

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). 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.