



Responsibilities of the local church with a Member-in-Discernment

Local Churches play a vital role in identifying, nurturing, and supporting members who may be called to Authorized Ministry. The UCC affirms that all members are called to ministry by their Baptism. Some are called to Authorized Ministry on behalf of the whole Church. Each Local Church is encouraged to identify and nurture future leaders of the Church.

When a church member feels called to Authorized Ministry, whether Ordained, Licensed, or Commissioned, the Local Church Governing Body recommends him/her to the Discernment of Call Working Group of the Association's Committee on Ministry (DWG) to begin the official Member-In-Discernment (MiD) process.

Within the Local Church it is expected that the Governing Body will appoint a Ministry Discernment Team (3 to 5 members) for each discerning member. Discernment requires deep and careful listening. It involves asking questions within community as it helps the member prayerfully and realistically examine the challenges s/he will face as s/he considers preparation for Authorized Ministry.

Together the Committee and member will explore the person's understanding of Christian faith and practice, sense of call, gifts for ministry, experiences in leadership, personal history, spiritual journey, length of membership, and anticipated practical concerns around education and finances.

If the Team discerns that the member has gifts for ministry and a call by God to Authorized Ministry, it will recommend the member to the Governing Body of the Local Church. Then, the Governing Body will make a formal written request to the DWG that the member be received as a MID.

Part of the application process involves a psychological evaluation. Usually one third of that fee is paid by the Local Church, one third by the applicant and one third by the Association.

It is vital that the Local Church continue to support the MID during the discernment process, which lasts a minimum of one year. Educational and formation requirements may make the process last three years or in some cases longer.

The Local Church will maintain contact with both the member and the DWG, may read and review papers written by the MID, and might be asked to accompany the MID to review meetings with the DWG. It may stand with the member if/when s/he becomes discouraged, loses his or her way, or feels burdened or disregarded by "the system". The Local Church will both support and challenge the MID.

As the process reaches a conclusion, the MiD is examined for Authorized Ministry. This process includes a worship service led by the MiD which members of the local church may attend. This is followed by an interview with the Committee on Ministry, which the Pastor of the local church and the MiD Advisor are expected to attend, in support of the MiD. If, after examination, the Committee on Ministry determines that the MID is fit for Authorized Ministry in the UCC it will make the determination that the MID is approved for Authorization pending a valid call. With a valid call, an appropriate Authorizing service may be scheduled with the Association General Minister. Usually this service is held in the Local Church.

We have no Authorized Ministry without the recommendations and support of the Local Church. Thank you for helping someone from your congregation in discerning the ways in which God is calling them to ministry.