



## Discerning a Call to Authorized Ministry In the United Church of Christ

### **Am I being called to authorized ministry?**

This question should first be explored through prayerful and faithful collaborative support through your local UCC congregation and pastor. If your church and pastor discern in you a potential call to authorized ministry, they will recommend you to the Association's staff responsible for Members in Discernment.

\*Understand that "NO" may be the faithful answer to this initial question.

### **What does it mean to become a "Member in Discernment"?**

A Member in Discernment is grounded in prayer and Scripture, willing to explore how his/her sense of call might be embodied in various ways that would serve Christ in the world through authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ. The following questions are foundational in the discernment process:

- *Is the sense of call from God or from some other impulse?*
- *How does this person ground his/her seeking?*
- *In what ways does this person already feel a clear sense of call?*
- *What questions and concerns is he/she seeking to clarify?*
- *What are the potential benefits to the person's spiritual development...to the wider community...to the faith community?*
- *Does this person have the skills and resources to carry out the call?*
- *How does this sense of call fit into existing obligations (family, work, community) and current needs of time and finances?*
- *What steps of preparation are needed?*

The United Church of Christ recognizes that there are multiple paths to three types of authorized ministry: licensed ministry, ordained ministry and commissioned ministry.

**Ordination** authorizes the minister to preach and teach the gospel, administer the sacraments and rites of the church, exercise pastoral care and leadership in any setting within the United Church of Christ.

**Licensed ministry** is grounded in the specific needs of local church for a designated time, empowering the licensed minister to perform mainly preaching and conducting worship, administering sacraments as needed (under the supervision of the Association). Licensure is renewable.

**Commissioning** is granted for a specific-church related ministry such as church musician, Church Educator, parish nurse, etc. This authorization is limited to its specific purpose, but can be used in various settings within the United Church of Christ.

## **What are the steps toward authorized ministry in the UCC?**

Your personal path of discernment will be unique and varied. Trust in the Spirit as you begin to travel, recognizing that you cannot be sure about your destination. You are not alone. You will be in covenant with your local church, pastor and the Association.

### **Steps in the Process**

1. Request, complete and submit a Member-in-Discernment application.
2. Upon submission of all required materials you will be scheduled to meet with the Discernment Working Group. The working group will review your materials and make a decision as to granting Member-in Discernment status.
3. If status is granted, you will be asked to complete a psychological assessment, and will be assigned an advisor. Together you will review the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministry. (The “Marks” are intended to be a lens for reflecting upon your formation, gifts and growth.)
4. Once you have completed a self-assessment with the Marks, you and your advisor, in cooperation with members of the Discernment Working Group, will craft a “Plan of Formation.” This “Plan of Formation” will serve as a guide through your discernment process, and may include educational as well as personal growth related areas of focus. Clinical Pastoral Education or its equivalent is generally required for all seeking ordination. The length of time for completion of this process varies depending on educational and commensurate experience.
5. You will also be asked to complete a portfolio, and instructions will be given as to what to include.
6. Towards the completion of working with the areas of focus identified in your Plan of Formation, an authorization paper will be required. This will include an articulation of your faith journey, your theology and your understanding of the United Church of Christ and the role of authorized ministry.
7. This will be followed by an authorization interview with the full Committee on Ministry, which will decide on your fitness and readiness to be authorized.

Jeremiah 29:11 - “For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”