

of discernment is complete with this decision. Member in Discernment status is terminated.

All decisions are to be communicated to the Member in Discernment in writing and added to their file. If Member in Discernment status is terminated, either with or without bias, the results are recorded in the UCC Data Hub.

8. Ecclesiastical Council²³

In the United Church of Christ, the authority to ordain ministers and to grant ministerial standing is given to Associations. The Ecclesiastical Council is a gathering of delegates on behalf of an Association to decide, on behalf of the United Church of Christ, for or against the ordination of a Member in Discernment (pending the receipt of an ordainable call²⁴) following the affirmative recommendation of a Committee on Ministry. Members in Discernment who receive negative recommendations (a *No* decision) from Committees on Ministry are not considered by Ecclesiastical Councils.

At the Committee on Ministry's recommendation, the Association schedules an Ecclesiastical Council and shares the Member in Discernment's ordination paper or portfolio presentation with the Association for its consideration. Delegates from Local Churches in the Association gather as an Ecclesiastical Council to examine the Member in Discernment and to vote for or against their ordination.

If the outcome of the Ecclesiastical Council is *No*, Member in Discernment status is terminated, with or without bias, and updated in the UCC Data Hub. If the vote is *Yes*, the UCC Data Hub is updated to indicate that the Member in Discernment is "approved for ordination pending call." At that time, the Member in Discernment may begin to circulate a UCC Ministerial Profile.

A Member in Discernment who is "approved for ordination pending call" continues to meet annually with the Committee on

The criminal background check on the UCC Ministerial Profile has a lifespan of eighteen months. Providing up to four years for a Member in Discernment to remain "approved for ordination pending call" allows for two full lifespans of the UCC Ministerial Profile (three years) and an additional year for the Committee and the Member in Discernment to review prayerfully the appropriateness of a continuing search. Depending on a Member in Discernment's particular circumstances, the Committee on Ministry may modify this period of time to ensure sufficient opportunity for the Member in Discernment to find their first call.

²³ See Section 3 for best practices for Ecclesiastical Councils.

²⁴ See Section 2 Article 5 for additional reflection on ordainable calls.



Section 2:1 Members in Discernment

Ministry. These meetings must include a vote by the Committee on Ministry, acting on behalf of the Association, to renew the status of “approved for ordination pending call.” Annual renewal of “approved for ordination pending call” permits a Member in Discernment’s UCC Ministerial Profile to continue its circulation and to be updated as needed. If a decision is made to decline renewal of “approved for ordination pending call,” then Member in Discernment status is terminated, the UCC Data Hub is updated accordingly, and the UCC Ministerial Profile is withdrawn from circulation. A Committee may terminate “approved for ordination pending call” at any time based on lack of an ordainable call and/or unsatisfactory demonstration of the Marks or Ministerial Code.

A Member in Discernment may be categorized as “approved for ordination pending call” for a recommended maximum of four years.