

ORDER FOR RECOGNITION OF A MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT

This order is to be held during a gathering of the Association or during worship in one of the Local Churches of an Association. It involves the participation of Local Church pastor, moderator or other leader, and members of the Local Church Discernment Committee. It further involves the participation of a representative of the Committee on Ministry, the MID advisor, and potentially the Lay Ministerial Standing Supervisor, on behalf of the Association.

This order may be incorporated into a Service of Word and Sacrament or a Service of the Word following the sermon, or during a meeting or other event. A Service of Word and Sacrament or a Service of the Word may continue, or a hymn and a benediction may close the order. The Member in Discernment may be invited to suggest hymns or choose scripture relevant to the overall service.

Member in Discernment is a specific ecclesial status of a lay member of a Local Church, granted by the Committee on Ministry of an Association. As the member progresses in discernment concerning ordination, responsibilities toward the heritage and future of the Church universal begin to come into focus, but ministerial standing is not yet granted. Prayers are sought for the continued preparation and formation of this member of the Body of Christ, whose discernment will not be complete without the wisdom of other members of the congregation and that of the United Church of Christ, exercised through an Association.

Member in Discernment status may last for a period of one or more years, during which a member will learn and prepare a portfolio of ministry that adheres to the “Marks of Faithful and Effective Ministers of the United Church of Christ.” In relationship with the Association the Member in Discernment will abide by decision-making appropriate to early, later, and final junctures of the process. The Member in Discernment process is more fully spelled out in *Manual on Ministry*.¹

The Moderator or another representative of the Association may greet the people, and the people may respond with these or similar words.

Leader:

Greetings in the name of our Creator,

People:

Who calls us into courage

Leader:

In the name of Jesus Christ,

People:

Who calls us into service

Leader:

And in the name of the Spirit,

People:

Who accompanies us on the Way

All:

Blessed be the Everlasting One!

Association Representative:

Welcome to this occasion.

As we welcome into formal status with the Association members of our local churches who have committed to intentional discernment, seeking specific preparation and continuing formation, to be equipped and later examined for the possibility of entering the ordained ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ.

Representative(s) of the Association, representative members of the Local Church(es) where the MID(s) hold active membership, the MID's advisor(s), and the MID(s) being recognized, are invited to come forward.

Local Church Pastor or Moderator:

__name of Local Church__ United Church of Christ, upon reflecting on the gifts we have noticed in the life of *__name of candidate(s)__*, requests formal Member in Discernment status be granted for this/these candidate(s) from the *__* Association. Our congregation has created a Discernment Committee to journey with *__name of candidate(s)__* and we will serve as full partners with the *__name of Association__* Association in their exploration of call.

Association Representative:

We celebrate the action of your Local Church to recommend you.

We affirm the action of the Committee on Ministry to receive you as a Member in Discernment.

The United Church of Christ desires that all who come to be ordained will have been nurtured by Christ's church in our midst,

and assessed by the measure of wisdom we can attain together.

Therefore this Association, through the Committee on Ministry and with the help of advisors and mentors, promises to assist you in your pilgrimage of learning over the year or years to come.

Promises

Association Representative

On behalf of the Local Church, do you add your commitment to encourage this Member in Discernment, to pray for them, and to nurture and support them, in preparation for whatever path their life unfolds?

Members of Local Church Discernment Committee:

We promise to support this member's journey of discernment through prayer, encouragement, through meeting together, and listening together to God's call.

Association Representative

As Advisor of a Member in Discernment in this Association, do you add your commitment to maintain regular contact with them, to support their discernment, and to communicate with the Committee on Ministry at regular intervals?

Advisor:

I do.

Association Representative:

As a Member in Discernment with this Association, do you promise to seek its guidance, to receive its support, and to communicate regularly with the Committee on Ministry and with your advisor?

Member in Discernment:

I do.

If a Member in Discernment has already been granted Lay Ministerial Standing, the service continues with members of the Local Church Discernment Committee still standing.

Lay Ministerial Standing Supervisor:

Do you promise to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to listen, and to test your sense of call throughout this season of discernment?

Member in Discernment:

I do.

Lay Ministerial Standing Supervisor:

Will your committee share with the Committee on Ministry what you learn and prayerfully acknowledge during this time?

Members Of Local Church Discernment Committee:

We will.

All who are able may stand.

Association Representative or Other Leader:

Let us pray.

We pray that God, out of the riches of divine glory,

Will strengthen you inwardly with power through the working of the Spirit.

May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith,

So that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

Will be able to grasp fully the breadth, length, height and depth of Christ's love,

And with all God's holy ones,

Experience this love that surpasses all understanding

So that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Congregation:

To God – whose power now at work in us

can do infinitely more than we ask or imagine,

to God be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus through all generations

world without end! Amen.ⁱⁱ

A Service of Word and Sacrament or a Service of the Word may continue, or a hymn and a benediction may close the order.

ⁱ Ministerial Excellence, Support, and Authorization. *Manual on Ministry: A Guide to Authorizing Ministry in the United Church of Christ*. (Cleveland, OH: Local Church Ministries, A Covenanted Ministry of the United Church of Christ, 2018).

ⁱⁱ Ephesians 3:15-21, Inclusive Bible Translation