

# ORDINATION DISCERNMENT PROCESS



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## Definitions

**Advisor:** A member of the Discernment Working Group assigned to advise the Member in Discernment regarding the process.

**Association:** Division of a Conference of the United Church of Christ made up of the churches in that geographic area. The Association holds the ecclesial authority over Authorized Ministers in that region. The Living Water Association is part of the Heartland Conference United Church of Christ.

**Authorized Ministers:** There are two forms of Authorized Ministry in the UCC: Ordained and Lay Ministerial Standing (formerly licensed & commissioned.)

**Committee on Ministry:** A group of clergy and lay members of an Association who are charged with oversight and formation of the Authorized Ministers of the Association. The committee has three standing Working Groups: Credentialing, Discernment, and Oversight.

**Discernment Working Group:** The Working Group of the Committee on Ministry grants Member in Discernment status, supporting and monitoring the candidate through the discernment process, meeting with them annually or as needed.

**Manual on Ministry:** The Manual on Ministry is a publication of the United Church of Christ which defines the shared expectations and accountability for Authorized Ministers across the denomination.

**Member in Discernment:** A lay member of a United Church of Christ Congregation who experiences the call to ministry and desires to prepare for Authorized Ministry.

**Mentor:** A person appointed by the Association to offer one-on-one support to a Member in Discernment during their ordination discernment process.

**Advisor:** A member of the Discernment Working Group who serves as liaison between the Working Group and the Member in Discernment.

**Discernment Support Team** A small team from the candidate's local church who serve as support and walk with the Member in Discernment throughout the discernment process.

**Wisdom Circle:** The Wisdom Circle consists of the Member in Discernment's Advisor, Mentor, a member of the candidate's Discernment Support Team and/or Pastor, a representative from the Committee on Ministry and the Association General Minister. The Wisdom Circle's primary task is to work with the Candidate to create their own unique Ministerial Formation Plan.

**Ordained Minister:** An ordained minister has been called by God and recognized, trained, and ordained to preach and teach the gospel, to administer the sacraments and rites of the church, and to exercise pastoral care and leadership.

**UCC:** United Church of Christ.

## PART ONE: EXPLORATION

This part of the journey involves asking essential questions of potential Member in Discernment candidates who are considering their response to a call from God to Authorized Ministry.

### STEP 1: CANDIDATE DISCERNMENT WITHIN THE LOCAL CHURCH

**Note:** The following steps must be completed in the order listed here.

There are important roles for the local church to play, on behalf of the entire United Church of Christ, throughout the ordained ministry discernment process in the Living Water Association.

First, local churches are primary places in which the gifts of persons for ministry are observed, called forth, nurtured, and celebrated. The UCC Constitution states: *The United Church of Christ seeks to undergird the ministry of its members by nurturing faith, calling forth gifts, and equipping members for Christian service* (paragraph 20). Local churches are instrumental in helping their members hear and clarify their call to ordained ministry. The ongoing and future leadership of the Church and its mission are dependent on local churches being aware and intentional in this role.

This understanding is the basis for the requirement that a person must be an active member of a local UCC church for at least a year in order to seek authorization as an ordained minister of the UCC.

### DISCERNMENT SUPPORT TEAM

When a member of a local UCC church expresses a desire to prepare for ordained Authorized Ministry in response to God's call, the local church creates a Discernment Support Team (3 to 5 members)

1. who 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
  - discern that the member has gifts for ministry and a call by God to Authorized Ministry
  - continue to walk the discernment journey with the candidate to its completion, continuing to explore the person's understanding of Christian faith, sense of call, gifts for ministry, experiences and practical concerns
2. the pastor and/or congregation makes a formal written request to the Discernment Working Group of the Committee on Ministry that the member be received as a Member in Discernment.

A complete description of responsibilities for the Discernment Support Team can be found in **Appendix A**.

As the person considering ordained ministry, the pastor, and Discernment Support Team meet, they may wish to discuss:

- Has the person been an active participant in the life of the local church? In their participation, have they shown the gifts and maturity necessary for Authorized Ministry?
- What is the person's understanding of Authorized Ministry? Does the person have a realistic view of Authorized Ministry? Do they understand the types of things an Authorized Minister does? Is there another form of ministry more suited to the person's gifts and passions?
- Does the person understand the educational requirements needed?
- Do they know about the need for Member in Discernment relationship with an Association in the UCC and understand the requirements to seek that status?

The Discernment Support Team can recommend Ask the Question, a great resource for discerning a call to ministry, to facilitate discussion about the person's call. Ask the Question can be found at <https://www.ucc.org/ask-the-question>.

If the pastor and church leaders confirm a call to ministry, they will recommend the person to the Discernment Working Group. Becoming a Member in Discernment is an integral part of the candidate's preparation for Authorized Ministry. This is communicated via a letter to the Discernment Working Group of the Committee on Ministry (sent via the Living Water Association registrar, [registrar@livingwaterone.org](mailto:registrar@livingwaterone.org)). This letter will include the following:

- A statement and explanation of the church's recommendation of the person for Member in Discernment status
- Verification of the candidate's membership and involvement in the local church and the amount of time the person has been in the UCC
- The process used by the church to make that decision

It is vital that the church continue to support the Member in Discernment during the discernment process, which lasts a minimum of one year. Generally, the process takes at least three years. Some people may also take longer than three years.

## **STEP 2: COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY DISCERNMENT AND AUTHORIZATION**

**Note:** The following steps must be completed in the order listed here.

### **STEP 2.1: Introduction of candidate to Association General Minister**

The candidate will arrange to meet with the Association General Minister, who will hear the story of the candidate's call and share a general review of the Member in Discernment process, answering any questions, and ensuring that a copy of this document is available to the candidate.

### **STEP 2.2: Application to the Discernment Working Group of the Committee on Ministry**

The candidate will provide the Discernment Working Group the following documentation (sent to the Living Water Association registrar, [registrar@livingwaterone.org](mailto:registrar@livingwaterone.org)):

- Member in Discernment Application (found in **Appendix B**)
- A paper about their Spiritual Journey and the story of their call (outline available in **Appendix C**)
- Three letters of reference (in addition to the letter from the candidate's local church, referenced above)
- Documentation of their formal education (transcripts, evaluations)
- Plans for theological education, if any
- Background Check (arranged by the Association office)

Once the Living Water Association registrar receives these materials, an interview with the Discernment Working Group will be scheduled. The candidate's pastor and/or a member of Discernment Support Team will attend this interview to present and support the candidate.

### **STEP 2.3: Interview with the Discernment Working Group**

At the meeting, the pastor and/or a member of Discernment Support Team will be given the opportunity to present and share information about the person's history and involvement with the local church. The Discernment Working Group will interview the candidate as to their sense of call, their spiritual journey, understanding of Authorized Ministry in the United Church of Christ, and academic and vocational intentions.

The Discernment Working Group may also wish to review the following concepts with potential Members in Discernment:

- Biblical, theological and ecclesiological discernment of call and ministry formation
- Developing and assessing the candidate's readiness
- Ongoing faith formation and lifelong learning
- Living Water Association Ministerial Formation Plan
- The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the UCC (**Appendix D**)

At the end of this meeting, the Discernment Working Group will either grant or decline Member in Discernment status for the candidate. The outcome is typically one of the following:

- Yes, the candidate is accepted
- Yes, with certain conditions
- No, with a willingness to reconsider if certain recommendations are addressed
- No, the candidate does not have the gifts for ministry or the candidate does not have a discernible call to ministry (this terminates the discernment process immediately)

**Note:** It is important to remember that acceptance as a Member in Discernment is not a guarantee of ordination. It is the granting of the status which enables the candidate to continue in the discernment process towards ordained Authorized Ministry.

**Upon being granted Member in Discernment status, the candidate will:**

- Start using Journaling the Journey (to be found on [www.uccresources.com](http://www.uccresources.com))
- Be assigned a Mentor by the Discernment Working Group, with whom they are expected to maintain contact on a monthly basis
- Be assigned an Advisor by the Discernment Working Group, with whom they are expected to maintain regular contact (at least twice a year)
- Actively participate in a Community of Practice, assigned by Discernment Working Group
- Maintain regular contact with their pastor, church of membership and, in particular, the Discernment Support Team of their church
- Maintain regular contact with the Living Water Association office

**STEP 2.4: Vocational/Psychological Assessment**

A career assessment — which includes comprehensive personal, emotional, and psychological evaluation — is required through Midwest Ministry Development. Once Member in Discernment status is granted, the Living Water Association registrar will contact the Member in Discernment about scheduling their appointment with Midwest Ministry Development. The cost of the evaluation is shared between the candidate, church of membership, and the Association.

**STEP 2.5: Member in Discernment Covenantal Agreement**

It is the polity of the UCC to live in covenant. In this journey of discerning one's call, it is important to covenant together to support, nurture and hold one another accountable so that together, we can discern God's call in the life of the candidate, to Authorized Ministry, specifically ordination.

To that end, we recommend that all parties in this new relationship covenant together using the Member in Discernment Covenantal Agreement found in **Appendix E**.

**EXPLORATION CHECKLIST (Appendix F)**

**Step 1**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Candidate is an active member of a church affiliated with the UCC for at least one year
- \_\_\_\_\_ Candidate approaches pastor and church leaders with their sense of call to Authorized Ministry
- \_\_\_\_\_ Church forms a Discernment Support Team of 3-5 members
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pastor, Discernment Support Team, and candidate meet to discern call
- \_\_\_\_\_ When the pastor, Discernment Support Team and Governing Body of the church feel the person is ready to move forward in the process, a letter of recommendation is sent to the Committee on Ministry



## Step 2

- \_\_\_\_\_ Candidate meets with the Association General Minister
- \_\_\_\_\_ Candidate submits application documents to the Discernment Working Group
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Member in Discernment Application
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Statement of Spiritual Journey and story of their call
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Three letters of reference (including one from their local church pastor)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Documentation of their formal education (transcripts, evaluations)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Plans for theological education, if any
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Background Check (arranged by the Association office)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Candidate is scheduled to meet with the Discernment Working Group
- \_\_\_\_\_ At the end of the meeting, the candidate is granted or declined Member in Discernment status

### If Member in Discernment status is granted:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Member in Discernment begins using Journaling the Journey
- \_\_\_\_\_ Member in Discernment completes Vocational/Psychological Assessment
- \_\_\_\_\_ Member in Discernment Covenantal Agreement is completed

## PART TWO: DISCERNMENT

Once Member in Discernment status has been granted, the Discernment Working Group assigns the candidate a Mentor, an Advisor and a Community of Practice. The candidate begins completing The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers Self-Assessment in preparation for developing the Ministerial Formation Plan with their Wisdom Circle.

### MENTOR

The Mentor serves as both a role model and support person during this time of discernment. The role of the mentor is to explore various forms of ministry and prepare the candidate for the challenges of Authorized Ministry. The mentor is appointed by the Discernment Working Group immediately upon granting Member in Discernment status, and is a partner in the Member in Discernment Covenantal Agreement.

The Mentor will assist the Member in Discernment in the following ways:

- Work with the Member in Discernment in a Self-Assessment using The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers: the Member in Discernment will provide them a copy of their Self-Assessment as well as a copy of their Journaling the Journey
- Together with the Wisdom Circle and the candidate, participate in developing a Ministerial Formation Plan. This plan will be presented to, refined, and approved by the Discernment Working Group.

- Provide opportunities for the Member in Discernment to raise and explore questions about faith, the Church, ministry, etc.
- Encourage and, if possible, accompany the Member in Discernment to take an active part in Association, Conference, and denominational activities
- Maintain monthly contact with the Member in Discernment (initiated by the Member in Discernment) to review educational progress, growth, goals, and needs
- Report any ethical or boundary concerns to the Association General Minister
- Attend Member in Discernment meetings with Discernment Working Group, when possible and as invited by the Member in Discernment

The Member in Discernment and mentor meet at least once a month to work together on The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers by using Journaling the Journey. Mentors serve as trusted companions and share important lessons learned from their own ministry careers. They help clarify whether Authorized Ministry is the most appropriate response to the individual's call, or if the Member in Discernment could better serve the church by not being authorized. They also help discern which particular form of ministry is most suited to that individual's gifts and skills.

The Member in Discernment is expected to be proactive in communicating with their mentor at least once a month. The Member in Discernment is expected to be able to: articulate evidence of their spiritual growth; demonstrate awareness of, and work on, personal growing edges; name newly acquired ministry skills (preaching, teaching, visioning, etc.)

A full list of the responsibilities of the Mentor are included as **Appendix G**.

## **ADVISOR**

The Advisor serves as a liaison between the Member in Discernment and the Discernment Working Group, particularly clarifying the Discernment process, to help the Member in Discernment understand and follow the steps of their process. The Advisor convenes and chairs the candidate's Wisdom Circle, helping develop their Ministerial Formation Plan. The Member in Discernment is expected to communicate with their Advisor regularly, especially when they have questions about the Member in Discernment process.

## **DISCERNMENT SUPPORT TEAM AND PASTOR OF CHURCH OF MEMBERSHIP**

The Member in Discernment is expected to meet with their pastor and the Discernment Support Team of their local church (where membership is held) at least twice a year. Regular contact will ensure that covenantal relationships are strengthened. The Member in Discernment needs to be proactive in communicating and arranging meetings. This will encourage support from the members of the church and help the Member in Discernment as they clarify their call.

The Member in Discernment should offer a quarterly update to the local church and pastor. This might be, for example, an article for the newsletter, Sunday bulletin, or a report to the Consistory/Council and local Pastor.

Remember, this is a shared journey. All parties are in covenant and communication is crucial. The candidate meets and communicates regularly with their various supports and partners throughout the discernment process.

Changing church membership during the discernment process is not anticipated. If such a step is necessary, it should be done in communication with the Association General Minister and the Discernment Working Group.

### **MARKS OF FAITHFUL AND EFFECTIVE AUTHORIZED MINISTERS SELF-ASSESSMENT**

This is the document the candidate utilizes for self-assessment as soon as they are granted Member in Discernment status. See **Appendix H**.

### **WISDOM CIRCLE AND MINISTERIAL FORMATION PLAN (Appendix I)**

The Wisdom Circle consists of their (1) Advisor (who convenes and chairs the Circle), (2) Mentor, (3) a member of the candidate's Discernment Support Team and/or Pastor, (4) a representative from the Committee on Ministry, and (5) the Association General Minister.

The Wisdom Circle's primary task is to work with the Candidate to create a Ministerial Formation Plan that is presented to the Discernment Working Group. The Ministerial Formation Plan focuses on improving the candidate's growing edges as discerned through assessment using the Marks and suggests ways to strengthen the candidate's competencies with the Marks.

On behalf of the Discernment Working Group, the candidate's Advisor convenes and chairs a Wisdom Circle, who works with the Member in Discernment to develop their own uniquely designed Ministerial Formation Plan. This document takes into account the results of the Self-Assessment and then lists:

1. future plans to acquire appropriate knowledge and skills for Authorized Ministry
2. plans to hone practices of ministry as outlined in The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers, exhibiting a willingness to engage in lifelong learning and an openness to God's continued call

The Ministerial Formation Plan includes academic learning and other education requirements, varying depending on the Member in Discernment's education, gifts, strengths, and experiences.

The Member in Discernment submits the Ministerial Formation Plan to the Discernment Working Group through the registrar, who schedules the candidate to meet with them. Once the Discernment Working Group has approved the plan, the Member in Discernment offers

their Mentor and Advisor regular updates as they progress through their Ministerial Formation Plan; documenting coursework, individual learning, seminars attended, etc.

See instructions for developing a Ministerial Formation Plan in **Appendix J**.

## **ACADEMIC EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

Please note: the use of “equivalent” and/or “approved” below needs to be deemed as such by the Discernment Working Group. The minimum educational requirements for a Member in Discernment should include:

- Bachelor’s Degree or its equivalent, and
- All Members in Discernment, whether attending seminary or taking one of the multiple paths to ministry, should possess proven experience, competency, and/or coursework in the following list. This may take the form of an MDiv or approved equivalents.
  - Biblical Studies
  - Biblical Interpretation
  - Theology
  - Worship, Sacraments, Liturgy
  - Preaching and Worship Leadership
  - UCC History and Polity
  - Pastoral Care
  - Stewardship Education
  - Evangelism and Church Growth
  - Pastoral Leadership
  - Christian Education and Confirmation
  - Church History
  - Christian Ethics
  - Spiritual Disciplines

The Wisdom Circle may add other requirements to those listed above.

Required coursework may be completed at another approved educational institution or program, including these recommended UCC affiliated institutions:

Andover Newton Theological School  
Damascus Project (WI & MN Conf. UCC)  
Hartford Seminary  
Lancaster Theological Seminary  
NYSOM (New York)  
Pathways (SE Conf. UCC)  
United Theological Seminary

Chicago Theological Seminary  
Eden Theological Seminary  
Harvard Divinity School  
NEOSOM  
Pacific School of Religion  
Union Theological Seminary  
Yale Divinity School

## **CONTEXTUAL EXPERIENCE**

The goal of contextual experience is to offer supervised opportunities for formative experiences in ministry outside the classroom, including but not limited to churches, hospitals, retirement homes, university campuses, social service agencies, and local urban shelters.

Students design their own learning covenants based upon their vocational plans, the pastoral skills they need to learn, and the pastoral experience they need. The objective is to help students meet their denominational requirements for ordination and become transformational ministers.

In their field education, students learn about themselves. They are shaped by the experiences in their practices of ministry, encounters with the people with whom they serve, and the wisdom of a skilled supervisor, who will accompany them in this discernment process. In addition to providing students with the opportunity to engage in supervised ministries, students are also expected to reflect theologically upon their ministerial experiences.

Clinical Pastoral Education is interfaith professional education for ministry. It brings theological students and ministers of all faiths (pastors, priests, rabbis, imams and others) into supervised encounters with persons in crisis. Out of an intense involvement with persons in need, and the feedback from peers and teachers, students develop new awareness of themselves as persons and of the needs of those to whom they minister. From theological reflection on specific human situations, they gain a new understanding of ministry. Within the interdisciplinary team process of helping persons, they develop skills in interpersonal and interprofessional relationships.

## **REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO THE ASSOCIATION AND CONFERENCE**

- Attend at least one Healthy Practices for Ministry before ordination
- Participate in a Member in Discernment Community of Practice
- Attend Annual Meetings and Spring Vitality Festivals of the Association
- Attend Heartland Conference Annual Meetings
- Attend UCC National Members in Discernment Events

## **ANNUAL REVIEW**

The Member in Discernment will arrange to meet with the Discernment Working Group on an annual basis by contacting the Association registrar. This meeting will ensure the Member in Discernment feels connected to the process, offer a time for sharing joys and concerns, allow an opportunity for the Discernment Working Group to be aware of the Member in Discernment's journey of discernment and education, and offer the Discernment Working Group the opportunity to share any recommendations or additional requirements. The Member in Discernment will invite their mentor to be present for this annual review.

## RECOMMENDED MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT PRACTICES OF MINISTRY

The following customs are practiced with variations in each UCC Association. These descriptions are intended to serve as a guideline for clergy and Members in Discernment in the Living Water Association:

- Stoles — worn as a symbol of an Authorized Minister's yoked relationship with Christ in service to God's people. Stoles are bestowed upon a Member in Discernment on the day of their ordination and are not worn before then.
- Robes — may be worn by Members in Discernment
- Clerical Collars — like stoles, tab and Anglican clerical collars are symbols of the pastoral office and are worn at the discretion of Member in Discernments, in consultation with their supervisors
- Titles — the title "Reverend" is reserved for ordained ministers. "Pastor, minister, clergy person" are reserved for Authorized and ordained ministers. Members in Discernment are sometimes referred to as "Student Pastor" or "Student Chaplain", but shouldn't claim a clerical title until the day of their authorization to ministry.
- Sacraments — the UCC recognizes and celebrates two sacraments: baptism and communion. Only Authorized UCC Ministers may preside at the table and the font. Members in Discernment can, and should, co-celebrate sacramental liturgies with their field education supervisor or home pastor, as appropriate.

## DISCERNMENT CHECKLIST (APPENDIX K)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Member in Discernment is assigned a Mentor
- \_\_\_\_\_ Member in Discernment is assigned an Advisor
- \_\_\_\_\_ Member in Discernment is assigned a Community of Practice
- \_\_\_\_\_ Member in Discernment starts working on the Self-Assessment, together with Mentor
- \_\_\_\_\_ Member in Discernment and Wisdom Circle draft the Ministerial Formation Plan
- \_\_\_\_\_ Discernment Working Group approves the Ministerial Formation Plan
- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete educational requirements of the Ministerial Formation Plan:
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Biblical Studies
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Biblical Interpretation
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Theology
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Worship, Sacraments, Liturgy
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Preaching and Worship Leadership
  - \_\_\_\_\_ UCC History and Polity
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Pastoral Care
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Stewardship Education
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Evangelism and Church Growth
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Pastoral Leadership
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Christian Education and Confirmation

- \_\_\_\_\_ Church History
- \_\_\_\_\_ Christian Ethics
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spiritual Disciplines
- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete Field Education or relevant contextual experience
- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete Clinical Pastoral Education or relevant contextual experience
- \_\_\_\_\_ Healthy Practices for Ministry
- \_\_\_\_\_ Diversity Awareness Training
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other:
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other:
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other:
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other:
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other:

**Also required:**

- Arrange to meet with Mentor monthly
- Schedule a review meeting with the Discernment Working Group annually
- Complete the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers Self-Assessment annually
- Arrange to meet with the local church Discernment Support Team twice a year
- Attend Annual Meeting and Spring Vitality Festival of the Association
- Attend the Annual Meeting of the Conference

## **PART THREE: MINISTERIAL AUTHORIZATION**

### **FINAL ASSESSMENT FOR MINISTRY**

In meetings with the Member in Discernment, the Discernment Working Group may conclude that the Member is ready for a final assessment for ministry. The Discernment Working Group will then begin providing feedback on the Member in Discernment's ordination paper.

The Discernment Working Group continues to meet with the Member in Discernment, as necessary, as they finalize their paper. Once the Discernment Working Group approves the Member in Discernment's ordination paper, the candidate will be scheduled for an interview with the whole Committee on Ministry.

## **ORDINATION PAPER**

The ordination paper is its own unique genre of writing. It should reflect your particular sense of call, your lived experience, theological perspective and training. Written with academic rigor and the proper citation of sources, the paper should integrate the work of other theologians and ministry practitioners whose ideas you synthesize into your own ministry and this ordination paper.

The ordination paper is expected to be 4,000-5,000 words, and will:

- Include your call to ministry and understanding of theological concepts as they relate to the Christian life
  - Address these key theological concepts: God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, Trinity, the sacraments, scripture, and atonement
  - Also include topics that are significant to you, such as: creation, liturgy, ecclesiology, soteriology, eschatology
    - Depth of topic is more important than breadth of topics
- Use a coherent and consistent academic formatting style for layout and source citations

Additionally, express your theological understanding of effective ministerial leadership in the United Church of Christ as framed by The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers (**Appendix L**).

## **FINAL INTERVIEW WITH THE COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY**

Upon approval of the Member in Discernment's ordination paper by the Discernment Working Group, the candidate will be scheduled for an interview with the whole Committee on Ministry. This meeting will include a worship service followed by an interview with questions focusing on, but not limited to, the worship service and ordination paper.

## **THE WORSHIP SERVICE**

The candidate crafts and offers a worship experience of no more than 30 minutes. The candidate is encouraged to express their creativity and gifts in planning and leading this service. The service should demonstrate the candidate's skill for worship design, leadership, and preaching. The committee expects candidates who are called to specialized ministry to tailor the service to reflect that specialization. The outline of the service might include:

- Opening Music
- Gathering (e.g. Call to Worship)
- Opening Prayer
- Hymn
- Scripture Reading(s)



Sermon (required)  
Pastoral Prayer  
Hymn  
Blessing

The candidate is expected to provide musicians or musical accompaniment. Keep within allotted time by choosing selected verses for hymns or songs. A printed order of service is not required; however, should the candidate decide to use one, 27 copies for Committee on Ministry would be needed, plus any guests that accompany the candidate.

The Committee on Ministry recommends that candidates visit the church where the service will be held prior to the date of interview. Alternately, candidates should plan to arrive early to familiarize themselves with the worship space and work out logistics. Please do not hesitate to contact the Association General Minister, Advisor, or the Living Water Association Registrar, if you have additional questions.

### **INTERVIEW WITH THE COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY**

The purpose of this interview is to examine and authorize the ordination of the Member in Discernment. The following is a sample agenda:

- The Discernment Working Group introduces the Member in Discernment to the Committee on Ministry
- The Committee on Ministry assesses the fitness of the Member in Discernment to ordained ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ
- On completion of the interview, the Member in Discernment is excused while the Committee on Ministry deliberates on whether or not to authorize the Member in Discernment for ordination, pending an approved call
- The candidate is invited back into the meeting space and informed of the Committee's decision
- If the Member in Discernment is approved for ordination by the Committee on Ministry, pending a call:
  - The Member in Discernment completes and circulates their Ministerial Profile
  - Once an approved call has been obtained, the Member in Discernment contacts the Association General Minister to plan for a service of ordination.

The decision of the Committee on Ministry is made on behalf of the Association and is a decision made for the entire United Church of Christ. It is binding and honored by other Associations of the United Church of Christ.

## PART FOUR: EXPECTATIONS OF CONTINUING COVENANTAL RELATIONSHIP

Once ordained, a person is granted Authorized Ministerial Standing and becomes a voting member of the Association and the Conference in which they hold their standing.

The United Church of Christ takes seriously its task of providing adequate support and oversight for those who minister to its congregations. Ordained ministers of the United Church of Christ receive care and oversight by the Association in which they hold their standing. In acting on behalf of the whole church, Associations are covenantally related to other Associations and Conferences, to the persons they have authorized for ministry, to local churches and/or other calling bodies. This spirit of covenantal connection is undergirded by the Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ, which establishes the relationship and authority of the various covenantal partners related to ministerial authorization.

Associations have the responsibility for extending nurture and ensuring ecclesiastical accountability for all Authorized Ministers, including retired ordained ministers and those serving in a variety of ministry settings - as pastor of a local church, chaplain, professor, pastoral counselor, and persons engaged in other employment.

Authorized Ministers have also the responsibility to be in covenant with their Association, other Authorized Ministers, and their setting of ministry. Just as Associations have the responsibility for supporting and holding accountable all Authorized Ministers; Authorized Ministers have the responsibility to be in covenant by supporting and being part of their Association, Conference and the wider UCC.

In order to maintain good standing in Living Water Association Authorized Ministers:

1. Must hold membership in good standing with a Local Church of the United Church of Christ
2. Must attend a Healthy Practice for Ministry event, the equivalent of Boundary Training, every other year. Authorized Ministers will receive reminders from the Association office about those scheduled events. Retired Authorized Ministers who no longer perform ministerial functions may be exempt from this requirement. A request for exemption must be made to the Oversight Working Group of the Committee on Ministry.
3. Are expected Ministers to participate in lifelong learning experiences at least every other year. We ask that Authorized Ministers send their certificate of attendance to [registrar@livingwaterone.org](mailto:registrar@livingwaterone.org) for record keeping.
4. Must complete an Information Review form annually. The form can be found on our website: <https://livingwaterone.org/pastors-information-review-form/>
5. Are encouraged to participate in Communities of Practice, which are groups for Authorized Ministers who gather for personal and professional development. Information can be found at <https://livingwaterone.org/pastoral-excellence/>

Other examples of how Authorized Ministers are expected to be in covenant with the Association, Conference, and the wider UCC include:

- Faithful preaching and teaching of the Gospel, the exercise of pastoral functions, and the administration of rites and sacraments of the Church as such time and in such places as may be appropriate
- Regular participation in Association Annual Meetings, Gathering of Ministers, and Conference Annual Meetings
- Adherence to oversight by the Association Committee on Ministry, including annual reviews, periodic support consultations, and healthy practices for ministry training.
- Clear and timely communication with the Association and/or Conference when situations arise within your ministry setting that may affect the continuing healthy ministry of that setting
- Willingness to serve in leadership and support roles for the work of the Association and Conference
- Adherence to the UCC Ministerial Code and the Marks for Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers

## Appendix A

### LOCAL CHURCH DISCERNMENT SUPPORT TEAM

When a member of a local UCC church expresses a desire to prepare for ordained Authorized Ministry in response to God's call, the local church creates a Discernment Support Team (3 to 5 members)

1. who 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
  - discern that the member has gifts for ministry and a call by God to Authorized Ministry
  - continue to walk the discernment journey with the candidate to its completion, continuing to explore the person's understanding of Christian faith, sense of call, gifts for ministry, experiences and practical concerns
3. the pastor and/or congregation makes a formal written request to the Discernment Working Group of the Committee on Ministry that the member be received as a Member in Discernment.

As the person considering ordained ministry, the pastor, and Discernment Support Team meet, they discuss:

- Has the person been an active participant in the life of the local church? In their participation, have they shown the gifts and maturity necessary for Authorized Ministry?
- What is the person's understanding of Authorized Ministry? Does the person have a realistic view of Authorized Ministry? Do they understand the types of things an Authorized Minister does? Is there another form of ministry more suited to the person's gifts and passions?
- Does the person understand the educational requirements needed?
- Do they know about the need for Member in Discernment relationship with an Association in the UCC and understand the requirements to seek that status?

If the pastor and church leaders confirm a call to ministry, they will recommend the person to the Discernment Working Group. Becoming a Member in Discernment is an integral part of the candidate's preparation for Authorized Ministry. This is communicated via a letter to the Discernment Working Group of the Committee on Ministry (sent via the Living Water Association registrar, [registrar@livingwaterone.org](mailto:registrar@livingwaterone.org)). This letter will include the following:

- A statement and explanation of the church's recommendation of the person for Member in Discernment status
- Verification of the candidate's membership and involvement in the local church and the amount of time the person has been in the UCC
- The process used by the church to make that decision

It is vital that the church continue to support the Member in Discernment during the discernment process, which lasts a minimum of one year. Generally, the process takes at least three years. Some people may also take longer than three years.

## **Appendix B**

### **APPLICATION FOR MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT**

*(PLEASE EMAIL COMPLETED FORM TO [registrar@livingwaterone.org](mailto:registrar@livingwaterone.org))*

**Name of Applicant:**

**Home Address:**

**Cell Phone:**

**Email:**

**Current Place of Employment:**

**Church Membership** (Name and Location of Church)

**Involvement in Local and/or Wider Church Activities**

**Academic Information**

**Other information you would like the working group to have**

---

Date

---

Applicant Signature

## Appendix C

### SPIRITUAL JOURNEY PAPER OUTLINE

#### The Spiritual Journey and Call paper

This paper tells your story, your experience of God, faith and spirit throughout your life as well as the story of your call.

When Christians talk about a "call," we mean that God is calling us—in our mind and heart—to take an action or make a choice with our lives. The Latin word for "call"—*vocatio*—is the root of a word often used to describe a call that leads us into a way of life: a "vocation."

A call to ministry includes the community's recognition of and calling forth gifts for ministry. One of the distinguishing aspects of ministry in the United Church of Christ is the affirmation that ministerial leadership is always defined by an ongoing sacred covenant among the minister, the congregation, and the denomination; thus, ministry is more communal than individual, and the call to Authorized Ministry is always discerned with others.

Your paper can include reflections on the following:

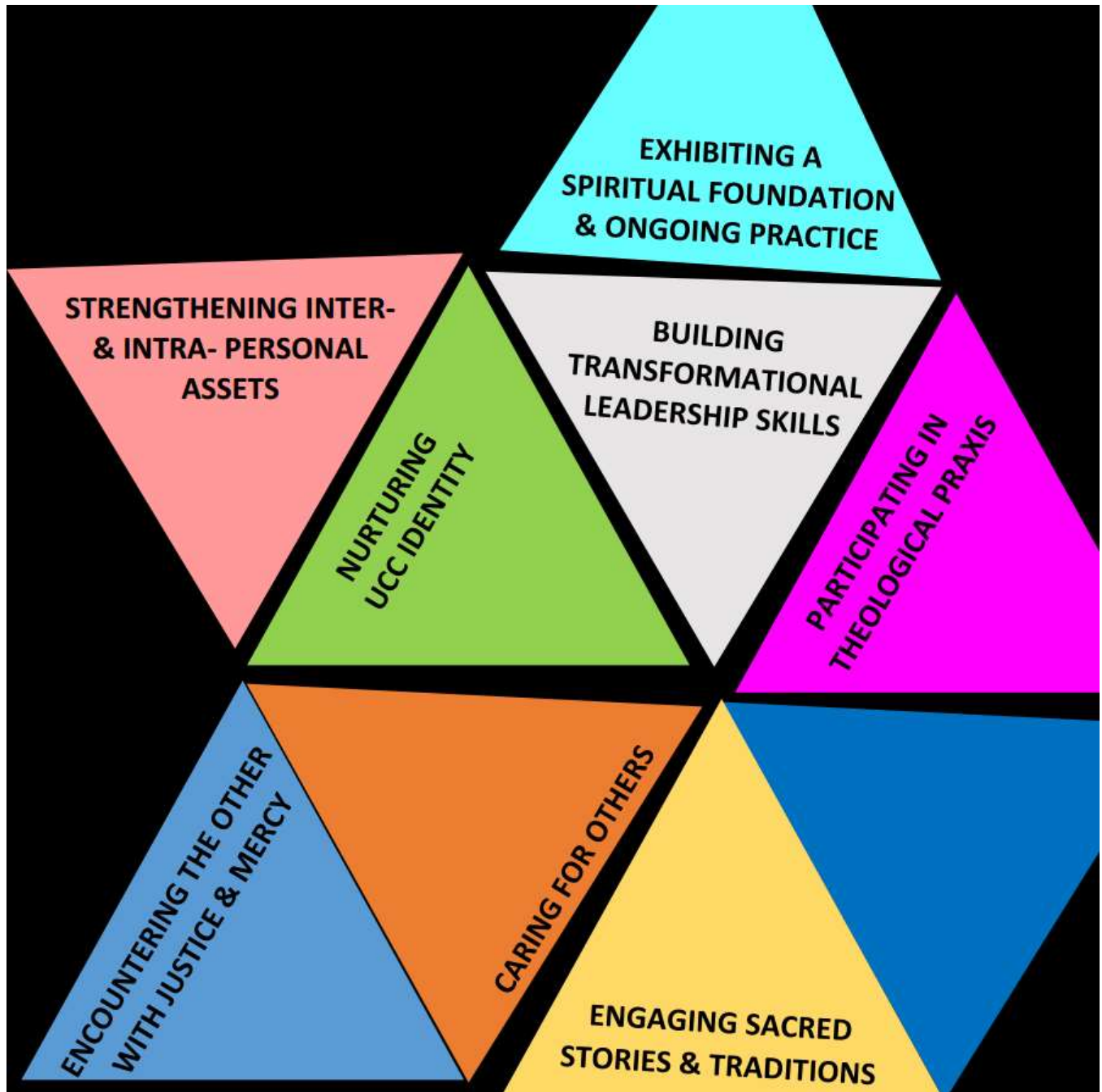
- Your first awareness of God
- Your experience of Church and community
- Your quest for meaning and where God has been in the quest
- The defining moments in your life and how you see God in them
- Experiences of life that reflect love, compassion, justice
- The story of your call – How did you hear God's voice?
- What gifts do you bring to ministry?
- Your understanding of ordination and Authorized Ministry

You can also create a timeline filled with key events, people, places, experiences, etc., and ponder how God has been part of those moments.

Your local church Discernment Support Team can be a valuable resource in clarifying the defining moments of your life that have brought you to the step of seeking Member in Discernment status, as well as the gifts you bring to ministry.

## Appendix D

### THE MARKS OF FAITHFUL AND EFFECTIVE AUTHORIZED MINISTERS



# The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ: INTRODUCING THE REVISION

The *Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministers* - developed as part of the work that followed General Synod's affirmation of the Ministry Issues Pronouncement (2005) - strives to demonstrate the diverse paths of preparation and formation for Authorized Ministry and to highlight the complex combination of talents, understandings and skills needed for faithful and effective ministerial leadership in the United Church of Christ.

Despite their appearance on paper as a long list of 64 individual marks in four categories, the whole *Marks* help to paint a picture of a person's initial preparation for and ongoing formation in Authorized Ministry. The *Journaling the Journey* workbook (released by MESA in 2014) posits that the individual marks are like individual elements of a mandala - some larger, some smaller, all diverse and all necessary for the creation of a beautiful image.

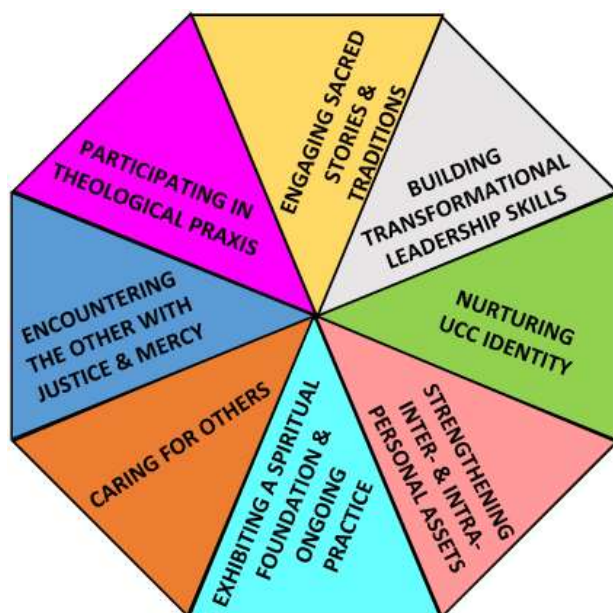


Yet even the translation from a linear list of marks to a 2D picture of marks has been insufficient, and the Habakkuk Group has identified a necessary third dimension of marks: movement indicating integration and growth. In **preparation and formation**, the various marks do not remain in place as stagnant elements of a picture; they tumble and shift and influence other marks, growing and reshaping across one's journey in Christian discipleship and in Authorized Ministry. To use a playful 3D image, the various marks - working dynamically within and demonstrated through an individual - could be said to be fragments of color in a spinning kaleidoscope, tumbling and overlapping to create one dynamic image.

What do we mean by **preparation** and **formation**? **Formation** is the influence of time and activities, life experiences, education, practice, and reflection in community that collectively lead toward the development of knowledge, skills, understanding and commitment.

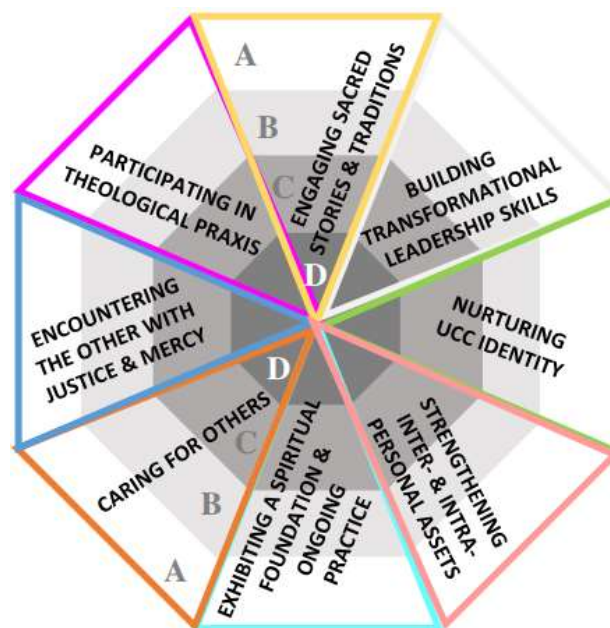
**Preparation** imagines a particular end goal and strives to develop or learn what is needed toward that end goal, even while recognizing that the goal may change or may not be realized. Preparation is often particular to a season or task (e.g. Member in Discernment preparing with the hopes of being entrusted with authorization, or an Authorized Minister preparing for a new position in chaplaincy), while formation is lifelong. The particulars of a person's preparation and formation for/in Authorized Ministry are unique: determined by call, ongoing discernment individually and in community, context, gifts & graces, and needs of the Church, all integrated in practice and guided by God's call to the individual, God's call to the Church, and the *Marks*.





The Habakkuk Group, in its work to revise and revision the Manual on Ministry, revisited the original *Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministers* in order to unveil biases, to better highlight core habits of excellent ministerial leadership, and to slim down the total list of individual marks. The four sections of the original *Marks* have been recreated as eight primary categories and the full list of marks has been reimagined from 64 to 46, with the existing tools (*Assessment Rubric* and *Journaling the Journey*) to be updated to reflect this *Marks* revision.

With the dynamic kaleidoscope of eight new categories and 46 individual marks, it becomes clear that faithfulness and effectiveness for/in Authorized Ministry include healthy integration and purposeful growth across the marks. The characteristics of this growth and integration can be illustrated by a deepening toward the center: The outer layer (A) indicates *experience* with a particular mark. The second layer (B) shows *deep understanding* of a particular mark. The third layer (C) demonstrates *integration* of a mark with other marks and areas of ministry. The core (D) represents *passion and love* for the mark - both the goal of growth and the originating foundation for each mark.



All Christians may exhibit any of the individual marks and at any layer of growth, including the core of love for a particular mark, simply as a natural expression and demonstration of faith. These marks reflect many aspects of discipleship that Christians might strive to develop. **For Authorized Ministers and those seeking authorization in the United Church of Christ, the collection of marks must be taken as a whole - the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers** - in which the various marks, qualities and skills are developed and integrated together, always alongside individual and communal habits of discernment and assessment, as well as ongoing dedication to personal and professional formation. When taken as a whole and integrated (set in motion) for ministerial leadership, the *Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers* begin to look like this:

## **EXHIBITING A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION AND ONGOING SPIRITUAL PRACTICES**

- Loving God, following Jesus Christ, and being guided by the Holy Spirit; Living a life of discipleship
- Praying actively and nurturing spiritual practices
- Being called to Authorized Ministry by God and the Church
- Continuing discernment of one's call in community
- Living in relationships of covenantal accountability with God and the church
- Understanding the power of the Holy Spirit working through silence, language, art, music, ritual and symbols across generations and contexts
- Knowing the elements and purpose of Christian worship in nurturing a life of faith
- Exhibiting a commitment to lifelong spiritual nurture and development



## **NURTURING UCC IDENTITY**

- Acknowledging Jesus Christ as the sole Head of the Church
- Communicating passion for the oneness of the body of Christ reflected in Scripture (John 17:21)
- Holding active membership in a local church of the United Church of Christ
- Participating in the various settings of the United Church of Christ, including associations, conferences, general synod, and global ministries
- Knowing and appreciating UCC history, polity, and theology
- Exhibiting a commitment to the core values of the United Church of Christ: continuing testament, extravagant welcome, and changing lives
- Demonstrating an appreciation for and participation in the ecumenical and interfaith partnerships of the United Church of Christ

## **BUILDING TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS**

- Empowering the Church faithful to God's call, reflective of Christ's mission, and open to the surprises of the Holy Spirit
- Strategically creating the future of God's church
- Witnessing in the public square to God's redeeming power
- Performing necessary and appropriate administrative tasks
- Working effectively with intercultural awareness and sensitivity
- Understanding community context and navigating change with a community
- Encouraging leadership development of self and others through continuing education and lifelong learning

## **ENGAGING SACRED STORIES AND TRADITIONS**

- Exhibiting knowledge, understanding, and continuing study of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament
- Nurturing effective proclamation and preaching
- Understanding the history of the Christian church, from biblical times forward
- Bringing life to the sacred stories and traditions in worship, proclamation, and witness
- Leading faith formation effectively across generations
- Holding the Holy with integrity especially as represented in the Sacraments

## **CARING FOR OTHERS**

- Nurturing care and compassion for all God's creation
- Maintaining a basic understanding of mental health and wellness
- Understanding and ministering to stages of human development across the life span
- Providing hope and healing to a hurting world
- Attending to one's own spiritual and pastoral care and engagement in supervision, as appropriate

## **PARTICIPATING IN THEOLOGICAL PRAXIS**

- Practicing theological reflection and engagement as part of one's sense of ministerial identity
- Experiencing and appreciating a variety of theological perspectives
- Integrating theological reflection in teaching, preaching, and ecclesial and community leadership
- Articulating a theology of ministry consistent with one's ministerial practices

## **ENCOUNTERING THE OTHER WITH JUSTICE AND MERCY**

- Drawing on the ministry of Jesus Christ to confront injustice and oppression
- Practicing the radical hospitality of God
- Identifying and working to overcome implicit bias in all ministry settings and in the life of the church
- Engaging in mission and outreach
- Embodying the United Church of Christ Ministerial Code of Ethics

## **STRENGTHENING INTER-AND INTRA-PERSONAL ASSETS**

- Developing and maintaining a healthy sense of self as shaped by God, community, and life experiences
- Respecting the dignity of all God's people
- Exhibiting strong moral character and personal integrity
- Demonstrating excellent communication skills
- Practicing self-care and life balance

## Appendix E

### DISCERNMENT PROCESS COVENANT

*(To be completed upon granting Member in Discernment status. It is the responsibility of the Member in Discernment to assure that this covenant is completed and copies delivered to all parties.)*

#### LOCAL CHURCH

We, the members of \_\_\_\_\_ (local church) United Church of Christ, located at \_\_\_\_\_, promise to support and nurture \_\_\_\_\_ (Member in Discernment) in their period of discernment and formation as they explores a call to Authorized Ministry. We will, in partnership with \_\_\_\_\_ (Member in Discernment), create a Discernment Support Team and work with them to discern the call to Authorized Ministry. We will, as we are able, provide financial support for costs associated with ministerial preparation and training. We covenant with them and the Living Water Association, Ohio NorthEast, Heartland Conference of the United Church of Christ as a sign of our mutual ministry in Christ's name.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Church Moderator or President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

#### ASSOCIATION

We, the members of the Living Water Association covenant with the people of \_\_\_\_\_ (local church) United Church of Christ, located at \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (Member in Discernment), to explore a call to Authorized Ministry in the United Church of Christ. The Discernment Working Group of the Committee on Ministry will work with \_\_\_\_\_ (Member in Discernment) to develop a Ministerial Formation Plan and accompany them as they engage in a path of discernment, preparation and formation. We will provide counsel and support, and will meet with \_\_\_\_\_

(Member in Discernment) at appropriate intervals to discern readiness for the Authorized Ministry sought. We will, as we are able, provide resources for financial support for costs associated with ministerial preparation and training. We will assign an advisor and a mentor and be responsible for the oversight of these relationship. If \_\_\_\_\_ (Member in Discernment) is determined to be worthy of Authorized Ministry, we will authorize them for ministry according to the faith and order of the United Church of Christ. We enter into this covenant as a sign of our mutual ministry in Christ's name.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Committee on Ministry

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **MENTOR**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (mentor), promise to faithfully meet with \_\_\_\_\_ (Member in Discernment) once a month. I promise to support and walk with \_\_\_\_\_ (Member in Discernment) as they discern their call. We will work together on The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers by using *Journaling the Journey and other resources as necessary*. I covenant with \_\_\_\_\_ (local church) United Church of Christ, located at \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ (Member in Discernment), the Living Water Association, the Discernment Working Group, as a sign of our mutual ministry in Christ's name.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mentor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **DISCERNMENT WORKING GROUP**

We, the members of the Discernment Working Group of the Committee on Ministry, promise to discern with you and the Living Water Association, your call to ordained ministry. We promise to faithfully speak the truth in love. We covenant with you to create a plan that will hold to the expectations of the United Church of Christ for all UCC Authorized Ministers. We promise to

support you and expect you to attend all Member in Discernment gatherings and workshops.  
We covenant with you \_\_\_\_\_ (Member in Discernment), \_\_\_\_\_  
(local church) located at \_\_\_\_\_, your mentor \_\_\_\_\_,  
and the Living Water Association as a sign of our mutual ministry in Christ's name.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Discernment Working Group Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
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 Discernment Working Group of the Committee on Ministry 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 also participate in the Member in Discernment events that are planned by the Living Water Association and the United Church of Christ. I will provide material as requested that reflect my progress to the Committee on Ministry and DWG. I covenant with \_\_\_\_\_ (local church) United Church of Christ, \_\_\_\_\_, (mentor) and the Discernment Working Group of Committee on Ministry, and the Living Water Association as a sign of our mutual ministry in Christ's name.

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix F

### EXPLORATION CHECKLIST

#### Step 1

- \_\_\_\_\_ Candidate is an active member of a church affiliated with the UCC for at least one year
- \_\_\_\_\_ Candidate approaches pastor and church leaders with their sense of call to Authorized Ministry
- \_\_\_\_\_ Church forms a Discernment Support Team of 3-5 members
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pastor, Discernment Support Team and candidate meet to discern call
- \_\_\_\_\_ When the pastor, Discernment Support Team and Governing Body of the church feel the person is ready to move forward in the process, a letter of recommendation is sent to the Committee on Ministry

#### Step 2

- \_\_\_\_\_ Candidate meets with the Association General Minister
- \_\_\_\_\_ Candidate submits application documents to the Discernment Working Group
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Member in Discernment Application
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Statement of Spiritual Journey and story of their call
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Three letters of reference (including one from their local church pastor)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Documentation of their formal education (transcripts, evaluations)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Plans for theological education, if any
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Background Check (arranged by the Association office)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Candidate is scheduled to meet with the Discernment Working Group
- \_\_\_\_\_ At the end of the meeting the candidate is granted or declined Member in Discernment status

#### If Member in Discernment status is granted:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Member in Discernment begins using Journaling the Journey
- \_\_\_\_\_ Member in Discernment completes Vocational/Psychological Assessment
- \_\_\_\_\_ Member in Discernment Covenantal Agreement is completed

## **Appendix G**

### **MENTOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Mentor serves as both a role model and support during this time of discernment. The role of the mentor is to explore various forms of ministry and prepare the candidate for the challenges of Authorized Ministry. The mentor is appointed by the Discernment Working Group immediately upon granting Member in Discernment status, and is a partner in the Member in Discernment Covenantal Agreement.

The Mentor will assist the Member in Discernment in the following ways:

- Work with the Member in Discernment in a Self-Assessment using The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers. The Member in Discernment will provide them a copy of their Self-Assessment as well as a copy of their Journaling the Journey.
- Together with the Wisdom Circle and the candidate, participate in developing a Ministerial Formation Plan. This plan will be presented to, refined and approved by the Discernment Working Group.
- Provide opportunities for the Member in Discernment to raise and explore questions about faith, the Church, ministry, etc.
- Encourage and, if possible, accompany the Member in Discernment to take an active part in Association, Conference, and denominational activities
- Maintain monthly contact with the Member in Discernment (initiated by the Member in Discernment) to review educational progress, growth, goals, and needs
- Report any ethical or boundary concerns to the Association General Minister
- Attend Member in Discernment meetings with Discernment Working Group, when possible and as invited by the Member in Discernment

The Member in Discernment and mentor meet at least once a month to work together on The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers by using Journaling the Journey. Mentors serve as trusted companions and share important lessons learned from their own ministry careers. They help clarify whether Authorized Ministry is the most appropriate response to the individual's call, or if the Member in Discernment could better serve the church by not being authorized. They also help discern which particular form of ministry is most suited to that individual's gifts and skills.



## Appendix H

### THE MARKS OF FAITHFUL AND EFFECTIVE AUTHORIZED MINISTERS SELF ASSESSMENT

Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

1 = Not at all; Have never encountered

2 = Heard of this, read about this, do occasionally

3 = Actively working on building familiarity with, and competence on, this MARK

4 = Most of the time; practice often, use often

5 = Consistently; definitely true; always practice, always make part of my life, ministry

#### **EXHIBITING A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION AND ONGOING SPIRITUAL PRACTICE**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Loving God, following Jesus Christ, and being guided by the Holy Spirit; living a life of discipleship**

- Understands and articulates the cost and joy of discipleship
- Invites others into a life of discipleship through evangelism, preaching, teaching, and witness
- Leads others to grow in a life of discipleship

\_\_\_\_\_ **Praying actively and nurturing spiritual practices**

- Demonstrates familiarity with various forms of prayer and spiritual practices
- Prays in a number of contexts and/or cultures, both individually and communally
- Walks with others as they discern their prayer style(s) and shape their prayer lives
- Exhibits a personal life of prayer

\_\_\_\_\_ **Being called to Authorized Ministry by God and the Church**

- Demonstrates understanding of and commitment to what it means to be authorized in and on behalf of the whole UCC
- Identifies and nurtures gifts in self and others
- Affirms the ministry of all the baptized while articulating a theology of Authorized Ministry
- Cultivates a culture of call for lay and Authorized Ministries in one's community of faith

\_\_\_\_\_ **Continuing discernment of one's call in community**

- Demonstrates familiarity with and appreciation for a variety of methods of discernment
- Practices discernment in a variety of settings
- Displays an openness to God's transforming action in one's life and recognizes the ongoing evolution of a personal sense of call
- Leads others in discernment, within diverse cultural norms and traditions

\_\_\_\_\_ **Understanding the power of the Holy Spirit at work through the elements of Christian worship to nurture faith**

- Demonstrates familiarity with liturgical practices across a variety of cultures
- Uses silence, language, art, music, ritual, and symbols in crafting meaningful liturgies that are respectful of cultures and peoples, and which lead to spiritual transformation
- Connects creativity and the creative arts to an understanding of being made in the image of God the Creator in theology and practice

\_\_\_\_\_ **Exhibiting a commitment to lifelong spiritual development and faithful personal stewardship**

- Understands the value of ongoing spiritual nurture and development as an Authorized Minister of the United Church of Christ
- Practices a variety of spiritual disciplines on a regular basis
- Encourages and nurtures others in spiritual formation and faith development over the lifespan
- Recognizes and resources constituents who have multiple or no religious affiliations

**TOTAL (6-30) = \_\_\_\_\_**

- 1 = Not at all; Have never encountered  
 2 = Heard of this, read about this, do occasionally  
 3 = Actively working on building familiarity with, and competence on, this MARK  
 4 = Most of the time; practice often, use often  
 5 = Consistently; definitely true; always practice, always make part of my life, ministry

### **NURTURING UCC IDENTITY**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Acknowledging Jesus Christ as the sole Head of the Church**

- Orders one's life and ministry in relation to Jesus Christ's role as sole head of the church
- Is faithful to Christ's presence and mission in the world
- Articulates an understanding of the Church that is faithful to God's mission in the world and open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, both as the Church has been and is becoming
- Teaches others the implications of Christ's role as head of the Church

\_\_\_\_\_ **Communicating passion for the oneness of the body of Christ (John 17:21)**

- Describes, appreciates and participates in the ecumenical relationships of the United Church of Christ
- Welcomes and affirms diverse voices within the UCC, including those with whom the individual disagrees or has no experience
- Leads others in ministries that cross boundaries of difference
- Has a heart for UCC values of "Open and Affirming," intercultural and multiracial, and "Accessible to All"

\_\_\_\_\_ **Holding active membership in a local church of the United Church of Christ**

- Maintains a covenantal relationship, as a baptized disciple of Christ, with a particular local congregation of the United Church of Christ
- Exercises leadership in the local and wider church, in a variety of traditional and emerging settings
- Mentors others in their relationship with the local church
- Represents the United Church of Christ as the denomination of one's heart in its local expression

\_\_\_\_\_ **Participating in the various settings of the United Church of Christ, including local churches, associations, conferences, general synod, and global ministries**

- Understands the covenantal relationship of each setting of the United Church of Christ (local, association, conference, and national)
- Ministers in and appreciates the various settings of the United Church of Christ
- Teaches others how the various settings of the church relate to one another covenantally
- Encourages participation in and financial support of the wider church

\_\_\_\_\_ **Knowing and appreciating UCC history, polity, and theology.**

- Articulates the diverse histories that comprise the UCC, both in its formation and ongoing development
- Places one's own journey of faith within these contexts
- Describes and appreciates the structure and governance of the United Church of Christ
- Teaches others about the history, polity, theology and witness through the ages of the UCC

\_\_\_\_\_ **Exhibiting a commitment to the core values of the United Church of Christ: continuing testament, extravagant welcome, and changing lives**

- Understands the core values of the United Church of Christ
- Incorporates these values into one's ministry
- Leads others in the goals of the United Church of Christ: bold, public voice; welcoming, reachable congregations; engaged discipleship; and excellent, diverse leaders

**TOTAL (6-30) = \_\_\_\_\_**

- 1 = Not at all; Have never encountered  
 2 = Heard of this, read about this, do occasionally  
 3 = Actively working on building familiarity with, and competence on, this MARK  
 4 = Most of the time; practice often, use often  
 5 = Consistently; definitely true; always practice, always make part of my life, ministry

### **BUILDING TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS**

#### **Empowering the Church faithful to God's call, reflective of Christ's mission, and open to the surprises of the Holy Spirit**

- Takes initiative in leading
- Leads by framing a vision in community
- Motivates others to test and share in a vision and to work toward its realization
- Demonstrates flexibility and a spirit of discernment

#### **Strategically creating the future of God's church**

- Exercises effective and adaptive leadership
- Models interdependence
- Assesses needs; plans, implements and evaluates ministries to meet identified needs; and continues to improve the future of those ministries

#### **Witnessing in the public square to God's redeeming power**

- Responds to local and global events and provides prophetic leadership in effecting systemic change
- Speaks truthfully to and about systems of oppressions and interpersonal behaviors of bias
- Accesses and promotes use of resources on social justice and advocacy

#### **Performing necessary and appropriate administrative tasks**

- Manages professional and supervisory relationships equitably
- Demonstrates personal and organizational financial literacy
- Delegates and lifts up the gifts of others
- Learns new skills as needed in ministerial roles (e.g. technological)

#### **Working collaboratively with intercultural awareness and sensitivity**

- Understands power dynamics and dominant privilege
- Appreciates the gifts of diverse persons, and works cooperatively across cultures and generations
- Practices humility; asks for and extends forgiveness when mistakes are made

#### **Encouraging leadership development of self and others through continuing education and lifelong learning**

- Commits to lifelong learning
- Demonstrates a commitment to ongoing discernment about one's call to ministry
- Trains members of teams, boards and committees
- Transitions well from one ministry setting to another, including retirement from active ministry

**TOTAL (6-30) = \_\_\_\_\_**

- 1 = Not at all; Have never encountered  
 2 = Heard of this, read about this, do occasionally  
 3 = Actively working on building familiarity with, and competence on, this MARK  
 4 = Most of the time; practice often, use often  
 5 = Consistently; definitely true; always practice, always make part of my life, ministry

### **ENGAGING SACRED STORIES AND TRADITIONS**

#### **Exhibiting knowledge, understanding, and continuing study of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament**

- Understands the historical development of the Bible, including the social, economic, and political contexts out of which biblical literature grew
- Leads Bible studies informed by scholarly methods of Biblical interpretation
- Reads the Bible prayerfully
- Uses appropriate interpretive lenses, including those that bend toward love, compassion, and justice

#### **Maturing in effective proclamation and preaching**

- Relates the social, economic, and political contexts of biblical literature to current issues and contexts
- Crafts and delivers sermons toward individual and communal transformation grounded in sacred stories and traditions
- Fosters appreciation for diverse ways of understanding the sacred texts and for diverse styles of preaching
- Discerns and articulates, theologically, one's own sacred story

#### **Understanding the history of the Christian church, from biblical times forward**

- Demonstrates knowledge of the development of Christianity through the ages and relates it to current and emerging realities of the Church Universal and its local contexts
- Traces the development of Christianity globally, with sensitivity to colonial and post-colonial implications
- Locates the history and heritage of one's constituencies within the broader scope of the historical development of global Christianity
- Demonstrates an understanding of the dynamic history of new expressions of the Church

#### **Bringing life to the sacred stories and traditions in worship, proclamation and witness**

- Affirms diverse practices in worship, proclamation and witness, and incorporates them into worship planning appropriately
- Allows the Holy Spirit to move within the worship experience
- Appreciates the role of music and the arts in worship

#### **Leading faith formation effectively across generations**

- Demonstrates knowledge of current best practices in faith formation and implements them for particular contexts
- Understands generational cohorts and generational differences
- Forms and empowers faith leaders of all generations

#### **Holding the Holy with integrity especially as represented in the Sacraments**

- Affirms the two sacraments of baptism and holy communion as described in the Preamble of the UCC Constitution
- Presides over the sacraments meaningfully and with integrity
- Teaches and preaches on the historical, biblical, ecumenical, and personal significance of the sacraments in particular contexts and settings
- Distinguishes between sacraments and other rites of the church (such as funerals and weddings) and follows civil laws when representing both church and state

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### **CARING FOR ALL CREATION**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Nurturing care and compassion for all God's creation**

- Employs appropriate relational skills
- Demonstrates emotional intelligence of oneself and in interactions with others
- Expresses and helps others understand the notion of interdependence among all God's creation
- Relates care for self and others to care for the earth

\_\_\_\_\_ **Maintaining a basic understanding of mental health and wellness**

- Distinguishes "normal" from "pathological" behavior, and knows one's own limits as a provider of pastoral care
- Identifies and uses community resources for one's own personal and professional wellness.
- Refers constituents to community mental health resources as needed
- Accompanies individuals, families, and communities through periods of mental illness and recovery, or chronic mental illness, with appropriate spiritual support

\_\_\_\_\_ **Practicing self-care and life balance**

- Leads by example and through active teaching how to live responsibly in relation to self, family, church, community, and the environment
- Takes time away from work in order to play
- Develops relationships outside of one's ministry setting

\_\_\_\_\_ **Providing hope and healing to a hurting world**

- Prays with and for those in need, and provides spiritual counsel appropriately
- Plans and leads services of lament, healing and hope
- Enacts the rites of the church with integrity and sensitivity to particular cultural contexts
- Embodies hope and healing in the Member in Discernments of struggle

\_\_\_\_\_ **Attending to one's own spiritual and pastoral care, including engagement in supervision as appropriate**

- participates in ministerial oversight, pastoral relations and evaluation congruent with one's setting and within the UCC covenants of mutual accountability
- Is cognizant of and practices appropriate personal boundaries
- Participates in spiritual direction, communities of practice, counseling, or other practices of growth and accountability

\_\_\_\_\_ **Stewarding the resources of the Church**

- helps the church plan faithfully for stewardship
- understand and oversees annual audits and monthly reporting of all finances
- helps others learn how they can use their gifts, talents, and skills for the building up of the Body of Christ

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### **PARTICIPATING IN THEOLOGICAL PRAXIS**

#### **Practicing theological reflection and engagement as part of one's sense of ministerial identity**

- Thinks theologically and acts in ways consistent with one's theological commitments
- Reads and critically evaluates theological texts, informed by a variety of Christian traditions
- Thinks theologically about contemporary issues related to the United Church of Christ's mission, and helps others do the same
- Reflects theologically on experience, opens oneself to new insights, and acts in new ways fueled by those theological insights

#### **Integrating theological reflection in teaching, preaching, and ecclesial and community leadership**

- Teaches others to reflect theologically
- Helps constituents bring their theological commitments to bear on significant life decisions
- Identifies and interprets theological implications of social discourse, public policy, and community engagement

#### **Articulating a theology and practice of ministry consistent with the UCC Manual on Ministry**

- Recognizes Jesus as the Sole Head of the Church
- Relates one's theology of ministry to the UCC's understanding of the priesthood of all believers and the nature of Authorized Ministry
- Integrates one's theology of ministry with the UCC's covenants of mutual accountability
- Demonstrates an appreciation for the formal ecumenical relationships in which the UCC participates
- Respects and encourages ecumenical and interfaith dialogue and activity, especially around issues of common concern within one's community

#### **Experiencing and appreciating a variety of theological perspectives**

- Demonstrates knowledge of and appreciation for theological perspectives other than one's own
- Assists others to appreciate theological perspectives reflected in the diverse communities that comprise the United Church of Christ
- Understands the variety of theological perspectives in the broader culture, and engages respectfully and boldly in public theological discourse

#### **Demonstrating an appreciation for and participation in the ecumenical and interfaith partnerships of the UCC**

- Understands the history of the global community of United and Uniting Churches and the place of the UCC within it
- Demonstrates appreciation for the formal ecumenical relationships in which the UCC participates
- Respects and encourages ecumenical and interfaith dialogue and activity, especially around issues of common concern within one's community
- Relates to constituents and their families/communities who experience multiple religious belongings

#### **Embodying the United Church of Christ Ministerial Code of Ethics**

- Understands and incorporates of the Code of Ethics into one's personal and professional life

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### **WORKING TOGETHER FOR JUSTICE AND MERCY**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Drawing on the ministry of Jesus Christ to confront injustice and oppression**

- Preaches and teaches effectively about social, economic, and environmental justice as an essential part of the gospel of Jesus Christ
- Serves as an educator, advocate and community organizer in an area of social justice work
- Works effectively for justice with ecumenical and interfaith partners and with people of no faith
- Analyzes systems and works for systemic change

\_\_\_\_\_ **Practicing the radical hospitality of God**

- Practices ministry within one's own culture with awareness and appreciation of the multi-cultural gifts of the UCC and Church Universal
- Understands and commits to minister in ways that are accessible to all
- Practices forgiveness and reconciliation, and works toward restorative justice
- Reaches across cultures with mutuality for the sake of the Gospel

\_\_\_\_\_ **Identifying and working to overcome explicit and implicit bias in the life of the Church**

- Reflects self-critically on one's social location and areas of privilege
- Helps others learn and practice intercultural competencies
- Understands the impact of racism, sexism, classism, hetero- and cis-normativity, ableism, cultural imperialism, and other forms of oppression on the church and the world, and engages in sacred conversations about these topics

\_\_\_\_\_ **Engaging in mission and outreach**

- Articulates a theology of mission consistent with critical presence, mutuality, community, justice, and peace
- Accesses resources provided by the United Church of Christ for education, advocacy and empowerment, and promoting their use among constituents and the local church
- Encourages others to support and participate in the wider church, including global and domestic ministry partnerships

\_\_\_\_\_ **Building relationships of mutual trust and interdependence**

- Seeks out and uses tools to understand and provide leadership in relating a ministry to its constituents and geographic context
- Navigates organizations and community systems effectively and with integrity
- Builds relationships of mutual trust and collaboration
- Solves complex problems and practices conflict transformation

\_\_\_\_\_ **Understanding community context and navigating change with a community**

- Seeks out and uses tools to understand and provide leadership in relating a ministry to its constituents and geographic context
- Navigates organizations and community systems effectively
- Builds relationships of mutual trust and collaboration
- Solves complex problems and practices conflict transformation

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### **STRENGTHENING INTER- AND INTRA- PERSONAL ASSETS**

#### **Developing and maintaining a healthy sense of self as shaped by God, community, and life experiences**

- Identifies one's strengths and weaknesses, functions within one's limits, and seeks the appropriate support of others in enhancing emotional maturity
- Identifies one's own implicit biases that impact interactions with others and works to overcome those biases

#### **Living in relationships of covenantal accountability with God and the Church**

- Articulates a theology and spirituality of covenant
- Lives covenantally among one's constituents or local church
- Teaches or mentors others in relationships of covenantal accountability with God, each other, and various settings of the church
- Participates in covenantal relationships with the wider church, such as the association, conference, and national setting of the UCC

#### **Exhibiting strong moral character and personal integrity**

- Demonstrates a commitment to spiritual, physical, emotional, and financial wellness sufficient for healthy ministry
- Supports moral and ethical development through teaching, preaching, counseling, and engagement with the world, informed by Christian scriptures and traditions
- Demonstrates knowledge and observance of personal and professional boundaries

#### **Respecting the dignity of all God's people**

- Provides pastoral care as needed to all, regardless of creed, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical and mental abilities, class, or theological perspective
- Respects others across differences, interacts with others in ways that affirm their sense of dignity (individually and as members of particular communities), and helps others do the same

#### **Understanding and ministering to stages of human development across the life span**

- Demonstrates a healthy understanding of the dynamics of childhood and adolescence, marriage and singleness, parenting and caregiving, death and trauma, grief and recovery
- Walks as a spiritual companion with individuals, families and communities as they journey through life milestones, joy, grief, and healing
- Provides sound spiritual counsel to those facing life transitions and the end of life, and to those making difficult decisions around major life events

#### **Demonstrating excellent communication skills**

- Communicates respectfully and effectively in diverse settings
- Uses social media effectively and appropriately
- Engages in "holy listening and speaking" and keeps appropriate confidences
- Engages productively in public discourse

**TOTAL (6-30) = \_\_\_\_\_**



## **Appendix I**

### **WISDOM CIRCLE AND MINISTERIAL FORMATION PLAN**

The Wisdom Circle consists of their (1) Advisor (who convenes and chairs the Circle), (2) Mentor, (3) a member of the candidate's Discernment Support Team and/or Pastor, (4) a representative from the Committee on Ministry, and (5) the Association General Minister.

The Wisdom Circle's primary task is to work with the Candidate to create a Ministerial Formation Plan that is presented to the Discernment Working Group. The Ministerial Formation Plan focuses on improving the candidate's growing edges as discerned through assessment using the Marks and suggests ways to strengthen the candidate's competencies with the Marks.

On behalf of the Discernment Working Group, the candidate's Advisor convenes and chairs a Wisdom Circle, who works with the Member in Discernment to develop their own uniquely designed Ministerial Formation Plan. This document takes into account the results of the Self-Assessment and then lists:

1. future plans to acquire appropriate knowledge and skills for Authorized Ministry
2. plans to hone practices of ministry as outlined in The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers, exhibiting a willingness to engage in lifelong learning and an openness to God's continued call

The Ministerial Formation Plan includes academic learning and other education requirements, varying depending on the Member in Discernment's education, gifts, strengths, and experiences.

The Member in Discernment submits the Ministerial Formation Plan to the Discernment Working Group through the registrar, who schedules the candidate to meet with them. Once the Discernment Working Group has approved the plan, the Member in Discernment offers their Mentor and Advisor regular updates as they progress through their Ministerial Formation Plan; documenting coursework, individual learning, seminars attended, etc.

## Appendix J

### DEVELOPING THE MINISTERIAL FORMATION PLAN

1. Begin by reviewing **The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the UCC**.
2. Using the candidate's self-assessment of the Marks, their spiritual journey, transcripts, and documents to look for evidence of competencies for each Mark. You may want to make notes using colored pencils corresponding to each of the eight sections of the Marks.
3. Note initially which sections the candidate demonstrates strength and which sections need further development. For example, does the candidate have some experience with this Mark; do they demonstrate a deep understanding of this Mark; have they integrated this Mark with other Marks and with their ministry; do they exhibit a passion for this Mark, such that they can lead others in its development? A copy of **The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers Self-Assessment** should be completed by the Member in Discernment in collaboration with their Mentor, Advisor and several persons familiar with the candidate's spiritual journey and faith practices and reviewed jointly.
4. Use these initial assessments as the basis for dialogue as you enter into the discernment process with the candidate. Determine what further evidence needs to be presented and/or what areas need further learning.
5. **Develop a Ministerial Formation Plan tailored to the individual** that will enable the candidate to acquire the learning and/or experience to develop competency in Marks where growth is lacking. The *Ministerial Formation Plan* should indicate specific desired outcomes, a timeline, and how the learning will be subsequently evaluated.
6. Living Water Association Registrar will maintain records that are shared with the candidate to keep track of observations of maturation and integration. When the competency has been sufficiently demonstrated, the Discernment Working Group will "sign-off" on the Mark. Sufficiency does not mean perfection. It means evidence of competency (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) sufficient for Authorized Ministry, with the expectation that all ministers will be lifelong learners.

## Chart for Appendix J

EXHIBITING A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION AND ONGOING SPIRITUAL PRACTICE						
	<b>Initial Assessment:</b> Experience, Understanding, Integration, Passion	Demonstration of Competency	Recommendations for Ongoing Growth	Observation of Maturation and Integration	Notes	COM Sign-off
Loving God, following Jesus Christ, and being guided by the holy spirit; living a life of discipleship						
Praying actively and nurturing spiritual practices						
Being called to ordained ministry by God and the Church						
Continuing Discernment of one's call in community						
Understanding the power of the Holy Spirit at work through the elements of Christian worship to nurture faith						
Exhibiting a commitment to lifelong spiritual development and faithful personal stewardship						

## NURTURING UCC IDENTITY

	<b>Initial Assessment:</b> Experience, Understanding, Integration, Passion	Demonstration of Competency	Recommendations for Ongoing Growth	Observation of Maturation and Integration	Notes	COM Sign-off
Acknowledging Jesus Christ as the sole Head of the church						
Communicating passion for the oneness of the Body of Christ (John 17:21)						
Holding active membership in a Local Church of the United Church of Christ						
Participating in the various settings of the UCC, including Local Churches, Associations, Conferences, General Synod, and global ministries						
Knowing and appreciating UCC history, polity and theology						
Exhibiting a commitment to the core values of the UCC: continuing testament, extravagant welcome, and changing lives						

## BUILDING TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS

	<b>Initial Assessment:</b> Experience, Understanding, Integration, Passion	Demonstration of Competency	Recommendations for Ongoing Growth	Observation of Maturation and Integration	Notes	COM Sign-off
Empowering the Church to be Faithful to God's call, reflective of Christ's mission, and open to the surprises of the Holy Spirit						
Strategically creating the future of God's Church						
Witnessing in the public square to God's redeeming power						
Working collaboratively with intercultural awareness and sensitivity						
Encouraging leadership of development of self and others through continuing education and lifelong learning						

## ENGAGING SACRED STORIES AND TRADITIONS

	<b>Initial Assessment:</b> Experience, Understanding, Integration, Passion	Demonstration of Competency	Recommendations for Ongoing Growth	Observation of Maturation and Integration	Notes	COM Sign-off
Exhibiting knowledge, understanding and continuing study of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament						
Maturing in effective proclamation and practicing						
Understanding the history of the Christian Church, from biblical times forward						
Bringing life to sacred stories and traditions in worship, proclamation, and witness						
Leading faith formation effectively across generations						
Holding the Holy with integrity, especially as represented in the Sacraments						

## CARING FOR ALL CREATION

	<b>Initial Assessment:</b> Experience, Understanding, Integration, Passion	Demonstration of Competency	Recommendations for Ongoing Growth	Observation of Maturation and Integration	Notes	COM Sign-off
Nurturing care and compassion for God's creation						
Maintaining a basic understanding of mental health and wellness						
Practicing self-care and life balance						
Providing hope and healing to a hurting world						
Attending to one's own spiritual and pastoral care, including engagement in supervision as appropriate						
Stewarding the resources of the church						

## PARTICIPATING IN THEOLOGICAL PRAXIS

	<b>Initial Assessment:</b> Experience, Understanding, Integration, Passion	Demonstration of Competency	Recommendations for Ongoing Growth	Observation of Maturation and Integration	Notes	COM Sign-off
Practicing theological reflection and engagement as part of one's sense of ministerial identity						
Integrating theological reflection in teaching, preaching, and ecclesial and community leadership						
Articulating a theology and practice of ministry consistent with the UCC Manual on Ministry						
Demonstrating an appreciation for and participation in the ecumenical and interfaith partnerships of the UCC						
Experiencing and appreciating a variety of theological perspectives						
Embodying the UCC Ministerial Code						



## WORKING TOGETHER FOR JUSTICE AND MERCY

	<b>Initial Assessment:</b> Experience, Understanding, Integration, Passion	Demonstration of Competency	Recommendations for Ongoing Growth	Observation of Maturation and Integration	Notes	COM Sign-off
Drawing on the ministry of Jesus Christ to confront injustice and oppression						
Practicing the radical hospitality of God						
Identifying and working to overcome explicit and implicit bias in the life of the Church						
Understanding community context and navigating change with a community						
Engaging in mission and outreach						
Building relationships of mutual trust and interdependence						

## STRENGTHENING INTER- AND INTRA-PERSONAL ASSETS

	<b>Initial Assessment:</b> Experience, Understanding, Integration, Passion	Demonstration of Competency	Recommendations for Ongoing Growth	Observation of Maturation and Integration	Notes	COM Sign-off
Developing and maintaining a healthy sense of self as shaped by God, community, and life experiences						
Living in relationships of covenantal accountability with God and the Church						
Exhibiting strong moral character and personal integrity						
Respecting the dignity of all God's people						
Understanding and ministering to stages of human development across the life span						
Demonstrating excellent communication skills						

## Appendix K

### DISCERNMENT CHECKLIST

- \_\_\_\_\_ Member in Discernment is assigned a Mentor
- \_\_\_\_\_ Member in Discernment is assigned an Advisor
- \_\_\_\_\_ Member in Discernment is assigned a Community of Practice
- \_\_\_\_\_ Member in Discernment starts working on the Self-Assessment, together with Mentor
- \_\_\_\_\_ Member in Discernment and Wisdom Circle draft the Ministerial Formation Plan
- \_\_\_\_\_ Discernment Working Group approves the Ministerial Formation Plan
- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete educational requirements of the Ministerial Formation Plan:
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Biblical Studies
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Biblical Interpretation
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Theology
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Worship, Sacraments, Liturgy
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Preaching and Worship Leadership
  - \_\_\_\_\_ UCC History and Polity
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Pastoral Care
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Stewardship Education
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Evangelism and Church Growth
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Pastoral Leadership
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Christian Education and Confirmation
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Church History
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Christian Ethics
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Spiritual Disciplines
- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete Field Education or relevant contextual experience
- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete Clinical Pastoral Education or relevant contextual experience
- \_\_\_\_\_ Healthy Practices for Ministry
- \_\_\_\_\_ Diversity Awareness Training
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other:
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other:
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other:
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other:

#### Also required:

- Arrange to meet with Mentor monthly
- Scheduled a review meeting with the Discernment Working Group annually
- Complete the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers Self-Assessment annually
- Arrange to meet with the local church Discernment Support Team twice a year
- Attend Annual Meeting and Spring Vitality Festival of the Association
- Attend the Annual Meeting of the Conference

## **Appendix L**

### **THE MARKS REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR THE ORDINATION PAPER**

#### **Exhibiting A Spiritual Foundation and Ongoing Spiritual Practices**

- What is your experience of call: in relationship to God, the church and your community?
- What spiritual practices have helped you live a life of discipleship and prayer?
- What is your understanding of covenantal accountability?
- How does the Holy Spirit find expression in Christian worship in historic and current practice?

#### **Nurturing UCC Identity**

- How do you see the purpose, mission and vision of the United Church of Christ in its expression of the local and global work of the church? How do you personally live this out?
  - Purpose - Love with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and our neighbor as ourselves.
  - Mission - United in Spirit and inspired by God's grace, we welcome all, love all and seek justice for all.
  - Vision - United in Christ's love, a just world for all.
- What is your history with the UCC, as a member of a congregation and as a leader within communities of faith? How have you grown spiritually as a result?
- How does your Christian commitment call you to value and participate in ecumenical and interfaith activities?

#### **Building Transformational Leadership skills**

- In what ways do Christ's example and the Spirit's movement inspire your effective leadership and growth within the church?
- What principles of life-long learning encourage leadership development in yourself and others?
- How are administrative and practical needs of the church forms of ministry?
- What is your role in public spaces as a witness to God's redeeming work?

#### **Engaging Sacred Stories and Traditions**

- What is your understanding of Scripture and the nature of Biblical revelation?
- What role does scriptural study play in your preparation for ministry and worship?
- What is the "good news" you are called to proclaim?
- The Christian tradition is long and varied. How have you been shaped by aspects of the tradition, and what do you find particularly compelling to honor and build upon?
- What role has Faith Formation played in your life, and how do you see it needing to be expressed in the life of the church?
- How do you understand the Sacraments? What do they mean to you and to the life of a gathered community of faith?
- Where do you experience "the holy"?

**Caring for All Creation**

- How is the church called to be a healing community? How are you a part of it?
- How is that call expressed in ministry to those outside the local church? to all God's creation?
- How do you care for yourself, find the help you need? How does that aid your ministry?

**Participating in Theological Praxis**

- What is your process for theological reflection?
- What are your sources for a variety of theological reflections?
- With what theologians do you resonate and why?
- How does your theological reflection inform your teaching, preaching and leadership?

**Working Together for Justice and Mercy**

- What does the ministry of Jesus Christ demonstrate about confronting injustice and oppression?
- How do you demonstrate leadership in extending the radical hospitality of God?
- In what ways do you discover and address implicit bias in all ministry settings?
- How do you embody the UCC Ministerial Code of Ethics?

**Strengthening Inter- and Intra-Personal Assets**

- How do you maintain a healthy sense of self shaped by God, community and life experience?
- How do you show respect for the dignity of all people?
- What importance does exhibiting strong moral character and personal integrity have in ministry?

## **Appendix M**

### **SCHOLARSHIP RESOURCES**

[Heartland Conference Ministerial Aid Scholarships](#)

[UCC Ministry Education Scholarships](#)

[The Fund for Theological Education](#)