

# MAKE IT PLAIN

2



2017 Draft

Authorizing Ministry for the 21st Century

I will stand at my watchpost to see what the LORD will say.  
Then the LORD answered and said, "Write the vision; make it plain  
so a runner may read it. For there is still a vision." (Habakkuk 2:1-3)

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# STANDING AT THE WATCHPOST

## INTRODUCING THE WORK OF THE HABAKKUK GROUP

Dear Friends,

Grace, mercy and peace to each of you involved in the sacred work of authorizing ministry in our beloved United Church of Christ.

### Introduction

In the fall of 2013, the Ministerial Excellence, Support & Authorization (MESA) Ministry Team initiated a process to reimagine the Manual on Ministry (MOM), which is an essential resource of the National Offices in service to and support of all covenant partners in the United Church of Christ.

MESA selected 17 persons from a pool of 150 nominees from across the denomination and called them together for the work of MOM's reimagining. This group of 17 includes Members in Discernment, Ordained and Licensed Ministers, retired clergy, chaplains to the military and prisons, Conference staff, seminary professors, and lay persons active with Committees on Ministry.<sup>1</sup> We are richly diverse in age, race, sexual orientation, and geography. Our group also includes a representative of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who was appointed by their General Minister and President. The MESA program staff has provided guidance and support.

From the first meeting of the group in June of 2014, we've grounded ourselves in the witness of the Hebrew prophet Habakkuk to "stand at the watchpost" and "survey the landscape" of ministry in our denomination (2:1). Calling ourselves the Habakkuk Group, we often return to those pages of scripture for guidance and inspiration.

At that first "watchpost" meeting in Cleveland, we noted many signs across the church's landscape that confirmed for us the need for more than minor modifications to the Manual on Ministry. Though MOM has had numerous revisions since it was first published in the 1960s by the then-new United Church of Christ, the current MOM has not been significantly updated in 30 years. It does not reflect the progress our denomination has made since General Synod adopted the Ministry Issues Pronouncement in 2005, nor is the current MOM complementary with tools and resources now widely used by our Committees on Ministry such as the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers. Much of the vocabulary we use has changed too (for example, "Students in Care" are now "Members in Discernment"), confirming the fact that we live beyond the current edition of MOM.

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<sup>1</sup> Capitalizations of certain titles reflect the capitalizations used in the UCC Constitution and Bylaws.

The United Church of Christ needs a Manual that reflects the progress we've made and equips us all – especially our Committees on Ministry (COMs)<sup>2</sup> – to respond to changes in ministry that will surely occur in the future. We envision this next edition of MOM as a living guide that articulates shared values and authorization practices while allowing for local embodiment of these core principles.

## The Landscape of Ministry Today

The Church<sup>3</sup> is in need now, as much as ever, of highly skilled and educated ministers who are deeply grounded in the Christian faith. Across the landscape of the Church in the 21st century, we are calling ministers to be entrepreneurs and church planters. We send them to lead social movements. We credential them to serve in the military. We ask them to represent us on college campuses, in hospitals and prisons. And in more than 5,000 Local Churches we authorize ministers to preach the Word and celebrate the Sacraments. These ministers act in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ, a responsibility that is maintained in covenant with a Committee on Ministry that supports, encourages, and holds them accountable. Committee members who serve as our episcopate<sup>4</sup> need guidance and resources from the denomination to be responsive to the changing landscape of authorizing ministry.

Authorized ministry is not the only significant area of change noticed by the Habakkuk Group. There exist structural challenges in the life of the church today that were not as acutely felt when the Manual on Ministry was last updated. Like our peer denominations in this post-Christendom age, the United Church of Christ has experienced declines in church membership, worship attendance, and financial offerings. These shifts impact and challenge the structures of support and accountability described in previous iterations of MOM.

Decline in traditional expressions of church also affects the employment of authorized ministers. Today we have fewer large and program-size churches with the capacity to employ ministers with specialized portfolios. We are sending fewer ministers into global mission fields. In 2015, the UCC's Center for Analytics, Research and Data (CARD) reported that nearly half of our Local Churches have fewer than 50 members. Many smaller congregations are threatened with closure. To sustain vital ministries, these churches have a continuing need for part-time and bi-vocational ministers.

The shift to “multiple paths” – the opportunity for multiple paths of formation (including but not limited to seminary), introduced a decade ago with the Ministry Issues Pronouncement – has helped to serve the needs of many Local Churches. Congregations throughout our multicultural denomination, in covenant with their Committees on Ministry, are now able to encourage the formation of authorized ministers

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<sup>2</sup> Committees on Ministry have a variety of names across the United Church of Christ, including *Church and Ministry Committee* in some Associations and *Committees on the Ministry* in the 1986/2002 edition of MOM. Throughout this document, *Committee on Ministry* or *COM* or simply *Committee* is used.

<sup>3</sup> **CHURCH:** When capitalized, Church indicates the whole Body of Christ across denominations and creeds and borders. In this document, the phrases *Church*, *Christian Church* and *Church Universal* indicate this broadest understanding of the Christian community.

<sup>4</sup> **EPISCOPE:** the ministry of oversight.

according to diverse contexts and values. Efforts to affirm the diversity of ministers, however, have been imperfect and unfinished. Bias, both explicit and implicit, continues to exist when churches call pastors; those biases are revealed by the ratios between male and female senior pastors and between clergy of color and their white colleagues. There are imbalances in compensation of Ordained versus Licensed Ministers who are called to perform similar ministerial functions. Meanwhile Commissioned Ministers represent less than 1% of all authorized ministers, a percentage that continues to decrease over time.

Concurrently, we are witnessing broad changes in society's relationship with institutions as a whole, including some of the Church's oldest institutions. Seminary enrollment has decreased and student debt has risen. Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM), the principal instrument of financial support for Associations, Conferences and the National Offices, is having to adapt to new patterns of giving.

Nowhere have these adjustments caused more pain than in the middle judicatory,<sup>5</sup> a primary source of pastoral and professional guidance for our Committees on Ministry. In more than 1/3 of our Conferences, the Conference Minister is the sole program staff person. In some areas of the denomination, Committees on Ministry have been bereft of the training needed to do the work of ministerial authorization or to deal with weighty and complex issues such as Fitness Reviews. Some Associations and Conferences experience difficulty filling Committees on Ministry with committed lay volunteers. Many Committees are overwhelmed by the sheer volume of work.

The Habakkuk Group affirms and believes strongly that our Committees on Ministry perform an essential function of our common life together as the United Church of Christ. Our work strives to "make plain" (Habakkuk 2:2) the theological rationale for and best practices of ministerial authorization so that Committees might be equipped to manage the tremendous expectations we have of them.

## **Habakkuk's Framework**

Through study and prayer and deliberation, the Habakkuk Group has reimagined the Manual on Ministry as a resource to equip the authorization of ministry in the United Church of Christ for the 21st century. MOM's primary audience is the Committee on Ministry, which is in itself a unique and vital ministry in our denomination. The primary tasks of Committees on Ministry are (1) the discernment of ministerial authorization in the United Church of Christ and (2) the ongoing support and accountability of the denomination's authorized ministers.

The next Manual on Ministry is composed of three sections.

Section 1: Theological Grounding

Section 2: Ministerial Authorization

Section 3: Resources for Committees on Ministry

We imagine that the theological grounding of MOM (Section 1) will remain constant in the coming years and will enrich our understandings of ministry: both lay and authorized. Section 2, which outlines

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<sup>5</sup> **MIDDLE JUDICATORY:** In denominational life, middle judicatory refers to regional structures of governance and ministry. The middle judicatories in the United Church of Christ are our Associations and Conferences.

the processes and covenants for ministerial authorization, require infrequent change only as significant shifts occur in our denominational life. The resources of Section 3 can be updated and improved on an ongoing basis, supplied and circulated by the MESA Team in its responsibilities to support middle judicatories and Committees on Ministry. We understand that Associations and Conferences will structure their COMs in ways that are most beneficial to their own contexts.

The Habakkuk Group anticipates that, at a later date, a companion resource to MOM will be developed to address the authorization of and ongoing covenant with Local Churches: a Manual on Church for the use of Committees on Ministry, Conference committees on church vitality, and other groups that relate to Local Churches. Finally, we anticipate that the Manual on Ministry materials being presented at this time in print will be refined and compiled into a single visually-engaging and interactive resource.

### **Habakkuk's Recommendations**

The Habakkuk Group grounded its work in deep prayer and discernment, listening carefully at all times for the needs of the Church, both currently and into the future. A critical listening partner throughout this process has been a group of 25 readers across the United Church of Christ who previewed and provided feedback semiannually on the Habakkuk Group's drafted theological and practical work. Like the Habakkuk Group members, these readers represent a diverse range of perspectives and experiences. The reimaged Manual on Ministry reflects a thorough and prayerful process as well as the Habakkuk Group's aim to identify technical and adaptive changes that will best support Committees on Ministry in their work of ministerial authorization and ongoing oversight.

It is our hope that all settings of the United Church of Christ will engage these materials proactively, exploring the Manual on Ministry with a heart for faithful and effective ministry throughout the Church. To that end, the Habakkuk Group will invite Conference staff and national partners into a time of conversation and reflection at "Authorizing Ministry for the 21st Century" (AM21) in December 2016, an event hosted by the MESA Ministry Team. Four regional AM21s will be offered in 2017 to Committees on Ministry and members of the UCC in order to provide intentional opportunity for discernment with this edition of MOM. The denomination will be invited to continue this conversation and to begin its engagement of the new Manual on Ministry by means of a prudential resolution at General Synod 29. Any necessary changes to the Constitution and Bylaws that may arise from the use of the Manual on Ministry would come before General Synod 30.

We extend profound thanks for your joining us in this sacred work.

Faithfully,

*Cameron Barr and Eleanore Chong*  
Co-Chairs of the Habakkuk Group

*Holly MillerShank and Rachel Hackenberg*  
on behalf of the MESA Ministry Team

*November 1, 2016*

# MANUAL ON MINISTRY: SECTION 1

BASED ON THE FEEDBACK RECEIVED TO DATE, THE FOLLOWING MATERIALS/IDEAS IN SECTION 1 ARE “STILL IN CONVERSATION” (see Discussion Guide) OR “READY TO BE USED”:

## STILL IN DISCERNMENT AND CONVERSATION

☑ The Habakkuk Group’s conclusion based on its theology of ministry and ordination – specifically, that the UCC might shift to one form of authorized ministry – is an idea that remains in discernment at this time. A Discussion Guide is provided in the back of this drafted Manual on Ministry (and as a separate document) to encourage the wider church’s conversation on how many/what forms of authorization best meet the needs of the Church for the 21st century.

## READY TO BE USED

☑ The description of covenantal polity can be used by Committees on Ministry and Conferences/Associations.

☑ The theology of ministry and ordination did not receive critical feedback or substantial edits at AM21 in San Antonio. (The implications of this theology are still in discernment and conversation.)

☑ The revised Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministers are affirmed and ready to be used. A new assessment rubric and Journaling the Journey are available through UCC Resources.

☑ The faithful and effective marks for Committees on Ministry received affirmation, with requests for additional tools for training and assessing the ministry of Committees on Ministry.

## FEEDBACK

During 2017, the Habakkuk Group will continue to receive feedback on the drafted Manual on Ministry as it is discussed at AM21 regional events and as Committees on Ministry engage the materials (putting some portions to use and holding some portions in conversation). [Feedback forms](#) can be sent to Rachel Hackenberg (hackenberg@ucc.org) for the Habakkuk Group’s consideration. Some Associations may choose to use materials/ideas presented in this drafted MOM as their method of discernment and engagement, with the understanding that changes and clarifications (particularly related to the topics “still in discernment”) will not be finalized until after 2017.

## **From the Habakkuk Group**

*The changing landscapes of Church and denominational life in the 21st century impact the form and function of ministry, including the ways in which the United Church of Christ calls, authorizes and oversees ministers. Consequently, our Manual on Ministry – which saw its last revision in 2002 and its last significant rewrite of content in 1986 – needs intentional revising and reimagining to meet the needs of the Church and especially of Committees on Ministry that serve the United Church of Christ. The Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization (MESA) Ministry Team of the UCC National Offices solicited nominations in 2013 to form the Habakkuk Group in 2014, a 17-member committee representing breadth in life experience, theological and ecclesial perspective, church roles, and voice.*

*The group's goal, in the spirit of Habakkuk 2:2, is to write the vision of authorized ministry and to make it plain for the United Church of Christ. Its membership includes:*

*Co-Chairs Cameron Barr and Eleanore Chong, David Alicea, Liddy Gerchman Barlow, Martha Ann Baumer, Ben Bohren, Cheryl Burke, Quentin Chin, Yelanda Collins, Sheldon Culver, Lois Farnsworth-Whysong, David Hill, Steve Moore, Jonathan New, Vickye Robinson, David Van Epps, and Bill Worley;*

*with support by the MESA Program Staff (Stephen Boyd, Kathryn Clark, Elizabeth Dilley, Rachel Hackenberg, Holly MillerShank, Malcolm Himschoot) and consultation from the Office of General Counsel (Don Clark, Heather Kimmel, Richard Hilbrich).*

*The Habakkuk Group built its work on prayer and theological reflection, listening for the Spirit at work in the Church and in the world. We believed from the outset that the authorization of ministers serves to help the Church respond faithfully to the Spirit in worship and work. Therefore, the Habakkuk Group was diligent in its attention to the **TRIUNE GOD**,<sup>6</sup> so that new developments and practices might honor the tradition of making faith our own in each generation. We believe the foundation for ministerial authorization is theological and that the Manual on Ministry is a living guide to empower and nurture ministry for the Church to glorify God.*

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<sup>6</sup> **TRIUNE GOD:** the God who is three-in-one; Father, Son, Holy Ghost; Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer.

## THEOLOGICAL GROUNDING

*O Holy One, as we become an expression of your presence in our midst, we ask for your Spirit to be present in our discernment of your call in our lives. As your Church gathers, guide and strengthen us in the ways we serve your name with our gifts and passions. Throughout history, you have emboldened leaders in your effort to energize people to serve creation. May we sense your Spirit moving within our efforts to raise up and support leaders for your Church's ongoing work in the world. In your holy name, we pray. Amen.*

### COVENANTAL POLITY

As members of the United Church of Christ, we testify to the deeds of God, saying together in the words of the Statement of Faith:

#### **From the Habakkuk Group:**

*The work of ministry and of the Church begins and ends in community. Our shared love of Christ and our response to God's grace compel us to work for and beside one another for the sake of God's mission.*

*In the United Church of Christ, these relationships of working together for God's sake are called covenants. We speak highly of covenantal relationships though at times we prefer individualism, in effect saying to other members of the Body, "I have no need of you" (I Corinthians 12).*

*Our covenantal relationships are rarely perfect, but we believe that – when we govern our common life as the United Church of Christ with commitment to one another and Christ – then we demonstrate Christ's love and the Spirit's wisdom at work through us in life-giving ways.*

"You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit,  
creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ  
binding in covenant faithful people of all ages,  
tongues, and races.

"You call us into your church  
to accept the cost and joy of discipleship,  
to be your servants in the service of others,  
to proclaim the gospel to all the world and  
resist the powers of evil,  
to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table,  
to join him in his passion and victory."<sup>7</sup>

God "calls the worlds into being," giving life and purpose to creation, to persons and to communities. Throughout the biblical stories and across generations, God calls us to belong to God and to respond to God's grace by belonging to one another.

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<sup>7</sup> United Church of Christ Statement of Faith, doxological version

So belonging together (being in **COVENANT**<sup>8</sup> with one another) relies on the initiative and grace of God, the One who gives and renews life. In Jesus Christ, the covenant is made new. By the Holy Spirit, the covenant is widened and strengthened. With the Sacraments of baptism and communion, the Church celebrates God's renewing power and knows again the new life and identity given to God's people. As God gives God's self to humanity for the sake of all, so Christians are called into covenant for the sake of one another rather than for one's self.

Covenant – the commitment of God to God's people, of the people to God, of the people to one another as the Body of Christ – is foundational to United Church of Christ identity and is at the heart of our governance. God's covenant with creation and humankind inspires deep and binding commitment in relationships within and beyond the Church, “that they may all be one” (John 17:21). The Church is called together by God; all members and settings of the Church are interrelated, sharing a common identity as the Body of Christ. The covenantal relationships between parts of the Body of Christ are characterized by mutuality, transparency, accountability, and a desire to represent Christ together for the glory of God.

In the United Church of Christ, the settings of the denomination are autonomous in governance and conscience yet belong to one another in Christ's name for the mission of God. They honor one another's integrity, listen carefully to each other, and “seek to walk together in all God's ways.”<sup>9</sup>

As a covenanted body, the United Church of Christ authorizes ministers to serve on its behalf. To do so faithfully requires

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<sup>8</sup> **COVENANT:** sacred commitments to relationship

<sup>9</sup> Article III Paragraph 6 of the UCC Constitution and Bylaws

accountability of all members and settings to one another and to God for the ministry of the Church. Clear communication is essential. The covenantal partners in UCC ministry authorization include:

- the individual,
- the Local Church where the individual is a member,
- the Association through its Committee on Ministry,
- the ministry setting to which the individual is called.

## REFLECTION AND FEEDBACK

*How does 1 Corinthians 12 help you examine the health as well as the dysfunction of a body living in covenant?*

*Using metaphors of water (e.g. river, fountain, deep, wide, shallow, winding), how would you describe the UCC covenants in your region?*

## THEOLOGY OF MINISTRY AND ORDINATION

The United Church of Christ believes that God calls every Christian to be a servant of God, a **MINISTER**<sup>10</sup>, living and serving in Christ's name. This call is celebrated sacramentally in baptism as persons are claimed for Christ by the Holy Spirit and the Church; all who are baptized spend the rest of their lives responding to God's call and claim. The particulars of each person's call and ministry vary with time, place, talents, experience, personal situation and responsibilities, and, importantly, the needs of the world. Ministry is lived in every aspect of one's life as God's love is shown in word and deed.

The particular ministry of reconciling all God's children with one another, with creation, and with God, was given to God's people in scripture: "All this is from God, who reconciled us through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Godself, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us" (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). This ministry is claimed daily by the United Church of Christ as it is called to love God, neighbor and self, and to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God (Matthew 22:36-50 and Micah 6:8).

Christians are members of the Body of Christ, the Church, under the sole headship of Jesus Christ. This is a living body (1 Corinthians 12), called, formed and sent into the world by the power of the Holy Spirit. Loving and serving God, the Church has multiple purposes:

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<sup>10</sup> **MINISTER**: any Christian, regardless of employment or title, created by God, called by Christ and gifted by the Spirit; all Christians are in ministry when serving the needs of the world in God's love and grace.

- embodying and proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ to all;
- nurturing and empowering the gathered Church through worship and Sacrament, fellowship and mutual care, education and spiritual formation; and
- acting in the world through deeds of justice and lovingkindness.

The Church is a covenantal community; members belong to God in Jesus Christ and therefore to one another in Jesus' name.

The Church acknowledges that its members have many diverse ministries in the world and in the Church. It also recognizes a specific need for representative servant leaders “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12). The United Church of Christ, along with the Church Universal through the ages and throughout the world, affirms God’s call to some individuals to be such leaders who help the Church to be what God intends it to be. These persons are set apart through prayer and the laying on of hands in the rite of ordination.

***From the Habakkuk Group:***

*The “needs of the Church,” a phrase often used when considering the authorization of a person for representative and sacramental ministry, should be understood as a question of the Church Universal’s needs, not only or primarily of a particular Local Church. Many needs of the Church are met well and faithfully by laypersons and their ministries.*

In ordination, the individual makes a lifetime commitment to God in Jesus Christ and to the Christian Church, relying on the Holy Spirit. As Ordained Ministers enter the **APOSTOLIC MINISTRY**,<sup>11</sup> they continue the witness of Christ’s followers from New Testament times. They receive authority from the Triune God to serve in Jesus’ name. Ordained Ministers have particular responsibilities for the proclamation and practice of the Christian faith and for the life of the Church itself.

<sup>11</sup> **APOSTOLIC MINISTRY:** The United Church of Christ “claims as its own the faith of the historic church” and joins the witness of Jesus’ apostles, at the same time challenging each generation “to make this faith its own.” Ordained Ministers witness to this faith as they engage in the ministries of Word and Sacrament within the United Church of Christ and the Church Universal.

***From the Habakkuk Group:***

*The Habakkuk Group wrestled long and hard over the issue of whether the UCC should continue to have three forms of authorized ministry: ordination, commissioning and licensure. For more than 20 years, the question of a theological basis for distinguishing among the three forms has been a major topic of conversation in UCC gatherings, discussions, and papers without reaching satisfying conclusions.*

*Ordained ministry has a firm theological, historical and ecumenical identity, and it includes a wide variety of ministries. In contrast, licensure and commissioning have pigeonholed – rather than expanded – ministries and gifts to specific roles with implicit statuses in our shared life. Licensed and commissioned ministers, while serving faithfully, nevertheless have been limited from offering their fullest gifts across the United Church of Christ.*

*Additionally, the Habakkuk Group believes that the ministry of Word and Sacrament (in its diverse settings and expressions) is ordained ministry regardless of hours worked, educational pathway, size of congregation, or institutional setting. The Group encourages Associations to consider ordination's full potential for serving the life and renewal of the Body of Christ in the 21st century.*

Ordained Ministers are authorized to serve and to lead on behalf of the United Church of Christ and the Church Universal, a ministry that encompasses the fullest range of leadership ministries: priestly and prophetic, representative and servant. They are called to embody the love of God for the world and to proclaim the good news on behalf of the Church, personally and publically pointing the Church to its dependence on Jesus Christ, the source of its faith, mission, and unity.

Ordained ministry of the United Church of Christ is in accord with the Church Universal as this ministry serves the unity of the Church and continues to witness to the Gospel proclaimed by Jesus of Nazareth and his followers across generations. As did prophets and priests of the Hebrew Scriptures and disciples and apostles of Jesus in the New Testament, Ordained Ministers stand with the people before God and carry the Word of God to the people. Ordained Ministers belong to both God and the people. They are nurtured and sustained by both; they are responsible to both. In the United Church of Christ, this relationship and responsibility is called **ORDAINED MINISTERIAL STANDING**.<sup>12</sup> It is embodied in a covenant under God among the Association, the Ordained Minister, the Local Church of membership, and the ministry setting.

Because both the demands upon Ordained Ministers and the needs of the Church are multiple, no person will have all the needed gifts to offer to all people in all situations. Nevertheless, all Ordained Ministers are servants of God in their ministry on behalf of the Church of Jesus Christ. Ordained ministry is ministry of the Church entrusted to individuals; it is not the ministry of individuals acting independently. Ordained Ministers

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<sup>12</sup> **ORDAINED MINISTERIAL STANDING:** Formal relationship between an Ordained Minister and the UCC through an Association.

are persons of faith, claimed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ and committed to the Church and its ministry. They seek to serve God and the world in humility, able and willing to offer and receive wisdom. The Church looks to them to be learned persons and to have a deep knowledge of the Scriptures and of the Church historically and ecumenically.

## REFLECTION AND FEEDBACK

*Where do deep conversations about ministerial authorization – its purposes, its theology, its function in the Church’s changing landscape – happen in your region?*

*What possibilities emerge in your context in response to the proposed change to one form of authorization (ordination)?*

## MARKS OF FAITHFUL AND EFFECTIVE AUTHORIZED MINISTERS OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Ordained Ministers are entrusted with and accountable for the faithfulness and effectiveness of their lives and ministries on behalf of the United Church of Christ. The development and demonstration of such faithfulness and effectiveness are guided by the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ (“The Marks”), a tool created to meet the aims of the 2005 Ministry Issues Pronouncement by General Synod. The Ministry Issues Pronouncement sought to expand UCC definitions of learnedness and leadership in authorized ministry and to emphasize excellence in ministerial formation. Committees on Ministry are guided in their work of authorizing and overseeing Ordained Ministers by the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers.

### **From the Habakkuk Group:**

*The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers strive to highlight the complex combination of talents, understandings and skills needed for faithful and effective ministerial leadership in the United Church of Christ. The Habakkuk Group revisited and revised the original Marks in order to unveil biases, better highlight core habits of excellent ministerial leadership, and slim the total list of individual marks.*

The Marks also have usefulness to Local Churches, ministry settings, Associations, and individuals as a discernment tool. The Marks are to be interpreted carefully within the many and varied contexts of particular UCC communities and ministries.

The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers,<sup>13</sup> arranged in eight categories, are:

### 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 ordained ministry by God and the Church.
- Continuing discernment of one’s call in community.

<sup>13</sup> See Section 3 for tools to use with the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers, including Journaling the Journey.

- 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

- 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 United Church of Christ, 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 United Church of Christ: continuing testament, extravagant welcome, and changing lives.

#### BUILDING TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS

- 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.
- Performing necessary and appropriate administrative tasks.
- Working collaboratively with intercultural awareness and sensitivity.
- 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.
- Maturing in effective proclamation and preaching.
- Understanding the history of the Christian Church, from biblical times forward.

#### ***From the Habakkuk Group:***

*As the Marks were revised, we affirmed passionately that the 21st century Church needs wise, knowledgeable, and ever-curious ministers. In agreement with the 2005 Ministry Issues Pronouncement of General Synod, the Habakkuk Group believes that such learnedness is not guaranteed by a particular degree but is shaped through multiple educational experiences, lessons of life's journeys, personal character, and the Spirit's inspiration.*

- 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

- 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

- 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

- 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

- 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.

In the United Church of Christ, Associations have the authority to ordain ministers and to grant standing on behalf of the whole Church. Associations, usually through their Committees on Ministry, work to discern God's call on an individual's life for ordained ministry, both initially with a Member in Discernment and throughout an Ordained Minister's journey. While ordination itself is understood to be for a lifetime, ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ is a covenant that may be concluded by the individual or by the Association for a variety of reasons.

#### ***From the Habakkuk Group:***

*In situations where an Ordained Minister is not available and the United Church of Christ's ministry is therefore compromised, Associations may grant Limited Standing to a Member in Discernment to perform the Sacraments of the Church and to provide pastoral care, with provisions for supervision. Guidelines for the use of Limited Standing are found in Section 2 of the Manual. Limited Standing should be understood as distinct from practices of licensure because Limited Standing is not an end in itself. A person who would be granted Limited Standing must be a Member in Discernment and continues the work of discernment while serving in a particular setting for a limited time as a layperson on behalf of the UCC.*

The **NEEDS OF THE CHURCH**<sup>14</sup> may determine that some Members in Discernment be granted Limited Standing to serve for a period of time in a setting where an Ordained Minister is not available. The Member in Discernment with Limited Standing is permitted to represent the United Church of Christ, to attend to teaching and pastoral care, to celebrate the Sacraments, and is accountable to and under the supervision of the Association through its COM on behalf of the United Church of Christ.

Associations<sup>15</sup> determine, usually through the work of Committees on Ministry and Ecclesiastical Councils, whether

<sup>14</sup> **NEEDS OF THE CHURCH** should be understood as a question of the Church Universal's needs, not only of a particular Local Church.

<sup>15</sup> Associations or Conferences acting as Associations

and when a person is to be ordained and/or received into Ordained Ministerial Standing. Associations are responsible too for ministerial oversight of all those with standing. Oversight includes the continuing support and accountability of those with standing, so that the United Church of Christ, in all its settings, may be led by faithful and effective servants.

## COMMITTEES ON MINISTRY

In both practice and polity, Committees on Ministry (COMs) are a vital embodiment of our covenantal relationships across the United Church of Christ. On behalf of and through their respective Associations and Conferences, Committees have a relationship with Local Churches, Members in Discernment, Ordained Ministers, every other Committee on Ministry, the United Church of Christ, and in fact the Church Universal. In this role, the overarching ministry of Committees on Ministry is the mindfulness of the Church's well-being and the discernment of the movement of the Holy Spirit in authorizing ministers on behalf of the United Church of Christ.

The Committee on Ministry has the role of support and accountability for those seeking or holding standing. On a regular basis, the Committee attends to the operative covenantal relationships between those with standing, the Association, the Local Church, and the ministry setting to nurture faithfulness and to ensure Ordained Ministers' ongoing growth in ministry according to the Marks for Effective and Faithful Authorized Ministers. A ministry setting – whether a UCC institution, an ecumenical ministry or a secular setting – is drawn into the covenantal relationship when it calls an Ordained Minister to servant leadership on behalf of the United Church of Christ.

### ***From the Habakkuk Group:***

*While all covenant participants across the United Church of Christ are autonomous bodies that willfully and prayerfully join together in ministry, the work of accountability requires a particular body to hold authority in relationship to those participants. The need for authority and accountability reflects our human failings as well as our human graces; we are blessed to be encouraged and challenged by one another to grow in faith and in relationship.*

*We locate the authority for overseeing ministerial leaders with our Associations through Committees on Ministry, believing that the gifts of the Spirit and the call of Christ to ministry are best discerned by a designated group of persons who are deeply faithful, perceptive of the Spirit and of persons, committed to the United Church of Christ, and collectively wise to varied experiences of the Church in the world.*

*The Habakkuk Group invites the Church to confess those times when we have resisted the authority of others to test our faithfulness and our gifts in community. We are grateful to Jesus Christ who is our Authority as the Head of the Body of Christ.*

Serving on a Committee on Ministry is a ministry in itself. For this reason, its membership should be intentionally diverse, include lay and ordained persons, and be trained and resourced to work for the empowerment of excellent authorized ministry. The core competencies and essential functions of a COM and its members<sup>16</sup> can be outlined to correlate with the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers:

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

- practicing discernment and prayerfulness
- modeling discernment to the wider church

#### NURTURING UCC IDENTITY

- understanding and practicing United Church of Christ polity in relationship and accountability
- articulating an ongoing commitment to the ministry of the Committee on Ministry and to the core values of the United Church of Christ

#### BUILDING TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS

- demonstrating integrity and trustworthiness
- willing to make difficult decisions through collaboration; saying “yes” as well as “no” for the sake of a healthy United Church of Christ

#### ENGAGING SACRED STORIES AND TRADITIONS

- engaging important moments of storytelling during seasons of ministry, such as incoming/exiting interviews, installations, etc.
- holding confidentiality as appropriate, including the secure maintenance of ministerial files

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<sup>16</sup> See Section 3 for a guide to COM Best Practices.

#### CARING FOR ALL CREATION

- empowering and safeguarding ministries that nurture God's mission throughout creation
- practicing support of Members in Discernment, Ordained Ministers, and Local Churches

#### PARTICIPATING IN THEOLOGICAL PRAXIS

- engaging questions of authority, covenant and accountability with care and wisdom
- participating annually in Committee on Ministry training with receptivity to best practices

#### WORKING TOGETHER FOR JUSTICE AND MERCY

- practicing hospitality to all persons
- demonstrating and encouraging accountability from all who seek and all who hold ministerial standing

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

- communicating in a timely and clear manner
- holding a healthy sense of self as members and as a Committee, and crafting space in which those meeting with the Committee can do the same

2017

# MANUAL ON MINISTRY: SECTION 2

## SECTION 2 ARTICLE I: MEMBERS IN DISCERNMENT

BASED ON THE FEEDBACK RECEIVED TO DATE, THE FOLLOWING MATERIALS/IDEAS IN SECTION 2 ARTICLE I ARE “STILL IN CONVERSATION” (see Discussion Guide) OR “READY TO BE USED”:

### STILL IN DISCERNMENT AND CONVERSATION

☒ The concept of Member in Discernment with Limited Standing is still in discernment and conversation, with questions raised about oversight, transferability, language (“limited”? “provisional”?), and distinctions between current practices of licensure and the proposed limited standing.

### READY TO BE USED

☒ The overall description of the Member in Discernment process, with allowance for local expressions of the process and requests for additional resources related to aspects of the process that may be new to some Associations (e.g. the encouragement of a Local Church Discernment Committee).

### FEEDBACK

During 2017, the Habakkuk Group will continue to receive feedback on the drafted Manual on Ministry as it is discussed at AM21 regional events and as Committees on Ministry engage the materials (putting some portions to use and holding some portions in conversation). [Feedback forms](#) can be sent to Rachel Hackenberg (hackenberg@ucc.org) for the Habakkuk Group’s consideration. Some Associations may choose to use materials/ideas presented in this drafted MOM as their method of discernment and engagement, with the understanding that changes and clarifications (particularly related to the topics “still in discernment”) will not be finalized until after 2017.

### LOCAL CHURCH AS LOCUS OF MINISTRY

The effectiveness, faithfulness and vitality of the United Church of Christ begin in the Local Church with the partnership between committed laity and effective clergy. At the heart of the understanding of Christian ministry in the United Church of Christ is the theological conviction that God calls all disciples to serve, and equips and empowers them to do so not only as active members of local congregations, but in their work and witness in daily life.

No matter the size or circumstance of a congregation, several fundamental characteristics reflect a culture of call:

- The congregation actively affirms a belief in the **PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS** and in the call of all Christians to be ministers (using their gifts and presence to serve the world with God's grace and love).
- The congregation has an identifiable mission providing many and varied opportunities for persons to have meaningful involvement in that mission.
- The congregation as a whole is connected to the life of the wider church, including a familiarity with the processes by which congregants may explore vocational ministry in the United Church of Christ.

For some the call to ministry may require specific **PREPARATION**, **FORMATION** and, perhaps, ordination. The vitality of the whole Church depends upon identifying, nurturing and empowering those who may experience such a call. The same "culture of call" of a Local Church that helps an individual attune themselves to God's call continues to nurture and support the individual's exploration of ordination, even as that individual takes steps with the Association toward a formal discernment process with a Committee on Ministry.

*PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS: "Let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood." (1 Peter 2:5) The understanding that all persons have access to God without an intermediary and that all persons have the potential to show God to others (to minister for God).*

*PREPARATION and FORMATION: "Preparation" refers to the specific activities that contribute to an individual's development personally, professionally, spiritually, and ethically. "Formation" is an active, open-ended and lifelong effort; it is the ongoing array of habits and intentional practices that contribute to an individual's maturity, effectiveness and faithfulness for ministry.*

## DISCERNMENT PARTNERS IN THE PROCESS OF AUTHORIZATION FOR MINISTRY

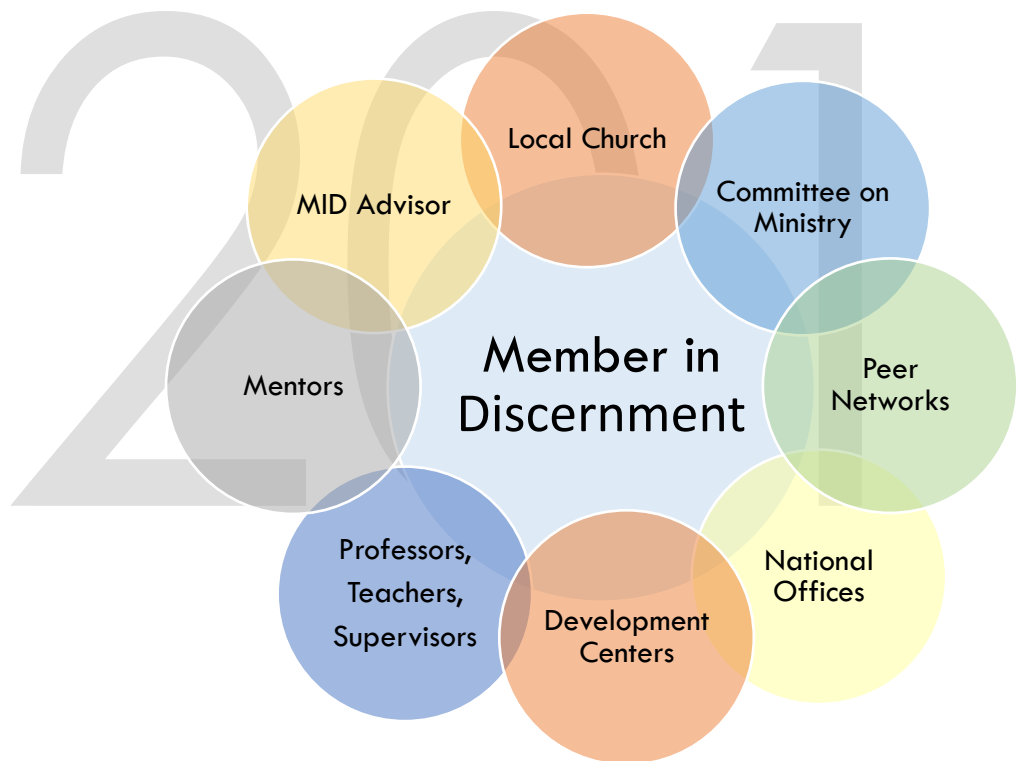
The process of discernment involves many interdependent and covenantal relationships, in support of both the individual and the Committee on Ministry making decisions on behalf of the United Church of Christ. These relationships help to form and examine the individual's capacity for ordained ministry, and these relationships provide a web of accountability partners so the individual as well as the Committee on Ministry do not do the work of discernment in isolation.

*LOCAL CHURCH DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE: An intentional small group of Local Church members who gather to listen to, encourage, and provide feedback for the Member in Discernment before that individual enters the MID process and continuing throughout the process. The Discernment Travelogue (see Section 3) is an excellent resource to support this process. The Local Church Discernment Committee may be a standing committee (elders, deacons, council, etc.) or an ad hoc group formed specifically for this purpose.*

*The guideline of SEVEN YEARS is intended to allow ample time for long-term experiences of formation such as mentoring and part-time academic studies, while limiting the endless "limbo" of discernment without decision. Committees on Ministry may modify this timeframe in discernment with a MID, depending on particular circumstances, however a clear and gracious boundary of time serves both the MID and the integrity of the process.*

- **Local Church.** The Local Church is the primary setting through which calls to ministry (both lay and ordained) are discerned. Whether persons have a lifelong experience of congregational life or they come to the United Church of Christ in adulthood, the relationship between individuals and Local Churches is considered essential for identifying and testing individuals' gifts and passions. To become a Member in Discernment, an individual must first be an active member of a Local Church of the United Church of Christ for at least one year, in order to establish and demonstrate commitment to a particular faith community's ministry and to the United Church of Christ. The relationships developed during this time and the experiences of Local Church life allow the individual, the pastor, and the congregation to listen and watch together for the individual's call. The pastor and a **LOCAL CHURCH DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE** are the individual's first and ongoing discernment partners. If these discernment partners agree that there is a potential call to ordained ministry to be explored formally, the Local Church's governing body recommends the individual to the Committee on Ministry.
- **Committee on Ministry.** The Committee on Ministry of an Association, acting on behalf of the United Church of Christ, provides support, assessment and accountability for the individual's continuing journey of discernment, and the Committee engages in its own discernment to determine whether the individual's call requires ordination. The Committee's discernment in relationship with the Member in Discernment should not take longer than **SEVEN YEARS**.

- **MID Advisor.** The Member in Discernment Advisor, assigned by the Committee on Ministry, is a UCC Ordained Minister who serves as a process guide for the MID. Often the MID Advisor meets with a Member in Discernment between the MID's meetings with the Committee, in order to provide a checkpoint on plans of formation and preparation and to clarify the discernment process.
- **National Offices.** The National Offices of the United Church of Christ provide parameters to support the discernment process and to ensure the development of faithful and effective ministers.



- **Mentors.** Mentors are persons whose ministry experience and personal relationship with the MID afford them opportunities to provide candid feedback and professional wisdom to the MID. Mentors reflect with the Member in Discernment as an expression of their personal relationship; mentors are not required to offer feedback to COMs.

*TRAINING EXPERIENCES in practical ministry may include such opportunities as field education, clinical pastoral education (CPE), internships, and more.*

- **Professors, Teachers, Supervisors.** Professors, teachers, supervisors, and other professionals who guide ministry preparation offer insight to the Member in Discernment and to Committees on Ministry. Professors and teachers are persons directly involved in the theological formation and educational development<sup>17</sup> of MIDs. Supervisors are persons who oversee MIDs' **TRAINING EXPERIENCES**.
- **Development Centers.** Development Centers are organizations that are called upon for psychological assessments, personality and gifts inventories, etc. Feedback from these professionals to a COM may be required regarding the preparation and readiness of an individual for ordained ministry.
- **Peer Networks.** The connection of Members in Discernment to one another is encouraged for support and networking. MID gatherings can be hosted by associations, conferences, and the National Offices.

## SUMMARY OF THE MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT PROCESS

The Member in Discernment process is intended to engage all discernment partners in reflection, conversation and assessment, so that the need of the church for excellent and faithful ministers may be met through wise decisions by all involved in the discernment process. The process unfolds in the following sequence<sup>18</sup>:

1. Exploration of Call with Local Church
  - Meetings with Local Church Pastor
  - Discernment with Local Church Discernment Committee
  - Decision by Local Church governing body to affirm or deny a recommendation of individual to the Committee on Ministry
2. Initial Meeting with **COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY**
  - Letter of Recommendation from Local Church
  - Application Materials from Individual

*COMMITTEES ON MINISTRY that are structured with subcommittees or organized conference-wide should understand "Committee on Ministry" to indicate whichever committee is assigned to the process of discernment.*

<sup>17</sup> See Section 3 for sample educational plans that follow multiple paths of theological formation and professional development.

<sup>18</sup> See Section 3 for "MID Process Best Practices."

- Following initial meeting, decision by Committee on Ministry to affirm or deny the request for MID status

3. Psychological Assessment, Criminal Background Check
  - Decision by Committee on Ministry to affirm or deny continuation of the MID process
4. **PREPARATION AND FORMATION PLAN** developed between MID and Committee on Ministry based on the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers as well as Assessment Reports
5. Ongoing Preparation by MID, Meetings with the MID Advisor, Continued Discernment, Development of MID Portfolio
6. Annual Review with Committee on Ministry
  - Decision by Committee on Ministry to affirm or deny continuation of the Member in Discernment process; ultimately a decision of whether to proceed to Ordination Interview or to end the MID process
7. Committee on Ministry Ordination Interview
  - Decision by Committee on Ministry to recommend an Ecclesiastical Council or to end the MID process
8. **ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCIL**
  - Decision by Association via Ecclesiastical Council to recommend for Ordination Pending Call or to end the MID process

*A PREPARATION AND FORMATION PLAN should include opportunities for MIDs to acquire the competencies represented in the Marks: the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for faithful and effective authorized ministry. Theological education (through an accredited seminary, a recognized regional theological education program, a mentoring program, or some combination of these), with outcomes oriented toward the Marks, should be identified as part of a MID's Preparation and Formation Plan.*

*The use of ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCILS varies by Association. Although discernment processes are delegated by an Association to a Committee on Ministry, the purpose of an Ecclesiastical Council is for an Association to exercise its authority directly to approve an individual for ordination and ministerial standing in the UCC.*

Based on discernment between the partners involved at each particular step of the process, decisions must ultimately have a *Yes* or a *No* but may include intermediate decisions of *Yes, but...* and *No, but...* A *Yes* decision indicates unhesitant affirmation and continuation of next steps. A *Yes, but...* decision indicates continuation of the process with recommendations that must be prioritized and met by the MID. A *No, but...* decision terminates the process but expresses potential for a new start to the discernment process at a future date and offers recommendations for the individual's growth. A *No* decision indicates a termination of the process, recognizing that the individual, like all Christians, is called by God into ministry but not to ordination.

Registrars serving Committees on Ministry, Associations and/or Conferences are expected to keep current records of the

initiation and termination of Member in Discernment statuses in the UCC Data Hub.

## STEP-BY-STEP MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT PROCESS

### 1. Exploration of Call with Local Church

For those who explore a sense of call to ordained ministry, the first place to engage that call and to listen for the feedback of a community is the Local Church. An individual must be an active member of a Local Church for at least one year before applying to a Committee on Ministry to enter the Member in Discernment process.

Meetings between an individual considering ordained ministry and their Local Church pastor should explore the individual's sense of vocation and consider what it means to be called to ordained ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ; the pastor can provide information on the UCC process of discernment. The Local Church Discernment Committee (LCDC) helps the individual listen to and test their sense of call. There are many ways in which the LCDC may practice discernment with the individual, including prayerful conversation centered on the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers and use of the Discernment Travelogue.<sup>19</sup> The goal of discernment for the Local Church Discernment Committee in reflection with the individual is to determine if the individual has the inherent gifts, character, and potential to serve faithfully and effectively as an Ordained Minister in and on behalf of the denomination.

Following a time of discernment between the individual and Local Church Discernment Committee, and in conversation with the pastor and LCDC, a Local Church governing body makes a *Yes* or *No* decision to recommend the individual to Committee on Ministry.

If, after prayerful discernment with the individual, the LCDC or the Local Church governing body does not believe that a call to ordained ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ is present, the process of discernment towards

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<sup>19</sup> See Section 1 for the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers and Section 3 for discernment and Marks resources, including the Discernment Travelogue and Journaling the Journey.

ordained ministry ends here. The *No* decision is made known to the individual with appropriate pastoral support. The Local Church continues to support the individual's vocational exploration and the appropriate exercise of the person's gifts as a lay person, consistent with its encouragement of all members' gifts in service to God's mission.

If *Yes*, the governing body writes a formal letter of recommendation to the Committee on Ministry and requests that the individual be received as a Member in Discernment. This recommendation does not presume a specified outcome, but is an affirmation of continued discernment and ongoing support for the individual's process. Accompanying the governing body's recommendation, the individual submits a completed Member in Discernment application form.<sup>20</sup>

Additional documentation that may be required by the Committee on Ministry at the time of initial application or throughout the discernment process may include:

- statement of the individual's spiritual journey
- statement of the individual's understanding of their call in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ at this time
- resume or portfolio, written with reference to the Marks
- documentation of educational and professional training (such as transcripts)
- three written references of support for the individual to enter the Member in Discernment process
- other requirements as established by a Committee on Ministry for all of its applicants to the Member in Discernment process

## **2. Initial Meeting with Committee on Ministry**

Upon receipt of the letter from the Local Church requesting that an individual be received as a Member in Discernment (accompanied by the application materials from the individual), a Committee on Ministry schedules an initial meeting with the individual. Representatives from the Local Church Discernment Committee and the pastor are encouraged to accompany the

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<sup>20</sup> See Section 3 for the Member in Discernment application form.

*CULTURAL TRANSLATOR: A person who helps to observe differences in cultural norms, which may or may not include linguistic differences. In a meeting between an individual and a Committee on Ministry, the cultural translator might take a teaching role to help the Committee understand the individual's context so that the individual is freed from that role.*

individual and to contribute to the meeting. As needed, a **CULTURAL TRANSLATOR** should be invited as well at this and future meetings with the individual. Prior to the meeting, the Committee on Ministry thoroughly reviews the submitted materials, which form the beginning of a file in the Committee on Ministry's records of the individual.

The purpose of this initial meeting is to offer hospitality to the individual, to listen prayerfully to the movement of the Spirit throughout the meeting, to engage in conversation about the individual's spiritual journey and sense of call, to outline expectations of the process, and to clarify any questions. The Committee on Ministry encourages openness to unexpected outcomes throughout discernment.

Following the meeting, the Committee takes time to reflect on the individual's gifts, character, and potential for ordained ministry as well as the movement of the Spirit experienced during the initial meeting. The Committee determines whether to accept the individual as a Member in Discernment and communicates this decision promptly to the individual.

If the Committee's decision is *Yes*, the individual is received as a Member in Discernment and entered in the UCC Data Hub. A Discernment Covenant<sup>21</sup> is written between the individual, the Local Church of membership, and the Committee on Ministry, outlining expectations for the discernment process and relationships. The Committee assigns the MID Advisor. Instructions are given for the individual to complete a criminal background check and to schedule a psychological assessment. The costs of these are recommended to be shared by the individual, the Local Church, and the Association.

If the Committee's decision is *No*, the discernment process toward ordained ministry ends here.

### **3. Psychological Assessment and Criminal Background Check**

The Committee on Ministry directs the Member in Discernment to the required criminal background checks, the results of which are sent to the Committee. Likewise the MID is guided to an appropriate agency for psychological assessment, with an

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<sup>21</sup> See Section 3 for sample Discernment Covenant.

explanation of the purpose, process, and review of outcomes.<sup>22</sup> The psychological assessment is best used as a developmental tool, pointing to areas for personal, spiritual, and professional development throughout the process of discernment. Committees on Ministry are encouraged to meet annually or biennially with the assessment agency to receive training on how best to read and interpret the reports generated from psychological assessments.

The report of the results from the psychological assessments is sent to the Committee on Ministry with recommendations from the assessor. These recommendations may include questions for further exploration with the Member in Discernment and suggestions for psychological growth suitable for one who would seek to serve as ordained minister. If serious pathologies are identified that would preclude one from having the potential to serve as an ordained minister in a healthy manner, the Committee on Ministry takes these under consideration when determining whether or not (and how) to continue the discernment process.

After prayerful review of the results of the psychological assessment, and in the context of ongoing conversation with the individual, the Committee on Ministry makes a decision whether the individual will continue as a Member in Discernment. The decision is communicated in writing with substantiating reasons as well as affirmations of the individual's gifts and call by God regardless of next steps, and a copy of the decision is kept in the individual's file. If the Committee's decision is "No," the process of discernment towards ordained ministry ends here. If the Committee's decision is "Yes," the discernment process continues and a Preparation and Formation Plan is developed.

#### **4. Development of Preparation & Formation Plan Based the Marks**

A Preparation & Formation Plan is developed based on the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers in relation to the Committee on Ministry's initial assessment of the MID's application materials and psychological assessments. The Preparation & Formation Plan may take multiple paths based on

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<sup>22</sup> See Section 3 for best practices with regard to psychological assessments.

the nature of the call, the available options that will best help the MID develop their competencies around the Marks, and the needs of the Church. While Preparation & Formation Plans are individualized, Committees on Ministry should standardize and clearly communicate any requirements that are expected of all Members in Discernment. These requirements may include some or all of the following:

*PORTFOLIO: the collection of materials that demonstrate competencies and experiences related to the Marks.*

- theological and practical education for ministry, with learning outcomes oriented toward the Marks;
- the development of a **PORTFOLIO** to document competencies around the Marks;
- successful completion of a COM-approved UCC History, Polity and Theology course;
- practical ministry experience under supervision (Clinical Pastoral Education, field placement, internship, etc.);
- successful completion of professional boundaries training;
- successful completion of anti-racism training;
- participation in regional or national MID gatherings;
- participation in association and conference Annual Meetings;
- engagement with the wider church, such as participation in General Synod;
- annual report of progress on the Preparation and Formation Plan at the annual in-person meeting with the Committee on Ministry;
- ongoing self-assessment based on the Marks;
- periodic meetings with and reports from the MID Advisor;
- prior to the Ecclesiastical Council, a drafted UCC Ministerial Profile including the Profile's criminal background check.

## **5. Ongoing Preparation by MID, Meetings with the MID Advisor, Continued Discernment, Development of Portfolio**

With the establishment of a Preparation and Formation Plan, the day-to-day work of that plan falls largely to the Member in

Discernment. Building a portfolio<sup>23</sup> is meant to be a process that integrates and demonstrates growth (personal, professional and spiritual). Resources such as *Journaling the Journey* can be helpful tools in reflecting upon the Marks, identifying growing places as well as places of strength, and guiding the development of the Portfolio.

The support of the MID in reviewing progress on the Preparation & Formation Plan is assigned to the MID Advisor,<sup>24</sup> who also provides clarity as needed to the MID about the discernment process and offers a listening ear to the MID's vocational discernment. MIDs are encouraged to meet with their MID Advisors regularly as outlined by the Committee. MIDs are also expected to remain actively involved in their Local Church of membership as much as possible, turning to the LCDC for ongoing conversation about vocation and readiness for ministry.

The geographic residence of a Member in Discernment may change temporarily or permanently throughout the discernment process as a result of employment, education, or life circumstance. When geographic distance prohibits a MID from meeting in person with their MID Advisor or Committee on Ministry, creativity and the use of technology are encouraged. If needed, it may be appropriate to assign a MID Advisor who is located in proximity to the MID; a Committee on Ministry holding a MID's status collaborates with the Association where the MID resides to make this assignment. When distance keeps a MID from participating regularly in their Local Church of membership, intentionality is encouraged to continue the relationship; it may be appropriate for the MID to participate in a nearby UCC congregation for additional community.

A Member in Discernment's status must, however, be held in the same Association as the Local Church where the MID has membership. If church membership moves, the Member in Discernment process cannot transfer to a new Association, and the MID would need to apply to a new Committee on Ministry to be received as a new Member in Discernment. If the Member in Discernment begins the discernment process anew in a different Association for any reason, the file developed by the Committee on Ministry that first granted MID status to the

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<sup>23</sup> See Section 3 for sample outlines of Portfolios.

<sup>24</sup> See Section 3 for guidance on selecting and training MID Advisors.

individual must be shared with the Committee on Ministry where the individual made a new application to be a MID. Committees on Ministry verify a MID's previous discernment process in another Association before agreeing to begin a new process.

## **6. Annual Review with Committee on Ministry**

Members in Discernment meet annually with their Committees on Ministry to review their progress with Preparation and Formation Plan, to make any adjustments or changes to the plan that may be needed, and to continue the Committee's process of discernment on behalf of the United Church of Christ. The annual meeting is an opportunity for both discernment and assessment. MID Advisors, Local Church pastors, and/or the LCDC may be encouraged to contribute to this review. Questions to guide the Committee's discernment include:

- To what ministry is this individual being called by God?
- Is this call affirmed in the individual's community of faith?
- Does this call require ordination? In other words, does the ministry to which the individual feels called need pastoral and priestly leadership? Does the ministry need someone who nourishes and renews the life of the church in that setting? Does the United Church of Christ need a representative in that role? Does the United Church of Christ need to have oversight and to provide covenantal support for that ministry?
- What is needed for the individual's path of preparation to be ready for this ministry? What formation and training will help the individual best prepare to meet the needs of the church and to serve faithfully and effectively on behalf of the United Church of Christ?

These questions may not have immediate answers. While the Member in Discernment process has no predetermined outcome, it is expected that an outcome of the process will become clearer over time. The annual review is an opportunity to discern if the MID continues to be called toward ordained ministry and what kind of progress they are making in preparation for that particular ministry. At the annual review,

the Committee on Ministry will make one of the following decisions:

- *Yes.* The Committee affirms the individual's continued status as a MID and ongoing progress in formation and preparation.
- *Yes, but...* The Committee continues the individual's MID status and adds particular learning or behavioral goals within a given time frame as a requirement for the discernment process, with a date set for reassessment.
- *No, but...* The Committee terminates the MID status and discernment process due to the MID's lack of progress and/or substantial need for growth over time, with constructive feedback offered that could help the individual begin the discernment process again at a future undetermined date.
- *No.* The Committee determines that the individual is not called to or suited for ordained ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ.<sup>25</sup>

All decisions that result from the annual review should be communicated in writing and added to the Member in Discernment's file. If Member in Discernment status is terminated, either **WITH OR WITHOUT BIAS**, the results are to be recorded in the UCC Data Hub.

*TERMINATION WITH OR WITHOUT BIAS:  
When an ecclesial status (Member in Discernment, Privilege of Call) is terminated, the phrase "without bias" may be entered in the UCC Data Hub to indicate that the Committee had no concerns about the individual's fitness or capacity for ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ; the phrase "with bias" may be entered in the UCC Data Hub to indicate that the Committee had concerns about the individual's fitness or capacity for ordained ministry.*

## 7. Committee on Ministry Ordination Interview

Once the Member in Discernment and their MID Advisor are satisfied that the portfolio accurately represents the MID's preparation and competencies for ordained ministry, and with the affirmation of the Committee on Ministry to move forward toward an ordination interview, the MID prepares an ordination paper or presentation, with reflection on all sections of the Marks. The completed ordination paper or presentation is sent, along with the portfolio, to the Committee on Ministry.

Upon review of the MID's portfolio and ordination paper or presentation, the Committee schedules an ordination interview with the Member in Discernment. The Committee is encouraged to solicit final assessments from all partners in the discernment process. In an atmosphere of prayer and openness to the Holy

<sup>25</sup> See Section 3 for a "Just Say No" resource.

Spirit, the Committee on Ministry holds the ordination interview and discusses with the MID their sense of call and their journey of preparation, reflecting together on the portfolio, the ordination paper or presentation, and the Marks. The Committee decides if it is time to move from the discernment process to a final authorization decision; its decision as a result of the ordination interview could be:

- *Yes.* The Committee commends the Member in Discernment to the Association for its approval and authorization for ordination (prompting the Association to schedule an Ecclesiastical Council);
- *Yes, but...* The Committee continues the process of discernment and defines certain learning outcomes or behaviors that must be demonstrated and reassessed by a specified time;
- *No.* The Committee on Ministry does not recommend the MID for ordination in and on behalf of the UCC and concludes that its process of discernment is complete with this decision. Member in Discernment status is terminated.

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

## 8. ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCIL<sup>26</sup>

In the United Church of Christ, the authority to ordain ministers and to grant ministerial standing is given to Associations. While there are some variations, many Associations use the Ecclesiastical Council to make the decision for or against ordination of a candidate (pending call), with delegates gathering to represent the entire Association in making this decision on behalf of the entire United Church of Christ.

At the Committee on Ministry's request, the Association schedules an Ecclesiastical Council and shares the recommendation of the Committee on Ministry along with the Member in Discernment's ordination paper or presentation. Delegates of the Association gather as an Ecclesiastical Council

*The use of ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCILS varies by Association. Although discernment processes are delegated by an Association to a Committee on Ministry, the purpose of an Ecclesiastical Council is for an Association to exercise its authority to approve an individual for ordination and ministerial standing in the UCC.*

<sup>26</sup> See Section 3 for best practices for Ecclesiastical Councils.

to examine the MID and consider the Committee on Ministry's recommendation, and then vote whether to authorize ordination (pending the receipt and acceptance of an ordainable call).

If the outcome of the Ecclesiastical Council is *No*, MID status is terminated, with or without bias, and updated in the UCC Data Hub.

If the Ecclesiastical Council's vote is *Yes*, the UCC Data Hub is updated to indicate that the MID is "approved for ordination pending call" and the Member in Discernment may circulate a validated UCC Ministerial Profile. A person may be categorized as "approved for ordination pending call" for no more than **FOUR YEARS**<sup>27</sup> and continues to meet annually with the Committee on Ministry as do all Members in Discernment. Annual meetings with the Committee on Ministry 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." Continued affirmation and renewal of "approved for ordination pending call" permits the update of a UCC Ministerial Profile, including the Criminal Background Check that expires after eighteen months. If a decision is made to discontinue "approved for ordination pending call," then MID status is terminated and the UCC Data Hub is updated to reflect this decision, marked with or without bias, and the UCC Ministerial Profile is withdrawn from circulation.

*The Criminal Background Check on the UCC Ministerial Profile has a lifespan of eighteen months.*

*Providing up to FOUR YEARS for a MID to remain "approved for ordination pending call" allows for a minimum of two full lifespans of the UCC Ministerial Profile (three years) and an additional year for the Committee and MID to review prayerfully the appropriateness of a continuing search. A Committee may terminate "approved for ordination pending call" at any time based on (1) lack of ecclesial call and/or (2) unsatisfactory demonstration of the Marks or of the Ministerial Code.*

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<sup>27</sup> Depending on particular circumstances, the Committee on Ministry may modify this period of time to ensure sufficient opportunity for a MID to find a first call. Annual meetings between the COM and the MID are still required.

*The United Church of Christ has been living with language of “Members in Discernment” since the 2005 Ministry Issues Pronouncement of General Synod, although the 1986/2002 Manual on Ministry still used “Student in Care.” How do the MID practices you’ve read in this document reflect (or not) your region’s best practices for the discernment process?*

## MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT WITH LIMITED STANDING

*PRIESTLY: providing sacramental leadership*  
*PASTORAL: holding responsibility for others’ spiritual care*

There may be times when a Member in Discernment may be called upon to serve in a **PRIESTLY**, **PASTORAL** and representative role where an Ordained Minister is not available to serve in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ. At the request of a Local Church or ministry setting to the Committee on Ministry, a Member in Discernment may be granted Limited Standing in order to meet the identified need in that setting, with provisions for supervision. Before Limited Standing is granted to a MID, substantial engagement of the Marks should be demonstrated and a psychological assessment and criminal background check should be on file with a Committee on Ministry. Limited Standing includes the privilege to administer sacraments and provide spiritual care, thus requiring the oversight of the wider church.

At all times, the status of the Member in Discernment remains with the home Association, and ecclesial oversight for Limited Standing is the responsibility of the Committee on Ministry that also holds the MID's status. When a request for Limited Standing comes from a Local Church or ministry setting located in a different Association than the MID's home Association, both Associations should communicate through their Conference staff and Committees on Ministry to consider the request and then, if granted, to provide the best oversight of the Member in Discernment with Limited Standing.

The ministerial role filled by a Member in Discernment with Limited Standing must be limited in duration and location, and reviewed annually in consideration of the individual's formation and discernment process. Limited Standing is temporary, and a Member in Discernment with Limited Standing may not represent their authority as extending beyond the particular ministry setting. Conference staff and the Committee on Ministry are encouraged to facilitate the development of a **PROVISIONAL AGREEMENT**<sup>28</sup> so that it is appropriate to the Member in Discernment's continued formation. The provisional agreement is written between the ministry setting and the Member in Discernment with Limited Standing specifying the duration of the role, scope of work, and other negotiated details. An Association is not obligated to grant Limited Standing when a ministry setting employs a Member in Discernment.

Upon granting Limited Standing, the Discernment Covenant is amended to include the ministry setting (in addition to the Committee on Ministry, the Member in Discernment, and the Local Church of membership) and to outline such details as:

- expectations for the Member in Discernment's ongoing process of discernment with the Committee on Ministry;
- expectations of ecclesial oversight, including clear communication that Limited Standing subjects the MID to such processes as the Fitness Review;
- assignment of a supervisor<sup>29</sup> to the MID for the duration of the provisional agreement with the ministry setting;

*PROVISIONAL AGREEMENT: Similar to the call agreement, the provisional agreement is primarily an employment contract between a ministry setting and a MID; it specifies the duration of the role (one year), scope of work, and other negotiated details. The provisional agreement assumes that a Committee has not yet completed its discernment process with a MID; otherwise, the offer of employment might be considered as a possible ordainable call. A Member in Discernment who is "approved for ordination pending call" should not be granted Limited Standing to accept a temporary call; instead the Committee should prayerfully consider whether such a call meets the qualifications for an ordainable call.*

<sup>28</sup> See Section 3 for sample provisional agreement.

<sup>29</sup> See Section 3 for resources about Member in Discernment with Limited Standing supervision.

- clarification of the parameters of Limited Standing as a lay role, representing the United Church of Christ only in the time and place and responsibilities outlined in the provisional agreement.

When the provisional agreement expires, Limited Standing ends. The discernment process, which has been ongoing during Limited Standing, continues.

## REFLECTION AND FEEDBACK

*As you've read it, how would "Member in Discernment with Limited Standing" be lived out in your context?*

*In your region, what are the parameters that distinguish a licensed minister's employment as pastor from an ordained minister's employment as pastor? How has that worked well, and what have been the challenges?*

*What intrigues you about  
"Member in Discernment with Limited Standing"?*

# MANUAL ON MINISTRY: SECTION 2

## SECTION 2 ARTICLE II: ORDAINED MINISTERS FROM ECUMENICAL BODIES

BASED ON THE FEEDBACK RECEIVED TO DATE, THE FOLLOWING MATERIALS/IDEAS IN SECTION 2 ARTICLE II ARE “STILL IN CONVERSATION” (see Discussion Guide) OR “READY TO BE USED”:

### STILL IN DISCERNMENT AND CONVERSATION

- ☒ The feedback at AM21 San Antonio raised questions for clarification, however the processes and ecumenical relationships were not flagged for ongoing discernment.
- ☒ Final adoption of Mutual Recognition and Orderly Exchange between the United Church of Christ and The United Church of Canada must be approved by both denominations. Guidelines for the interim process can be found at [http://www.ucc.org/ministers\\_regional-ministers](http://www.ucc.org/ministers_regional-ministers).

### READY TO BE USED

- ☒ The entirety of Section 2 Article II is ready to be used, understanding that final approval is still required between the United Church of Christ and The United Church of Canada.
- ☒ Note that ecumenical agreements only pertain to Ordained Ministers, so any consideration of varying the UCC’s three forms of authorization will not impact existing ecumenical agreements.

### FEEDBACK

During 2017, the Habakkuk Group will continue to receive feedback on the drafted Manual on Ministry as it is discussed at AM21 regional events and as Committees on Ministry engage the materials (putting some portions to use and holding some portions in conversation). [Feedback forms](#) can be sent to Rachel Hackenberg (hackenberg@ucc.org) for the Habakkuk Group’s consideration. Some Associations may choose to use materials/ideas presented in this drafted MOM as their method of discernment and engagement, with the understanding that changes and clarifications (particularly related to the topics “still in discernment”) will not be finalized until after 2017.

## SECTION 2 ARTICLE II: ORDAINED MINISTERS FROM ECUMENICAL BODIES

### WELCOMING THOSE WHO SEEK MINISTERIAL STANDING

There are three groups of individuals who may seek authorization for ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ:

- potential Members in Discernment who are considering a vocation in ministry (see the preceding article on Members in Discernment);
- clergy ordained in other Christian traditions seeking to have their ordination recognized by and ministerial standing granted in the UCC (use this article);
- leaders of Christian communities of faith who may or may not be related to any denomination or religious institution (use either the MID process or an appropriate process found in this article).

While the policies and practices of engaging individuals from these three groups may differ, the underlying value of extravagant welcome is common to all.

As it relates to ministerial authorization, the United Church of Christ's value of extravagant welcome encourages Committees on Ministry to welcome those seeking ministerial standing into processes of mutual discernment without obligating any Committee on Ministry to say *Yes* to Ordained Ministerial Standing without process, time and reflection. The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers are an appropriate tool of discernment and assessment for all persons seeking ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ. Committees should value diverse cultures and diverse ways of knowing, honoring multiple paths of formation and preparation.

An ordained minister from another ecclesiastical body (fellowship, denomination, etc.) may express their sense of call into the United Church of Christ through a conversation with a Conference staff person before connecting to a Local Church of the UCC. A completed UCC Ministerial Standing application form<sup>30</sup> is required by a Committee on Ministry to consider an initial request for Ordained Ministerial Standing in the UCC;

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<sup>30</sup> See Section 3 for the UCC Ministerial Standing application form

additional documentation may be required according to the type of standing requested and to demonstrate engagement with the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers. The numerous ecumenical agreements of the United Church of Christ must be considered when an individual approaches a Committee on Ministry with a request for ministerial standing. The Minister for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations of the United Church of Christ is the primary contact for clarification of official ecumenical and interfaith relationships.

Several of the United Church of Christ's ecumenical agreements include the **MUTUAL RECOGNITION** of Ordained Ministers, meaning that the credentials, formation, and authorization process of the originating ordination are seen as valid by the receiving denomination. In addition to Mutual Recognition, these agreements may also include **ORDERLY EXCHANGE**, meaning that a specific process has been developed to facilitate the interchangeability of Ordained Ministers between the denominations in the agreement.

Aside from formal ecumenical agreements, there are also processes by which Ordained Ministers from other Christians communions can either fully join the United Church of Christ (Privilege of Call) or hold temporary UCC Ministerial Standing (Dual Standing).

#### **A FULL COMMUNION AGREEMENT**

is written between two or more Christian denominations that are committed to unity of the Church. Full communion has been identified historically by five marks: common confession of Christ; mutual recognition of members; common celebration of the Lord's Supper/Holy Communion, mutual recognition and reconciliation of ordained ministries; common commitment to mission. Not all full communion agreements include mutual recognition...

#### **MUTUAL RECOGNITION**

of ordained ministry means churches in a full communion agreement recognize that the ordained ministries of each denomination are given by God as instruments of God's grace, that these ministries seek to be faithful to Jesus Christ, and that these ministries possess not only the inward call of the Spirit but also Christ's commission through the church. Not all mutual recognition agreements provide for orderly exchange...

#### **ORDERLY EXCHANGE**

indicates that a specific process has been developed to facilitate the interchangeability of Ordained Ministers between those bodies in the agreement.

## ORDAINED MINISTERIAL PARTNERS

All United Church of Christ Ordained Ministers who maintain standing are Ordained Ministerial Partners with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). All United Church of Christ Ordained Ministers who maintain standing are Ordained Ministerial Partners with The United Church of Canada. Likewise, all ordained ministers who maintain their standing requirements in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or The United Church of Canada are Ordained Ministerial Partners with the United Church of Christ. Being an Ordained Ministerial Partner is an expression of the close relationship and full communion agreements between these denominations.

## ORDAINED MINISTERIAL PARTNER STANDING (OMPS)

Ordained Ministers in good standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or in The United Church of Canada may apply to the United Church of Christ for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing. Ordained Ministers in the Disciples of Christ should apply for OMPS in the Association where they are geographically located. United Church of Canada ministers should apply for OMPS to a United Church of Christ Association where they anticipate seeking a call. The United Church of Christ has requirements for all ministers seeking Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing, including:

- United Church of Christ history, theology and polity
- a current criminal background check
- letter of good standing from originating denomination
- a letter articulating why the minister is seeking OMPS in the United Church of Christ
- three letters of reference

During the process of meeting the requirements for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing, the minister may be granted Seeking OMPS status by the Committee on Ministry to which the individual has applied. Seeking OMPS status is

renewable annually and can be removed at any time by the Committee on Ministry granting this status. Seeking OMPS allows a minister to fully circulate a UCC Ministerial Profile within the UCC's Search and Call system. Additionally, on a case-by-case basis a Conference staff person may submit a Disciples of Christ or United Church of Canada profile to a United Church of Christ ministry setting. If called, the minister is required to seek Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing.

Once all requirements are met and a call is extended, the Committee on Ministry votes whether to give the minister Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing. Ministers with OMPS retain standing in their denomination of origin and they hold standing in the UCC Association, including membership in a UCC Local Church. To clarify these relationships, ministers with Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing should have four-way covenants for their ministry positions.<sup>31</sup> Ministers with OMPS have primary oversight from the denomination in which they are serving, in collaboration with the judicatory where their Disciples of Christ or United Church of Canada ministerial standing is held. All expectations for maintaining standing in the United Church of Christ and originating denomination are to be clearly articulated in the four way covenant.

There are occasional ministry positions that exist in service to more than one denomination. If a Disciples of Christ or United Church of Canada minister is serving in a qualifying context (as determined by the Committee on Ministry) Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing may be granted for the duration of that call.

Ordained Ministers from the Disciples of Christ or United Church of Canada with OMPS may have full access to the UCC search and call process while serving a United Church of Christ ministry setting. If a new call is found in another UCC ministry setting while the Ordained Minister still holds OMPS, then their Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing may transfer. When a minister with OMPS is no longer serving in a UCC ministry setting, then OMPS is removed; the minister may reapply for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing at another time to seek and serve in a UCC ministry setting.

Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing is only applicable for Ordained Ministers, thus OMPS is not applicable for first calls.

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<sup>31</sup> See Section 3 for sample Four-Way Covenants.

*A Committee on Ministry always retains the option of denying OMPS or removing Seeking OMPS status even if employment is offered by a UCC Local Church. Local Churches are encouraged to review their Constitution & Bylaws as well as insurance coverage to verify whether UCC Ministerial Standing is required for their pastor and/or ministerial staff.*

## OMPS FOR UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST MINISTERS

Ordained Ministers in the United Church of Christ should refer to the Disciples of Christ or United Church of Canada for procedures on how to apply for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the corresponding denomination.

United Church of Christ ministers with Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing maintain membership in a Local Church of the United Church of Christ and UCC Ministerial Standing in the corresponding Association. Additionally UCC ministers with OMPS hold standing in the appropriate United Church of Canada Presbytery or Disciples of Christ Region. Oversight for UCC Ordained Ministers with OMPS is primarily with the denomination where ministry is taking place, in collaboration with the appropriate Committee on Ministry. UCC ministers with OMPS should have a covenant with their UCC Local Church of membership, UCC Association of standing, The United Church of Canada or Disciples of Christ ministry setting, the related judicatory, and themselves to articulate expectations for continued standing in both the denomination being served and the United Church of Christ.

## FORMULA OF AGREEMENT

The United Church of Christ is a partner in a multi-lateral Full Communion agreement called the Formula of Agreement<sup>32</sup> with the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Reformed Church in America. The Formula of Agreement includes Mutual Recognition and a process for Orderly Exchange, although Orderly Exchange differs from the agreements with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and The United Church of Canada. Formula of Agreement ministers do not have access to the UCC Ministerial Profile system. Formula of Agreement applies only to Ordained Ministers.

On a case-by-case basis, a Conference staff person of the United Church of Christ may include the profile of a PC(USA),

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<sup>32</sup> See Section 3 for the Formula of Agreement.

RCA or ELCA minister in the pool of candidates for a search process. If called, the minister must apply for Dual Standing for the duration of that call. Because the Formula of Agreement includes Mutual Recognition, a full examination of the minister's original ordination credentials is not necessary. It is expected that the minister is in good standing with their originating denomination, can articulate the history, theology and polity differences between the two denominations, demonstrate capacity to function in and appreciate the UCC, and is adequately familiar with the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers.

## KIRCHENGEMEINSCHAFT

In 1981 the United Church of Christ entered into a full communion agreement with the Evangelical Church of the Union in Germany (EKU). In this relationship the term "Kirchengemeinschaft" is used rather than "full communion." This term is a German word expressing a broad range of meaning around "full church community / communion." This relationship has been expressed both through a national working group as well as regional /conference partnerships. In 2003 the UCC's General Synod reaffirmed Kirchengemeinschaft as the EKU itself became a larger body of reformed and union churches call the Union of Evangelical Churches (UEK). This agreement does not include Mutual Recognition or Orderly Exchange of ministers. A UEK pastor who wishes to gain standing in the UCC applies for either Privilege of Call or Dual Standing.

## PRIVILEGE OF CALL

At times, ordained ministers from other Christian denominations seek to affiliate with the United Church of Christ. The process of Privilege of Call is designed for an ordained minister who desires to leave their denomination of original authorization and become an Ordained Minister in the United Church of Christ.

Ministers seeking Privilege of Call apply to a Committee on Ministry of the UCC, submitting a completed UCC Ministerial

*There are rare cases in which a letter of good standing from the current denomination is not available to the Committee on Ministry. In these instances, it is incumbent upon the Committee on Ministry to verify that there are no prior or ongoing ecclesiastical proceedings that would deem the minister unfit for standing in the UCC. Efforts in this regard should be well-documented and maintained in the minister's file.*

*Committees on Ministry that receive requests for Privilege of Call from ordained ministers from other Christian denominations who hold governmental or professional endorsements should first contact the Endorsement Office of the UCC National Offices.*

*The use of ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCILS varies by Association. Although discernment processes are delegated by an Association to a Committee on Ministry, the purpose of an Ecclesiastical Council is for an Association to exercise its authority to approve an individual for ordination and ministerial standing in the UCC.*

Standing application form.<sup>33</sup> Additional documentation may be required by a Committee on Ministry at the outset or throughout the Privilege of Call discernment process, such as:

- statement of the individual's spiritual journey
- statement of the individual's understanding of their call into the United Church of Christ
- letter of good standing from the Ordained Minister's current denomination
- successful completion of an approved UCC History, Polity and Theology course
- résumé or portfolio, written with reference to the Marks
- documentation of educational and professional training (such as transcripts)
- psychological assessment
- criminal background check
- three written references of support for the individual's application for UCC Ministerial Standing

The Committee completes an interview and an initial assessment based on the Marks, criminal background check, and psychological assessment. The Committee then determines if the minister should (1) move forward with the Privilege of Call process, (2) become a Member in Discernment, or (3) be declined from further exploration of ordained ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ.

If the Committee affirms the continued discernment for potential Privilege of Call, the Ordained Minister is granted the status of "Seeking Privilege of Call," the minister's status as "Seeking Privilege of Call" is recorded in the UCC Data Hub, and the Committee outlines further steps for discernment, including required documentation, additional preparation specific to ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ, and ongoing reflection with the Marks. Once the Committee on Ministry is satisfied by its discernment and the completion of its requirements, the Committee recommends an **ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCIL** for the final decision regarding UCC Ministerial Standing. An affirmative vote by an Ecclesiastical Council grants Privilege of Call to the Ordained Minister.

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<sup>33</sup> See Section 3 for the UCC Ministerial Standing application form

Ordained ministers seeking to relinquish standing in their denomination of origin and to maintain exclusively UCC Ordained Ministerial Standing are generally routed through the Privilege of Call discernment process when they belong to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), The United Church of Canada, the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Reformed Church in America, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, or other ecclesial organizations whose ministerial formation process is similar to the United Church of Christ. There are times when it is appropriate for a Committee on Ministry to grant Member in Discernment status rather than Privilege of Call status, particularly if the individual's previous ordination is granted by a non-denominational entity (e.g. fellowship, local church, online organization, etc.) and/or if the individual does not adequately demonstrate the Marks.

Both Privilege of Call and Member in Discernment statuses require membership in a Local Church of the United Church of Christ. Privilege of Call is a status that allows the individual to complete and circulate a UCC Ministerial Profile; the status is renewed annually by the Committee on Ministry for a maximum of four years, is not transferable, and can be removed at any time by the Committee based on (1) lack of ecclesial call and/or (2) unsatisfactory demonstration of the Marks or of the Ministerial Code while holding Privilege of Call status.

Once a minister with Privilege of Call receives a **AUTHORIZABLE CALL** within a UCC ministry setting, as determined by the Committee on Ministry, then the Committee votes to grant Ordained Ministerial Standing. With standing granted, the status of Privilege of Call ends and the individual relinquishes their standing in any other denomination. Ordained Ministerial Standing is then held exclusively in the UCC. If the calling body/Local Church is located outside of the Association that oversaw the Privilege of Call process and granted Ordained Ministerial Standing, the minister must then apply for a transfer of Ordained Ministerial Standing to the Association where the calling body/Local Church is located.

*See Section 2 Article III for guidance on an AUTHORIZABLE CALL.*

*A Committee on Ministry may deny Privilege of Call or Dual Standing, or remove Seeking Privilege of Call status, even if employment is offered by a UCC Local Church. Local Churches are encouraged to review their Constitution & Bylaws as well as insurance coverage to verify whether UCC Ministerial Standing is required for their pastor and/or ministerial staff.*

## DUAL STANDING

There are occasions when an ordained minister of another denomination is called to serve in a ministry setting of the United Church of Christ. Ordained ministers of another denomination who receive a call to serve in a UCC ministry setting can apply for Dual Standing to the Committee on Ministry where the ministry setting is located. Dual Standing is a temporary standing in the United Church of Christ, valid only for the duration of the call. The application to the Committee on Ministry should include:

- a current criminal background check
- a letter of standing from the original denomination
- a demonstrated knowledge of United Church of Christ history, theology and polity
- a demonstrated capacity to function in and appreciate the United Church of Christ

Committees on Ministry meet with candidates for Dual Standing and complete an initial intake interview. This interview, in dialogue with the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers, will determine the Committee's decision to say *Yes* to Dual Standing, *Yes, but...* with additional requirements before granting Dual Standing, *No, but...* with a decline but also an invitation to return after completing certain requirements, or *No* to Dual Standing.

Once satisfied, the Committee on Ministry may grant Dual Standing for the duration of the call within the UCC ministry setting. Oversight for ministers with dual standing is held primarily in the denomination of origin. The minister is responsible for any requirements of maintaining standing in the United Church of Christ as established by the Committee on Ministry for its ministers (boundary awareness training, anti-racism training, attendance at Association and Conference annual meetings). Not maintaining the requirements for standing may result in the removal of Dual Standing. If a disciplinary concern is raised regarding an ordained minister with Dual Standing, the Committee on Ministry may vote to receive the findings of a disciplinary review led by the denomination of primary standing or the Committee may undertake its own Fitness Review.

Dual Standing can be removed by the Committee on Ministry at any time and is not transferable. Dual Standing does not grant an ordained minister access to a UCC Ministerial Profile or to the UCC search and call system.

## THE FELLOWSHIP OF AFFIRMING MINISTRIES (TFAM)

The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries is a trans-denominational, theologically diverse fellowship and therefore does not fall within the protocols of Mutual Recognition or Orderly Exchange related to full communion agreements. General Synod approved an affirmation of the relationship between the United Church of Christ and The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries, saying:

“A unique relationship exists between the United Church of Christ and The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries. There are United Church of Christ congregations and clergy who are active participants in The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries. There are also congregations and clergy within The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries that have a desire to become affiliated with the UCC, and still others that value and support the relationship between the United Church of Christ and The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries but choose not become a part of the United Church of Christ.”

General Synod 29

Ministers from the Fellowship of Affirming Ministries who come to a Committee on Ministry for authorization may come from a wide variety of ecclesiastical histories and expressions.

A TFAM minister may approach a Committee on Ministry to request Dual Standing if they are serving in a UCC ministry setting for a limited time. The standard process for Dual Standing is followed including an interview and assessment based on the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers.

A TFAM minister may approach a Committee on Ministry for Ordained Ministerial Standing in the United Church of Christ. After an initial interview and assessment, the Committee determines if the appropriate avenue for the individual is the Member in Discernment process or Privilege of Call process. After the Committee determines the appropriate process, that

process is followed with the understanding that a TFAM minister is not required to relinquish their relationship, office or title with The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries in order to seek or maintain authorization within the United Church of Christ.

## MINISTERS FROM OTHER COMMUNIONS

As a **UNITED AND UNITING CHURCH** in partnership with other communions throughout the globe, the United Church of Christ is an important partner in mission and ministry with many different denominations. There are several other ecumenical agreements between the UCC and other denominations both domestically and internationally. If an ecumenical agreement does not specifically articulate Mutual Recognition of ministries and Orderly Exchange of ministers, then individuals from those communions work with Committees on Ministry for authorization through the Member in Discernment, Privilege of Call or Dual Standing process as appropriate.

*UNITED AND UNITING CHURCH:  
Churches and denominations  
around the world that have  
historically and/or are currently  
working to unite with other  
Christian churches and  
denominations are called “united  
and uniting churches.” These  
churches and denominations  
collaborate through the World  
Council of Churches, and they  
offer a distinct witness and  
response to Jesus’ prayer “that  
they may all be one.” (John 17:21)*

*What's new to you in this article about how the UCC  
welcomes those ministers who have been ordained by  
other ecumenical bodies?*

2017

# MANUAL ON MINISTRY: SECTION 2

## SECTION 2 ARTICLE III: MINISTERIAL STANDING

BASED ON THE FEEDBACK RECEIVED TO DATE, THE FOLLOWING MATERIALS/IDEAS IN SECTION 2 ARTICLE III ARE “STILL IN CONVERSATION” (see Discussion Guide) OR “READY TO BE USED”:

<b>STILL IN DISCERNMENT AND CONVERSATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ The feedback at AM21 San Antonio provided overall affirmation for Section 2 Article III, and several edits were received for the revised Ministerial Code. Continued feedback on the Code will be welcomed by the Habakkuk Group as Committees on Ministry engage its use.</li><li>✓ The proposal of “Omega Standing” received thoughtful questions in the feedback from AM21 San Antonio. Alternate suggestions for the name/title of this new standing are welcomed.</li><li>✓ Here again it’s worth noting that the concept of MID with Limited Standing is still in discernment.</li></ul>
<b>READY TO BE USED</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ The entirety of Section 2 Article III is ready to be used, noting the above encouragement for feedback related to Omega Standing, MID with Limited Standing, and the Ministerial Code.</li></ul>
<b>FEEDBACK</b>	<p>During 2017, the Habakkuk Group will continue to receive feedback on the drafted Manual on Ministry as it is discussed at AM21 regional events and as Committees on Ministry engage the materials (putting some portions to use and holding some portions in conversation). <a href="#">Feedback forms</a> can be sent to Rachel Hackenberg (hackenberg@ucc.org) for the Habakkuk Group’s consideration. <u>Some Associations may choose to use materials/ideas presented in this drafted MOM as their method of discernment and engagement, with the understanding that changes and clarifications (particularly related to the topics “still in discernment”) will not be finalized until after 2017.</u></p>

## SECTION 2 ARTICLE III: MINISTERIAL STANDING

### MINISTERIAL STANDING

*ECCLESIAL: related to church*

Ordained Ministerial Standing is the formal **ECCLESIAL** relationship by which an Ordained Minister may represent the United Church of Christ to the Body of Christ (both UCC and ecumenical settings) and to the wider world. Through ministerial standing, the Ordained Minister demonstrates commitment to view their ministry as part of the whole ministry of the United Church of Christ and, in turn, the United Church of Christ (through the Association) commits to providing sources of support and processes of accountability.

An Association (through its Committee on Ministry) holds ministerial standing; an Ordained Minister maintains standing in the Association where the Ordained Minister keeps their Local Church membership. Ministerial standing may only be held in one Association at a time. For Ordained Ministers serving as Local Church pastors, membership belongs in the church they are pastoring and standing in the Association of that Local Church. For Ordained Ministers serving in specialized settings, ministerial standing is held by the Association where they have a Local Church membership. Those Ordained Ministers who specialize in interim ministries or whose work is not geographically bound likewise maintain membership in a Local Church and commit to the obligations of ministerial standing in the Association of that Local Church.

The particular expectations of ministerial standing are outlined in **THREE- AND FOUR-WAY COVENANTS**,<sup>34</sup> although anyone with standing in the United Church of Christ is obligated to processes of accountability even when a three- or four-way covenant is not actively engaged. The three-way covenant outlines expectations for the Local Church of membership, the person with standing, and the Association in relationship to each other. The four-way covenant outlines expectations for the Local Church of membership, the person with standing, the Association, and the ministry setting in relationship to each other.

<sup>34</sup> **THREE- AND FOUR-WAY COVENANTS:** See the Section 2 Article IV, “Covenants and Endorsements of Ordained Ministers.”

Ministerial standing may be categorized in a variety of ways, with different implications for oversight and transferability.

*Specialized opportunities to maintain standing should be available as appropriate for such persons as ministers in specialized settings, military chaplains, Ordained Ministers who are professionally retired, and others.*

- **ORDAINED MINISTERIAL STANDING** indicates the relationship of support and accountability in which the Ordained Minister faithfully engages systems of support and processes of accountability and adheres to the UCC Ministerial Code. Associations have the responsibility of providing ample and diverse opportunities for their Ordained Ministers to meet the obligations of standing.<sup>35</sup> All Ordained Ministers must meet their Associations' requirements for ministerial standing regardless of whether they are currently engaged in three- or four-way covenants, professionally retired, or between calls. Standing may transfer between Associations when an Ordained Minister moves their Local Church membership, with or without a call agreement. Ordained Ministerial Standing includes voting privileges in the Association and Conference where they hold standing.
- **LEAVE OF ABSENCE** is a type of standing for an Ordained Minister who is neither actively seeking nor engaged in professional ministry for a specific season of time. Reasons for an Ordained Minister to request Leave of Absence are diverse, such as vocational discernment, major life event, etc. As a form of ministerial standing, Leave of Absence may be transferred between Associations. Responsibilities and permitted ministerial functions during Leave of Absence are established in conversation with the Committee on Ministry where standing is held but may not negate the Ordained Minister's or Association's commitments of oversight.
- **OMEGA STANDING.** The rite of ordination is understood as lifelong, however there may come occasions when the public ministry of an Ordained Minister comes to a close. In these circumstances, Ordained Ministers may apply to their Committee on Ministry for Omega

*OMEGA STANDING: using the last letter of the Greek alphabet, Omega Standing signifies the capstone of life in ministry.*

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<sup>35</sup> See Section 2 Article V for recommendations of best practices for support and accountability.

*“Retired” is not a form of ecclesiastical standing in the United Church of Christ. A minister may self-identify as “retired,” however they must adhere to the requirements of Ordained Ministerial Standing as set forth by their Association’s Committee on Ministry unless they have requested and been granted Omega Standing.*

Standing, covenanting to no longer perform acts of public ministry.<sup>36</sup>

Omega Standing includes ongoing commitments between the Ordained Minister and the Committee on Ministry where Omega Standing is held; these commitments differ from the responsibilities of Ordained Ministerial Standing and are articulated through an Omega Standing covenant.<sup>37</sup> In general, the Committee releases ministers with Omega Standing from ongoing requirements such as boundary training and continuing education; ministers cease their public ministries but can continue to vote in the Association where Omega Standing is held and may co-officiate the Sacraments at the invitation of an active Ordained Minister. Omega Standing is recorded in the UCC Data Hub.

Omega Standing does not end the relationship of support and accountability. Those who hold Omega Standing continue to be responsible for faithfully embodying the UCC Ministerial Code and can be the subject of Fitness Reviews. Committees are responsible to maintain annual contact with ministers holding Omega Standing, in order to keep accurate contact information and to communicate relevant information from the Committee on Ministry. Ministers with Omega Standing may take membership in a UCC Local Church outside of the Association where their Omega Standing is held. An Ordained Minister with Omega Standing can request reinstatement of Ordained Ministerial Standing if they wish to engage again in active public ministry.

- **ORDAINED MINISTERIAL PARTNER STANDING (OMPS)** is specific to a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or United Church of Canada Ordained Minister who is serving in a United Church of Christ ministry setting. Oversight is primarily the role of the United Church of Christ in collaboration with the appropriate Disciples Region or

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<sup>36</sup> Omega Standing has implications for those ordained ministers who have been celebrated as Pastor Emeritus by local churches. An ordained minister with Omega Standing may hold Pastor Emeritus as a title only, with no active engagement in ministry in the church that granted the honor.

<sup>37</sup> See Section 3 for a sample Omega Standing covenant.

United Church of Canada Presbytery. OMPS is valid only for the duration of the particular call with a UCC ministry setting.<sup>38</sup>

- **DUAL STANDING** is specific to an Ordained Minister of another denomination who is serving in a United Church of Christ ministry setting. Oversight is primarily the role of the other denomination, although the ordained minister is responsible for any requirements of standing as established by the UCC Association where Dual Standing is held. Dual Standing is valid only for the duration of the particular call with a UCC ministry setting and may not be transferred.
- **LIMITED STANDING** is specific to a Member in Discernment who has been called upon to serve in a priestly, pastoral and representative role where an Ordained Minister is not available to serve in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ. Limited Standing expires and must be renewed annually along with continued Member in Discernment status. Limited Standing may not transfer, because the status of a Member of Discernment is rooted within the Association where the MID has Local Church membership.

*STATUS: A mutual relationship of discernment between an individual seeking ministerial standing and an Association of the United Church of Christ through its Committee on Ministry*

**ECCLESIAL STATUSES:** Distinct from ministerial standings, several ecclesial statuses exist in the United Church of Christ:

- **MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT** is a lay member of the United Church of Christ who is exploring and pursuing ordination with a Committee on Ministry; may have the privilege to circulate a UCC Ministerial Profile after being “approved for ordination pending call.” Approval for ordination does not change an individual’s ecclesial status; they continue as a MID with obligations of annual meetings with a Committee on Ministry until receiving an ordainable call or until the Committee has reason to discontinue the MID status.
- **PRIVILEGE OF CALL** indicates an ordained minister of another denomination or ecclesial body who is exploring and pursuing Ordained Ministerial Standing in the United Church of Christ; may have the privilege to circulate a UCC Ministerial Profile following the

<sup>38</sup> See Section 2 Article II for further information on OMPS, Dual Standing and Privilege of Call.

affirmation of an Ecclesiastical Council. “Seeking Privilege of Call” is used in Committee on Ministry records and the UCC Data Hub to indicate the process of discernment between an ordained minister of another denomination and a Committee on Ministry prior to the full approval of Privilege of Call by an Ecclesiastical Council. Privilege of Call and “Seeking Privilege of Call” are nontransferable between Associations.

- **SEEKING OMPS** indicates an Ordained Minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or The United Church of Canada who is seeking Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ, including the privilege to circulate a UCC Ministerial Profile.

Persons holding ecclesial status are in relationships of mutual discernment with Committees on Ministry but do not have the authority to represent the United Church of Christ. Statuses are non-transferable across Associations and may be terminated at any time by a Committee on Ministry.

STANDING	STATUS
Ordained Ministerial Standing	Member in Discernment
• Leave of Absence	Seeking OMPS
• Omega Standing	Seeking Privilege of Call
Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing (OMPS)	Privilege of Call
Limited Standing (MID only)	
Dual Standing	

## TRANSFER OF MINISTERIAL STANDING

Ministerial standing is allowed and expected to move between Associations throughout the career and lifetime of an Ordained Minister. When an Ordained Minister moves their Local Church membership and/or enters into a call agreement in an Association that is not their current Association of standing,

ministerial standing should transfer between Associations so that support and accountability can continue appropriately.

Transfer of standing from one Association to another is initiated by the Ordained Minister, the originating Committee on Ministry or the receiving Committee on Ministry.<sup>39</sup> The minister meets with the Committee on Ministry of the Association into which the person is moving. The Committee on Ministry that will receive the minister's standing requests the minister's file from the originating Association. Upon receipt and review of the file, the receiving Committee votes whether to receive the minister's standing. This decision is communicated to the minister, to the originating Association, and to the appropriate registrar to administratively transfer the record in the UCC Data Hub.

An Ordained Minister must be in good standing to transfer ministerial standing. When an oversight process is in progress, standing cannot transfer until the oversight process is completed where standing is currently held. The Ordained Minister currently under review through an accountability process may not seek standing in another Association; if a transfer of standing is requested, the originating Association must deny the request in order to complete its oversight work. A Committee on Ministry may not complete a transfer while an ordained minister is:

- under a Fitness Review;
- serving a program of growth as a condition of a Fitness Review that resulted in a Censure;
- serving a suspension of standing.

An Ordained Minister may, for reasons that may be (but aren't always) related to an oversight process, choose to resign their standing. An Ordained Minister who resigns but later wishes to regain ministerial standing must return to the Association where they submitted their resignation in order to discern with that Committee on Ministry whether it is appropriate to be granted ministerial standing again.

As noted previously, ecclesial statuses (Member in Discernment, Seeking Privilege of Call, Privilege of Call, Seeking OMPS) do not transfer between Associations. Likewise the following standings do not transfer: Limited Standing and

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<sup>39</sup> See Section 3 for sample Transfer of Standing request.

Dual Standing. An individual who has lost or resigned ministerial standing may not transfer between Associations.

### TRANSFERABLE

- Ordained Ministerial Standing as part of: new call, change in Local Church membership, Leave of Absence, Omega Standing
- Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing with call

### NON-TRANSFERABLE

- Dual Standing
- Privilege of Call
- Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing without call
- MID (including Limited Standing)
  - Seeking OMPS or POC
- Ordained Ministerial Standing during Fitness Review, censure, suspension, or termination
- Resigned ministerial standing

## TRANSFER OF MINISTERIAL FILES

In order to track and validate an Ordained Minister's standing, Committees on Ministry maintain **MINISTERIAL FILES**<sup>40</sup> for each individual holding standing within their Associations. These files are critical in the work of support and accountability as documentation of the covenantal relationships between an Ordained Minister, their ministry settings, and the wider United Church of Christ. A ministerial file includes:

- Record of Local Church membership
- Record of ordination
- Documentation of regular oversight proceedings
- Documentation of special disciplinary proceedings (concluded Fitness Review materials are attached as a packet in the file, to be accessed only as needed)
- Dates of boundary awareness training and continuing education

<sup>40</sup> See Section 3 for best practices regarding ministerial files.

- Most recent UCC Ministerial Profile
- Current three- or four-way covenant
- Leave of Absence agreements (if any)
- Omega Standing covenant (if applicable)
- Copy of Ecclesiastical Endorsement (if applicable)
- Credentials or ministerial standing related to ecumenical bodies

Ministerial files do not include materials collected during a Committee on Ministry's processes of discernment with an individual holding an ecclesial status (Member in Discernment, Seeking Privilege of Call, Privilege of Call, Seeking OMPS). These materials are maintained by the Committee on Ministry that conducted the discernment process and archived in perpetuity by the Committee or its Association. If the individual is ordained and/or granted Ordained Ministerial Standing in the United Church of Christ, the documentation of ordination and ministerial standing comprise the start of the individual's ministerial file. If the individual is declined ordination or ministerial standing, the documentation of the discernment process and of the Committee on Ministry's decision is archived.

Ministerial files, including records of discernment and oversight processes, are the property of the United Church of Christ and may be shared as appropriate across settings and partnerships.<sup>41</sup> While individuals may request and be granted access to their ministerial files for review under supervision, they may not retain the original or any copies of their ministerial files.

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Leave of Absence is an avenue for Ordained Ministers to maintain standing (including transferability of standing and eligibility for call) during a prolonged life season when they are not engaged in a three- or four-way covenant. Such a season

<sup>41</sup> Settings and partners include but are not limited to: the Ministerial Excellence, Support & Authorization (MESA) Ministry Team, the Office of General Counsel, Conferences, Associations, and ecumenical partners.

might include family leave to care for a new child or an aging parent; study leave to begin an academic program; vocational discernment when an individual reassesses their professional paths; sick leave following a serious accident or health crisis.<sup>42</sup>

A minister with Ordained Minister Standing requests Leave of Absence in writing to the Committee on Ministry where they hold ministerial standing. In conversation with the Committee, expectations for the duration of Leave of Absence are outlined, including:

- the Ordained Minister's continued responsibility for or temporary reprieve from such standing requirements as boundary training and continuing education;
- the Ordained Minister's ongoing relationship with their Local Church of membership;
- the Ordained Minister's authorization (or not) to provide pulpit supply, preside over Sacraments, officiate at weddings and funerals, engage in search and call processes, etc.;
- the agreed-upon method for renewing Leave of Absence annually (up to five years) and the next steps for both the Ordained Minister and the Committee on Ministry when Leave of Absence expires.

Some Ordained Ministers will conclude Leave of Absence with a letter to the Committee requesting to return to active ministerial standing. Some ministers may conclude Leave of Absence with a letter to the Committee to resign standing. It is inappropriate to use Leave of Absence as a penalty; Leave of Absence cannot serve the same purposes as program of growth related to an accountability process or Fitness Review.

## LOSS OF STANDING

The temporary or permanent loss of ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ may be the result of an oversight process by a Committee on Ministry or the choice by an individual to resign standing. Any request to return to good ministerial standing must always be made to the Association

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<sup>42</sup> Leave of Absence is not appropriate to Fitness Review or other accountability processes. Leave of Absence is distinct from and not related to a ministry setting's decision to place an Ordained Minister on administrative leave from employment for any reason.

*WITH OR WITHOUT BIAS: The phrase “without bias” may be selected in the Standing field of the UCC Data Hub upon a minister’s resignation of standing to indicate that the Committee has no concerns about the individual’s fitness for ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ. The phrase “with bias” may be selected in the Standing field of the UCC Data Hub to accompany a minister’s resignation that seeks to avoid or prematurely end an accountability process, and/or to indicate that the Committee has concerns about the individual’s fitness or capacity for ordained ministry.*

where standing was lost. Standing may be lost by the following actions:

- REMOVAL indicates that Ordained Ministerial Standing is removed without bias for administrative reasons. Removal can also be used at the conclusion of a call for an ordained minister serving in a UCC setting through Dual Standing or Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing;
- RESIGNED (WITH OR WITHOUT BIAS) indicates the choice of an Ordained Minister to resign their standing;
- SUSPENDED indicates that an Ordained Minister has temporarily lost standing as well as the authorization to minister in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ as part of an accountability process (Information Review or Fitness Review); the return of Ordained Ministerial Standing is dependent upon conditions outlined by the overseeing Committee on Ministry;
- TERMINATED indicates the permanent loss of ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ.

An individual may not represent themselves to the Body of Christ or the world as a minister in the United Church of Christ without having standing in an Association. An individual whose standing has been lost may not transfer between Associations. The loss of standing is recorded in the UCC Data Hub by designating the appropriate standing category. Records for individuals that are removed, resigned (with or without bias) or terminated should be marked “inactive” in the UCC Data Hub.

## REINSTATEMENT OF MINISTERIAL STANDING

An Ordained Minister may seek reinstatement of standing following the resignation or termination of standing only through the Association where standing ended. Upon receiving a request for reinstatement, a Committee on Ministry carefully considers the circumstances surrounding the resignation or termination and reviews the individual in light of the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers. In situations involving prior disciplinary processes, the Committee’s consideration includes among other factors:

- the circumstances that gave rise to that concern and/or Fitness Review process;
- the degree to which responsibility for actions was/is taken;
- the perspective of those who have been harmed by the individual's behavior.

If a minister resigned their standing in the midst of a Fitness Review or prior to the completion of a program of growth and returns to a Committee on Ministry to request reinstatement, the unfinished oversight process must be completed first before the Committee determines whether to grant reinstatement of standing.

A Member in Discernment who has lost Limited Standing as the result of a disciplinary process may not request reinstatement of Limited Standing. The loss of Limited Standing through a Fitness Review also brings into question the continuation of the Member in Discernment process. A Committee on Ministry should make and communicate a clear decision about its expectations for the Member in Discernment process when Limited Standing is lost as the result of an oversight process. An individual's decision to resign Limited Standing before an oversight process ends simultaneously ends their Member in Discernment status. The loss of Member in Discernment status may not be appealed. An individual may request to start the discernment process anew; when this request is made to a different Association than the one where MID status was lost, the Association where MID status was lost is encouraged to share its MID files with the new Association.

## UCC MINISTERIAL CODE

All persons with ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ are expected to abide by the UCC Ministerial Code.

I acknowledge as the Church's sole Head, Jesus Christ, Son of God and Savior, and as kindred in Christ all who share in this confession. I will look to the Word of God in the Scriptures, and

to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, to prosper its creative and redemptive work in the world.<sup>43</sup>

Affirming that I have been called by God to be a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ and granted ministerial standing by the United Church of Christ, I agree to preach and teach the gospel, to administer the sacraments and rites of the Church with integrity, and to exercise pastoral care and leadership in covenant with others.

Relying on the grace of God, I...

**COVENANT WITH GOD TO:**

- Lead a life worthy of the calling to which I have been called.
- Demonstrate a sincere yearning for connection with the triune God, expressed in prayer, worship, Bible study, retreat, and other spiritual practices.
- Affirm the importance of discernment in relationship to my call and, using the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers, will continue to discern the nature of my call in community.
- Grow in faith, knowledge, and the practice of ministry through intentional continuing education, study, and devotional life.
- Cultivate a culture of call by nurturing the gifts of others in the Church and joining their gifts with mine in seasons of change and continuity for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ and the health of the Church.
- Honor the diversity of God's creation and work for the unity of the body of Christ (John 17:21).
- Recognize the communal nature of God, ensuring that ministry does not happen in isolation.

**COVENANT WITH SELF AND FAMILY TO:**

- Attend to my physical well-being by adopting a healthy life style including diet, exercise, and rest, setting aside time for Sabbath and vacation.

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<sup>43</sup> Preamble to the United Church of Christ Constitution

- Steward my time, talents, and personal financial resources responsibly.
- Accept responsibility for all debts that I incur.
- Refrain from abusive behavior including abusive behavior toward others, the abuse of alcohol, drugs, or any other substance; to seek appropriate care for physical and mental health concerns; and to avoid addictive behaviors.
- Maintain high moral standards in my sexual behavior.
- Honor my family commitments, including my family's need for privacy and time together.
- Develop and maintain meaningful personal relationships outside of my ministry setting.

#### COVENANT WITH THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST TO:

- Actively participate in the covenantal life and work of all settings of the United Church of Christ.
- Adhere to all requirements for maintaining ministerial standing as set forth by my Association, and abide by the terms of my call agreements and covenants with energy and vitality.
- Seek the counsel of others, including Conference staff and/or the Association Committee on the Ministry, should divisive tensions threaten my relationship with those with whom I minister.
- Serve as an ambassador for the United Church of Christ, and participate in activities that strengthen its mission, vision and purpose.
- Advocate for fair standards of compensation for all ordained and lay employees of the Church, and honor the search and call process of the United Church of Christ.
- Seek to know, understand and respect the diversity of opinions and people within the United Church of Christ, affirming that all settings of the UCC speak to the church and not for it.
- Encourage and participate in the evaluation of my ministry, understanding and demonstrating that ministry is of and for the Church as it seeks to advance God's mission in the world.

#### COVENANT WITH MY MINISTRY SETTING TO:

- Preach and teach the gospel without fear or favor, regarding all persons with equal respect and concern, and undertaking to minister impartially.
- Honor all confidences shared with me, telling only those who need to know, what they need to know, when they need to know it.
- Steward church funds and property faithfully, while overseeing the administrative tasks of ministry with integrity.
- Speak the truth, not using my position, power, or authority to exploit any person nor using my position for unwarranted personal financial gain.
- Assess with care the implications of accepting gifts from congregation members.
- Not perform pastoral services within a congregation or for a member of a congregation, without the invitation of the current pastor of that congregation.
- Neither interfere with nor intrude upon the ministry of my successor, upon my departure from a ministry setting; and to deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and successor.

#### COVENANT WITH ALL ORDAINED MINISTERS TO:

- Work cooperatively and collegially, with intercultural awareness.
- Stand in mutual relationships with colleagues in ministry, offering and receiving counsel and support with intentionality.
- Use technology and social media responsibly.
- Act to prevent and to report known or suspected cases of physical or sexual abuse or neglect.
- Attribute the sources of words and ideas that are not my own.
- Accurately represent my professional qualifications, education, experience and affiliations, acknowledging the limitations of my office, abilities, skills and competencies, and making referrals when necessary and/or appropriate.

- Maintain appropriate boundaries and practice self-differentiation in both my personal and professional life, including within the Local Church where I hold membership.

## REFLECTION AND FEEDBACK

*Which clarifications about ministerial standing are particularly helpful to your work?*

*If you were asked to use both the Ministerial Code and the Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministers to reflect on your own ministerial work, which themes between the two resources might be particularly insightful for you at this time?*

# MANUAL ON MINISTRY: SECTION 2

## SECTION 2 ARTICLE IV: COVENANTS AND ENDORSEMENTS OF ORDAINED MINISTERS

BASED ON THE FEEDBACK RECEIVED TO DATE, THE FOLLOWING MATERIALS/IDEAS IN SECTION 2 ARTICLE IV ARE “STILL IN CONVERSATION” (see Discussion Guide) OR “READY TO BE USED”:

### STILL IN DISCERNMENT AND CONVERSATION

- ☒ The feedback at AM21 San Antonio provided overall affirmation for Section 2 Article IV, with clarification questions.
- ☒ The Habakkuk Group encourages reflections and conversations on an expanded use of ordination for ministry in settings beyond the Local Church and traditional institutions and/or for calls that may or may not include full-time compensation.

### READY TO BE USED

- ☒ The entirety of Section 2 Article IV is ready to be used.

### FEEDBACK

During 2017, the Habakkuk Group will continue to receive feedback on the drafted Manual on Ministry as it is discussed at AM21 regional events and as Committees on Ministry engage the materials (putting some portions to use and holding some portions in conversation). [Feedback forms](#) can be sent to Rachel Hackenberg (hackenberg@ucc.org) for the Habakkuk Group’s consideration. Some Associations may choose to use materials/ideas presented in this drafted MOM as their method of discernment and engagement, with the understanding that changes and clarifications (particularly related to the topics “still in discernment”) will not be finalized until after 2017.

## SECTION 2 ARTICLE IV: COVENANTS AND ENDORSEMENTS OF ORDAINED MINISTERS

### CALL

At the heart of the understanding of Christian ministry in the United Church of Christ is the theological conviction that God calls all disciples to serve, and equips and empowers them to do so as active members of local congregations, as well as in their work and witness of daily life. Some members of the body of Christ are called to particular service as authorized ministers, representative of the Church Universal and the United Church of Christ.<sup>44</sup>

The particulars of each person's call and ministry vary with time, place, talents and skills, experience, personal situation and responsibilities, and importantly, connectivity to a Local Church and the needs of the Church and the world. It is the responsibility of Committees on Ministry, on behalf of the United Church of Christ, to work with Local Churches (Discernment Committees) and individuals who sense a call to ordained ministry in the UCC to discern the readiness for and appropriateness of ordination or, in the case of those already ordained by another ecclesiastical body, the readiness for and appropriateness of granting Ordained Ministerial Standing.

*While CALL has many meanings in the work of discernment and ministerial authorization, here the word "call" specifically refers to a formal ministry setting for which an Ordained Minister is gifted and qualified and in which the Ordained Minister is asked to serve. The "call" includes a call agreement (or employment contract) that outlines scope of work and compensation among other details, and is accompanied by a three- or four-way covenant.*

In order to be ordained, a Member in Discernment who is approved for ordination pending call must first receive a **CALL** to an approved ministry setting; this is referred to as an **ORDAINABLE CALL**. Similarly, in order to receive ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ, an ordained minister from another ecclesiastical body must first receive a call to a UCC ministry setting that is considered by a Committee on Ministry to warrant ministerial standing; this is referred to as an **AUTHORIZABLE CALL**. At times a Committee on Ministry may also need to discern together with a currently-authorized minister whether a particular work being undertaken by the individual is a ministry in and on behalf of the Church Universal and the United Church of Christ, and thus represents an authorizable call.

<sup>44</sup> See Section 1, Theology of Ministry and Ordination

At the heart of an ordainable or authorizable call is covenant: the sacred commitment of the individual, the ministry setting, the Local Church, and the Association through its Committee on Ministry to one another and to Christ to faithfully and effectively minister together for the glory of God.

## ORDAINABLE CALL

“In ordination, the individual makes a lifetime commitment to God in Jesus Christ and to the Christian Church, relying on the Holy Spirit. As Ordained Ministers enter the apostolic ministry, they continue to witness to Christ’s followers from New Testament times. They receive authority from the Triune God to serve in Jesus’ name. Ordained Ministers have particular responsibilities for the proclamation and practice of the Christian faith and for the life of the Church itself.” (Section 1)

An individual who is called to ordained ministry is authorized to serve and to lead on behalf of the United Church of Christ and the Church Universal must first receive a **CALL** for ministerial service. The discernment of an ordainable call is a decision empowered to Committees on Ministry by their Associations. While the discernment of an individual’s effectiveness and fitness for ministry is assessed throughout the Member in Discernment process and affirmed through an Ecclesiastical Council, a Committee on Ministry must further discern whether the Member in Discernment who is approved for ordination pending call has secured a ministerial position that serves God, Jesus Christ, the Church Universal and the United Church of Christ in such a way that ordination is needed: that is, an ordainable call. The Church Universal, the United Church of Christ, and Committees on Ministry throughout the denomination are coming to understand that the setting for an ordainable call may or may not be in the Local Church and may or may not include full-time compensation.

An ordainable call must demonstrate three essential qualities to the Committee on Ministry’s satisfaction:

- THE CALL IS COVENANTAL. In the United Church of Christ, no one does ministry alone. An ordainable call demonstrates clear connectedness with a Local Church (or in the case of a

call beyond the Local Church, connectedness with the individual's Local Church of membership and the ministerial setting) as partners in ministry with an Association in the shared mission of the United Church of Christ.

In the case of an Ordained Minister serving a Local Church, it is understood that a three-way covenant be written to illustrate the covenantal relationship and expectations between the Local Church, Association and the minister. In the case of an Ordained Minister serving in a setting beyond the Local Church, it is understood that a four-way covenant be written to illustrate the covenantal relationship expectations between the Local Church of membership, the ministry setting, the Association, and the minister.

- THE CALL RESPONDS TO THE NEEDS OF THE CHURCH.<sup>45</sup> An authorizable call meets the needs of the Church for a representative of the United Church of Christ and of the Church Universal through the servant leadership of an Ordained Minister. The particular need that leads to an authorizable call relates to the whole and holy life of the Church, with responsibility for representing Christ and the Church and for equipping the Church's response to God's work in the world; the person seeking ordination and/or ministerial standing articulates a sense of call to meet that need.

The call, whether to a Local Church setting or a setting beyond the Local Church, must be carefully reviewed for its intent, authenticity and validity to serve the ongoing and expanding needs of the Church. A Committee on Ministry may be asked to consider calls to interim ministry, community organizing, or a wide variety of entrepreneurial ministry settings for ordination.

Further questions to be asked while discerning an ordainable call may include:

- Does this ministry setting require/need an individual, a servant leader, one who has 'received authority from the Triune God to serve in Jesus' name'?

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<sup>45</sup> See Section 1 for "Needs of the Church."

- Does this ministry setting require an individual who embodies and proclaims the Good News of Jesus Christ to all, preaching and teaching the Word?
- Does this ministry setting ask that the one who serves nurture and empower those gathered through worship and Sacrament, fellowship and mutual care, lifelong education and spiritual formation, including rites, sacraments, pastoral presence or spiritual guidance?
- Does this ministry setting require that the one called be a statement in the world for justice for all of God's children through preaching, teaching and acts of loving-kindness?

- THE CALL INVOLVES MUTUALITY IN MINISTRY BETWEEN THE MINISTER AND THE COMMUNITY. An ordainable call demonstrates tangible commitments to shared concerns and mutual accountability for the sake of sustained ministry. Whether an minister is serving in a Local Church or in a specialized setting while holding membership in a Local Church that supports the authorized minister and the ministry setting, it is expected that there are ongoing structures of both support and accountability in place to encourage the long-term well-being of the minister and ongoing viability of the ministry being undertaken.<sup>46</sup>

Tools that can help a Committee on Ministry discern whether a call to ministry is authorizable include:

- Prayer and Discernment<sup>47</sup>
- Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministers
- Position Description and Scope of Work
- Call Agreement/Employment Contract
- Three- or Four-Way Covenants

<sup>46</sup> See Section 3 for sample Three- and Four-Way Covenants.

<sup>47</sup> See Section 3 for the Discernment Travelogue.

## AUTHORIZABLE CALL

The discernment of an **AUTHORIZABLE CALL** is a decision empowered to Committees on Ministry by their Associations. Such a decision considers both the local context and the wider context of the United Church of Christ. Like ordainable calls, authorizable calls must demonstrate three essential qualities to the Committee on Ministry's satisfaction:

- THE CALL IS COVENANTAL.
- THE CALL RESPONDS TO THE NEEDS OF THE CHURCH.
- THE CALL INVOLVES SHARED MUTUALITY IN MINISTRY BETWEEN THE MINISTER AND THE COMMUNITY.

Tools that can help a Committee on Ministry discern whether a call to ministry is authorizable include:

- Prayer and Discernment<sup>48</sup>
- Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministers
- Position Description and Scope of Work

## THREE- AND FOUR-WAY COVENANTS

*To be recognized as a CALLING BODY for three- or four-way covenants with Ordained Ministers, an organization or faith community typically must have: an identifiable structure of leadership and governance; a willingness to recognize and provide appropriate oversight for an individual's call to ordained ministry; a commitment to participate fully in a three- or four-way covenant with the individual, the Local Church of membership, and the UCC through an Association.*

When an Ordained Minister and a ministry setting enter into a season of laboring together, the expectations of employment (such as scope of work and compensation) are detailed in a **CALL AGREEMENT**<sup>49</sup> between the Ordained Minister and the ministry setting; a copy of the call agreement should be provided to the Association or Conference for the ministerial file.

The sacred nature of the shared ministry between the Local Church and the Ordained Ministry (and the ministry setting beyond the Local Church for specialized ministries) for the purpose of God's mission and the relationship expectations of all covenantal partners should be made explicit in writing with a **THREE- or FOUR-WAY COVENANT**.<sup>50</sup> Accountability for healthy relationships, good communication, and mutual concern for all participants should be built into the fabric of the three- or four-

<sup>48</sup> See Section 3 for discernment tools such as the Discernment Travelogue.

<sup>49</sup> See Section 3 for sample call agreement.

<sup>50</sup> See Section 3 for sample 3-way covenants and 4-way covenants.

*When a Committee on Ministry is considering the appropriateness of an employment or ministry setting to provide an ordainable or authorizable call, it may be helpful for the potential ministry partners to draft a three- or four-way covenant as an exercise to review the scope of proposed ministry, mutual accountability and oversight, as well as the ways in which the call would require of the individual an embodied Word and Spirit through preaching and teaching, rites and sacraments, justice and pastoral care.*

way covenant in order to strengthen and encourage the ministry. The authority and power of the three- or four-way covenant rests in the understanding of mutual accountability on the part of each participant.

Three-way covenants outline expectations of an Ordained Minister, the Local Church of membership as the **CALLING BODY** and the Association all in relationship to one another. Four-way covenants outline expectations of an Ordained Minister, the Local Church of membership, the Association, and the ministry setting as the calling body all in relationship to one another. Distinct and separate from a call agreement or an employment contract, a three- or four-way covenant relies on the parties involved to embrace and actively engage the relationship with a sincere desire for the good of all participants. Covenant – not only in writing but in all its forms – is meant to secure the well-being of God’s community and the Body of Christ; covenants are not crafted for the purpose of prioritizing the needs or wants of an individual. In the United Church of Christ, three- and four-way covenants are written to further the mutual ministry of all ministry partners (Association, Local Church, Ordained Minister, and ministry setting) in and on the behalf of the United Church of Christ.

While the specific responsibilities in three- and four-way covenants can vary according to Association and ministry setting, some basic expectations are important to foster healthy relationships and communication among the covenantal partners and with God:

- LOCAL CHURCH RESPONSIBILITIES include participation in the Association and Conference (e.g. sending delegates to annual meetings and nurturing its own “culture of call” to identify members whose leadership gifts would bless the wider church); support of its members who are Ordained Ministers (pastors, ministers in specialized settings, and retired clergy alike) through pastoral relations and/or discernment committees; appreciation for other settings beyond its own walls & programs as essential locations of ministry.
- ORDAINED MINISTER RESPONSIBILITIES include maintenance of ministerial standing, participation in the life of a Local Church and of the wider United Church of Christ, including financial support; faithfulness to the

Ministerial Code and to the terms of a call agreement. Those ministers called to specialized settings should be encouraged to intentionally engage and support their Local Church of membership through newsletter articles, annual reports, stewardship of their resources, and pastoral assistance if/when there is an appropriate opportunity.

- ASSOCIATION RESPONSIBILITIES include communication of expectations for Ordained Ministers and Local Churches to maintain standing; faithful exercise of oversight responsibilities, such as annual Information Reviews and opportunities for clergy renewal; the hosting of installation services; participation in the wider United Church of Christ, including timely communication with other Associations' Committees on Ministry in matters of ministerial standing.
- MINISTRY SETTING RESPONSIBILITIES include fair terms of call to an Ordained Minister, written in proportion to the position's scope of work; affirmation of the Local Church as the locus of ministry and mission in the United Church of Christ; communication with the Association as needed for support and oversight of an Ordained Minister.

*Occasionally, some ministry settings are unable to sign a formal four-way covenant. In those situations, it can still be possible to create a four-way covenant that outlines support and accountability for both the minister and the ministry setting.*

On behalf of an Association and the United Church of Christ, a Committee on Ministry has the responsibility of support and accountability for Ordained Ministers. A Committee tends to the functional expressions of the covenantal relationships between Local Churches, Ordained Ministers, Associations, and settings of ministry; responds to the needs of those who hold standing in its Association; facilitates spaces and communities that nurture growth in ministry; holds accountable Ordained Ministers for effective and faithful ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ.

*How have three- and four-way covenants worked well  
in your region to nurture relationships between  
the covenantal partners?*

*How are preaching, teaching, Sacraments, pastoral care,  
and leadership (UCC Constitution paragraph 23)  
demonstrated by Ordained Ministers beyond  
Local Church settings?*

## ECCLESIASTICAL ENDORSEMENT

Ecclesiastical Endorsement is sought by an Ordained Minister and their Association of standing when required specifically by an agency (such as hospital, military branch, federal prison system, university campus, or other specialized setting). While ordination and the granting of ministerial standing are the responsibility of Associations, the Ecclesiastical Endorsement of an Ordained Minister is the work of Associations in collaboration with the United Church of Christ Endorsement Office. Endorsement is the assessment and verification of an Ordained Minister's standing, qualifying experience, and capacity to represent the United Church of Christ faithfully and sensitively in diverse and pluralistic settings. An individual cannot be endorsed without ordination and Ordained Ministerial Standing.

Ecclesiastical Endorsement requires the participation of an Association's Committee on Ministry in the application process. Professional and government agencies that require endorsement set unique standards for applicants, which are reviewed and evaluated by the United Church of Christ Endorser and the Endorsement Office of the UCC National Offices.<sup>51</sup> The processes for ecclesiastical endorsement vary by agency, however they can be outlined in two basic categories:

- GOVERNMENTAL: For military chaplaincy, chaplaincy in the Federal Bureau of Prisons or chaplaincy in the Veterans Administration health care system, individuals must be ordained and have post-ordination experience in an approved ministry setting, be interviewed by their Committee on Ministry, and be recommended for endorsement to the Ecclesiastical Endorser for the United Church of Christ. The final decision on endorsement is the decision of the Endorser, confirming that the individual is specifically qualified to serve in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ.
- PROFESSIONAL: In the cases where individuals are seeking endorsement to pursue certification as a chaplain or supervisor through a professional agency, the individual's Committee on Ministry works directly with

*Governmental endorsement regulations stipulate specifically which types of post-ordination experiences are required and the duration of those experiences.*

*Because post-ordination experience is required by the government prior to endorsement, chaplaincy positions with the military, Veterans Affairs, or Federal Bureau of Prisons cannot qualify as ordainable calls.*

<sup>51</sup> See Section 3 for specific endorsement requirements and procedures for various professional and governmental agencies.

the Endorsement Office of the UCC National Offices to ensure that each agency's policies are adhered to and that all files are complete. The Committee on Ministry makes the endorsement for professional agencies and is responsible for the submission of paperwork to the Endorsement Office. Once the application is complete, the seal of the United Church of Christ is affixed to an endorsement letter and sent to the appropriate agency.

Endorsement establishes that an Ordained Minister maintains Ordained Ministerial Standing and has accrued the needed credentials and experience to minister in and on behalf of the UCC in diverse professional settings.

Endorsement to a governmental agency may be removed at the discretion of the Ecclesiastical Endorser of the United Church of Christ. Endorsement to a professional organization may be removed by the UCC Endorsement Office following the resignation of membership in the organization by the Ordained Minister, the termination of the minister's membership by the organization, or the loss of ministerial standing as the result of an oversight proceeding.

# MANUAL ON MINISTRY: SECTION 2

## SECTION 2 ARTICLE V: ACCOUNTABILITY AND SUPPORT OF ORDAINED MINISTERS

BASED ON THE FEEDBACK RECEIVED TO DATE, THE FOLLOWING MATERIALS/IDEAS IN SECTION 2 ARTICLE V ARE “STILL IN CONVERSATION” (see Discussion Guide) OR “READY TO BE USED”:

### STILL IN DISCERNMENT AND CONVERSATION

☒ The proposal of “Admonishment” as a new outcome for the Fitness Review process received thoughtful questions in the feedback from AM21 San Antonio. Alternate suggestions for the name/title of this new outcome are welcomed.

☒ Here again it’s worth noting that the concept of Member in Discernment with Limited Standing is still in discernment.

### READY TO BE USED

☒ The entirety of Section 2 Article V is ready to be used.

### FEEDBACK

During 2017, the Habakkuk Group will continue to receive feedback on the drafted Manual on Ministry as it is discussed at AM21 regional events and as Committees on Ministry engage the materials (putting some portions to use and holding some portions in conversation). [Feedback forms](#) can be sent to Rachel Hackenberg (hackenberg@ucc.org) for the Habakkuk Group’s consideration. Some Associations may choose to use materials/ideas presented in this drafted MOM as their method of discernment and engagement, with the understanding that changes and clarifications (particularly related to the topics “still in discernment”) will not be finalized until after 2017.

## SECTION 2 ARTICLE V: ACCOUNTABILITY AND SUPPORT OF ORDAINED MINISTERS

### ONGOING SUPPORT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

*All processes of support and accountability require accurate recordkeeping. Depending on the Association or Conference, the responsibility for maintaining MINISTERIAL FILES and updated the UCC Data Hub may rest with a Registrar, Committee on Ministry, or Association or Conference Office. Regardless of who holds this responsibility, communication among all judicatory partners and effective file maintenance are necessary. See Section 3 for best practices on ministerial files.*

The oversight of ordained ministry by a Committee on Ministry, including processes of support and accountability, is fundamental to Ordained Ministerial Standing. Oversight serves to strengthen covenantal relationships, to provide relational support for Ordained Ministers and their ministry settings, to affirm or assess standing, and to promote ongoing discernment of and suitability for ongoing ministerial authorization. The underlying goal of all forms of oversight is to support ministerial excellence throughout the United Church of Christ.

An Ordained Minister is required to participate in an Association's processes of mutual support and accountability in order to maintain standing in the United Church of Christ. Associations through their Committees on Ministry are required to provide sufficient opportunities for Ordained Ministers to fulfill these requirements. Committees must also maintain accurate committee records and **MINISTERIAL FILES** of oversight processes and ensure that the UCC Data Hub is updated appropriately.

While processes of support and oversight are fundamental to the relationship of Ordained Ministerial Standing, the following individuals all need to engage faithfully in processes of support and accountability with their Committee on Ministry:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• individuals with Ordained Ministerial Standing (including those on a Leave of Absence or holding Omega Standing)</li></ul>   |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Members in Discernment with Limited Standing</li></ul>   |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• individuals with Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing serving in UCC contexts, in collaboration with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or The United Church of Canada as appropriate</li></ul> |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• individuals with Dual Standing, including ministers who serve under the Formula of Agreement, in collaboration with their denomination of origin</li></ul>   |

The phrase "INDIVIDUAL WITH STANDING" is used from this point forward in this article to note all of the above.

Processes of support and accountability are the responsibility of Committees on Ministry in the Associations where standing is held. When an individual with standing serves in a ministry setting that is located outside of their Association of standing, then the need for intentional and effective communication between the individual with standing, their Association, their Local Church of membership, and their ministry setting (if applicable) is especially noted.

## OVERVIEW OF SUPPORT PROCESSES

The ongoing support of ministry by a Committee on Ministry includes providing (whether directly or indirectly) opportunities for those with standing to grow and be **HEALTHY** in their vocations according to the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers and the UCC Ministerial Code. In support of those with standing, the Committee on Ministry hosts, encourages, and/or sponsors spaces for individuals to reflect regularly on their ministries alongside peers, and to discern their ongoing sense of call in conversation with the Committee.

*HEALTHY is used holistically to include mental, physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, personal, professional health along with the wise integration of life and ministry in order to serve effectively and faithfully as an Ordained Minister.*

- **VOCATIONAL SUPPORT:** Ministry is never done in isolation. Committees on Ministry are key conversation partners in ongoing discernment of call as well as providing support mechanisms for clergy growth. Vocational Support from Committees on Ministry fall into two categories: ongoing and periodic.
  - **ONGOING PEER SUPPORT:** Committees on Ministry host or recommend opportunities for ongoing peer support so that those with standing build relationships on a regular basis with their colleagues in ministry. Those with standing are encouraged to proactively seek out and engage in ongoing peer support.
  - **PERIODIC VOCATIONAL SUPPORT:** Committees on Ministries designate time every 3-5 years to meet with Ordained Ministers regarding their current ministries and ongoing vocational discernment. These conversations are guided by the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers. Members in Discernment with Limited Standing continue to meet annually with the Committee on Ministry that holds both their status and standing, as part of their ongoing vocational discernment and formation.

- **SITUATIONAL SUPPORT CONSULTATION:** The Committee on Ministry makes itself available for Situational Support Consultation between an individual with standing and the ministry setting as needed to address circumstances or dynamics within the covenantal relationship that need support; Situational Support Consultations are not appropriate when concerns are raised of possible unethical behavior or misconduct on the part of the Ordained Minister or Member in Discernment with Limited Standing. Any partner in the covenant – the individual with standing, the Local Church of membership, the ministry setting if separate from the Local Church, or the Committee on Ministry – may request a Situational Support Consultation.

## OVERVIEW OF ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESSES

The purpose of accountability processes includes holding accountable those with standing for their conduct and assessing their continued qualification for ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ. When granting standing, a Committee on Ministry communicates its requirements for maintaining standing (and provides opportunities for those with standing to fulfill those requirements) and the individual fulfills those requirements.

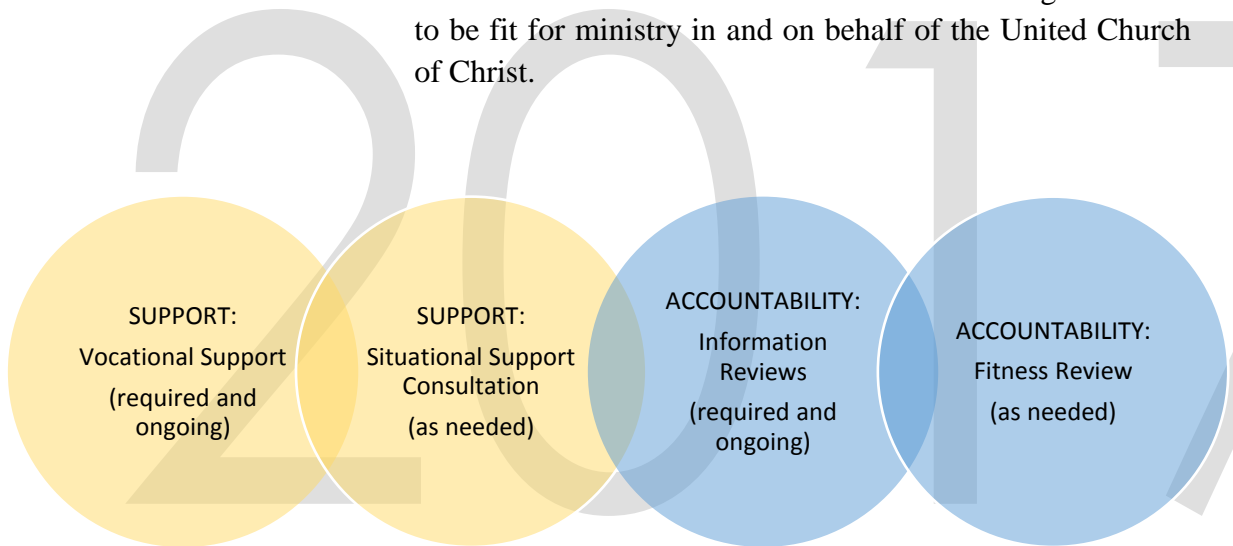
Processes for accountability and their frequency are recommended as follows:

- **INFORMATION REVIEWS** require those holding standing to complete annually a written information form so that the Committee on Ministry can confirm each individual's most up-to-date contact information and ministry setting.<sup>52</sup> Space is to be provided in information reviews to indicate which peer support, boundary awareness and continuing education programs were completed in the past year as well as indications from the Committee on Ministry regarding any upcoming requirements.
- **BOUNDARY AWARENESS** is required at least once every 3 – 5 years, with the Association hosting a diversity of opportunities on a range of boundary topics (sexual, financial, familial, social media, retirement, etc.).

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<sup>52</sup> See Section 3 for a recommended Information Review Form.

- CONTINUING EDUCATION is required annually, with the Committee on Ministry clarifying to those with standing what opportunities qualify as continuing education and whether particular topics must be engaged (e.g. anti-racism training every 3 – 5 years).
- **FITNESS REVIEWS:** As needed, an accountability process may be conducted in response to questions regarding unhealthy behavior or misconduct of an individual with standing in light of the UCC Ministerial Code. During a Fitness Review, those affected by the individual’s potential misconduct have the opportunity to share their stories, the individual has the opportunity to share their perspective and to reflect on others’ stories, and the Committee on Ministry determines whether the individual with standing continues to be fit for ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ.



*Which processes of support and accountability  
are most familiar to you?*

*How might the nuances of what you just read  
inform more faithful processes of support  
and accountability in your region?*

#### SUPPORT PROCESS: VOCATIONAL SUPPORT

Vocational Support is designed to reduce isolation, honor the evolving call of the spirit, and provide for an ever-deepening relationship between the Committee on Ministries and those ministers hold standing in that Association.

**ONGOING PEER SUPPORT:** The purpose of Ongoing Peer Support is to build relationships on a regular basis among those with standing in an Association. Peer relationships are critical to ministerial health and growth, and regular support helps to prevent Fitness Reviews. Associations may develop, host or sponsor a variety of activities for Ongoing Peer Support, including but not limited to clergy retreats, communities of practice, Association ministerium, etc. Ministers may also form or locate additional communities of peer support throughout the

year, in particular, cohorts related to geographic location, areas of common interest or field of specialized ministry. Ordained Ministers and Members in Discernment with Limited Standing should participate in Ongoing Peer Support opportunities regularly throughout the year.

**PERIODIC VOCATIONAL SUPPORT:** The purpose of Periodic Vocational Support is to encourage the vocational development and ongoing discernment of those with standing. This meeting, held at least once every 3 – 5 years between a Committee on Ministry and an individual with standing, also provides an opportunity to strengthen UCC covenantal relationships and to clarify the Association’s expectations for ministerial standing. Members in Discernment with Limited Standing continue to meet annually with the Committee on Ministry that holds both their status and standing, as part of their ongoing formation and discernment as MIDs. Periodic Vocational Support is not intended to address fitness concerns.

The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers serves as the primary tool for these conversations.<sup>53</sup> Additional questions that may serve to shed light on the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers might include:

- How does the Ordained Minister view their spiritual and professional development?
- In what types of continuing education has the Ordained Minister participated and found meaningful?
- Does the Ordained Minister have regular and trusted sources of support and feedback?
- How is the Local Church of membership providing support of the individual’s continued development?
- Does the Ordained Minister have a sense of fulfillment in the current setting and in their overall vocation?

Periodic Vocational Support is also a Committee on Ministry’s opportunity to update those with standing on any new expectations and/or opportunities for maintaining standing with the Association.

As much as possible, Committees on Ministry should strive to meet in person with Ordained Ministers for Periodic Vocational Support, while also offering flexibility in the method of meeting to those who hold standing in the

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<sup>53</sup> See Section 3 for additional tools, conversation suggestions, and process recommendations.

Association but do not reside regularly in that Association (such as ministers in specialized settings). The precise structure of Periodic Vocational Support may vary by Association. Periodic Vocational Support requirements could be met through one-on-one meetings between Ordained Ministers and their Committees on Ministry; on-site meetings with representatives from a Committee on Ministry and Ordained Ministers in their ministry settings; group meetings of several Ordained Ministers together with their Committee on Ministry to foster collegial support; retreats hosted for Ordained Ministers by the Association and attended as well by Committee on Ministry members.

Periodic Vocational Support may result in one or more outcomes, including:

- affirmation of particular strengths in ministry and recommendations for continued professional development;
- acknowledgment of and encouragement for specific areas for vocational development;
- encouragement for continued or improved care of self and personal relationships;
- connection to peer groups and networks;
- referrals for support resources appropriate to address difficult circumstances;
- a program of personal or vocational development that may be carried out in consultation with the Committee on the Ministry;
- follow-up work with the ministry setting in a Situational Support Consultation.

#### SUPPORT PROCESS: SITUATIONAL SUPPORT CONSULTATION

The purpose of a Situational Support Consultation is to address in-depth a particular relationship or situation of concern that has arisen between an individual with standing and their ministry setting. This meeting may be requested by any covenantal partner: the individual with standing, the ministry setting or the Committee on Ministry. If concerns are raised of possible unethical behavior or misconduct on the part of the individual with standing, a Situational Support Consultation is not appropriate and a Fitness Review should be considered.

In a Situational Support Consultation, the Committee on Ministry seeks to clarify the specific issues or circumstances that have arisen, and help to identify ways to promote effective and collaborative ministries in response to these circumstances. The desired outcome is for all covenantal partners involved to agree to a course of action that will be evaluated together at a specified later date.

When a Situational Support Consultation is convened, it is appropriate to include the covenantal partners most directly involved in the situation. Concerns leading to a Situational Support Consultation may vary widely, such as:

- a situation in ministry or life that may be hindering an individual's capacity to practice minister effectively;
- significant changes in life circumstances including deployment, birth or adoption of a child, death in the minister's immediate family or significant changes in health;
- a concern involving varying expectations of priorities, direction, or effectiveness between covenantal partners;
- a concern involving changes to the terms of a call agreement;
- a concern about relational conflict that has arisen between an individual with standing and their ministry setting, or certain members within that ministry setting;
- other issues or concerns involving the relationships between parties in 3- or 4-way covenants.

The Situational Support Consultation allows the Committee on Ministry to address issues in a nurturing, pastoral manner: clarifying the issues, determining the concerns that need to be addressed, and working toward a plan of action with all covenantal partners. A Situational Support Consultation is not intended to address questions about an individual's conduct or ethical behavior. If, during the course of the consultation, the Committee becomes aware of information that raises a question about ministerial misconduct, the Committee initiates a Fitness Review.

The precise structure of Situational Support Consultations may vary by Association and, more importantly, by the situation at hand. Most often, representatives from the Committee on Ministry meet with those involved first to gather information about the situation and clarify the concern. The

Committee may meet with the persons involved individually or in a group as the Committee discerns the extent to which the identified situation impedes faithful and effective ministry and to explore available options for dealing with the situation. This process may take place over a series of meetings, held in the ministry setting or at the Committee on Ministry's meeting location or in a neutral environment.

Situational Support Consultations may result in several possible outcomes:

- No further action required. The concern is explored and the consultation provides sufficient opportunity for reflection by those parties involved and impacted. No further action is needed.
- Mutually agreed-upon plan of action. The situation is explored and a plan is agreed upon to address or correct the situation, with checkpoints pre-determined with the Committee on Ministry to review progress. The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers may be a resource in relationship to both the ministry setting and the minister when developing a plan of action or entering a season of discernment.<sup>54</sup>
- Advisory statement. If all parties cannot agree to or follow a mutually agreed-upon plan of action, then the Committee on Ministry prepares an advisory statement about the situation to recommend to those involved the Committee's best recommendations. The statement is shared with all involved covenantal members.
- Season of discernment. As a result of this process it may become clear that a season of intentional discernment is needed for a ministry setting and/or minister. A season of discernment may include opportunities for a ministry setting to engage in deeper conversations around its mission and ministry; for congregations especially this discernment may occur in dialogue with Conference or Association staff. A season of discernment may also include a period of administrative leave (determined by the ministry setting as a matter of employment) or a Leave of Absence in dialogue with the Committee on Ministry. Many possible outcomes may result from a

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<sup>54</sup> See also "The Local Church in Relation to Its Pastor" in Section 1 of the 1986/2002 version of the Manual on Ministry.

season of discernment, including (but not limited to) a recommitment to mutual ministry between the individual and the ministry setting, a graceful closure of the mutual ministry, a commitment on the part of the ministry setting to fully address systemic dysfunction, or a graceful transition by the individual out of active ministry. The Committee is a conversation partner in the season of discernment, encouraging faithful and effective ministry on the part of the ministry setting and the individual with standing.

- Referral to a Fitness Review. If concerns regarding misconduct arise a Situational Support Consultation may be referred to a Fitness Review.

## ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS: INFORMATION REVIEW

The purpose of an annual Information Review is to provide current contact and ministry information to Committees on Ministry about each individual who holds standing in that Association. The annual Information Review is a basic obligation to maintain ministerial standing, and it is usually accomplished through the use of a form that collects the following:

- the individual's current address and contact information
- current ministry setting (or confirmation that the person is: between calls but searching, not currently engaged in a call but active in other ministerial services such as pulpit supply, on a Leave of Absence, holding Omega Standing, etc.)
- Local Church of membership
- most recent continuing education experience (with documentation as needed)
- most recent boundary awareness training (with documentation as needed)

Ordained Ministers are obligated to participate in Information Reviews annually, and Committees on Ministry are obligated to provide annual communication with their Ordained Ministers about the Information Reviews and to maintain up-to-date ministerial files and committee records.

Based on the information collected (or at times, the lack of information collected), the annual Information Review may result in a variety of outcomes:

- Standing affirmed. All basic requirements for continued standing are met. The Committee updates records as appropriate.
- Changes in Ecclesial Records. Standing is affirmed, however, the Committee on Ministry notices significant changes from the previous year in the information of the individual holding standing. The Committee initiates further communication to verify changes in ministry setting or ecclesial standing. The Committee may also notice that a change in information provided indicates that standing should be transferred, and the Committee contacts the Ordained Minister to initiate a Transfer of Standing process. The Committee files and UCC Data Hub are updated accordingly.
- More information needed. The use of the Information Review form by the individual holding standing doesn't clearly demonstrate that the requirements for standing are being met, and the Committee on Ministry contacts the individual for additional information.
- Standing suspended or removed. The requirements for standing are not being met for two or more consecutive years. The Committee on Ministry invites conversation and clarification with the individual holding standing regarding reasons why the requirements have not been met; a process of support or accountability may be appropriate at this time. Should the individual refuse to participate or communicate, the Committee may vote to remove standing.

The annual Information Review may provide an opportunity for the Committee on Ministry to recognize significant ordination anniversaries, as well as an opportunity to communicate any changes in standing requirements or upcoming opportunities for fellowship and/or vocational support.

## ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS: FITNESS REVIEW

*FITNESS is used holistically to describe the demonstration of integrity and ethics throughout an individual's personal and professional behavior.*

*A Committee on Ministry may conduct a Fitness Review on:*

- *individuals with Ordained Ministerial Standing, including those on a Leave of Absence or with Omega Standing;*
- *Members in Discernment with Limited Standing;*
- *individuals with Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing serving in UCC contexts;*
- *individuals with Dual Standing.*

*Conference Ministers are subject to a slightly different Fitness Review process; see Section 3. Concerns about a Conference Minister's behavior and/or fitness for ministry should be directed to the General Minister and President of the UCC.*

A Fitness Review is a serious proceeding that involves a reassessment of an individual's overall **FITNESS** for ordained ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ. For this reason, it is important that a Fitness Review be thorough so that a Committee on Ministry can be fully informed about an identified concern before taking action to ensure faithfulness and effectiveness of the United Church of Christ through its Ordained Ministers and those to whom it grants standing. In matters of Fitness Reviews the Committee is acting in and on behalf of the entire United Church of Christ.

The process of a Fitness Review must be transparent at each step to the individual with standing and the ministry setting, as well as the ones who raised the concern, so that fairness is clear and the outcomes are trusted. Before initiating a Fitness Review, a Committee on Ministry should ensure that the Fitness Review process<sup>55</sup> is not used to address concerns unrelated to an individual's fitness for Ordained Ministry.

1. **Information surfaces.** As soon as the Committee on Ministry is made aware of a concern, prompt response is essential. Questions raised about ministerial ethics and behavior should be taken seriously and not be dismissed without careful review and response by the Committee on Ministry. While a question about ministerial behavior may surface as the result of a formal complaint, this is not always so. Concerns may be raised or information received through other means (such as traditional or social media). Deliberate follow-through enables the Committee to responsibly address the faithfulness and effectiveness of all ministries in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ.

In certain circumstances, a Committee will need specialized information in order to review the concern and/or conduct the Fitness Review (e.g. situations involving sexual abuse). Section 3 offers some of these specialized resources; additionally Committees are encouraged to reach out to trusted service providers and secular authorities when appropriate.

<sup>55</sup> See Section 3 for resources on the Fitness Review process and the roles of various judicatory partners.

2. **Committee makes initial decision(s).** The Committee on Ministry considers the concern without identifying details, prayerfully considering whether the identified concern is a matter related to the Ministerial Code and asking: “If this concern is found to be true, does it call into question the individual’s fitness for ministry in and behalf of the United Church of Christ?” If *Yes*, the Committee votes to initiate a Fitness Review. If *No*, the Committee determines whether a Situational Support Consultation is appropriate. As needed, the Committee affirms a transfer of adjudication for the Fitness Review.

In some instances, a ministry setting may choose to put a minister on administrative leave pending the outcome of a Fitness Review. Administrative leave is a decision of the ministry setting as an employer, not the decision of a Committee on Ministry. Administrative leave should not be confused with Leave of Absence.

3. **Fitness Review roles and participation.** When a Fitness Review is in progress, the recommended role of a Conference Minister or Conference staff is that of coordinating the various roles within a Fitness Review and encouraging timeliness in the processes.

Once a Fitness Review is underway, the individual raising a concern and the individual whose actions are being reviewed are informed of the process that will be followed. Their pastoral care by persons unrelated to the process is confirmed by the Committee.

While the individual who raises the concern is not required to participate in the process, the individual whose ongoing fitness for ministerial standing is being reviewed is obligated to participate in the oversight of the United Church of Christ through the Committee on Ministry. Failure to participate in the Fitness Review process (including the failure to sign confidentiality agreements, information releases, and more) is considered a failure to participate in the covenantal relationships of ministerial standing and is grounds for termination of standing at the conclusion of the Fitness Review process.

If an individual chooses to resign standing in order to avoid a Fitness Review process, the process must be

*RESPONSE TEAMS are cohorts of trained individuals outside of the Committee on Ministry who are equipped to serve as the Interview Team for a Fitness Review or as Process Guides to those involved in the process. See Section 3 for Response Team resources.*

suspended; ministerial standing cannot be reinstated without resuming the incomplete Fitness Review.

4. **Information gathering.** Relevant information is gathered about the concern that has been raised, usually through the work of a **RESPONSE TEAM** conducting interviews with the individual raising the concern, the individual whose behavior is in question, persons from the ministry setting as needed, and others who may be relevant.

Occasionally during the course of a Fitness Review, patterns of behavior or specific actions contrary to the Ministerial Code surface that may or may not directly relate to the original concern raised. The Committee continues with the Fitness Review process and includes these new insights into their process of discernment.

5. **Committee on Ministry deliberation.** The Committee on Ministry receives the collected information and considers it prayerfully alongside the Ministerial Code. Meetings with the individual holding standing and the person raising the concern, among others, are scheduled and held by the Committee on Ministry. The Committee considers all information in its deliberation. Questions for reflection include: Were the specific concerns found to have merit? What is the rationale for this decision? Is the individual in question currently fit for ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ? Based on the Committee's deliberations, what outcome is discerned to be appropriate?

The Committee on Ministry makes its decision regarding the fitness of the individual in question to continue ministerial standing in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ and the ability of the individual to meet future expectations for standing. All Fitness Review outcomes are noted in the minister's file.

6. **Outcomes.** Potential outcomes of a Fitness Review can include:
  - *Affirmation of Standing.* The individual's current fitness for ministry is affirmed. This is an appropriate outcome when the specific concerns were unfounded or unsupported by the information available to the Committee.

*A PROGRAM OF GROWTH should include SMART goals: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely. Such goals consist of clear expectations for actions to be taken or ceased as well as clear expectations for outcomes of those actions, all of which must take place prior to the review and potential reaffirmation of standing. Programs of growth should also include a timeline for review. If a program of growth is not completed to the satisfaction of a Committee on Ministry or according to the timeline, new benchmarks may be set and the reaffirmation of standing may be delayed (or termination of standing may be considered).*

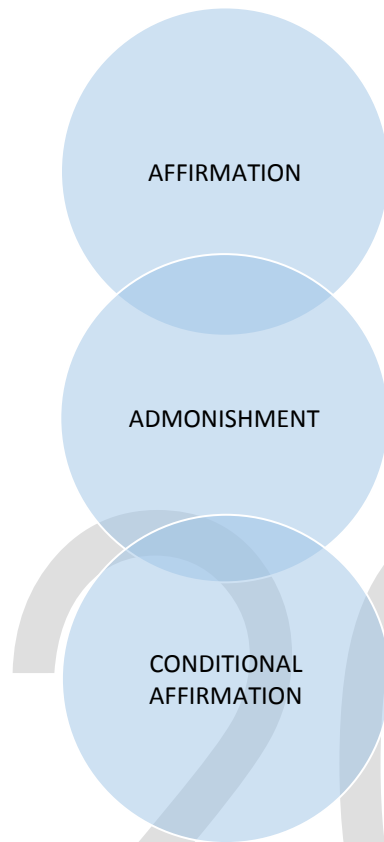
*There may be situations in which a Committee on Ministry wishes to engage a process of restorative justice as part of, alongside of, or following the completion of a program of growth. Restorative justice may not replace the disciplinary procedures of the Church nor is a restorative justice process expected to be overseen by a Committee on Ministry.*

- *Admonishment.* The concern is found to be true and acknowledged by the individual as a mistake; the Committee on Ministry likewise determines that the behavior is not habitual. There is evidence that the minister has already made acts of repentance and taken steps to demonstrate their responsibility for the action in question, including preventative measures to avoid similar mistakes in the future. A program of growth is not required, the admonishment is not reported on the UCC Ministerial Profile, and the individual's standing is reaffirmed.
- *Conditional Affirmation of Standing with **PROGRAM OF GROWTH**.* The concern is found to be true, impacting overall demonstration of one or more aspects of the Ministerial Code. The Committee determines that the individual may continue in their ministry but that constructive growth and healing must be undertaken at the same time, to be reassessed by the Committee at a future date. Using the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers the Committee creates a program of growth to address specific concerns. Conditional Affirmation must be reported on a UCC Ministerial Profile until the prescribed program of growth is completed to the satisfaction of the Committee on Ministry. Those with Conditional Affirmation and a program of growth may circulate a UCC Ministerial Profile and transfer standing, including the transfer of the program of growth after clear communication between the sending and receiving Associations. Following the successful completion of a growth plan, the Committee reviews and may reaffirm the individual's standing.
- *Censure with program of growth.* The concern is found to be true, impacting overall demonstration of one or more aspects of the Ministerial Code. The Committee determines that the individual may continue in ministry but that the actions were severe enough to warrant a permanent record on their UCC Ministerial Profile. Using the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers, the Committee creates a program of growth to address specific concerns raised in the Fitness Review. A censure

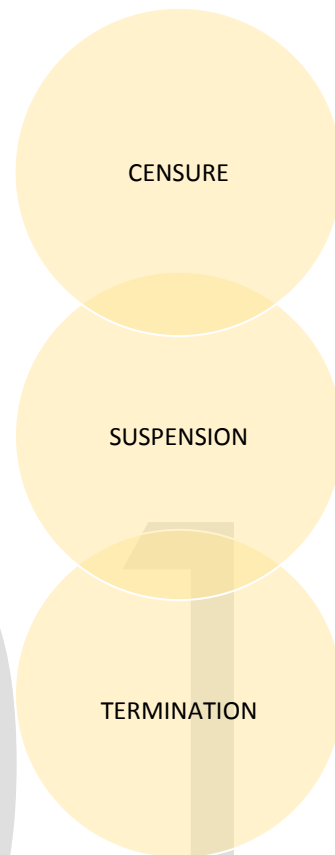
does not permit the minister to circulate a ministerial profile until the Committee is satisfied with the completion of the program of growth. Censure must be reported on a UCC Ministerial Profile in perpetuity. Following the successful completion of a growth plan, the Committee reviews and may reaffirm the individual's standing.

- *Suspension of standing with program of growth.* The concern is found to be true, and the Committee determines that the individual is not currently fit for ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ. A prescribed program of growth is agreed upon, with reassessment by the Committee at a future date. For the duration of the Suspension, the individual may not represent themselves as serving in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ, and the individual may not circulate a UCC Ministerial Profile. Following the successful completion of a growth plan and the Committee on Ministry's satisfaction in reassessing fitness, the Committee may reaffirm the individual's standing. Suspension must be reported on the UCC Ministerial Profile in perpetuity.
- *Termination.* The concern is found to be true, and the Committee on Ministry determines that the individual is not currently and is unlikely to become fit for ministry in and on behalf of the UCC. Standing is terminated. If reinstatement of standing is sought at a later date, the individual must return to the Committee on Ministry in the Association where standing was terminated.

Outcomes not permanently reported  
on the UCC Ministerial Profile:



Outcomes permanently reported  
on the UCC Ministerial Profile:



REFLECTION AND FEEDBACK

*What are the strengths of these six outcomes  
of a fitness review?*

7. **Alternate conclusions to a Fitness Review.** In addition to the above decisions, there are two other ways in which a Fitness Review might conclude:

- *Referral to a Situational Support Consultation.* The individual's current fitness for ministry is affirmed, and the concern is referred to a Situational Support Consultation. This outcome is appropriate when, after examining all of the information, the Committee on Ministry finds that the concern does not call into question an individual's ethics for ministry but identifies a concern that can be addressed more appropriately through a Situational Support Consultation.
- *Resignation of Standing.* At any time in the process of a Fitness Review, an individual may resign their standing and the Fitness Review process cannot finish. The decision of the individual is received by the Committee on Ministry, and the Committee records the resignation in the UCC Data Hub as "resigned with bias" noting the incomplete Fitness Review. Any consideration of reinstatement of standing at a later date must be addressed to the Association where the individual resigned standing, and it requires the completion of the Fitness Review process.

8. **Decision communicated.** The Committee on Ministry conveys its decision to all covenantal partners, including the individual whose ethical behavior was reviewed, the ministry setting, the Local Church of membership, the person raising the initial concern, the Association, the Conference, and the National Offices (MESA Team). Documents must be maintained accurately throughout the Fitness Review, including but not limited to a signed program of growth. The refusal of the individual to sign such documents is a refusal to participate in the covenantal relationships of ministerial standing, and the Committee may choose to terminate standing based on this refusal. The appropriate release of documents is not hindered by the individual's refusal to sign any document, as the process and documentation are the property of the United Church of Christ. The documentation of the Fitness Review itself is held in a

packet within the minister's file, with a summary report attached to the packet.

9. **Fitness Review appeals.**<sup>56</sup> An appeal may be requested by the individual under review within a specified time period commencing at the conclusion of a Fitness Review. Appeals may only be brought based on the Committee on Ministry's faithfulness in executing the Fitness Review process, outcomes are not appealable. The Fitness Review is the only ecclesial process of COMs that may be appealed.

Following its bylaws and the UCC Manual on Ministry, an Association holds a meeting of its appeal body, giving opportunity for both the minister under review and the Committee to address the procedures used in (and purported failures of) the Fitness Review process. The purpose of the meeting of the appeal body is not to reexamine the information but to determine whether the process used by the Committee was consistent with Fitness Review process adopted by the Association. If the process was consistent, the appeal is denied. If the process was not consistent, the appeal is sustained, and the appeal body directs the Committee on Ministry to reconsider its action following the adopted process, policies, and procedures of the Association.

Fitness Reviews happen infrequently in the life of the church and are difficult, stress-producing experiences for all involved. Regardless of the outcome, a host of pastoral work remains to be done upon its conclusion for those impacted by the individual's behaviors and by the process of a Fitness Review, including but not limited to the individual raising the concern, the individual who was reviewed, the Local Church of membership, and the ministry setting. The Committee on Ministry should work collaboratively with the Association and Conference to determine the appropriateness and availability of any ongoing support.<sup>57</sup>

A Fitness Review also has a considerable impact on those involved in conducting it, including members of the Committee

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<sup>56</sup> Section 3 includes recommendations for a Fitness Review Appeal Process and Media Guidelines during a Fitness Review.

<sup>57</sup> See Section 3 for resources for those affected by clergy sexual misconduct.

on Ministry, the Response Team, and Conference staff. Some Associations and Conferences find it helpful to provide an opportunity for these parties to gather with a facilitator to debrief and reflect on the impact of the Fitness Review following its conclusion.

*Review your notes of reflection and feedback across Sections 1 and 2 of this drafted Manual on Ministry.*

*Overall, what stands out to you from your notes?*

*Which notes of feedback can help the Habakkuk Group further revise and improve this draft to serve the whole United Church of Christ?*

*A [feedback form is provided online](#) to be scanned/emailed to [hackenberg@ucc.org](mailto:hackenberg@ucc.org) or mailed to Rachel Hackenberg, United Church of Christ, 700 Prospect Ave, Cleveland OH 44115 for the Habakkuk Group's continued work.*

# MANUAL ON MINISTRY: SECTION 3

## RESOURCES FOR COMMITTEES ON MINISTRY

The purpose of Section 3 is to resource the ministries of Committees on Ministry in the United Church of Christ, so that Committees are well equipped to:

- ground their authorization decisions in processes of discernment with individuals who seek and hold ministerial standing;
- exercise their responsibility faithfully and effectively on behalf of their associations and the wider United Church of Christ.

Resources in Section 3 are kept current by the Ministerial Excellence, Support & Authorization (MESA) Ministry Team of the National Offices of the United Church of Christ. Unlike Sections 1 and 2 of the Manual on Ministry, Section 3 resources may be updated frequently in order to best respond to the needs of Committees on Ministry. Dates are marked on all Section 3 resources so that Committees on Ministry and other resource users can more easily confirm most current versions. Resources marked with \* will be developed by the Habakkuk Group and the MESA staff in 2017.

### RESOURCES FOR SECTION 1: THEOLOGICAL GROUNDING

#### COVENANTAL POLITY

- [UCC Constitution and Bylaws](#)
- Manual on Ministry (1986/2002), [Section 1 “Partners in Authorizing Ministry”](#)

#### THEOLOGY OF AUTHORIZED MINISTRY

- Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (World Council of Churches 1982)
- [Ministry Issues Pronouncement](#) (2005) and [Background Document](#) (2010)

#### MARKS OF FAITHFUL & EFFECTIVE AUTHORIZED MINISTERS

- [The Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministers](#)
- [Marks Assessment Rubric](#)
- [Journaling the Journey](#)
- Marks Mosaic cards

#### MINISTRY OF COMMITTEES ON MINISTRY

- [Discernment Travelogue](#)

- Committee on Ministry orientation booklet\*
- Scriptural study: “Just Say No”\*
- [Committee on Ministry Research Report](#)
- Sample Ministerial File
- Registrar Orientation and Instructions

## RESOURCES FOR SECTION 2: MINISTERIAL AUTHORIZATION

### ARTICLE 1: MEMBERS IN DISCERNMENT

- Local Church Discernment Committee best practices\*
- Member in Discernment application form\*
- Discernment process checklist\*
- [Discernment Travelogue](#)
- Psychological Assessments best practices
- Sample outlines of multiple paths of theological education and ministerial formation\*
- Sample Covenant of Discernment
- Sample outlines of portfolios and ordination papers
- Member in Discernment Advisor best practices\*
- Sample provisional agreement for MID with Limited Standing\*
- Best practices for Ecclesiastical Councils\*
- Scriptural study: “Called But Awaiting A Call”\*

### ARTICLE 2: ECUMENICALLY ORDAINED MINISTERS

- UCC Ministerial Standing application form\*
- Discernment process checklist\*
- [Formula of Agreement](#)

### ARTICLE 3: MINISTERIAL STANDING

- UCC Ministerial Code
- Eligibility for UCC Ministerial Profile
- Scriptural study: “Call in Transition”\*
- Transfer of Standing Chart
- Leave of Absence best practices\*
- Scriptural study: “Living in Liminal Spaces”\*
- Ministerial Standing in Retirement best practices\*
- Sample emeritus agreement\*

### ARTICLE 4: COVENANTS AND ENDORSEMENTS OF ORDAINED MINISTERS

- [Sample Call Agreement](#)
- [Call Agreement Workbook](#)
- [Three- and Four-Way Covenants](#)
- [Departure Guidelines](#)

- Sample exit interview
- Endorsement checklist for professional organizations
- Endorsement checklist for federal government agencies

#### ARTICLE 5: ACCOUNTABILITY AND SUPPORT OF ORDAINED MINISTERS

- Guiding principles for oversight\*
- Ministerial Resources booklet\*
- [Information Review Form](#)
- [Marks of Faithful & Effective Boundary Trainers](#)
- Scriptural study: “Accountability in Covenant”
- Recommendations for organizing/hosting Peer Support\*
- Periodic Vocational Support best practices\*
- Situational Support Consultation
- Roles of the Response Team
- [Fitness Review flowchart](#)
- [Fitness Review flowchart for review of Conference Ministers](#)
- [Sample Growth Plans](#)\*
- [Media Guidelines in a Fitness Review](#)
- Scriptural study: “Beyond Forgiveness: Restoration in Covenant”
- Suggested resources for victims of clergy misconduct

2017

*What are some of your region's best practices  
in ministerial authorization and oversight?*

*Are there sample resources and practices  
that you can bring to share  
at this AM21 event?*

2017

# 2017 DISCUSSION GUIDE

## BRIDGING THE TRANSITIONS

The Habakkuk Group's development of a re-visioned Manual on Ministry impacts every aspect of the United Church of Christ's processes of ministerial authorization and oversight. While the vision for these processes and the clarity of their theological foundations hold creative possibilities for the authorization of United Church of Christ ministers in the 21st century, the implications of Habakkuk's foundational work now need the wider church's conversation, discernment and feedback before the re-visioned Manual on Ministry can be further revised in order to best be effective across the denomination.

The current draft of the re-visioned Manual on Ministry serves as a bridge in two ongoing transitions within the work ministerial authorization:



- **MOM AS A CONVERSATION.** Since the United Church of Christ was formed by mergers, we have continuously discussed and revised our ideas about ministerial authorization. MOM reflects and contributes to those conversations, especially in seasons of significant cultural and missional change in the Church.
- **MOM AS A PROCEDURAL GUIDE.** As the Church changes, the work of Committees on Ministry adapts to meet new visions for ministerial authorization. The Manual on Ministry, as a procedural guide for Committees on Ministry, curates and encourages best practices.

## MORE BRIDGE METAPHORS:

- In the ongoing changes within the UCC's ideas about ministerial authorization, there's not really one bridge – not one consistent idea, not only one cultural or social justice influence, not just one theology that ties all of our ideas about ministry together. Instead it's a jumble of roads, bridges, pathways, and detours, all operating at the same time and all impacting the overall bridge/conversation uniquely.



The United Church of Christ's early conversation about women in ministry, for example, was reflected in the 1968 version of the Manual on Ministry, in which a full page explicitly affirmed women in lay and ordained ministries. You can tell that the UCC's conversation about oversight of authorized ministers reached a critical peak in the 1980s, which resulted in a whole section on oversight written into the 1986 version of MOM. As congregations and Associations have identified varied needs for authorized ministry across the UCC's history, the Manual on Ministry has obligingly described many different ministry roles: licentiate, lay minister, commissioned worker, licensed minister, commissioned minister.

**WHAT MINISTRY ROLES ARE NEEDED – IN THE CHURCH, IN THE WORLD, IN THE 21ST CENTURY –**

**AND CAN YOU IMAGINE THOSE ROLES HAVING DIFFERENT TITLES/TYPES OF MINISTERS?**

**CAN YOU IMAGINE MINISTERS HAVING MANY ROLES BUT THE SAME TITLE?**

Into this broad and ongoing conversation about ministerial authorization in the UCC, the Habakkuk Group has stood “at the watchpost” (Habakkuk 2:1) from 2014 – 2016 to pay attention to trends, challenges, needs and also new imaginings for ministry and the Church. It's a complicated conversation, and as the image above suggests, not everyone is even on the same ramp: each Association and Conference see its own unique needs, each cultural context has its own values, each Committee on Ministry (with every turnover of committee members) has a new set of priorities. The Manual on Ministry's role in this conversation is to take a “big picture” look and a “deep discerning” listen to the entire United Church of Christ, and to support the wide diversity of our conversations in a single manual.

**AS YOU SEE IT, WHAT ARE THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST'S NEEDS**

**FOR FAITHFUL AND EFFECTIVE MINISTERS IN THE 21ST CENTURY?**

- In the ongoing changes that occur over time in Committee on Ministry work, the role of the Manual on Ministry is to curate and support best practices in ministerial authorization. Now MOM takes on the metaphor of a continual bridge project: refining tools and equipping the builders (Committees on Ministry) so that the best, most faithful and effective, learned and imaginative authorized ministers are formed and sent out on behalf of the United Church of Christ. At times, MOM leads the way in outlining best practices for the sake of consistency across the denomination. At other times, MOM has to “catch up” to the changed practices already in use by Committees on Ministry.



In recent years, one of the most significant changes in the work of authorization was led not by the Manual on Ministry but by General Synod. The Ministry Issues Pronouncement by Synod in 2005 affirmed multiple paths of ministerial formation and theological education, asserting that an individual’s path of preparation as not sufficient to distinguish a Licensed Minister from an Ordained Minister. Out of this Pronouncement and related work, the Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministers were developed to help Committees on Ministry assess the preparation and formation of individuals for ministry regardless of educational path.

**THE MINISTRY ISSUES PRONOUNCEMENT CHALLENGED THE ASSUMPTION THAT ONE PATH**

**OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION & MINISTERIAL TRAINING WAS APPROPRIATE FOR**

**EVERY MINISTRY CANDIDATE. DO YOU KNOW INDIVIDUALS WHOSE PREPARATION**

**FOR MINISTRY INCLUDED (1) REGIONAL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS, (2) SEMINARIES**

**OR (3) MENTORSHIPS? WHAT REQUIREMENTS FOR AUTHORIZATION DO COMMITTEES ON MINISTRY**

**HOLD FOR ALL CANDIDATES REGARDLESS OF FORMATIONAL PATH? DO YOU KNOW GIFTED PERSONS**

**WHO HAVE BEEN EXCLUDED FROM ORDINATION DUE TO AN ASSOCIATION’S REQUIREMENT**

**THAT ALL CANDIDATES FOLLOW THE SAME FORMATIONAL PATH INTO MINISTRY?**

The Habakkuk Group’s work and discernment stand on the shoulders of the Ministry Issues Pronouncement and subsequent papers. Habakkuk’s aim with the drafted MOM is to support best and consistent practices by Committees on Ministry in their work to meet the needs of the 21st century Church, including the ongoing response to Ministry Issues.



## DISCUSSING MOM AS A CONVERSATION

As noted, the Habakkuk Group represents a particular point in time along the United Church of Christ’s ongoing conversation about authorization. Other points along the “bridge” are worth noting for your conversation:

The Ministry Issues Pronouncement (2005) was committed to building a “multiracial, multicultural, open and affirming, accessible to all, just peace church” through processes of ministerial authorization. How does your Committee on Ministry demonstrate these commitments in its own practices of ministerial authorization, support and oversight?

Have you read the Habakkuk Group’s theological grounding for ministry authorization in Section 1 of the drafted MOM? If in fact the UCC’s theologies for ordination and licensure are indistinct, and if the pastoral roles served by Ordained and Licensed Ministers are the same, and if – in the spirit of Ministry Issues – we do not authorize persons differently on the basis of their diverse paths of ministerial formation, then what distinctions (if any) remain between the two forms of authorization? Do those distinctions serve the Church faithfully in the 21st century?

### MINISTRY ISSUES PRONOUNCEMENT

One phrase that is used to argue for local churches’ need for Licensed Ministers asserts that small congregations “cannot afford” to have Ordained Ministers as their pastors. To what extent do you believe that congregations’ budgets should shape the UCC’s forms of authorization?

### PASTORAL PAY

Has your Association/Conference used the “Scope of Work” material in the Call Agreement Workbook to help congregations right-size their pastoral job descriptions according to their financial ability? Why might the United Church of Christ as a whole want to affirm – or decline – the rationale that frugal church budgets can dictate ministerial authorization?

Has your Association ordained someone to a part-time ministry setting? Has a congregation’s budget ever influenced whether your Association/Conference recommends a Licensed Minister or an Ordained Minister to serve in a pastoral position? Besides salary, what is the difference between a pastor who is licensed and one who is ordained?

Does the debt of higher education qualify someone for ministry or measure their ability to serve faithfully and effectively?

As you see it, what are the United Church of Christ’s needs for faithful and effective ministers in the 21st century? In what settings do you hope to see authorized ministers preaching and teaching on behalf of the denomination? Has your Committee on Ministry authorized a minister to a setting beyond the Local Church?

What are the challenges and changes in mission happening in the seminaries and regional theological education programs nearest you?

The UCC is part of a larger trend in examining its forms of authorization; other denominations engaged in similar conversations include The United Church of Canada and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), which are reducing or recommending a reduction in their forms of ministerial authorization. Did you know that our ecumenical agreements on the Mutual Recognition of ministers apply only to ordained clergy?

## NEEDS OF THE CHURCH

	<p>What are the United Church of Christ's needs in the 21st century for faithful and effective ministers who can work bivocationally – that is, in part-time and partial-income ministry positions alongside their additional professions? How does your Association recruit and raise up such persons to be considered for ministerial authorization?</p>
<p><b>FORMS OF AUTHORIZATION</b></p>	<p>Licensed Ministers and Commissioned Ministers are lay persons in their ministerial roles. Do you believe that the United Church of Christ should always authorize a lay person who is asked to celebrate the Sacraments? Do you believe the United Church of Christ has a need to authorize individuals whose ministries do not include the Sacraments?</p> <p>If we take the priesthood of all believers seriously (see Section 1 of the drafted MOM), why do lay persons who serve the Church with various gifts and talents need any authorization by the United Church of Christ?</p> <p>The form of ministerial authorization known as Commissioned Minister is only thirty years old in the United Church of Christ. How has it been used in your Association? When (or not) has it been meaningful for the Committee on Ministry to have oversight of a Commissioned Minister? How has your Committee on Ministry used the Marks of Faithful &amp; Effective Authorized Ministers to assess the ministerial formation of candidates for commissioned ministry?</p>



## DISCUSSING MOM AS A PROCEDURAL GUIDE

Already Committees on Ministry have abandoned parts of the 1986/2002 MOM in order to adapt to changes resulting from the 2005 Ministry Issues Pronouncement, along with other shifts of the 21st century. The United Church of Christ empowers its Committees on Ministry to continue their work through seasons of change, including seasons of transition between MOM versions. In addition to using the “what to use, what to discuss” charts, the following questions may be helpful:

### BEYOND THE 1986/2002 VERSION OF MOM

The 1986/2002 version of MOM used the language of “Students in Care.” Does your Committee on Ministry refer to its candidates as Students in Care or as Members in Discernment? If the latter, is your Committee aware that it has already transitioned away from a literal use of the 1986/2002 MOM?

How (if at all) has your Committee on Ministry used the Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministers? Does your Committee on Ministry use the Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministers not only as a developmental tool in authorization but also as a review tool in processes of ministerial oversight?

### INCONSISTENCIES IN OUR PROCEDURES

Does your Committee on Ministry use the Member in Discernment process for all candidates for authorized ministry, including those who may become Commissioned or Licensed Ministers?

How does your Association or Conference seek out Licensed Ministers for pastoral positions? (For example, are the positions listed through the UCC Ministry Opportunities website? Does your Conference/Association recruit individuals to pastor local congregations as Licensed Ministers? Does your Conference/Association circulate unofficial profiles for its Licensed Ministers, and do those profiles include a background check? See page 9 for additional thoughts on licensure expectations.)

Does your Committee on Ministry affirm the use of clerical collars and stoles by Commissioned and/or Licensed Ministers?

Does your Association have Licensed Ministers who pastor local churches for whom the Committee on Ministry would strongly oppose the possibility of ordination due to competency? Why do you imagine that the Committee on Ministry entrusts a church – of any membership size, of any annual budget, of any theological persuasion – to a less-than-competent pastor? What faithfulness and excellence do we hope for our churches' pastors and members? How do we hold common standards for all authorized ministers in all ministry settings?

Given the existing inconsistencies of authorization practices across the UCC, if licensure and commissioning were to be standardized, what values and assessments and protocols would you recommend being used by all Committees on Ministry for these two forms of authorization?

This discussion guide provides questions and information to support both the ongoing conversation about ministerial authorization and the development of an updated procedural guide for Committees on Ministry. Your time in discernment and [feedback](#) will aid the Habakkuk Group in determining how the drafted MOM moves into its final version.

## ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS FROM THE HABAKKUK GROUP

### LICENSURE

Members of the Habakkuk Group are occasionally asked, “What was broken with licensure that you’re trying to fix with one form of authorization?” The short answer is that the Habakkuk Group sees some inconsistencies and injustices in the practices of licensure across the United Church of Christ, such as:

- alternating application of licensure as an end in itself (“career” Licensed Ministers) or as a step in the process of ministerial formation toward ordination;
- varied transportability of licensure, including some local use of a ministerial profile for Licensed Ministers; although licensure was intended only for one location and for a finite time, it is common for Licensed Ministers to “carry” their license to serve in another setting;
- inconsistent understandings of Licensed Ministers as sacramental representatives of the United Church of Christ beyond their ministry settings;
- different expectations of excellence for Licensed Ministers (for example, a Committee on Ministry that says “no” to ordination but “yes” to licensure for an individual), which may implicitly suggest that an Association holds different expectations of vitality for its congregations;
- unequal standards of pay for pastors who are licensed in comparison to those who are ordained.

The longer answer to the question is that current practices of licensure are being used to “fix” changes in the life of Local Churches that licensure was never intended to address: small congregations with part-time pastorates, rural congregations that have trouble attracting pastors to their regions, the burden of debt for those authorized ministers whose formational path includes seminary, the increased number of persons whose ministries are part of multi-vocational portfolios, and more. What aspects of Local Church life does your Association/Conference understand to be “fixed” by the current use of licensure?

The landscape of the Church – even more broadly, the landscape of institutional and professional life across many fields of our society – is changing significantly. The Habakkuk Group’s proposal for one form of authorized ministry is not intended to fix those shifts, just as the existing three forms of authorization do not fix the shifts in the Church’s landscape. (In fact, the three forms were their own type of response to change when they were introduced in the 1986 version of MOM.) The Habakkuk Group invites the United Church of Christ to consider thoughtfully its varied responses to these changes, including its response through ministerial authorization and its imagination for excellence & faithful authorized ministry serving across the changing landscape and in diverse settings where the Spirit calls us to send representative ministers with the Good News of Christ.

## **MID WITH LIMITED STANDING**

Members in Discernment are occasionally asked to serve congregations during their process of ministerial formation; in many instances, Committees on Ministry license persons for that formational experience. When the location of a MID's ministry training falls in a different Association than the Association where the MID is a member, current practices are that a license is granted by the Association where the ministry training is located. In these situations, the Member in Discernment is subject to relationships and requirements of two different Associations. Has your Committee on Ministry had this experience? What might the pros and cons be of the proposed MID with Limited Standing, in which the Association where the MID is a member grants Limited Standing when applicable, regardless of the location of the ministry in which they temporarily serve?

In the past, Committees on Ministry were not able to conduct Fitness Reviews on Members in Discernment who were serving in ministry, since MIDs do not hold standing. Additionally, there have been occasions when Licensed Ministers (including MIDs with licensure) chose to leave their ministry setting and end their licensure in order to avoid Fitness Reviews. The Habakkuk Group recommends that MIDs with Limited Standing can be subject to Fitness Review and sees the possibility that MID with Limited Standing may be an alternative to the current practice of licensure. What experiences has your Committee on Ministry had regarding oversight of Licensed Ministers and Members in Discernment?

## **OMEGA STANDING**

In our society the concept of retirement has shifted dramatically. The UCC does not have a form of ecclesiastical standing for 'retired' clergy (the UCC Yearbook has a specialty code of RT, which serves as an informational detail but not a form of ministerial standing). In addition, there are no current guidelines on what constitutes the use of the word 'retired,' nor any ecclesiastical process to support a retiring minister's discernment and outline the relationship with their Committee on Ministry. How have you noticed trends in the changing nature of 'retirement'?

In the United Church of Christ we experience significant numbers of ministers who self-identify as 'retired' but continue to serve congregations in part-time, interim, and supply capacities. The Habakkuk Group recommends that all authorized ministers engaged in any form of public ministry (e.g. pulpit supply, interims, service on an Association or Conference committee, consultants) maintain Ordained Ministerial Standing, adhering to the requirements of standing as set by their Associations. What experiences does your COM have with 'retired' clergy practicing ministry in your area who do not hold standing in your Association? How does your Committee on Ministry connect with 'retired' clergy who have relocated to a different part of the country but hold standing in your Association?

The Habakkuk Group recommends a new form of ministerial standing called Omega Standing. This would be a type of Ordained Ministerial Standing intended to signify that an Ordained Minister has come to the close of their public ministry and wishes to remain on the Association's roster but covenants to no longer perform public ministry. Their Committee on Ministry then covenants to release the minister from ongoing requirements to maintain standing, such as continuing education and boundary awareness training. Omega Standing would be the only type of ministerial standing in which the minister may hold membership in a Local Church outside of the Association where standing is held. In the past, how has your Committee on Ministry negotiated waivers in its standing requirements for clergy who are no longer active in ministry? What intrigues you about the concept of Omega Standing?

Words such as 'retired,' 'active,' 'inactive,' and 'emeriti' are all used and understood differently within social and ecclesiastical structures. The Habakkuk Group strove to find a title for a new type of standing that would honor the end of a minister's service and provide clarity on the conclusion of their public ministry. What other words or phrases (e.g. Capstone Standing) might describe this new type of standing in the United Church of Christ?

“I KNOW THAT CERTAIN IDEAS IN THE DRAFTED MOM ARE STILL IN DISCERNMENT WHILE OTHER PARTS OF THE DRAFTED MOM ARE READY TO BE USED, BUT WHAT IF MY COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY WANTS TO DISCERN ITS UNDERSTANDING OF THESE NEW IDEAS BY PUTTING THEM TO USE?”



## DISCERNMENT THROUGH ENGAGEMENT

Let's say you see the bridge and you want to explore the other side. The Habakkuk Group's proposed movement to one form of authorized ministry (ordination) and to a fuller understanding of the ministry of Word and Sacrament then prompts a question: What about Commissioned and Licensed Ministers? The Group's prayerful consideration of the theology and history of ministerial authorization finds a simple and direct answer: **CONSIDER ORDINATION**. Many of the gifts of currently Commissioned and Licensed Ministers are needed more expansively across the United Church of Christ; those who feel called to ordained ministry should be invited to explore this call, and those who do not feel called to ordination should be celebrated for their faithfulness as laypersons. The following pages outline basic steps and guiding questions for those Committees on Ministry that would like to use one form of ministerial authorization during this season of continued discernment with the drafted MOM.

<p><b>DEVELOP PLAN FOR DISCERNMENT</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Engage training opportunities at regional “Authorizing Ministry for the 21st Century” events (AM21), hosted by MESA in 2017.</li> <li>2. Meet to reflect on the drafted Manual on Ministry and to develop a plan for discerning future authorization with Commissioned and Licensed Ministers.</li> </ol> <p><b>DISCUSS:</b> How have commissioning and licensure been used by our Committee on Ministry and by our region? What assumptions undergird our practices of authorizing Licensed and Commissioned Ministers? How do we assess individuals’ readiness for licensure or commissioning (and how do we assess their ministry settings) differently from or similarly to readiness for ordination?</p> <p>Consider the existing workload of the Committee on Ministry (COM); if needed, invite volunteers with prior Committee experience to join a few COM members in forming a Bridge Team for this work.</p> <p><b>DISCUSS:</b> How many Licensed and Commissioned Ministers do we currently have within our Committee’s oversight? How are we feeling as a Committee about our current workload? How do we best continue our ongoing work of authorization and oversight while taking time for our own engagement with the drafted Manual on Ministry materials?</p>
	<p>During 2017, the Habakkuk Group will continue to receive feedback on the drafted Manual on Ministry as it is introduced at AM21 regional events and as Committees on Ministry engage the materials. <u>Feedback forms</u> can be directed to Rachel Hackenberg (hackenberg@ucc.org) for the Habakkuk Group’s information and consideration.</p>
<p><b>SCHEDULE INITIAL MEETINGS</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. In writing, contact all Commissioned and Licensed Ministers and their ministry settings to explain the upcoming work of discernment; letter templates are provided at the end of this outline.</li> </ol>

4. The initial meetings with Licensed and Commissioned Ministers can be individual sessions or large regional gatherings of all Licensed and Commissioned Ministers to introduce one form of authorization and to outline the Committee's plan for discernment with ministers regarding possible ordination. If large group gatherings are held, include time for one-on-one conversations between individuals and the Committee.

**PLAN** in these initial meetings to seek God's guidance together, to make room for silence, to acknowledge feelings, to answer questions and to seek out answers that you don't know.

Use the tools of the Discernment Travelogue.

**DISCUSS:** With authorized ministers as a group and individually, ask: How do you understand ordination? How do you understand the priesthood of all believers? Do you feel called by God into lifelong service or into service for a season of a particular ministry? How does your current ministry role relate to Sacraments? In what ways, if any, does your ministry represent the UCC to the world?

5. During this transitional season, Committees on Ministry can choose not to issue new licenses or commissions. Any individuals who are already in discernment with a Committee on Ministry in the hopes of becoming licensed or commissioned might refocus their discernment on call and competencies for the possibility of ordination.

**USE** the Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministers to help all authorized ministers explore their call and competencies.

6. The initial meetings with authorized ministers provide an opportunity to seek God's guidance, clarify information about the drafted MOM, acknowledge diverse feelings about the transition, make room for uncertainty, and express appreciation for diverse ministries. The invitation to explore a call to ordination is not a promise of ordination but an opportunity for mutual discernment. The invitation is also not a denial or abrupt ending of their current authorizations.

## HOLD INITIAL MEETINGS

**ASK:** What do we need as a Committee to respond to questions without knowing all of the answers? How do we best practice discernment as a Committee without assuming certain conclusions?

7. Before concluding the initial meeting, the Committee (Bridge Team) outlines expectations for the discernment process as outlined in the drafted MOM. Commissioned and Licensed Ministers should be equipped with the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers and related tools such as Journaling the Journey for the purpose of individual discernment until the second meeting.

8. If an individual at this initial stage feels open to further discernment of a call to ordained ministry, a second meeting is scheduled to review the individual's call and competencies using the Marks. If an individual is not inclined to pursue the possibility of ordination, the current parameters of authorization are reviewed (licensure requires regular renewal by the Committee on Ministry; commissioning is held for the duration of call and the specific field of ministry). A second meeting is scheduled for an opportunity to reflect on the individual's ministry.

**REMEMBER:** Authorization is not only based on an individual's call and competencies, but also on the need of the UCC for a representative servant leader. **ASK:** How do our currently Licensed and Commissioned Ministers represent Christ in their ministries? How do they represent the UCC to their ministry setting and to the world? Does the UCC have other representatives to provide sacramental presence and leadership in those places?

The Habakkuk Group will gather in December 2017 to review and reflect upon the feedback collected in 2017. Those ideas that have been noted as "still in discernment" will be reconsidered by the Habakkuk Group, with an aim to move toward a final draft of the re-visioned MOM that supports Committees on Ministry with best practices for ministerial authorization in the 21st century.

9. In second meetings, a Committee on Ministry (Bridge Team) listens for the individual's ongoing discernment as well as its own discernment. If there is a shared sense of call to ordination, the Committee considers the individual's previous formation, current experience, and possible needs for further preparation, as well as the appropriateness of ordination for the individual's current call.

**DISCUSS:** What is the need of the Church and of the UCC for an authorized minister in this particular setting?

Recognizing the UCC's affirmation of multiple paths to authorization, how does an individual minister's experience already provide evidence of competencies for ordained ministry?

If the Licensed or Commissioned Minister becomes ordained, how might their ministry setting need to adapt the current call agreement; would any adjustment be needed?

10. As a result of the second meeting:

- If the individual and Committee (Bridge Team) agree that the discernment of possible ordination should continue, then a Plan of Preparation and Formation is developed, taking into account previous experience, formation, multiple paths, and the Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministers (see the drafted MOM, Section 2 Article 1).
- If the individual or Committee (Bridge Team) do not discern a potential for ordination, the end date of current authorization is clarified. Once authorization ends, individuals must take care not to present themselves as authorized ministers of the UCC. Liturgical recognition for the end of authorization as well as the celebration of lay ministries may be appropriate.
- Those ministers whose current authorization and call will conclude with professional retirement may be considered for retired standing at the Committee's discretion.

**HOLD SECOND MEETINGS**

**CHECK-IN:** How is our Committee or Bridge Team managing its communication with the association/conference registrar to keep authorization records and the UCC Data Hub up-to-date?

**DISCUSS:** Where and how are our understandings of ordination being challenged? Where are we having trouble saying “no”? How are we distinguishing between God’s call to all people and God’s call (echoed by the UCC’s call) to ordained ministry?

11. After the second meeting, individuals and Committees or Bridge Teams prepare for discernment to move to decision: concrete steps are outlined for individuals pursuing ordination or authorization is discontinued. Committees should neither unduly burden nor inattentively expedite the process toward ordination, but should rely on the Marks for assessment of competencies. Those who do not pursue ordination continue in the Church as laypersons who, like all Christians, are called to use their gifts in service of God’s mission although no longer with the authorization and oversight of the United Church of Christ.

**PLAN:** How will we celebrate the faithful work of those whose ministries will no longer include authorization?

How do we support those ministry settings whose Licensed or Commissioned Ministers have had a change in their authorization?

## THIRD MEETINGS: DECISION POINT

## LETTER OUTLINES

### **TO THOSE MINISTERS CURRENTLY LICENSED OR COMMISSIONED**

1. Invite all authorized ministers to attend the regional AM21 event most convenient to your association or conference in 2017.
2. Begin this letter to Commissioned and Licensed Ministers with a summary of the regional AM21 event and the drafted Manual on Ministry materials. Borrow or adapt text from this guide to underscore the UCC's ever-evolving understandings of ministerial authorization.
3. Highlight the Habakkuk Group's proposed one form of ministerial authorization as an opportunity for vocational discernment and an invitation to explore ordination (especially where the path to ordination previously might not have seemed available).
4. Request the opportunity to be in discernment together. Explain that current authorizations are all limited: licensure by intervals of renewal, commissioning by duration of call and the specific field of ministry.
5. Provide the date(s) and time(s) of a large group meeting or appoint a Committee person to schedule individual meetings. Include contact information for a specific Committee or Bridge Team member who is willing to field initial questions.

### **TO MINISTRY SETTINGS THAT HAVE LICENSED OR COMMISSIONED MINISTERS**

1. In association/conference news, announce the regional AM21 event most convenient to your location in 2017, so that all ministry settings have preliminary awareness of upcoming Manual on Ministry changes.
2. Begin this letter to the ministry settings of Commissioned and Licensed Ministers with a summary of the regional AM21 event and the drafted Manual on Ministry materials. As needed, borrow or adapt text from this guide to underscore the UCC's ever-evolving understandings of ministerial authorization.
3. Highlight the proposed one form of ministerial authorization as an opportunity for encouraging faithfulness and excellence for 21<sup>st</sup> century leadership by all of our UCC ministers, regardless of full- or part-time employment, specialized or bivocational careers, rural or urban context.

4. Invite ministry settings to understand that ministerial authorization represents the UCC's relationship with individuals who serve in and on behalf of the denomination. While ministry settings' individual needs are taken into account in authorization decisions, the overall well-being of the UCC through its ministerial leadership is of foremost concern in authorization. Assure ministry settings that current forms of ministerial authorization will not be changed immediately or without conversation.
5. Include contact information for a specific Committee or Bridge Team member who is willing to field initial questions.

FROM SECTION 1 OF THE DRAFTED MANUAL ON MINISTRY, WE PRAY:

O Holy One, as we become an expression of your presence in our midst, we ask for your Spirit to be present in our discernment of your call in our lives. As your Church gathers, guide and strengthen us in the ways we serve your name with our gifts and passions. Throughout history, you have emboldened leaders in your effort to energize people to serve creation. May we sense your Spirit moving within our efforts to raise up and support leaders for your Church's ongoing work in the world. In your holy name, we pray. Amen.

