

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>FORMS OF AUTHORIZATION</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 & 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:

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?

BEYOND THE 1986/2002 VERSION OF 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

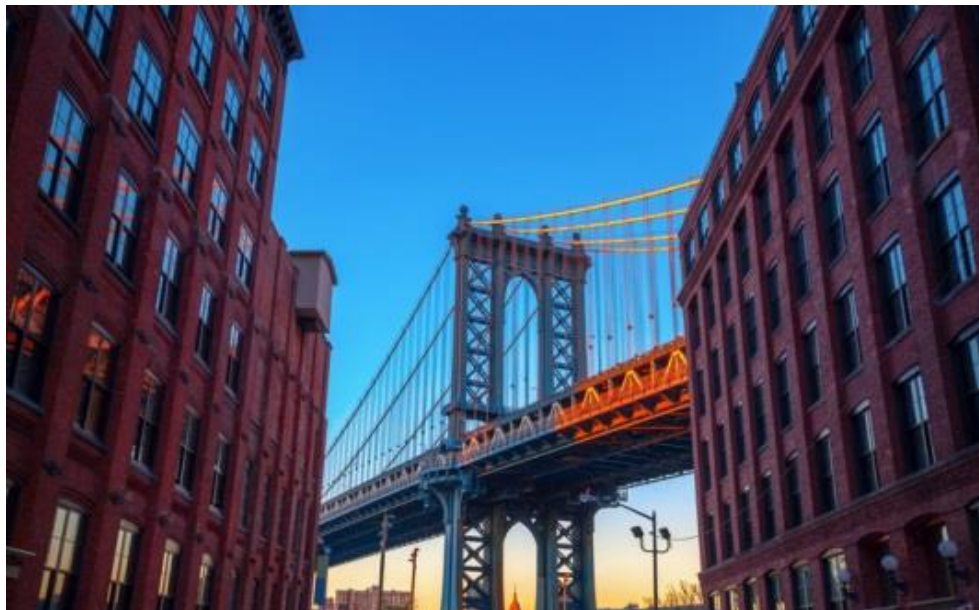
In our society the concept of retirement has shifted dramatically. The UCC does not have a form of ecclesiastical standing for 'retired' clergy (the UCC Yearbook has a specialty code of RT, which serves as an informational detail but not a form of ministerial standing). In addition, there are no current 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>DEVELOP PLAN FOR DISCERNMENT</p>	<p>1. Engage training opportunities at regional “Authorizing Ministry for the 21st Century” events (AM21), hosted by MESA in 2017.</p> <p>2. Meet to reflect on the drafted Manual on Ministry and to develop a plan for discerning future authorization with Commissioned and Licensed Ministers.</p> <p>DISCUSS: 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>DISCUSS: 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 (hackenbergr@ucc.org) for the Habakkuk Group’s information and consideration.</p>
<p>SCHEDULE INITIAL MEETINGS</p>	<p>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.</p>

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

<p>TO THOSE MINISTERS CURRENTLY LICENSED OR COMMISSIONED</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">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.
<p>TO MINISTRY SETTINGS THAT HAVE LICENSED OR COMMISSIONED MINISTERS</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">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 21st 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.