, seminaries and CPE programs, and those that regulate Conference-based educational and mentoring programs.

Colleges, seminaries and CPE programs are bound by the provisions of Federal privacy law, specifically the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). This means that they can release documents pertaining to a student's performance to a third party such as a Committee on the Ministry only on the signed, written request of the student. This requirement is most easily met by having the person in care request of the school or program that it send the Committee a copy of whatever record the Committee wishes to see. Some schools are also willing to accept a global authorization to release student records to a Committee on the Ministry so long as this is signed by the student and the school retains a copy to document the authorization. If you have questions about how to proceed with this for a particular school, or have questions about what sort of records would be available under this procedure, the office of the Academic Dean is probably the best first place to direct your questions. The office of the Registrar also is usually a good place to receive such questions.

Most seminaries will record evaluation and feedback offered to students at a variety of points during the M.Div. program, and will record it in a variety of ways and places. These almost always include the transcript and field education reports. At many seminaries there are periodic evaluations or a student's developing ministerial formation, e.g., annual review, middler (second level) review, senior review. At a few seminaries a student's formal academic record will contain full page evaluations of a student's performance in each course. All these offer a Committee on the Ministry a far richer picture of the student's development than can be gained from a transcript. In particular the full-page course evaluations, field education reports, and records of periodic reviews will be an especially rich resource for assessing a person's progress in relation the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers.

Another way to gain valuable assessment information from a student's educational program is to contact the student's instructors. This may be an especially useful way to gather detailed information concerning a student's manifestation of the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers that pertains to knowledge and skills for ministry. There are at least two approaches a Committee can take here. One is to have the student request references from specific instructors using forms that include the Marks about which you want the instructor to comment (see below for more details on this approach). For example, a Biblical studies instructor

1 might be asked to speak to a student's work in relation to the Marks that relate to knowledge and  
2 interpretation of the Bible; a Pastoral Care instructor might be asked to speak to Marks relating to  
3 pastoral care; and so on. The second approach is to have the student sign an authorization for  
4 members of the Committee to contact the instructors directly to seek a reference. These direct  
5 contacts should ask faculty members about the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized  
6 Ministers they are best placed to observe.

7 Conference-based regional educational programs and mentoring programs will most likely have a  
8 different dynamic around providing Committees on the Ministry information about students in  
9 those programs. On the one hand, as programs that are part of the same legal entity as the  
10 Committee, privacy law is much less likely to require special procedures to authorize release of  
11 records to the Committee. On the other hand, there are likely to be far fewer written records that  
12 can be shared. To obtain detailed assessment information about students in these programs  
13 Committees are best advised to take the approach of contacting individual instructors described in  
14 the previous paragraph.

15 Clinical Pastoral Education programs conclude with a very careful evaluative process that can  
16 provide a Committee on the Ministry rich assessment data on a student in such a program. A  
17 student who completes such a program will have a copy of the student's own self-evaluation and  
18 their program supervisor's evaluation of them. So perhaps the easiest way for a Committee on the  
19 Ministry to see these documents is to ask the person in care for copies. If the Committee  
20 specifically wishes to receive a copy of the evaluation directly from the CPE program, they  
21 should contact the program about the procedures they must follow to obtain that.

22

### 23 ***USING THE MARKS OF READINESS TO OBTAIN MORE*** 24 ***INFORMATIVE REFERENCES***

25 The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers can be used very directly in soliciting  
26 highly informative references concerning a Member in Discernment. A Committee on the  
27 Ministry that asks a referee to speak to a person's manifesting of specific Marks rather than just  
28 asking for "a reference" will receive a response that much more usefully informs the Committee's  
29 own judgment. In seeking such references, the best practice will not be to send the entire list of  
30 Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers to every referee, but rather to send only  
31 those Marks to which the referee is able to speak. For example, a Committee logically would ask  
32 a person's Biblical studies instructors about Marks pertaining to knowledge and skills in Biblical  
33 studies; a person's preaching instructor or individuals who have heard the person preach about  
34 Marks pertaining to knowledge and skills in preaching; a UCC instructor, field supervisor or  
35 mentor about Marks pertaining to UCC identity; and so on. A Committee might also want to  
36 think about seeking references from persons with different experiences of the Member in  
37 Discernment. For example, an instructor or mentor will have one kind of experience of a person's  
38 capabilities for ministry, but the recipients of that person's ministry will have a different  
39 experience of a person's capabilities. That different experience and point of view will be valuable  
40 for the committee.

41

42

43

## 1 **THE USE OF CASE STUDIES**

2 Committees on Ministry may find case studies an especially effective way of assessing a  
3 student's progress in relation to the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers. Case  
4 studies are narratives of critical incidents that are suitable for analysis and reflection. The  
5 narratives may range in length from a few paragraphs to a few pages. The Association for Case  
6 Teaching has developed and promoted their use in the education and preparation of ministers for  
7 a number of years, and has compiled hundreds of case narratives. They range from cases related  
8 to Biblical studies and church history to every imaginable situation that might arise in  
9 contemporary authorized ministry. Case narratives may be fictional or fictionalized real incidents,  
10 but they are certainly "true to life" in ways that make them excellent resources for observing the  
11 abilities of a Member in Discernment.

12 Committees will doubtless imagine a variety of ways to use cases in discerning a person's  
13 readiness for authorization, but at least two are immediately obvious. A committee may give a  
14 case to a Member in Discernment with the request to respond to specific questions about it in  
15 writing. A committee may ask the Member in Discernment to discuss the case orally with the  
16 committee. Which approach the committee takes will depend on the kind of information it seeks,  
17 constraints of time and distance, as well as other factors. A committee should be especially  
18 attentive to the need to discuss cases orally with persons from oral cultures.

19 Cases of incidents from ministerial practice will be especially useful for committees because they  
20 offer the possibility of assessing a person's progress in a way that integrates many aspects of  
21 readiness in a fashion that the recipients of the person's ministry might actually experience. This  
22 also allows the committee to rely on its experience of good ministerial practice as a resource for  
23 evaluation, rather than having to be dependent on technical experts.

24 Committees should be aware that cases built around ministerial practice allow them to assess  
25 much more than ministerial practice. For example, a case of an incident at a church council  
26 meeting offers a committee the possibility of assessing a person's grasp of leadership issues, but  
27 also their grasp of UCC identity, and their theological understanding. A case of a pastoral care  
28 incident might also be the occasion to probe a person's theological understanding, as well as their  
29 sense of how they might preach and shape worship in ways that cared for persons in the situation  
30 described in the case. A case about an adult Bible study class offers an opportunity to assess a  
31 person's readiness in relation to Marks having to do with educational ministry, Biblical studies,  
32 and perhaps pastoral care. All of these offer opportunities to observe how the Member in  
33 Discernment sees the role of ordained minister, and themselves in that role.

### 34 **Sources of Case Studies**

35 A Committee on Ministry may not need to write a single case narrative in order to make full use  
36 of this approach to assessment although they certainly may do so if they feel the need. Because of  
37 the great value of case narratives in preparation for ministry, many others have done that work.  
38 There are published collections of case studies, some of which are listed in the bibliography  
39 below. Perhaps even more easily accessible is the collection of hundreds of case narratives  
40 developed and maintained by the Association for Case Teaching. This can be accessed online  
41 through the Yale Divinity School Library at the following URL:

42 [http://www.library.yale.edu/div/case\\_teaching/case\\_list.html](http://www.library.yale.edu/div/case_teaching/case_list.html)

43 That page contains an alphabetical listing of case titles and a link to a search engine. Probably the  
44 best way to access the collection is through the search engine. Type in the topic for which that

1 you want to see cases, and the search process will return a list of all the cases that have to do with  
2 that topic. You then can view a summary of the case to decide whether it is something you want  
3 to use. You must order the full case, but there is an online order form that you can use for that  
4 purpose. Here is a sample of what the summary description of a case from this database looks  
5 like:

6 PLEASE FIRE MRS. WILLIAMS 9 475 626

7 Author: Paylor, N.R.

8 Setting: Suburban Community, Community Church, 350 Members, 1959 (field)

9 Date: 1975

10 Length: 4 p.

11 Topics: Interpersonal Relationships, Religious Organizations, Staff Relations,  
12 Management of Conflict, Role of Minister

13 The choir at Riverton Church asked Rev. Roberts "as our minister, please fire  
14 Mrs. Williams," the church organist/choir director. This was Rev. Roberts' first  
15 parish since graduating from seminary and he was uncertain how to handle the  
16 request. He sought the help of the church officers, the choir members, and Mrs.  
17 Williams herself, in order to bring about satisfactory solution to the problem.  
18 Indecision, delay, frustration, and anger were the consequences of his efforts.  
19 This case is intended to enable students to confront issues surrounding the  
20 personal and professional identity development of the young minister. A portion  
21 of an introductory course in pastoral care deals with his identity as a primary  
22 factor in his capacity to provide pastoral care to other persons. This case fits  
23 within that course segment. The issues in the case include: the pastor's integrity,  
24 staff relations and pastoral care, decision-making, sharing responsibilities for  
25 leadership with lay persons, and patterns of conflict. No teaching note available.

26

27 Note that the summary also includes an identification of the setting in which the incident  
28 occurred, a list of the topics for which the case might have relevance, and a summary of the  
29 incident. This particular example also adds a statement of what the case is useful for to the end of  
30 the summary of the incident. Many will only summarize the incident.

31 The reference to the case's setting will help identify the cultural community and norms within  
32 which the case unfolds. It is possible that a Committee on Ministry needing cases set in a specific  
33 cultural community will have difficulty finding them if that community is not part of the  
34 dominant culture. In such a situation the committee may have to write its own cases or scenarios  
35 for use with persons from that cultural community. Committees wishing to take this course of  
36 action are encouraged to contact PLL staff if they wish assistance in finding or developing such  
37 cases or scenarios.

38 [Bibliography of collections of case studies to be added at a later date.]

39



## 1 **THE USE OF DIRECT EXPERIENCE OF A PERSON'S MINISTRY**

2 Committees on Ministry can also seek opportunities to experience the ministry of Members in  
3 Discernment directly. Even as an occasional occurrence, this can give a Committee on Ministry  
4 substantial evidence of a person's progress in relation to the Marks of Faithful and Effective  
5 Authorized Ministers. If such occasions were a regular part of a committee's relationship with a  
6 Member in Discernment, over time the committee would build up a significant picture of that  
7 individual's readiness. Here are some examples of ways Committees on Ministry can experience  
8 the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers in a Member in Discernment during the  
9 time of that member's Covenant of Discernment and Formation.

10 1) Gatherings of Members in Discernment in social settings:

11 a) a Christmas reception and/or a summer occasion. Request each person to participate in  
12 providing one of the following: a brief devotional, share a testimony of a positive  
13 learning experience, share in conversation with the Committee on the Ministry about joys  
14 and concerns of issues in ministry.

15 b) a reception at Association and Conference annual meetings for Members in Discernment  
16 and others. Involve those who are closest to fulfilling Marks of Faithful and Effective  
17 Authorized Ministers to provide introductions, prayers, and other forms of leadership.

18 c) a spiritual retreat to mark the beginning of covenant experiences.

19 2) Networking:

20 a) via messages through an emailing list (e.g., a listserv);

21 b) by circulating up-to-date calendars of Associational events

22 3) Attendance at events of the Member in Discernment to which he or she appropriately invites  
23 his or her Committee on Ministry mentor or the whole committee.

24 4) Participate in Association committees, functions, and events as times allows through:

25 a) worship leadership;

26 b) projects supported by Association;

27 c) special partner, ecumenical and interfaith events of the Association;

28 d) cross-cultural events.

29

## 30 **THE USE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL INVENTORIES**

31 Many Committees on Ministry will be used to the idea of using psychological inventories in  
32 working with persons on a path toward ordained ministry. The approach of assessing Members in  
33 Discernment in relation to the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers, however,  
34 should lead to a change in the way committees use psychological inventories and perhaps even to  
35 which inventories are used with which persons.

1 When Committees on Ministry use the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers as a  
2 frame of reference for working with a Member in Discernment throughout their relationship, the  
3 Marks create a framework for thinking about individuals developmentally. That is, the Marks  
4 help a committee to ask, “Where is this person ready and where do they need to grow in order to  
5 become ready for authorization.” In this approach psychological inventories serve as tools for  
6 identifying areas where a Member in Discernment needs to grow – to develop. In the past the  
7 most common use for psychological inventories was instead as a kind of screening mechanism,  
8 i.e., to rule out persons regarded as psychologically “unfit” for ministry – to give a kind of  
9 “thumbs up” or “thumbs down” verdict on a person. While such an approach can still be  
10 maintained in the new relationship that Committees on Ministry are being invited to have with  
11 persons who believe that God is calling them to authorized ministry, it will not be very helpful in  
12 the long run, and will not contribute much to moving persons toward real readiness for ministry.  
13 A developmental approach will be much more useful in that regard.

14 A developmental approach in the use of psychological inventories will lead to different choices  
15 about which inventories to use. In the old screening approach to the use of inventories, the MMPI  
16 was commonly used, and for those purposes it may sometimes have been suitable since it was  
17 designed to identify pathology. In a developmental approach grounded in the Marks of Faithful  
18 and Effective Authorized Ministers the MMPI still has a place, but will be rather less useful in  
19 some important respects, exactly because of its emphasis on pathology. Instead, instruments such  
20 as the Meyers-Briggs, Enneagram, BarOn EQI, California Psychological Inventory, Leadership  
21 Effectiveness Assessment, and others will prove much more useful. The annotated list of  
22 inventories that follows this discussion will give Committees on Ministry some idea of the  
23 possibilities for helpful inventories they might use. This list in no way substitutes for a committee  
24 consulting with a qualified counselor concerning the use of psychological inventories, but is in-  
25 tended to equip committees to enter such consultations with greater clarity about what best meets  
26 their needs. By far the best consultant for a Committee on Ministry concerning the use and  
27 evaluation of psychological inventories is a Ministry or Career Development Center that is an  
28 accredited member of the Ministry Development Council.

29 The results of any inventories used should be interpreted to the Member in Discernment and the  
30 committee by a person who has been properly qualified to do so. Since the goal of the process is  
31 the development of the Member in Discernment toward greater capacity for ministry,  
32 interpretation of the results of the inventories to the Member in Discernment in a fashion that  
33 promotes self-understanding and growth is an indispensable part of the process.

34 It is a simple fact of life that psychological inventories are not universally applicable across all  
35 cultures. Because psychological and relational health manifest themselves differently in different  
36 cultures, inventories must be “normed” and validated for a particular culture before their results  
37 can be regarded as useful and reliable. Moreover, for persons who do not come from the  
38 dominant culture their results are best interpreted by someone from that individual’s culture or  
39 someone with the necessary background and skill for cross-cultural interpretation of that/those  
40 inventory/ies.

41 The list that follows identifies psychological inventories that committees might find particularly  
42 useful in working with Members in Discernment around the Marks of Faithful and Effective  
43 Authorized Ministers. For each inventory an attempt is made to signal its particular value and the  
44 extent to which it has been normed and validated for cultures other than the dominant culture.

45 [Annotated list of inventories to be added at a later date.]

1

**2 THE USE OF A PERSON'S PROFILE**

3 The pronouncement of the twenty-fifth General Synod has created a situation in which persons  
4 will come to Committees on Ministry seeking authorization from different places in the life of the  
5 church than before. Some, although perhaps not many, may already have developed a ministerial  
6 profile. Of course, persons near the end of their process of preparation will also have developed a  
7 ministerial profile in anticipation of seeking a call. In either case, Committees on the Ministry  
8 might wish to think of the ministerial profiles of Members in Discernment as another way to learn  
9 the degree to which those persons are ready for authorization. For at least some of the Marks of  
10 Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers, the member's own narrative statements and the  
11 views of references will be valuable sources of perspective on a member's manifestation of the  
12 Marks.

13

**14 THE USE OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY**

15 Committees on Ministry will probably find an approach know as Appreciative Inquiry (AI)  
16 especially helpful in their work of discernment with potential candidates for ordained ministry. A  
17 basic definition of Appreciative Inquiry is this:

18 AI is about the coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant  
19 world around them. In its broadest focus, AI involves systemic discovery of what gives "life" to a  
20 living system (like a potential candidate for ministry) which it is most alive, most effective, and  
21 most constructively capable in economic, ecological and human terms.<sup>1</sup>

22 Appreciative Inquiry is a perspective with ten assumptions:<sup>2</sup>

- 23 1. In every organization like the church, some things work well.
- 24 2. What we focus on becomes our reality.
- 25 3. Asking questions influences the group.
- 26 4. We have more confidence in the journey to the future when we carry forward parts of the  
27 past.
- 28 5. If we carry parts of the past into the future, we should be clear about what is best about  
29 the past.
- 30 6. It is important to value differences and diversity.
- 31 7. The language we use creates our reality.
- 32 8. Organizations are heliotropic.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/intro/whatisai.cfm>

<sup>2</sup> Mark Lau Branson, Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute 2004, p. 24.

1           9. Outcomes should be useful.

2           10. All steps are collaborative.

3 Appreciative Inquiry is a way for a Committee on Ministry to ask questions of the Member in  
4 Discernment that recall the best of the known, give voice to the person's deep values, and aid in  
5 helping them to imagine the possibilities the future might hold for them. AI is also about telling  
6 and sharing stories—as we remember our past, we are remembered.

7 For Members in Discernment some of the kinds of questions you would use might be framed like  
8 this:<sup>3</sup>

- 9           • What attracted you to ministry? What are some of your most positive impressions of  
10           ministry prior to this moment?
- 11           • Remember a time when you made a difference by doing the work of ministry. Relate to  
12           us your story and tell us what happened.
- 13           • What do you value most about yourself as a leader? What would others say about you as  
14           leader?
- 15           • Think of a time when someone else provided you with an opportunity to take a risk, to  
16           stretch, or to grow. What happened and what do you value most about the leader in that  
17           story?
- 18           • Think of a time when you provided someone with an opportunity to take a risk, to stretch,  
19           or to grow. What was going on? What do you value most about your leadership in this  
20           story? How did you persist in keeping a positive image of potential?
- 21           • Can you think of a story or an example that stands out for you, something that ex-  
22           emplifies the kind of leadership approaches we should aim at more often?
- 23           • Imagine and picture the church as you always imagined it could be—the way you believe  
24           it ought to be. In terms of church leadership, describe what you see happening. How is it  
25           different?
- 26           • How can you further develop your gifts for leadership so you can help the church to  
27           become what you imagine it could be?

## 28 **Appreciative Inquiry Resources**

29 Committees on Ministry can find significant resources concerning Appreciative Inquiry and its  
30 use in many places. Committees will probably find the following three especially helpful. The  
31 first is the web site for the **Clergy Leadership Institute**. The web address for the site is:  
32 <http://www.clergyleadership.com>.

33 The mission statement of the Clergy Leadership Institute is this:

34           The mission of the Clergy Leadership Institute is to increase ministers' ef-  
35           fectiveness by offering training that integrates theological reflection with  
36           organizational psychology. The institute believes appreciative processes are the  
37           most effective way of enabling people to manifest their God-given talents and

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<sup>3</sup> From the *Alban Weekly* – Week of 5/27/05

1 abilities. The Institute's website features detailed information about its AI and  
2 leadership training programs, clergy sabbatical programs, clergy search  
3 resources, coaching service for personal and professional development, and  
4 consulting for congregational development.

5 Another major resource is the **Appreciative Inquiry Commons**, a web site of resources  
6 maintained at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. The web address for the  
7 Appreciative Inquiry Commons is: <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/>

8 The third resource is an excellent **book concerning Appreciative Inquiry**:

9 Hammond, Sue Annis, *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry*. Plano, TX: Thin Book Publishing  
10 Company, 1996.

11

## 12 **THE USE OF PORTFOLIOS**

13 Members in Discernment and authorized ministers may be asked to assemble and add to a  
14 portfolio. Portfolios are used in a number of settings, including higher education, business, and  
15 the arts, to document competencies in particular areas of achievement as well as for the  
16 assessment of learning. For Members in Discernment and authorized ministers, the Portfolio is a  
17 way of documenting competencies outlined in the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized  
18 Ministers.

19 The use of a portfolio is woven into the processes of initial assessment, on-going assessment and  
20 assessment for authorization of Members in Discernment. The sections describing those  
21 processes identify items that would be useful contents of that portfolio, and discuss their use with the  
22 member and the Committee on Ministry.

23 However, the portfolio may have other uses as well. For example, individual authorized  
24 minister may wish to use the portfolio in a process of self-assessment to guide their on-going  
25 learning and development. Or Committees on Ministry may wish for similar reasons to use a  
26 portfolio process with ministers already authorized, or in processes with persons seeking  
27 standing, or with Members in Discernment in some way not already described in the sections on  
28 assessment of Members in Discernment.

29 In these other uses it may be most helpful to organize the Portfolio around the four categories of  
30 the "Marks," Spiritual Formation, UCC Identity, Personal and Professional Formation, and  
31 Knowledge and Skills for Ministry. Each category may begin with a brief (one-two page)  
32 narrative describing the contents of the section and why each entry was chosen for inclusion.  
33 Each entry, in turn, should include the date, context, and a brief description. For example, a  
34 sermon should be included with the date of the sermon, the setting in which it was delivered, a  
35 brief description -- including the Scriptures used as the basis for the sermon -- should appear at  
36 the beginning of the sermon, and perhaps also a brief reflection on the piece in relation to the  
37 Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers.

38 Such a development of a portfolio may be of particular value to Licensed Ministers, especially if  
39 they serve over an extended period of time or if they are invited to consider serving in more than  
40 one setting. The Licensed Minister will find it valuable to guide continuing education and a  
41 helpful tool for reflection upon one's ministry. Moreover, by organizing the Portfolio around the

1 “Marks” the minister can provide a coherent picture of her or his particular gifts and  
2 competencies for easy use by Committees on Ministry and Local Churches.

3 In practical terms a portfolio can be contained in a large binder with dividers although many other  
4 forms of organization are possible as well. A title page may appear both on the cover of the  
5 binder and as the first page and should include the Member’s name, address, contact information,  
6 local church, Association, Conference, and the date(s) of the most recent updates. A table of  
7 contents is recommended.

8 Portfolios can be quite variable in content and can be tailored to the particular needs of a person,  
9 committee or group. Since the United Church of Christ includes and honors much diversity  
10 among its members, it is anticipated that the Portfolio composition will be particular to the person  
11 and context represented. The following list illustrates (but does not exhaust) the rich array of  
12 materials that could be include in a portfolio:

- 13 1. Narratives of various kinds (e.g., a spiritual autobiography, an account of your call to  
14 ministry, statement on ministry, statement of theology)
- 15 2. A current resumé
- 16 3. Audio and/or video recordings
- 17 4. Oral presentations
- 18 5. Official transcripts from undergraduate or graduate institutions attended
- 19 6. Certificates of Completion for training related to ministry and other continuing education  
20 experiences
- 21 7. Records from non-credit courses, workshop certificates, documentation and description  
22 of workshops presented
- 23 8. UCC history and polity documentation (if earned)
- 24 9. Demonstration of self-directed learning projects, reflective practice, or on-the-job  
25 training
- 26 10. Photographs of original artwork, photographs of ministry moments
- 27 11. Works of art (with interpretation, if desired)
- 28 12. Written papers
- 29 13. Case Studies
- 30 14. Letters of recommendation
- 31 15. Interview recordings
- 32 16. Programs from worship services
- 33 17. Performance assessments

- 1 18. Ministerial Profile
- 2 19. Summaries of projects undertaken in the local congregation, regional or national church,
- 3 or community
- 4 20. Evidence of related experience, knowledge, skills from other experiences
- 5 21. Evidence of applicable corporate training (e.g., conflict resolution, financial management,
- 6 computer skills)
- 7 22. College level exams such as CLEP and DANTES
- 8 23. Military training and occupations
- 9 24. Corporate/agency training evaluated by ACE/PONSI
- 10 25. Contact learning - independent study
- 11 26. Special assessment of all national and state licensing/certificates
- 12 27. Annotated bibliographies
- 13

## APPENDIX E

### RESOURCES FOR DESIGNING AND ASSESSING MENTORING PROGRAMS

#### ***INTRODUCTION***

In adopting the Pronouncement, “Ministry Issues: Forming and Preparing Pastoral Leaders for God’s Church,” the twenty-fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ called upon the Associations and Conferences to provide paths of preparation for authorized ministry which are appropriate to the needs and possibilities of the church and community. One such path is that of mentoring. Mentoring has been demonstrated in the life of the faith community from its beginning. The scriptures are filled with examples: Moses and Joshua, Eli and Samuel, Naomi and Ruth, Elijah and Elisha, Elizabeth and Mary, Jesus and the twelve disciples, and Paul and Barnabas. Through time, mentors have been instrumental in helping people discover who they are and how they are to be in God’s service.

Mentoring, the one-on-one modeling, instruction, and guidance from a teacher to a learner, is certainly a time honored process for preparing leaders in a variety of settings, including the church. This preparation often takes place in a local context and is less structured than the patterns of most schools. The rhythm of learning is more from season to season and highly dependent on the negotiation and motivation between intentional teacher and learner. The goal of such a mentoring relationship is for the Member in Discernment to prepare for authorized ministry in a community through a variety of hands-on-learning activities whereby he or she can faithfully and effectively teach, preach, evangelize, witness, mobilize social action and minister to the community. The focus is developing personal, professional, and cultural competence under the guidance of wise elders.

In selecting mentoring as a part of a member in discernment’s path to preparation for authorized ministry, a Committee on the Ministry will need to consider several things, including the appropriateness of this process for the Member in Discernment, the role mentoring will play in the Member in Discernment’s plan for developing the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers, the qualities and characteristics of a mentor, the shape and form of the mentoring relationship, the possibility of a team of mentors with particular specialties, the kinds of accountability between mentor and mentee and between the mentor/mentee and the Committee on the Ministry, and selection and preparation of mentors.

#### ***MENTORS***

In the context of a path of preparation for authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ, a mentor is an individual who serves as a model, a supporter, and a teacher of ministry for a Member in Discernment. They are able to be a wise and trusted advisor, teacher, counselor and guide. They are held in high regard in their ecclesial and cultural context and have expertise in the area the member in discernment seeks to explore. They have had life experiences that are reliable for both the guidance and the edification of the mentee. They are able to establish a trusting relationship that is both generative and nurturing for the learning individual.

An effective mentor:



- 1 • has a mature faith, models effective ministry, and possesses the necessary ability to help  
2 individuals discern, develop and grow in the marks of a faithful and effective authorized  
3 minister;
- 4 • helps the member in discernment clarify issues and options and think about what it means  
5 to be an authorized minister in their context;
- 6 • brings experience, wisdom and care to the relationship;
- 7 • is esteemed, trustworthy, knowledgeable, holds confidences and can be direct and firm;
- 8 • has experience in the history, culture, and language of the community to which both the  
9 mentor and the Member in Discernment belong;
- 10 • helps persons reflect on their growth in the Marks of Faithful and Effective Ministers;
- 11 • creates a climate safe for reflection and growth;
- 12 • listens actively and hears others;
- 13 • is personally confident and secure and is willing to share appropriately;
- 14 • is able to exercise appropriate boundaries;
- 15 • models a deep faith in Christ and exhibits an active spiritual life;
- 16 • nurtures others with sensitivity and empathy.

17 The relationship between a mentor and mentee is marked by collegiality where the emphasis is  
18 relational, where mutual giving and receiving may develop. The relationship is dynamic and not  
19 legalistic. As with other paths of preparation, the path of mentoring seeks always to assist the  
20 Member in Discernment in developing and maturing in the Marks of a Faithful and Effective  
21 Authorized Minister.

22

### 23 ***CREATING AND EVALUATING MENTORING PROGRAMS USING*** 24 ***CURRENT RESOURCES***

25 \*\* This section is still under development. It will be circulated when it is finished. \*\*

26

### 27 ***WHAT A MENTORING PROGRAM COULD BE IF ADDITIONAL*** 28 ***RESOURCES WERE AVAILABLE***

29 \*\* This section is still under development. It will be circulated when it is finished. \*\*

30

## APPENDIX F

### RESOURCES FOR DESIGNING AND ASSESSING REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

#### INTRODUCTION

When the twenty-fifth General Synod called upon the Associations and Conferences of the United Church of Christ to “make available paths of preparation for ordained ministry which are appropriate to the needs and possibilities of the church and community, including: . . . (b) Regional theological formation programs,” it was calling for something that to some extent already exists in the life of the church and at the same time offers real opportunities for further development. Regional theological formation programs have existed for some time in many of the Conferences of the United Church of Christ, as well as in the judicatories of other denominations. So there is a strong history of important work in preparing leaders for God’s church from which a future can be projected. On the other hand, in the United Church of Christ most of these programs have aimed at preparing persons for licensure in the Associations of the Conference sponsoring a given program, not ordination for the whole church. Such existing programs can be used as the foundation to which other experiences and educational resources are added to build an individual educational plan preparing a member for ordination. At the same time, Conferences may wish to strengthen these existing programs to make them a more substantial foundation for educational plans intended to prepare members for ordination.

Lance Barker and Edmon Martin, in their study of regional programs of theological education, *Multiple Paths to Ministry: New Models for Theological Education*, state their conviction “that these programs are vital components in the theological landscape.”<sup>4</sup> These programs add important capacity for theological education in the United Church of Christ beyond the resources represented by its seminaries.

The distinctive contribution of regional educational programs has at least three dimensions. First, they “widen access to the resources of theological education,”<sup>5</sup> making preparation for authorized leadership in the church available to persons whom God has called, but who live outside commuting range from an accredited seminary and whose life circumstances prevent them from moving to a seminary. Second, as Barker and Martin put it, “these programs [are] apt to reinforce the contextual and connectional character of ministry, often resulting in ministries of local empowerment in church and community.”<sup>6</sup> Third, “churches that [are] served by graduates of [these] programs time and again [exhibit] renewed energy and self-worth as a result of being liberated from having to measure their viability in terms of economic or demographic capital.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Barker, Lance R. and B. Edmon Martin, eds, *Multiple Paths to Ministry: New Models for Theological Education* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2004) 7.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

1 Regional educational programs come in a variety of forms and formats. For example, curricula in  
2 some programs look like mini-seminary curricula. In other programs the same subject matters  
3 have been rearranged into integrated courses built around specific patterns of ministerial practice.  
4 Some use courses that meet on weekends; others have courses that meet weekly over an extended  
5 period. Some use classic lecture formats; others use learning circles; others use small group  
6 action-reflection models of education. Some are primarily initiated, designed and carried out  
7 within the bounds of a single judicatory; some operate within an interdenominational setting;  
8 others may be related to an accredited seminary. Barker's and Martin's book contains essays  
9 describing a wide variety of these programs, and summarizes the results of their study of over one  
10 hundred such programs.<sup>8</sup>

11 All exhibit the essential genius of regional education programs. First, they organize their  
12 educational offerings to make theological education accessible to a non-residential population  
13 that for varying reasons is unable to engage either in full-time study of any sort, or in regular part-  
14 time study at a seminary that exhibits the marks of an effective seminary program. Second, they  
15 are adapted to the needs and culture(s) of the community/ies they are designed to serve. In  
16 particular, they have a capacity to shape an educational program in a way that is fully integrated  
17 into the culture of a particular community, preparing persons to lead in ways that are appropriate  
18 to that context. Third, they also tend to have a simple administrative structure that allows them to  
19 be quickly responsive to the constituencies they serve.

20 These core strengths of regional educational programs also have other consequences. In some  
21 programs the dispersal of students, faculty and administration -- except for the occasions of  
22 classroom gatherings -- can make consistency of educational results harder to achieve. The focus  
23 of programs on the needs of particular communities or regions sometimes can make it harder to  
24 cultivate awareness of the whole United Church of Christ and the global church beyond that --  
25 especially an issue in relation to ordination, which is an authorization for the whole church. The  
26 programs' location in Conference settings can lead to wide variations in the resources they are  
27 able to offer their students, depending on what is available to a given conference.

28 At the time the General Synod adopted the Ministry Issues pronouncement most of the regional  
29 educational programs in the United Church of Christ were designed to educate lay persons or  
30 those who might be seeking licensure in the Associations of the Conferences sponsoring the  
31 programs, and still are. Only a very few aim at preparing persons for ordained ministry.  
32 However, the "Biblical, Theological and Ethical Rationale" associated with the pronouncement  
33 presumed that the levels of education needed for licensure and ordination differ. Committees on  
34 the Ministry may need to strengthen and further develop current regional educational programs  
35 and/or to supplement the educational experience they offer if students in those programs are to be  
36 able to meet Marks of Readiness for Ordination. Nevertheless, regional education programs are  
37 an indispensable component of the church's institutions of theological education, and in particular  
38 instances will actually be the best possible form of preparation.

39

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41

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<sup>8</sup> Barker and Martin, *Multiple Paths to Ministry*.

## 1 **CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL** 2 **PROGRAMS**

3 Because of the diversity among regional educational programs, a Committee on the Ministry  
4 needs to spend time assessing such a program to determine its appropriateness for a particular  
5 member in discernment. It is important to know a program's strengths and weaknesses as the  
6 committee determines what role such a program will play in the educational and formational plan  
7 as a member in discernment seeks to develop the marks of a faithful and authorized minister.  
8 Without a common accrediting body for these programs, like the Association of Theological  
9 Schools for seminaries, each committee will need to do the careful work of assessing and  
10 evaluating the programs available in order to determine their effectiveness. The material that  
11 follows is provided to assist you in this process. The same set of questions and criteria also  
12 constitutes a list of the issues to consider in the design of a new regional educational program.

13 The primary aim of your committee's assessment should be to determine how effective the  
14 regional education program is in developing and nurturing the marks of a faithful and effective  
15 authorized minister. These marks should always be before you as you consider the various  
16 program options and seek the best resources for your member in discernment.

## 17 **MARKS OF A GOOD REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM**

18 Given the Marks of a Faithful and Effective Authorized Minister, an effective regional program  
19 in education will:

- 20 1. enable its students to acquire the bodies of knowledge identified by or implied by the Marks  
21 of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ;
- 22 2. enable its students to acquire the abilities and skills necessary for manifesting the marks of  
23 faithful and effective authorized ministers;
- 24 3. cultivate in its students an awareness of and commitment to the United Church of Christ and  
25 its essential commitments to be a united and uniting, multiracial and multicultural, accessible  
26 to all, open and affirming, just peace church, including
  - 27 • informing and training students concerning issues that are vital to such a church.
- 28 4. cultivate in its students an awareness of the wider, global church and the ability to engage in  
29 ecumenical and interfaith conversations;
- 30 5. cultivate in its students a sensitivity to and awareness of the particularity of context,  
31 including:
  - 32 • the capacity for interpreting, that is, "reading" and analyzing texts, situations and  
33 relationships in order to make sense of them for the faith communities to which the  
34 student belongs;
  - 35 • the ability to understand how theological resources, persons, and communities are  
36 influenced by the particular social context in which they occur;
  - 37 • the ability to adapt resources and institutions to new situations and contexts;

- 1 6. cultivate in its students openness to critique, receptivity to the possibility of transformation,  
2 empathy with those who are different, and respect for unfamiliar perspectives;
- 3 7. cultivate in its students dispositions and habits that explicitly integrate religious knowledge,  
4 skill, ministerial identity and character in patterns of behavior and practice characteristic of  
5 authorized ministry, including the public role of authorized ministers in the broader society;
- 6 8. cultivate in its students a mature spiritual life that includes an awareness of God's love and  
7 mystery, a deepening relationship with the Creator, gratitude to the Redeemer, and openness  
8 to the Holy Spirit;
- 9 9. provide an appropriate educational environment which includes:
  - 10 • opportunities to learn from appropriately qualified faculty;
  - 11 • access to a depth and breadth of print and electronic resources for learning;
  - 12 • an interactive and dialogic peer learning community that encourages the development of  
13 personal convictions and interpretations;
  - 14 • opportunities to learn from experienced UCC ministers;
  - 15 • opportunities to learn through the performance of ministerial tasks.

16 In addition to the characteristics listed above, there are other important marks of effectiveness  
17 that your committee needs to consider when assessing the quality of a regional educational  
18 program. These include:

19 **The design of the curriculum:**

- 20 • Ask to see the curriculum requirements for the program. The courses offered should be  
21 those that enable students to achieve the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized  
22 Ministers.
- 23 • There should be a sufficient number of courses and a sufficient length of time to the  
24 program for quality learning to occur.
- 25 • It is helpful to have some logic and structure to the courses taken. A collection of courses  
26 taken in random order is seldom an effective educational process.
- 27 • Ask to see the syllabi for the courses offered. The content of a particular course should be  
28 appropriate for achieving the marks it addresses.
- 29 • Ask how many hours a course meets. We call these contact hours. The more contact  
30 hours the better. While regional programs cannot be expected to meet the typical  
31 seminary requirement of 40 contact hours, a sufficient number of hours is important for  
32 effective education.

33

34

1 **Quality teachers:**

- 2 • Teachers need to have expertise in the area they are teaching. Generally they should be  
3 ordained and have advanced degrees appropriate for their subject matter.
- 4 • In addition to formal teachers, the program should provide opportunities for appropriate  
5 mentoring relationships with clear guidelines for the conduct of such relationships. An  
6 example of such a relationship would be a spiritual director, or a local church pastor who  
7 oversees a student's work in a church.

8 **An appropriate learning environment:**

- 9 • The program needs to provide the facilities and resources for its classes and experiences  
10 that are conducive to the patterns of learning in the program.
- 11 • Quality texts, materials, and other necessary resources need to be readily available.
- 12 • Opportunities for ready access to teachers outside of classroom contexts are important.
- 13 • Opportunities for engagement and dialogue with student peers beyond the formal  
14 instructional time are also important.
- 15 • Attention is paid to activities for spiritual nurture, growth, and expression.

16 **Admission standards:**

- 17 • The program should have explicit admissions standards that seek to ensure that persons  
18 entering the program have the needed capacities to attain the marks of faithful and  
19 effective ministers and to enter into such ministry on behalf of the church.

20 **Accountability:**

- 21 • The program needs to have some standards of accountability for its participants. In other  
22 words, there needs to be required reading, the writing of papers and preparation of  
23 projects, and criteria for evaluating student work.
- 24 • Appropriate means for evaluating student achievement of learning goals need to be used.
- 25 • In addition to student accountability, it is important to have clear lines of accountability  
26 with the Conference, Association, Committee on the Ministry, and congregations, with  
27 all of the covenantal parties involved with the program.

28 Throughout the assessment process, it is important to keep before the committee the Marks of  
29 Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers. There are the ultimate criteria by which you will  
30 measure the usefulness of a given program. And it is also important to remember and to keep  
31 before your member in discernment that the participation in a regional educational program is not  
32 the end of their preparation for authorized ministry. Even as they enter into such ministry, they  
33 will continue to prepare themselves. Education for ministry is a lifelong process and calls us to  
34 continuing effort and faithful work.

1 **EXAMPLES OF REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS:**

2 The LEARN program, Iowa Conference, UCC

3 The ELM program, Nebraska Conference, UCC

4 The Yankton College Licensed Ministry Program, South Dakota Conference, UCC

5 The Lay Academy program, Wisconsin Conference, UCC

6 The TAP program, Southeast Conference, UCC

7 The PLD program, Southern Conference, UCC

8 The LIFE program, Illinois South and Missouri Mid-South Conferences, UCC, with Eden  
9 Seminary

## APPENDIX G

### RESOURCES FOR ASSESSING COLLEGE and SEMINARY PROGRAMS

#### ***INTRODUCTION***

For all the similarities from one accredited school to another, colleges and seminaries in the United States and Canada show a tremendous diversity in approach, ethos and quality. For this reason it will pay real dividends if, as a Committee on Ministry, you spend time assessing the colleges and seminaries your Members in Discernment are considering attending or actually are attending. This extra effort on your part will enable you to better support your Members in Discernment in obtaining the greatest benefit from these educational programs, and that will serve the church by providing it the best prepared leaders possible.

For both colleges and seminaries a key aim of your assessment should be to discern how the ethos of any institution your Members in Discernment attend relates to the ethos of the United Church of Christ (i.e., We are a united and uniting church; we are a multiracial and multicultural church; we are a church accessible to all; we are an open and affirming church; we are a just peace church.). This is important because you should assume that your Members in Discernment will attend a variety of institutions, not all of which are connected with the U.C.C.

A second key aim of your assessment should be to learn the strengths and weaknesses of the educational opportunity that school represents so that you can identify what supplementary experiences you might need to include in the educational and formational plan of a particular Member in Discernment – for example, whether a particular seminary provides the kind of spiritual formation opportunities you think a particular MID needs.

In general, assessment of the educational quality of institutions will be beyond the means of most Committees on Ministry, and in any case the educational accreditation system in the United States does a very good job of assessing and improving the quality of higher education. Your committee can rely on the work of accrediting agencies for quality assessment. A little later we will tell you how to access that information.

Of course, Members in Discernment will come to your committee at all stages of their educational process. So you may or may not be able or need to do this work in every case, depending on how much of her or his education a particular MID has completed when they first meet with you.



## 1 **ASSESSMENT OF COLLEGES**

2 Some Members in Discernment will come before you only after they have already received their  
3 college degree. Apart from ensuring that they received it from an accredited institution (see  
4 below under “Assessment of Quality”), there is nothing more you need to do here with such a  
5 MID.

6 Other Members in Discernment will come before you while they are in the middle of their college  
7 studies. For these persons the purpose of your assessment is not to contribute to the MID’s  
8 considerations about choosing a college – he or she has already done that, but to help you  
9 understand what opportunities are available to them in that context. That will help you and the  
10 Member discern whether there are other opportunities for growth and development he or she  
11 should be seeking out.

12 Finally, on occasion, Members in Discernment may come to you at a point where they are  
13 choosing the college or university they will attend. In such a situation, your aim in this  
14 assessment is to be able to be an informed guide for the member as to how each school she or he  
15 is considering might contribute to her or his development toward ministry.

### 16 **Assessment of Quality**

17 It is relatively easy to ensure that the college or university attended by a Member in Discernment  
18 provides a baseline of educational quality. Your committee should look for a reference in either  
19 the school’s catalog or on its web site that it has been accredited by an agency approved by the  
20 U.S. Department of Education.

21 In general, you should look to see that the school is accredited by one of the six regional  
22 accrediting agencies for institutions of higher education in the U.S. These are:

- 23 • Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Higher Education
- 24 • New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Institutions of  
25 Higher Education
- 26 • North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, The Higher Learning Commission
- 27 • Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
- 28 • Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges
- 29 • Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Accrediting Commission for Senior  
30 Colleges and Universities

31 A school accredited by one of these agencies is obligated to publish in its own materials (i.e.,  
32 catalog and web site) the name, address, telephone and other contact information for that agency.  
33 If you do not see such a notice, the school is not accredited by a regional accrediting body. If you  
34 do see such a notice, not only do you know that the school is accredited, but you can now find the  
35 agency’s web site. On their web sites all accrediting agencies maintain lists of accredited  
36 members with reports of their accreditation status. This allows you, if you should desire to do so,  
37 to explore the specifics of an individual school’s accreditation status.

38 There are other accrediting agencies beyond the regional agencies although those six accredit  
39 most of the colleges and universities your members are likely to attend. The federal Department  
40 of Education maintains a list of the accrediting agencies it has approved on its web site. You may  
41 access that through this address: <http://www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/index.html>.

## 1 **Assessment of Ethos**

2 When you are working with a Member in Discernment who is currently enrolled in college or  
3 university, or who is considering options for college or university study, it is important and useful  
4 to ask two questions:

- 5 • how does the ethos or climate of a particular school relate to the essential commitments  
6 of the United Church of Christ;
- 7 • how does the educational environment created by that ethos or climate support a student  
8 acquiring the kinds of knowledge, skills and perspectives that the Marks of Faithful and  
9 Effective Authorized Ministers expect a MID to develop before reaching seminary, i.e.,  
10 the section of the Marks titled “General Knowledge and Skills.”

11 Your answers to such questions are always a judgment call, of course, but they are still worth  
12 considering. For a MID who is still deciding where to do undergraduate studies, your judgment  
13 about these matters might be valuable perspective that will help him or her make that choice. For  
14 a MID who is already attending a college or university, coming to a judgment about these  
15 questions will help you support them as they navigate the college experience, and may suggest  
16 other opportunities you would encourage the MID to seek out.

17 Where can you find the information you need to make such judgments?

18 If the MID is already attending the college or university, she or he will be your best source of  
19 information. When you meet with them, talk over these two questions with them at some length,  
20 and see what the MID thinks.

21 In addition, you can find useful information related to these questions in a school’s catalog and on  
22 its web site. A school’s catalog can easily be obtained by contacting its Admissions Office, and  
23 sometimes by request through the school’s web site. Here are some ideas of what to look for:

- 24 • statements about the kinds of students the school seeks
- 25 • statements about the kind of graduates they turn out,
- 26 • statements about the educational climate they seek to create in their classrooms and on  
27 campus,
- 28 • statements about their mission,
- 29 • statements about their commitment to freedom of inquiry.

30 Look at the school’s curricular requirements to see whether they expect students to have a broad  
31 grounding in the various fields of human knowledge.

32 If the school has a religious commitment or affiliation, you can look for several things that might  
33 help your judgment:

- 34 • whether it is related to the U.C.C.;
- 35 • what other denomination or faith it might be related to;
- 36 • descriptions of the nature of that relationship;
- 37 • whether the school has a statement of religious beliefs and values that guide it, and, if so,  
38 what the content of that is.

## 1 **Assessment of Educational and Formational Resources**

2 Your purpose here should be to identify resources that you might wish to call to the attention of  
3 the Member in Discernment with whom you are working. The purpose of this would be to  
4 enhance their educational and spiritual development in college or university so that it provides  
5 them the best possible foundation for further study toward ministry. Obviously, this is only a  
6 concern with members who have not yet completed their undergraduate education.

7 In general, you should be looking for two things:

- 8 1. courses in the humanities, arts, and social sciences, as well as cross-curricular emphases  
9 in areas such as writing and critical thinking;
- 10 2. opportunities for study abroad and/or immersion trips;
- 11 3. extra-curricular and off-campus opportunities that support spiritual growth.

12 The first set of resources (i.e., the courses, etc. in point 1.) are explicit educational opportunities  
13 that will support the development of the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers in  
14 the category “General Knowledge and Skills that Ordained Ministry Builds Upon.” You can find  
15 these listed in a school’s catalog and on many schools’ web sites. Of course, the Member in  
16 Discernment, if currently enrolled at the school, can be a source of information about such things  
17 too. The point of learning about these opportunities is to be able to counsel with the MID in an  
18 informed way about the courses that will best prepare her or him for theological studies. Note, in  
19 particular, that the best preparation for theological studies is not necessarily theology or religion,  
20 but the study of literature, history, sociology, psychology, various cultures, philosophy, art  
21 history, etc. Courses such as these are excellent preparation for theological studies because they  
22 teach knowledge and perspectives that theological studies presuppose, but do not themselves  
23 teach. Undergraduate study of theology and religion without this broader exposure to the  
24 humanities and social sciences may give a student a head start on what will be taught in seminary,  
25 but it will leave them without this important foundation.

26 The second set of resources (i.e., the opportunities in point 2.) will exist partly at the school itself  
27 and partly off-campus. Here are some suggestions of things to look for:

- 28 • Resources for spiritual growth on-campus will include student religious organizations,  
29 and – at some schools – chaplains’ offices and chapel programs. You can find out about  
30 such groups and programs by contacting the Student Services office or Dean of Students  
31 office at the college or university.
- 32 • Campus ministries are important off-campus resources for students’ spiritual life at some  
33 colleges and universities. To find out if there is a UCC-related campus ministry at the  
34 school your MID is attending, check this web page at [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org):  
35 [http://www.ucc.org/links/index.html#HIGH\\_ED](http://www.ucc.org/links/index.html#HIGH_ED).
- 36 • Local churches of the United Church of Christ nearby college and university campuses  
37 are crucial resources to which to alert your MIDs. To find out which of the local  
38 congregations of the UCC serve the campus community, you can contact the relevant  
39 Association or Conference staff.

40 The point of learning about these opportunities is to be able in an informed way to help your MID  
41 connect with a faith community or communities, and with helpful resources for spiritual guidance  
42 during their college time.

43

## 1 **ASSESSMENT OF SEMINARIES**

2 Assessment of seminaries will loom larger in your work with Members in Discernment than  
3 assessment of colleges. This certainly will be true whenever seminary is the central educational  
4 program in a MID's path to authorization. It will also be important on those occasions when you  
5 think some seminary work should be a component of a MID's path that is primarily built around  
6 either study in a regional educational program or mentored practice. Your work in assessing the  
7 quality, ethos and resources of the seminaries that your Members in Discernment attend is  
8 centrally important to your ability to guide your members in making wise choices about which  
9 seminary to attend, and your ability to craft effective educational and formational plans for your  
10 Members in Discernment. If you know the profile of strengths and limitations for those seminary  
11 programs, you will be equipped to be much more helpful to your Members in Discernment.

12 At the same time, there is a realistic limit to the amount of time you will be able to devote to this  
13 task, so here again you will want to make use of assessments that already exist and take  
14 advantage of the seminaries' willingness to explain and interpret their programs for you.

## 15 **MARKS OF EFFECTIVE SEMINARY PROGRAMS**

16 The importance of seminary education in the formation of leaders for the United Church of Christ  
17 is so significant that it is worth keeping in mind what makes for an effective seminary educational  
18 program. Although seminaries will differ, and none is perfect, here are a set of "marks of  
19 effective seminary programs" that have been developed out of representative reflection from  
20 across the United Church of Christ:

- 21 • The seminary will be accredited by the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of  
22 Theological Schools in the United States and Canada. This accreditation is essential since it  
23 ensures a baseline of quality that allows the following list of marks to be much shorter,  
24 making the resulting task of evaluation much more practical.
- 25 • In addition, an effective M.Div. program will:
  - 26 1. enable its students to acquire the bodies of knowledge identified by or implied by the  
27 Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers;
  - 28 2. enable its students to acquire the skills of ordained ministry described in the Marks of  
29 Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers;
  - 30 3. cultivate in its students adherence to the norms of the role of ordained ministry as  
31 identified in the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers;
  - 32 4. consistently provide its students with opportunities to learn from experienced U.C.C.  
33 ministers in the supervised practice of ministry;
  - 34 5. regularly provide its students two semesters of instruction in U.C.C. history, theology and  
35 polity, and will support the attendance of the instructor(s) of those courses at the annual  
36 UCC polity-teachers meeting;
  - 37 6. inform and train its students concerning issues that are vital to a united and uniting, multi-  
38 racial, multi-cultural, open and affirming, accessible to all, just peace church;
  - 39 7. support the ordination of women to ministerial office, and welcome their distinctive  
40 contributions to theological discourse;

- 1 8. be attentive to the particular needs of racial-ethnic churches and their expectations of  
2 pastors and develop culturally specific strategies of ministry formation and nurture to  
3 meet those needs;
- 4 9. maintain an open dialogue around LGBT concerns being guided by UCC General Synod  
5 Resolutions and policy;
- 6 10. intentionally include, support and provide accommodation for participants with dis-  
7 abilities, being guided by UCC General Synod Resolutions and policy and the  
8 requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990;
- 9 11. provide its students a comprehensive exploration of the Just Peace Movement in the  
10 United Church of Christ.

11 In the following two sections you will find suggestions for where to find the information you  
12 need to see how any particular seminary lines up with these characteristics, and some suggestions  
13 on how to work with a seminary to ensure that your Members in Discernment studying there get  
14 the preparation they need to be ready for leadership in the United Church of Christ.

## 16 **HOW TO GET THE INFORMATION YOU NEED ABOUT SEMINARY** 17 **PROGRAMS TO ASSESS THEIR EFFECTIVENESS**

18 This section offers advice on who to talk to and what to look for to do two things:

- 19 • ensure that a particular seminary is an appropriate choice for a particular Member in  
20 Discernment;
- 21 • develop a profile of what that seminary offers your MID that supports his or her de-  
22 velopment so that you know if you need to build additional educational or formational  
23 experiences into the MID's educational and formational plan and path to authorization.

## 24 **Assessment of Quality and Educational Resources**

### 26 THE ESSENTIAL STEP

27 The first and essential step in assessing the quality of a seminary program is to check to be sure  
28 that the school is accredited by the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological  
29 Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS). There are two ways to check this.

30 One is to look in the seminary's catalog or web site. If it is accredited by the ATS, the school is  
31 obligated to identify not only the name of that accreditor, but also its address, telephone and other  
32 contact information.

33 The second way to check is perhaps the one you should prefer since it will get you additional  
34 information about the school. If you go to the ATS web site ([www.ats.edu](http://www.ats.edu)), you will find there a  
35 complete list of "Member Schools," i.e., accredited, candidate and associate institutions. If you  
36 click on a school's name in that list, you go to a page that gives essential accrediting information  
37 about the school as well as the names of the president and dean and contact information. The  
38 accrediting information you receive is:

- 39 • status (accredited/candidate/associate; you want "accredited");

- 1       • the specific degrees that are approved for that school;
- 2       • any notation the school has on its accreditation status.

3 The listing of degrees allows you to check whether the particular degree your MID aims to pursue  
4 is approved for that school. The listing of notations informs you of significant departures from  
5 accrediting standards that the accreditor has found in the school's operations. You should pay  
6 careful attention to any notations about the quality of the school's educational programs. This  
7 page will also tell you if the school has more than one location approved for granting degrees.  
8 Incidentally, if you click the school name of this page, it will take you to the school's own web  
9 site.

## 10 THE EXTRA MILE

11 If you are motivated to go the extra mile in assessing the quality of education your Members in  
12 Discernment receive from the seminaries they attend or plan to attend, you might ask if the  
13 seminary will share its own self-assessment results with you. All ATS schools are supposed to be  
14 conducting on-going self-assessment of the effectiveness of their educational programs. Perhaps  
15 they would be willing to share some of that. About half of the schools in the ATS (and the  
16 majority of the seven seminaries of the U.C.C.) collect something called the Graduating Student  
17 Questionnaire. Perhaps a school would be willing to share with you their results for the questions  
18 that ask students their judgment of the adequacy of their education. If you ask for this, be sure to  
19 ask not only for the school's own results, but also for the all-ATS results. These will give you a  
20 frame of reference for judging how the particular school did.

## 21 DISTANCE EDUCATION

22 The ATS web site is also the place to go if you are looking for seminaries that have been  
23 approved to offer distance education courses on an on-going basis, up to and including entire  
24 degree programs. This list of such approved schools is also found in the "Member Schools"  
25 section of the ATS web site ([www.ats.edu](http://www.ats.edu)). Clicking on the name of the school in the list will  
26 take you to the school's information page on the ATS site. You must click on the school's name  
27 on that page to go to the school's web site. In order to find just what courses a school offers over  
28 the Internet you must go the school's web site and discover that there. The ATS listing simply  
29 tells you that the school is approved to do this. If the school is approved, and the Internet course  
30 carries credit towards degrees at the school, you may trust that the course has had to pass the  
31 same quality standards as a face to face class. You will have to check out the school, however, to  
32 determine whether this is one that will serve your MID well (see the section on "Assessment of  
33 Ethos").

## 34 BEYOND THE MINIMUM: DEVELOPING THE PROFILE OF A SCHOOL

35 Beyond the kind of basic quality assessment just described there is a second, and perhaps more  
36 important assessment task you need to carry out. This is the one implied by the marks of an  
37 effective M.Div. program listed in the previous section. The aim here is to develop a profile of  
38 the school's strengths and limitations. Of course, if the limitations are too great, you may want to  
39 discourage members from attending there. More commonly this profile will help you determine  
40 if you need to add other educational and formational opportunities into a MID's educational plan  
41 to supplement what the seminary does. It might also lead you to want to address certain concerns  
42 directly with the seminary administration.

43 There are three foci here:

- 1 1. How completely does the seminary support a student's development of the Marks of  
2 Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers in the section "Knowledge and Skills  
3 Specific to Authorized Ministry"?
- 4 2. How completely does the seminary support a student's development of the Marks of  
5 Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers in the sections "Spiritual Foundation for  
6 Ministry" and "Personal and Professional Formation for Ministry"?
- 7 3. How completely does the seminary support a student's development of the Marks of  
8 Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers in the section "UCC Identity for Ministry"?

9 For your assessment in all of these areas there are three major sources of information that you  
10 should consider:

- 11 • the seminary's catalog and web site;
- 12 • direct conversation with seminary officials, especially the academic dean and instructors  
13 of specific courses;
- 14 • experiential knowledge and course materials gained by your MID in the course of  
15 studying at the school.

#### 16 1. Knowledge and Skills Specific to Ordained Ministry

17 Here is a set of steps to follow to check how thoroughly the seminary's curriculum covers the  
18 knowledge and skills specific to ordained ministry.

- 19 1. Begin with this section of the list of Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized  
20 Ministers. With that to one side as a kind of check list, go through the requirements for  
21 the M.Div. degree at the seminary you are assessing (these will be in the catalog and on  
22 the web site), and identify the courses required for the degree.
- 23 2. Course by course find the course description in the catalog or on the web site. Based on  
24 the course descriptions, check off the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized  
25 Ministers as you find them covered by courses the seminary requires for the M.Div.  
26 degree.
- 27 3. If you have a MID already enrolled at this seminary, or a recent graduate of this seminary  
28 is a member of your association, you might want to verify this list with them based on  
29 their experience.
- 30 4. It is also entirely appropriate for you to contact the school in question to ask how  
31 particular topics in the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers are covered  
32 in the requirements for its degree. The best person with whom to begin this conversation  
33 is the academic dean. If she or he does not know the answer to your question, she or he  
34 will know who does and will refer you to them.

35 Ideally, all the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers will be addressed in some  
36 way by at least one of the courses required for the M.Div. at this seminary. If there are any  
37 Marks for which this is not true, you can always address this by encouraging the MID to find an  
38 elective that covers those topics.

#### 39 2. Spiritual Foundation for Ministry, and Personal and Professional Formation for Ministry

40 In this area seminaries are quite uneven in what they require, and so are quite different in the  
41 degree to which they support the spiritual, personal and professional formation of their students

1 (all the way from “not at all” to “very intensively”). This means that you must pay especially  
2 careful attention here, as this is one of the areas where you may most need to supplement a  
3 seminary education for your MIDs depending on the seminary they are attending.

4 Begin with the sections of the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers titled  
5 “Spiritual Foundation for Ministry, and Personal and Professional Formation for Ministry,” as  
6 well as information about the seminary (starting with catalog and web site). You are looking for  
7 opportunities and resources that support the kind of spiritual, personal and professional formation  
8 described in the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers. These opportunities might  
9 include:

- 10 • courses,
- 11 • the supervised practice of ministry in field education sites,
- 12 • clinical pastoral education (CPE) units,
- 13 • spiritual formation groups,
- 14 • integrative portfolios,
- 15 • regular chapel worship,
- 16 • the presence of a chaplain or pastor to students,
- 17 • opportunities to learn spiritual disciplines,
- 18 • psychological assessments.

19 You will want to find out a number of this about these opportunities:

- 20 • what is required, and what is optional;
- 21 • the extent or frequency with which a particular resource or opportunity is available;
- 22 • most importantly, whether the criteria for assessment of students in field education  
23 contexts are consistent with the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers in  
24 the area of professional formation.

25 Some of this information will be available in the school’s catalog or on its web site. Some of it  
26 you will be able to discover by talking to MIDs attending the seminary or recent graduates in  
27 your association. However, some of the information you will only be able to obtain by calling  
28 someone at the seminary. Again, the academic dean is a good person to start with. However, if  
29 you see from the school’s information that it has a director of field education (or contextual  
30 studies or supervised ministry), or a chaplain, or a director of spiritual formation, you might do  
31 well to contact them directly with your questions.

32 As in the previous section, in an ideal world you would discover that the seminary had cared fully  
33 for all these matters of spiritual, personal and professional formation, and indeed some do a very  
34 good job of this. However, the reality is that you will find some unevenness. These then become  
35 areas where you will want to think about adding some supplemental activities to your MID’s  
36 educational and formational plan.

### 37 3. UCC Identity for Ministry



1 You can, and should, approach assessing a seminary's program in regard the Marks of Faithful  
2 and Effective Authorized Ministers in the area of UCC Formation for Ministry in the same way as  
3 for the previous two areas.

4 However, especially for non-UCC seminaries, support for development of these Marks of Faithful  
5 and Effective Authorized Ministers will tend to be concentrated in two areas, UCC courses and  
6 field education. Here effectiveness can be relatively easily measured by focusing on items 4  
7 through 11 in the list of marks of an effective M.Div. program (see above). Ask:

- 8 • whether your students' field education experiences are in UCC contexts and under the  
9 supervision of experienced UCC clergy (mark #4),
- 10 • and whether there is instruction in UCC history, theology and polity that matches the  
11 requirement of mark #5.

12 Look for marks 6 through 11 in five ways.

- 13 1. Ask whether these subjects are covered in the two UCC studies courses.
- 14 2. Scan the elective courses listed in the seminary's catalog or web site to see how many  
15 deal with the topics and concerns in these marks.
- 16 3. Ask any MID studying at this seminary, and any recent graduates in your Association to  
17 what extent these themes are present in coursework and the life of the community at this  
18 seminary.
- 19 4. Ask about the degree to which mark #8 is cared for in required courses in areas such as  
20 Biblical studies, theology, worship, preaching, administration, Christian education, and  
21 pastoral care.
- 22 5. Look at the degree of diversity represented in the faculty, staff, trustees and student body  
23 of the seminary.

## 24 **Assessment of Ethos**

25 In considering any particular seminary it is always important to ask how the ethos or climate of  
26 that particular seminary relates to the essential commitments of the United Church of Christ.  
27 Your answer to this question is always a judgment call, of course, but it is essential that you ask it  
28 since the intellectual climate of a school (the implicit curriculum) exerts a considerable formative  
29 power on the students who pass through it. That will have a real impact on how well prepared a  
30 student is to lead effectively in a UCC ethos.

31 Where can you find the information you need to make such a judgment?

32 You can find useful information related to this question in a seminary's catalog and on its web  
33 site. A school's catalog can easily be obtained by contacting its Admissions Office, and  
34 sometimes by request through the school's web site. Once you have the catalog, here's what to  
35 look for:

- 36 • statements about the kinds of students the school seeks;
- 37 • about the kind of graduates it turns out;
- 38 • about the educational climate it seeks to create in its classrooms and on campus;
- 39 • about its commitment to freedom of inquiry;

- 1 • and any mission or vision statements;
- 2 • its curricular requirements and the kind of elective courses offered to see whether they
- 3 reflect the array of concerns characteristic of the United Church of Christ;
- 4 • descriptions of how diverse the student body is in terms of gender, race, age, de-
- 5 nominational background, etc.;
- 6 • if the school uses a doctrinal statement to define its character, look for whether people are
- 7 expected to agree with it in all particulars, and if so who: trustees?, faculty?, staff?,
- 8 students?.

9 For anything about which you have questions, feel free to call the school and ask for clarification.  
10 Regarding academic programs, the Academic Dean is always a good person to put your questions  
11 to. Most deans have responsibility for responding to just such questions about their seminary  
12 from the churches. If you prefer, a call to the President would serve the same purpose since  
13 presidents typically have a high responsibility for church relations. Of course, you should also  
14 ask your Member in Discernment for their own sense of the school on these matters. Although  
15 that will only be a single student's experience of a more complex community, it is important  
16 perspective for you. There may also be recent graduates of the seminary in your Association.  
17 They would also be good sources of perspective as well.

## 18 **WORKING WITH SEMINARIES FOR IMPROVEMENT**

19 In the course of your work with Members in Discernment attending seminaries you may discover  
20 that there is a seminary that attracts a number of your MIDs as students for good reasons, but that  
21 has some significant limitation in providing the kind of preparation you believe is best for your  
22 students. As mentioned above, you can take the approach of arranging individual supplementary  
23 experiences for those students to make up for the deficits you uncover in the seminary education.  
24 You can also take the approach of addressing your concerns to the seminary in search of a more  
25 permanent improvement in the education it offers your students.

26 On the whole, seminaries are always interested in improving the preparation of their students for  
27 ministry, and so will actually welcome conversation with those responsible for the ordination  
28 process in a denomination they serve. (If they do not welcome such an approach and potential  
29 partnership, that in itself is a significant sign for you.) So if you have concerns that you would  
30 like to see addressed by a particular seminary, you are encouraged to take the initiative and ask  
31 for an appointment to discuss this with the academic dean. It will certainly help if you can be  
32 specific and detailed about the problems you are seeing. Especially in the area of UCC Identity  
33 for Ministry, it will also help if you or your Association/Conference can be part of the solution in  
34 some way.

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