

Procedure Manual
for
Members in Discernment,
(Ordained, Commissioned, and Licensed Ministries)
Local Churches and the Committees on Ministry
of the
Associations of the Wisconsin Conference
United Church of Christ

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION: OVERVIEW MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT PROCESS..... 4

2. COVENANTING FOR DISCERNMENT AND FORMATION..... 6

2.1. Member in Discernment’s Responsibilities 6

2.2. Local Church’s Responsibilities 7

2.3. Association’s COM Responsibilities 7

2.4. Member in Discernment MENTOR’s Responsibilities 8

3. PROCEDURES 9

3.1. Individual and the Local Church 9

3.2. Individual, the Local Church, and the Committee on Ministry 14

4. BEGIN ORDINATION PROCEDURES 18

5. NON-TRANSFERABILITY OF MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT 18

APPENDICES 19

APPENDIX 1: THE MARKS OF FAITHFUL AND EFFECTIVE AUTHORIZED
MINISTERS OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST 20

APPENDIX 2: APPLICATION FOR MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT STATUS 24

APPENDIX 3: APPLICANT’S STATEMENT OF CONSENT 26

APPENDIX 4: ASSESSMENT OF A MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT’S MARKS OF
FAITHFUL AND EFFECTIVE MINISTRY 27

APPENDIX 5: SUGGESTED ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED BETWEEN THE LOCAL
CHURCH AND THE MEMBER..... 28

APPENDIX 6: RESOURCES FOR ASSESSING COLLEGE AND SEMINARY
PROGRAMS 30

APPENDIX 7: MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT RENEWAL FORMS..... 46

APPENDIX 8: FINANCIAL WORKSHEET; Income and Expenses to Degree or
Authorization for Ministry 54

APPENDIX 9: MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT STEPS 57

1. INTRODUCTION: OVERVIEW MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT PROCESS

The elements within a Covenant of Discernment and Formation are decidedly nonlinear, allowing the partners in the covenant to adapt to the unique gifts and needs of the MID and the communities from which they have come, and to which they may be called. Bearing in mind that discernment is by definition not a sequential, predictable process, certain moments of discernment can nonetheless be identified. A formal beginning, an entry point for the Covenant of Discernment and Formation; a covenant of formation, in which an appropriate learning and formation plan is defined; assessment of readiness, using the collection of “The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ” provided specifically for this purpose; and formal authorization appropriate to the particular ministry. It is critical to understanding this covenantal relationship that between beginning and authorization for ministry, the middle moments of discernment can and will occur in many permutations, depending on the MID’s circumstance, the needs of the community, and the collective wisdom of the CoM.

All persons who are members of the United Church of Christ and who understand themselves to have been called by God to a particular form of ministry, persons who are in the process of learning the possible ways of living out such a call, and persons who are preparing themselves for authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ are required to participate in the Member in Discernment process. Those preparing for a wide variety of authorized ministries benefit from this relationship.

A member interested in exploring authorized ministry talks with the pastor and lay leaders of the church where the member holds membership. The local church shall create a Ministry Discernment Committee (MDC). The MDC represents the congregation in helping the member discern the particular gifts for ministry God has given and also provides a forum for exploring the nature of the call. The member is now considered a Candidate for Member in Discernment (CMID). If and when appropriate, the MDC recommends the member to the governing body of the church, which makes a formal request to the Association Committee on Ministry (CoM) to enter into a covenant of discernment. The CoM meets with the

member. If the CoM agrees with the recommendation of the local church the CMID, the CoM, and the local church become partners in the covenant of discernment. This covenant has three partners—the member, the local church, and the CoM. Upon entering into a covenant of discernment with the local church and the CoM the status of the CMID is changed to Member in Discernment (MID) and is reported to the Conference. The member shall have been a member of a UCC church for a minimum of two years.

The CoM makes an initial assessment as to which of the three forms of UCC authorized ministry (Licensed, Commissioned, Ordained) the MID is called. A learning and formation plan is defined that includes education, mentoring, and other experiences of ministerial formation. A specific plan will be outlined and agreed upon by all covenantal partners. It will be designed according to the particular form of authorization anticipated and the MID's prior experience. The CoM appoints a Mentor in Discernment for the MID.

The CoM, MID and the Mentor shall meet annually to review the MID's progress within the learning and formation plan and the "The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ."

The Mentor-in-Discernment is critical in the MID's exploration of various forms of ministry and preparation for the possibility of authorized ministry. The Mentor performs several essential functions in this spiritually rich and multi-dimensional process. Most importantly, the Mentor serves as a trusted companion and guide on the discernment journey, listening to the MID's aspirations, anxieties, and uncertainties, and helping to clarify the individual's sense of God's calling to a particular form of ministry. The Mentor also helps the MID discover whether authorized ministry is the most appropriate response to the individual's call, and what type of authorization is most suited to that individual's gifts and graces. This spiritual companionship involves the encouragement of the MID's prayer life, habits of disciplined study, participation in corporate worship, meditation, and other devotional practices. The Mentor fosters an atmosphere of trust and candor in which the MID can raise and explore questions concerning faith, the Christian life, ministry, and the church. In conversation, the MID and the Mentor will discuss the MID's educational plans in the

broader context of the MID's spiritual and vocational formation. In an ethos of mutuality, the Mentor will help the MID connect theory and practice, vocational and personal life, and study and action. In short, the Mentor serves as a coach and counselor throughout the discernment process and the preparation for the possibility of authorized ministry.

The CoM discerns the MID's readiness for authorization using a collection of characteristics of good ministry in the UCC called "The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ" (Appendix 1). These Marks have been grouped into four types: *Spiritual Formation for Ministry*, *UCC Identity for Ministry*, *Personal and Professional Formation for Ministry*, and *Knowledge and Skills for Ministry*. The MID is assessed on the basis of all four, recognizing that not every member displays them all in equal measure. To assess the MID, the CoM uses multiple tools, including: "Assessment of A Member In Discernment's Marks of Faithful and Effective Ministry" (Appendix 4), reports from field education supervisors, seminary reviews, psychological assessments, portfolios, feedback from the MID's church community, and the Mentor in Discernment. The CoM also meets regularly and intentionally with the MID for times of reflection and prayer.

If and when appropriate, the CoM determines that the MID is ready for authorization. In the UCC, authorization is always made pending a call from a specific body, e.g., a local church, chaplaincy, or other ministry setting. The MID becomes a Candidate for Authorized Ministry. Upon receiving a call, authorization is celebrated in a rite of ordination, licensure, or commissioning.

2. COVENANTING FOR DISCERNMENT AND FORMATION

2.1. Member in Discernment's Responsibilities

- Engage in disciplines of discernment regarding a possible call to authorized ministry.
- Receive the counsel of her/his local church and others regarding the possible call.
- Shall meet regularly with the designated body in the member's local church regarding the member's call.
- Meets with Mentor
- Shall meet at least annually with the CoM

- Explore with the covenant partners what type of authorization (licensure, commissioning, ordination) is the most appropriate response to the member's call.
- Work with the Association to develop a learning and formation plan for the authorized ministry sought.
- Engage in the study and action prescribed in the learning and formation plan.
- Discern through prayer and reflection with covenant partners throughout the process.
- Grow in the practices of spiritual discipline under the guidance of a spiritual director
- At the appropriate time, prepare and submit documentation to the CoM and be interviewed by the CoM regarding readiness for authorization.

2.2 Local Church's Responsibilities

- Interacts with the member as he/she undertakes initial exploration of the call;
- If the exploration proceeds, the local church recommends the member to the COM.
- After/if the Association enters into the covenant, the local church continues to provide support (including financial and spiritual) as the member engages in preparation for authorized ministry.
- Discern through prayer and reflection with covenant partners throughout the process.
- Be able to provide facilities for Ecclesiastical Council and Ordination services.

2.3 Association's COM Responsibilities

- Receive the recommendation and supporting materials from a local church regarding its member's request to enter a covenant of discernment and formation
- Interview the member; if the Association enters the covenant, work with the member to discern the form of authorization (licensure, commissioning, or ordination) most appropriate for the members call.
- Appoint a Mentor to guide the member during the covenantal period.
- When a candidate is a member of a racial/ethnic community which is not represented in significant numbers (50% or more) among the members of the CoM, adapt its procedures of discernment and decision-making by including members of the MID's own community in the decision-making processes, taking the time and effort to educate itself concerning the community's traditions and needs, and acknowledging the validity of the member's community's discernment.

- When the MID is a person with disabilities, adapts its procedures of discernment and decision-making so as to honor that member's gifts and needs, taking the time and effort to educate itself appropriately and including other individuals with disabilities in the processes of discernment.
- Work with the member to develop a plan of preparation.
- Meet at agreed upon intervals with the member and representative of the local church to review the member's progress on her/his path of preparation.
- Discern through prayer and reflection with covenant partners throughout the process.
- At the appropriate time, request appropriate documentation from the member and interview the member to determine readiness for authorization.
- Decide whether to proceed with authorization in covenant with the member, her/his local church, and when appropriate, the member's particular community.
- Provide training for Mentors.

2.4 Member in Discernment MENTOR's Responsibilities

- Receive orientation from the Association regarding the Mentor's role and seek appropriate training (spiritual direction, life coaching, listening skills workshops, etc.) for the work of advisement.
- Act on behalf of the CoM with the Committee's full and current knowledge of the MID's progress and the Mentor in Discernment's practices, advice and role.
- Maintain frequent contact with the MID via e-mails, telephone calls, written communication, and face-to-face meetings.
- Offer on-going advice and counsel.
- Provide guidance, in consultation with the CoM, concerning course work and other educational opportunities.
- Help the MID understand the expectations of the CoM concerning the individual's path of preparation for authorized ministry.
- Help the MID understand the United Church of Christ's procedures for the authorization of ministries.
- Encourage the MID to participate in the life of his/her local congregation.
- Encourage the MID to be active in Association and Conference activities.

- Encourage the MID to explore sources of available financial support for the preparation process.
- Help the MID evaluate and select appropriate educational opportunities from among the possible paths of preparation for ministry (seminary courses, regional theological education programs, mentoring, etc.).
- Help the MID prepare the necessary documentation and reports required by the Association and the broader church.
- Accompany the MID to meetings of the CoM in order to review progress.
- Foster the deepening of the MID's Christian faith and life.
- Encourage the MID to grow in the practice of spiritual disciplines through regular meetings with a spiritual director.

3. PROCEDURES

3.1. Individual and the Local Church

A member who is interested in exploring authorized ministry talks with the pastor of the church where the person holds membership. If the member and the pastor decide to begin a formal process of discernment the church shall form a Ministry Discernment Committee (MDC). The pastor shall contact the COM for training and available resources.

MID Academic Assessment

Assessment of a Member in Discernment's academic preparedness for ministry will be made in direct relationship to the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministry, utilizing the rubric developed by the Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization Team found in *Journaling the Journey: Engaging the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ for Personal Discernment and Professional Growth*.

Because UCC polity allows for multiple paths to ordination and individualized learning plans which may or may not include formal advanced theological

training, Committees on Ministry recognize that academic training may take many forms and may be secured from multiple sources.

Members in Discernment are expected to prepare a portfolio of materials for presentation to their respective Committee on Ministry demonstrating their academic ability and achievements.

A Member in Discernment's portfolio must include artifacts demonstrating a level of knowledge equivalent to a seminary-level introductory course in the following subjects:

- Old Testament Survey
- New Testament Survey
- An Exegetical Course
- A History of Christianity Survey Course
- A History or Theology Course on the 16th Century Reformation
- A Course on one form of contemporary theology
- A UCC History Course
- A UCC Polity Course

In addition, the portfolio must include artifacts confirming:

- 2 years of supervised ministry, at least 1 in a local church setting
- 1 unit of Clinical Pastoral Education
- Demonstrated understanding of the UCC Ordained Ministers' Code

The portfolio must include representative artifacts of competency with respect to all four sections of the Marks of Ministry. Acceptable examples of artifacts include, but are not limited to:

- Workshop descriptions/certificates/syllabi

- Official college/university transcripts from educational institutions accredited by the regional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education
- Official theological school transcript (from a seminary/divinity school accredited by the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada)
- Papers
- Tests
- Projects
- Sermons
- Liturgies
- Testimonies
- References
- Case studies
- Original Art
- Newspaper articles
- CPE Evaluations
- Fieldwork evaluations
- Evidence of Participation in denominational, ecumenical, community ministries
- The Member in Discernment's completed *Journaling the Journey*.

A Member in Discernment's portfolio does not replace the ordination paper, nor does it replace any additional requirements for ordination listed in *Manual on Ministry*.

A preliminary assessment of a Member in Discernment's academic progress toward meeting the "Marks for Ministry" shall be made half-way through the learning plan, based upon a partial completion of the portfolio described above.

As a result of this assessment, identified modifications in the learning plan may be made.

Committees on Ministry will provide a copy of *Journaling the Journey* to each Member in Discernment and Mentor.

The MDC, pastor, and the member enter into a process of discernment. When a member's call leads to consideration of authorized ministry, the Church, pastor, and that member together seek to discern God's particular call to that person. Such discernment and response is an ongoing practice. The primary questions guiding discernment are, "To what ministry is this person called?" And then, "Does this ministry require authorization? If so, what form of authorization?"

The MDC, pastor, and the member shall use the "The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of The United Church of Christ" (Appendix 1), "Suggested Items To Be Discussed Between The Local Church and The Member" (Appendix 5), and Appendix 8 "FINANCIAL WORKSHEET; Income and Expenses to Degree or Authorization for Ministry" as tools for discernment. The MDC may use additional tools for discernment.

If, after a period of discernment the MDC, pastor, and member discern the member's call does not require authorization the MDC, and pastor may work with the member to further develop the ministry to which the member is called. No recommendation is required to be sent to the CoM.

If the local church's MDC recommends the person to the CoM for further formation and discernment toward authorized ministry, the applicant shall provide to the CoM the completed "Application for Member in Discernment Status" (Appendix 2) and the completed "Applicant's Statement of Consent" (Appendix 3).

The applicant shall submit to the CoM a completed UCC background check.

The applicant shall complete a psychological assessment with a professional chosen by the CoM.

Before a candidate is taken in care as a Member in Discernment, he or she will need to go through a psychological assessment with a person or agency selected by the Association's Committee on Ministry.

The psychologist will be using tests seeking a minimum of two kinds of information: one set to determine the candidate's self-awareness and where areas for growth might be and another set to screen out people who might be unfit for ministry (the MMPI or its equivalent). The Committees on Ministry will use this information as well as other information from the tests to obtain a deeper understanding of the candidate. The psychologist and the Associations' Committees on Ministry would determine the specific tests for each Association.

In addition to the objective test results, the Committees on Ministry will seek a narrative assessment from the psychologist based on an interview with the candidate. The psychologist will offer insights on whether those preparing for ordained ministry have at least the following qualities of personal character needed for leadership in the church: personal maturity, the commitment and emotional capacity to deal with conflict, personal courage, and the ability to trust others while also being trustworthy. Both the candidate and the Committee on Ministry will receive the report from the psychologist.

The cost of the testing and evaluation will be split in thirds among the candidate, the congregation and the association. The candidate should schedule the tests and interview within 30 days of first meeting with the Committee on Ministry. While the testing is in process, the candidate and advisor would draft the candidate's learning plan. When the testing and learning plan are completed, the Committee on Ministry will make the decision on whether to take the candidate in care.

A signed release of the results of the psychological exam to the Committee on Ministry is required for the association to authorize proceeding with the psychological exam, release its third of the funding, and proceed with consideration of the applicant for MID status.

The MDC shall provide to the CoM a summary of the process used to determine the prospective MID readiness for formation and discernment. The documentation will provide the reasoning for the recommendation and provide an explanation of any areas of concern that were identified by the MDC.

If the member enters into the covenant with the CoM, the role of the MDC will change. Because the whole discernment process can be exciting, difficult and sometimes confusing for the member, it is vital that the local church and the Association seek to support the member all along the way, not just at the beginning of exploration. The MDC of the local church can stand with the person if the member becomes discouraged, loses their way or feels put upon or disregarded by “the system.” MDC will both challenge and support the MID and will serve as a communication link between the member and the congregation, maintain contact with the CoM, and interpret the process as the member’s discernment and formation continues. The MDC will play a particularly important role during times in the process when decisions are called for such as a decision to recommend the member for authorization or a decision that more preparation is needed, or that the covenant of discernment and formation has ended without the member proceeding to authorization.

3.2 Individual, the Local Church, and the Committee on Ministry

The first step of the CoM in the Member in Discernment process is to receive and consider the application of a member of a local church of the Association to become a MID. The local church shall accompany the request with the required documentation about the person. In most cases the decision to proceed is made if the documentation provided is complete and provides a basis for an interview with the person. Throughout the interview, the CoM is seeking to determine the person’s fitness, aptitudes, Christian experience, and commitment as a basis for preparing for authorized ministry. It shall

utilize “The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of The United Church of Christ.” (Appendix 1)

When the member and the local church have provided all required documentation to the CoM will interview the member. A sample interview agenda follows:

- Introduction of the person, representatives of the local church, members of the CoM, and any others who may be present.
- A time of prayer or worship.
- A statement about the purpose of the meeting and preview of the agenda.
- A statement by the pastor or lay leader about the person, including information about the person’s history with and involvement in the local church, the process the local church went through to recommend the person to the CoM, and the rationale for the local church’s recommendation.
- A statement by the person that includes sharing his or her life pilgrimage, those factors that have led to the decision to prepare for authorized ministry, and plans for this preparation.
- Discussion by the CoM with the person about questions or issues raised by the person’s statement or by any of the written materials provided by the person.
- Description and interpretation by the CoM of the MID procedures and the expectations it has of its MIDs. The CoM will emphasize the important role of the Mentor in Discernment and the responsibility of the MID to relate closely with his or her Mentor. The CoM will emphasize the fact that the decision to grant MID status does not ensure that the person will be approved for authorized ministry.
- Discussion of the selection of a seminary, if that is part of the learning and formation plan, including the necessity that it be a seminary approved by Local Church Ministries. (See Appendix 6: “Resources for Assessing College and Seminary Programs”).
- It should be noted that seminaries related to the United Church of Christ provide significant opportunities for understanding of and incorporation into the ethos of the United Church of Christ; thus, they should receive strong consideration in the selection process.

- Closure, including a statement by the Committee to the person about next steps.

Following the interview, the CoM deliberates and makes its decision. At this point, it is making a decision about the person's potential fitness for ordained ministry. Is there a reasonable expectation that with the proper preparation the person can meet the requirements for authorized ministry and can function as an authorized minister in the United Church of Christ?

The decision of the CoM may take one of several forms:

- “Yes.” The CoM senses that this is a person with gifts for authorize ministry, an authentic call to ministry, and the ability and determination to meet the requirements for authorized ministry.
- “Yes, but . . .” The CoM senses that the applicant may have the potential for authorized ministry, but it has certain reservations or concerns that must be addressed. These may have to do with a perceived lack of maturity in the person, a deficient understanding of ministry, questions about the person's ability to complete the learning and formation plan, and so on. In this case, the CoM will need to share its reservations with the applicant and determine together steps to be taken to address these reservations and checkpoints along the way to reassess them. The decision to enter into a covenant of discernment with the member is postponed until these steps are complete.
- “No, but . . .” The CoM may feel that at this time it is not able to make a positive decision to enter into a covenant of discernment with the member. However, it could indicate its openness to consider the request at a later time if the person is able to address the identified deficiencies and wishes to make application again.
- “No.” In some cases, the CoM may need to say no to a person. This is not a decision that can be made lightly or without considerable deliberation. But in cases where it is clear that the person does not appear to have the potential for authorized ministry, is not authentic in his or her intentions, or exhibits obvious immaturity or emotional problems, the CoM can express its caring for the person and for the Church by denying the request.

In making its decision, the CoM needs to keep a variety of factors before it:

- It is making a decision on behalf of the entire United Church of Christ. Its decision is one that is recognized by and honored by all of the United Church of Christ.
- It is making a decision about entering into a preparation process with the member. On the one hand, this means that its concern is not the present fitness of the person but the potential fitness of the person for authorized ministry. On the other hand, it is committing itself to provide responsible guidance and support during the period of formation so that the person has every opportunity to develop the potential that is there.

The Committee on the Ministry communicates its decision to the applicant and the applicant's local church. When the decision is not to proceed with the person, the CoM should ensure that there is pastoral follow-up with and concern expressed for the person and his or her local church. When the decision is to proceed with the covenant of discernment, the CoM enters into covenant with the MID and the local church to create a learning and formation plan for the person during the period of formation. The CoM appoints a Mentor in Discernment for the person.

The decision to enter into a covenant of discernment is reported to the Association and, the Conference. This report confirms MID status of the member with the denomination. If seminary education is part of the learning and formation plan, the CoM will need to be familiar with the educational institutions where its MIDs are enrolled and share with these institutions its expectations about the nature of the educational experience it desires for its MIDs. (See Appendix 6: "Resources for Assessing College and Seminary Programs"). This may involve giving the schools feedback about their curricula and the CoM's perception of the readiness for ministry of the school's graduates. The CoM should be aware that the development of United Church of Christ identity and familiarity with United Church of Christ history, polity, and practice often is not a prime concern of seminaries not related to the United Church of Christ.

The MID shall successfully complete Boundary training within one year of acceptance as an MID.

The CoM shall present persons who have been accepted into a covenant of discernment to the Association or Conference or both. This may be done as part of one of the regular meetings of these bodies. The CoM presents a certificate to each newly approved MID.

The MID, Mentor in Discernment, and the CoM shall meet annually to review the progress of the MID. The MID, MDC, Mentor in Discernment and the pastor shall complete and submit the “Member in Discernment Renewal Forms” (Appendix 7) to the CoM prior to the annual review by the CoM.

4. BEGIN ORDINATION PROCEDURES

Bylaw 105 of the United Church of Christ specifies that a MID applies for ordination not more than six months prior to the completion of theological training. If a close relationship with the MID has been maintained by the CoM and the member’s Mentor, the necessary preparatory steps, including the preparation of the required documentation, will occur naturally, leading to the formal application.

5. NON-TRANSFERABILITY OF MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT

Because the discernment process is a relationship between the MID, the local church, and the CoM, it is not something that can be transferred. If a MID changes his or her local church membership it is necessary for the MID to make a new application to become a MID in its care. If the new church is in an Association different from the Association where MID status was granted, the new Association shall request, for informational purposes, the MID file on the person, including any counsel or recommendations from the former CoM.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: THE MARKS OF FAITHFUL AND EFFECTIVE AUTHORIZED MINISTERS OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION FOR MINISTRY

1. A lived faith showing love of God, trust in Jesus, and openness to the Holy Spirit.
2. Devotion to the word of God as revealed through scripture and Christian traditions.
3. Commitment to life-long spiritual growth and practice, individually and in community.
4. A sense of being called by God and the community to authorized ministry in the church.
5. Openness to continuing discernment of one's call in community.

UCC IDENTITY FOR MINISTRY

1. Acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as sole Head of the Church.
2. A passion for the oneness of the body of Christ as expressed through commitment to ecumenism, justice, and the full embrace of all persons in the radical hospitality of God.
3. Active membership in a local church of the United Church of Christ.
4. An understanding of the concept of covenant and how it informs the nature, purpose, and polity of the United Church of Christ.
5. A willingness to live in the covenants of mutual accountability that characterize authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ.
6. Ongoing demonstration of commitment to the United Church of Christ.
7. Stewardship of resources, including financial support of the church in all of its settings.
8. Participation in the various settings of the United Church of Christ, including the conference/association and local church.

The ability:

9. to articulate diverse histories that comprise the United Church of Christ, to situate them in the broader evolution of faith traditions and to relate them to the theology, polity, and practices of the Member's local church, association, and conference.
10. to explain and work within the current polity of the UCC and its denominational structure, and to describe the covenantal relationships among the General Synod, national setting, conferences, associations, and local congregations of the UCC.
11. to share key elements of the UCC's statement of faith, constitution with its preamble, and bylaws regarding the governance, mission, and theologies of the UCC and their implications for the life of the church.
12. to articulate the UCC's commitment to being a united and uniting, multiracial and multicultural, open and affirming, accessible to all and just peace church.
13. to envision how the UCC in its various settings may respond to religious, social, economic, and political trends, changing demographics, and other emerging factors.
14. to use and promote the informational and educational resources available through UCC publications and websites.

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL FORMATION FOR MINISTRY

1. A healthy sense of self as shaped by God, community, and personal experience.
2. A sense of theological identity and authority, while being responsive to the opinions and values of others, including those whom the Member will serve.
3. A healthy awareness of strengths, weaknesses and limits, and assumption of responsibility for one's body, mind and spirit.
4. Knowledge and observance of personal and professional boundaries in interpersonal, congregational, and community settings.
5. A commitment to continuing education, professional development, and life-long learning.
6. Demonstrated moral maturity, including integrity in personal and public life and responsibility to self, family, church, and community.

The ability:

7. to affirm the identities of others, including others very unlike oneself.
8. to engage in self-reflection and to seek and use feedback from others appropriately.
9. to engage productively in public discourse, expecting to grow and be transformed through the exchange of viewpoints.
10. to take initiative in leadership, and to frame and test a vision in community.
11. to listen empathically, communicate appropriately, and keep appropriate confidences.
12. to function as part of a team, to give and receive supervision, and to mutually equip and motivate the community of faith.
13. to be resourceful and adaptable, and know where to locate additional resources and seek consultation when needed.
14. to accept and promote diversity, to inspire others to do so, and to minister in a multicultural and multiracial, open and affirming, just peace, accessible to all, united and uniting church.

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR MINISTRY

General Knowledge and Skills

The Ability:

1. to understand and appreciate a variety of perspectives of life.
2. to understand the profound differences that physical, psychological, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, class, cultural, religious, racial, and ethnic factors make in the ways that human beings experience the world.
3. to comprehend the impact of historical change upon the thoughts, feelings, and actions of individuals and societies.
4. to perceive how a person's perspectives and interests shape communication, and to appreciate the virtues and limitations of those perspectives and interests.
5. to grasp and evaluate the justifications that people give for their opinions.
6. to apply basic concepts of psychology to the understanding of oneself, others, and human

interactions.

7. to appreciate the importance of symbols and images in human culture(s).
8. to understand various meanings and purposes of the arts.
9. to analyze social, political, environmental, and economic dynamics, using the tools of the social and natural sciences.
10. to use respectfully and relationally a basic knowledge of specific human cultures.
11. to communicate clearly and effectively with appropriate media and technologies.

Knowledge and Skills Specific to Authorized Ministry

1. A thorough knowledge of, and personal engagement with, the Bible.
2. Skill with methods of biblical interpretation, including the historic interpretive traditions of the church and contemporary methods, particularly those from historically underrepresented communities.
3. A deepening familiarity with the global history of the Christian churches through the ages and across cultures, including the newest Christian populations, and an understanding of the evolution of Christian communities in the United States.
4. A deepening familiarity with contemporary theological ways of thinking and with the rich and varied theological heritages, creeds, liturgies, and spiritual practices of the Christian churches.
5. An understanding of other religions and their foundational documents.

The ability:

6. to articulate a theological understanding of authorized ministry, and to relate it to the practice of ministry.
7. to analyze, evaluate, and integrate the biblical, historical, theological, and pastoral disciplines and practices in ways that contribute to fruitful and faithful Christian ministry.
8. to understand the nature, use, and misuse of power and authority, and to exercise them appropriately and effectively in authorized ministry.
9. to engage in community leadership that is collaborative and transformative.
10. to engage in respectful ecumenical and interfaith dialogue.
11. to celebrate the unique features of local faith communities while encouraging them to be receptive to perspectives from the broader church and world.
12. to appreciate, practice, and pass on traditions of faith while interpreting them in light of the context of a diverse and changing world.
13. to adapt the practices of ministry to the unique social, cultural, environmental and ecclesiastical aspects of particular settings.
14. to discern God's mission in the world and, in response, to lead ministries of compassion, nurture, justice, and proclamation that support fullness of life for all people.
15. to preach the good news, lead worship and participate in the sacraments in a manner faithful to the broader Christian heritage and appropriate to the characteristics of a specific culture and setting.
16. to provide effective and appropriate pastoral care and Christian education, and to equip and motivate others to share in these ministries.
17. to organize and implement programs, administer the operations of a complex organization,

- and initiate change when appropriate.
18. to read the contexts of a community's ministry and creatively lead that community through change or conflict.
 19. to lead and encourage ministries of evangelism, service, stewardship and social transformation.
 20. to understand and participate in the financial administration of the church and other religious organizations.

APPENDIX 2: APPLICATION FOR MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT STATUS

Name _____

Address _____

Phone numbers:

Daytime _____

Evening__Cell _____

Birthday _____

e-mail address_____Churc

h Membership _____

Baptism date and location _____

Confirmation date and location _____

How long have you been a member of the UCC? _____

Name and address of your pastor _____

Have you ever applied for Member in Discernment status with this or another Association?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, which Association: _____

Have you ever been a Member in Discernment with this or another Association?

Yes_____ No _____

If yes, which Association: _____

Education

High School attended and date of graduation _____

College(s) attended/attending _____

Degree received/anticipate receiving and date_ _____

Seminary currently attending _____

Essay

Please briefly (five pages) share with the Church and Ministry Committee:

1. Your Christian pilgrimage.
2. Biography
3. How the call is understood at this time.
4. Special gifts which you believe you possess which God will use in your ministry.
5. Leadership responsibilities you have assumed within the church and within the community.

The information provided above is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX 3: APPLICANT’S STATEMENT OF CONSENT

We are called to speak the truth in love. Our primary goal is, in all circumstances, to build up the body of Christ. Relationships between Church and Ministry Committees and persons seeking Authorization for Ministry in The United Church of Christ require honesty, integrity, and truthfulness for the health of the church. In that spirit:

I attest that the information contained herein is true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that any misrepresentations or omission may be grounds for rejection of consideration for authorized ministry.

An open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for continuing healthy relationships between the Church and Ministry Committee and persons seeking Authorization. In that spirit:

I have read and reviewed the Procedure Manual for Members in Discernment, (Ordained, Commissioned, and Licensed Ministries) Local Churches and the Committees on Ministry of the Associations of the Wisconsin Conference United Church of Christ.

I authorize the Church and Ministry Committee to make inquiries as needed for the granting of Member in Discernment status and for the continuation of that status, including conversations with professors, pastors, supervisors and other appropriate persons. I understand that such persons may comment on and state their opinions regarding my background and character and fitness for authorized ministry. To encourage such persons to speak openly and responsibly, I hereby release them from all liability arising from their responses and comments made in good faith and without malice. I also authorize the release to the Church and Ministry Committee of transcripts, reports, evaluations, and psychological and spiritual assessment results as outlined in the Member in Discernment policy.

Signature _____

Date _____

APPENDIX 4: ASSESSMENT OF A MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT'S MARKS OF FAITHFUL AND EFFECTIVE MINISTRY

Committees on Ministry may utilize a variety of resources in their ongoing assessment of a Member in Discernment's marks of faithful and effective ministry. These include:

- *Case studies*

Cases are short narratives of incidents or situations in ministry. CoMs can use them for doing theological reflection as well as discussing how a MID might face the often complex realities presented by everyday ministry.

- *Direct experiences of ministry*

Members of the CoM may be invited when the MID is leading worship, speaking at a meeting, teaching an educational event, or demonstrating some other form of leadership. When such occasions become a regular part of the committee's relationship to the MID, they help build up a picture of his or her readiness for authorized ministry.

- *Portfolios*

The MID may assemble a file of sermons and other writings, recordings of oral presentations, artwork, worship programs, summaries of completed projects, transcripts, letters, and other materials that, taken together, provide a picture of his or her developing ministerial competence.

- *Appreciative Inquiry*

An approach to assessment rather than a resource *per se*, AI is the search for the best in a person using questions and the sharing of stories. CoMs may be trained in AI for use in their ministry with MIDs.

APPENDIX 5: SUGGESTED ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED BETWEEN THE LOCAL CHURCH AND THE MEMBER

Areas of discernment to explore with the member include (the list which follows is suggestive, not exhaustive):

- The member's understanding of Christian faith and practice including beliefs about God, Christ, and church, and commitments to a Christian life including worship, prayer, and service.
- The member's sense of call
- Exploration of the member's gifts for ministry, including ways the gifts have been used in and beyond the church, and how others have understood and affirmed these gifts.
- The member understands her/his call to authorized ministry as distinctive from the call to ministry of all God's people within the community of the church.
- Exploration of licensure, commissioning and ordination, the authorized ministries of the UCC. Final determination regarding authorization will entail ongoing discernment.
- How the member envisions functioning as an authorized minister. Understandings of faithful and effective authorized ministry.
- Questions about authorized ministry. Particular challenges anticipated as the member imagines fulfilling the office of an authorized minister.
- Experience in conflicted situations and the member's approach to conflict.
- Experiences in leadership.
- Understandings of the physical and emotional stamina and maturity that are needed to function effectively as an authorized minister.
- Anticipated preparation for authorized ministry. Seminary? Regional Education Programs? Mentoring? Is relocation possible?
- Examination of financial realities. Preparation can be expensive. What is the initial plan to finance the time of preparation and formation?
- Issues of employment during the time of preparation and experience and concerns with balancing academic preparation and working. How might balance be achieved?

- Household and relationship issues. If the member is part of a household or has a partner, children, or other covenantal relationships, how do the others in the relationships feel about a decision of the member to pursue authorized ministry? What does the member envision regarding balance in household commitments and the maintaining of relationships during the time of preparation?
- Reflection on some of the authorized ministers the member admires and respects, and exploration of how the member sees her/himself as similar to/different from them.

APPENDIX 6: RESOURCES FOR ASSESSING COLLEGE AND SEMINARY PROGRAMS

INTRODUCTION

For all the similarities from one accredited school to another, colleges and seminaries in the United States and Canada show a tremendous diversity in approach, ethos and quality. For this reason it will pay real dividends if, as a Committee on Ministry, you spend time assessing the colleges and seminaries your Members in Discernment are considering attending or actually are attending. This extra effort on your part will enable you to better support your Members in Discernment in obtaining the greatest benefit from these educational programs, and that will serve the church by providing it the best prepared leaders possible.

For both colleges and seminaries a key aim of your assessment should be to discern how the ethos of any institution your Members in Discernment attend relates to the ethos of the United Church of Christ (i.e., We are a united and uniting church; we are a multiracial and multicultural church; we are a church accessible to all; we are an open and affirming church; we are a just peace church.). This is important because you should assume that your Members in Discernment will attend a variety of institutions, not all of which are connected with the U.C.C.

A second key aim of your assessment should be to learn the strengths and weaknesses of the educational opportunity that school represents so that you can identify what supplementary experiences you might need to include in the educational and formational plan of a particular Member in Discernment – for example, whether a particular seminary provides the kind of spiritual formation opportunities you think a particular MID needs.

In general, assessment of the educational quality of institutions will be beyond the means of most Committees on Ministry, and in any case the educational accreditation system in the United States does a very good job of assessing and improving the quality of higher education. Your committee can rely on the work of accrediting agencies for quality assessment. A little later we will tell you how to access that information.

Of course, Members in Discernment will come to your committee at all stages of their educational process. So you may or may not be able or need to do this work in every case, depending on how much of her or his education a particular MID has completed when they first meet with you.

ASSESSMENT OF COLLEGES

Some Members in Discernment will come before you only after they have already received their college degree. Apart from ensuring that they received it from an accredited institution (see 4 below under “Assessment of Quality”), there is nothing more you need to do here with such a MID.

Other Members in Discernment will come before you while they are in the middle of their college studies. For these persons the purpose of your assessment is not to contribute to the MID’s considerations about choosing a college – he or she has already done that, but to help you understand what opportunities are available to them in that context. That will help you and the Member discern whether there are other opportunities for growth and development he or she should be seeking out.

Finally, on occasion, Members in Discernment may come to you at a point where they are choosing the college or university they will attend. In such a situation, your aim in this assessment is to be able to be an informed guide for the member as to how each school she or he is considering might contribute to her or his development toward ministry.

Assessment of Quality

It is relatively easy to ensure that the college or university attended by a Member in Discernment provides a baseline of educational quality. Your committee should look for a reference in either the school’s catalog or on its web site that it has been accredited by an agency approved by the U.S. Department of Education.

In general, you should look to see that the school is accredited by one of the six regional accrediting agencies for institutions of higher education in the U.S. These are:

- Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Higher Education

- New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
- North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, The Higher Learning Commission
- Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges
- Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities

A school accredited by one of these agencies is obligated to publish in its own materials (i.e., catalog and web site) the name, address, telephone and other contact information for that agency. If you do not see such a notice, the school is not accredited by a regional accrediting body. If you do see such a notice, not only do you know that the school is accredited, but you can now find the agency's web site. On their web sites all accrediting agencies maintain lists of accredited members with reports of their accreditation status. This allows you, if you should desire to do so, to explore the specifics of an individual school's accreditation status.

There are other accrediting agencies beyond the regional agencies although those six accredit most of the colleges and universities your members are likely to attend. The federal Department of Education maintains a list of the accrediting agencies it has approved on its web site. You may access that through this address:

<http://www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/index.html>.

Assessment of Ethos

When you are working with a Member in Discernment who is currently enrolled in college or university, or who is considering options for college or university study, it is important and useful to ask two questions:

- how does the ethos or climate of a particular school relate to the essential commitments of the United Church of Christ;
- how does the educational environment created by that ethos or climate support a student acquiring the kinds of knowledge, skills and perspectives that the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers expect a MID to develop before reaching seminary, i.e., the section of the Marks titled "General Knowledge and Skills."

Your answers to such questions are always a judgment call, of course, but they are still worth considering. For a MID who is still deciding where to do undergraduate studies, your judgment about these matters might be valuable perspective that will help him or her make that choice. For a MID who is already attending a college or university, coming to a judgment about these questions will help you support them as they navigate the college experience, and may suggest other opportunities you would encourage the MID to seek out.

Where can you find the information you need to make such judgments?

If the MID is already attending the college or university, she or he will be your best source of information. When you meet with them, talk over these two questions with them at some length, and see what the MID thinks.

In addition, you can find useful information related to these questions in a school's catalog and on its web site. A school's catalog can easily be obtained by contacting its Admissions Office, and sometimes by request through the school's web site. Here are some ideas of what to look for:

- statements about the kinds of students the school seeks
- statements about the kind of graduates they turn out,
- statements about the educational climate they seek to create in their classrooms and on campus,
- statements about their mission,
- statements about their commitment to freedom of inquiry.

Look at the school's curricular requirements to see whether they expect students to have a broad grounding in the various fields of human knowledge.

If the school has a religious commitment or affiliation, you can look for several things that might help your judgment:

- whether it is related to the U.C.C.;
- what other denomination or faith it might be related to;
- descriptions of the nature of that relationship;

- whether the school has a statement of religious beliefs and values that guide it, and, if so, what the content of that is.

Assessment of Educational and Formational Resources

Your purpose here should be to identify resources that you might wish to call to the attention of the Member in Discernment with whom you are working. The purpose of this would be to enhance their educational and spiritual development in college or university so that it provides them the best possible foundation for further study toward ministry. Obviously, this is only a concern with members who have not yet completed their undergraduate education.

In general, you should be looking for two things:

- courses in the humanities, arts, and social sciences, as well as cross-curricular emphases in areas such as writing and critical thinking;
- opportunities for study abroad and/or immersion trips;
- extra-curricular and off-campus opportunities that support spiritual growth.

The first set of resources are explicit educational opportunities that will support the development of the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers in the category “General Knowledge and Skills that Ordained Ministry Builds Upon.” You can find these listed in a school’s catalog and on many schools’ web sites. Of course, the Member in Discernment, if currently enrolled at the school, can be a source of information about such things too. The point of learning about these opportunities is to be able to counsel with the MID in an informed way about the courses that will best prepare her or him for theological studies. Note, in particular, that the best preparation for theological studies is not necessarily theology or religion, but the study of literature, history, sociology, psychology, various cultures, philosophy, art history, etc. Courses such as these are excellent preparation for theological studies because they teach knowledge and perspectives that theological studies presuppose, but do not themselves teach. Undergraduate study of theology and religion without this broader exposure to the humanities and social sciences may give a student a head start on what will be taught in seminary, but it will leave them without this important foundation.

The second set of resources will exist partly at the school itself and partly off-campus. Here are some suggestions of things to look for:

- Resources for spiritual growth on-campus will include student religious organizations, and – at some schools – chaplains’ offices and chapel programs. You can find out about such groups and programs by contacting the Student Services office or Dean of Students office at the college or university.
- Campus ministries are important off-campus resources for students’ spiritual life at some colleges and universities. To find out if there is a UCC-related campus ministry at the school your MID is attending, check this web page at [www.ucc.org: http://www.ucc.org/links/index.html#HIGH_ED](http://www.ucc.org/links/index.html#HIGH_ED).
- Local churches of the United Church of Christ nearby college and university campuses are crucial resources to which to alert your MIDs. To find out which of the local congregations of the UCC serve the campus community, you can contact the relevant Association or Conference staff.

The point of learning about these opportunities is to be able in an informed way to help your MID connect with a faith community or communities, and with helpful resources for spiritual guidance during their college time.

ASSESSMENT OF SEMINARIES

Assessment of seminaries will loom larger in your work with Members in Discernment than assessment of colleges. This certainly will be true whenever seminary is the central educational program in a MID’s path to authorization. It will also be important on those occasions when you think some seminary work should be a component of a MID’s path that is primarily built around either study in a regional educational program or mentored practice. Your work in assessing the quality, ethos and resources of the seminaries that your Members in Discernment attend is centrally important to your ability to guide your members in making wise choices about which seminary to attend, and your ability to craft effective educational and formational plans for your Members in Discernment. If you know the profile of strengths and limitations for those seminary programs, you will be equipped to be much more helpful to your Members in Discernment.

At the same time, there is a realistic limit to the amount of time you will be able to devote to this task, so here again you will want to make use of assessments that already exist and take advantage of the seminaries' willingness to explain and interpret their programs for you.

Marks of Effective Seminary Programs

The importance of seminary education in the formation of leaders for the United Church of Christ is so significant that it is worth keeping in mind what makes for an effective seminary educational program. Although seminaries will differ, and none is perfect, here are a set of "marks of effective seminary programs" that have been developed out of representative reflection from across the United Church of Christ:

- The seminary will be accredited by the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada. This accreditation is essential since it ensures a baseline of quality that allows the following list of marks to be much shorter, making the resulting task of evaluation much more practical.
- In addition, an effective M.Div. program will:
 1. enable its students to acquire the bodies of knowledge identified by or implied by the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers;
 2. enable its students to acquire the skills of ordained ministry described in the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers;
 3. cultivate in its students adherence to the norms of the role of ordained ministry as identified in the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers;
 4. consistently provide its students with opportunities to learn from experienced U.C.C. ministers in the supervised practice of ministry;
 5. regularly provide its students two semesters of instruction in U.C.C. history, theology and polity, and will support the attendance of the instructor(s) of those courses at the annual UCC polity-teachers meeting;
 6. inform and train its students concerning issues that are vital to a united and uniting, multi-racial, multi-cultural, open and affirming, accessible to all, just peace church;
 7. support the ordination of women to ministerial office, and welcome their distinctive contributions to theological discourse;

8. be attentive to the particular needs of racial-ethnic churches and their expectations of pastors and develop culturally specific strategies of ministry formation and nurture to meet those needs;
9. maintain an open dialogue around LGBT concerns being guided by UCC General Synod Resolutions and policy;
10. intentionally include, support and provide accommodation for participants with disabilities, being guided by UCC General Synod Resolutions and policy and the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990;
11. provide its students a comprehensive exploration of the Just Peace Movement in the United Church of Christ.

In the following two sections you will find suggestions for where to find the information you need to see how any particular seminary lines up with these characteristics, and some suggestions on how to work with a seminary to ensure that your Members in Discernment studying there get the preparation they need to be ready for leadership in the United Church of Christ.

How To Get The Information You Need About Seminary Programs To Assess Their Effectiveness

This section offers advice on who to talk to and what to look for to do two things:

- ensure that a particular seminary is an appropriate choice for a particular Member in Discernment;
- develop a profile of what that seminary offers your MID that supports his or her development so that you know if you need to build additional educational or formational experiences into the MID's educational and formational plan and path to authorization.

Assessment of Quality and Educational Resources

THE ESSENTIAL STEP

The first and essential step in assessing the quality of a seminary program is to check to be sure that the school is accredited by the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS). There are two ways to check this.

One is to look in the seminary's catalog or web site. If it is accredited by the ATS, the school is obligated to identify not only the name of that accreditor, but also its address, telephone and other contact information.

The second way to check is perhaps the one you should prefer since it will get you additional information about the school. If you go to the ATS web site (www.ats.edu), you will find there a complete list of "Member Schools," i.e., accredited, candidate and associate institutions. If you click on a school's name in that list, you go to a page that gives essential accrediting information about the school as well as the names of the president and dean and contact information. The accrediting information you receive is:

- status (accredited/candidate/associate; you want "accredited");
- the specific degrees that are approved for that school;
- any notation the school has on its accreditation status.

The listing of degrees allows you to check whether the particular degree your MID aims to pursue is approved for that school. The listing of notations informs you of significant departures from accrediting standards that the accreditor has found in the school's operations. You should pay careful attention to any notations about the quality of the school's educational programs. This page will also tell you if the school has more than one location approved for granting degrees. Incidentally, if you click the school name of this page, it will take you to the school's own web site.

THE EXTRA MILE

If you are motivated to go the extra mile in assessing the quality of education your Members in Discernment receive from the seminaries they attend or plan to attend, you might ask if the seminary will share its own self-assessment results with you. All ATS schools are supposed to be conducting on-going self-assessment of the effectiveness of their educational programs. Perhaps they would be willing to share some of that. About half of the schools in the ATS (and the majority of the seven seminaries of the U.C.C.) collect something called the Graduating Student Questionnaire. Perhaps a school would be willing to share with you their results for the questions that ask students their

judgment of the adequacy of their education. If you ask for this, be sure to ask not only for the school's own results, but also for the all-ATS results. These will give you a frame of reference for judging how the particular school did.

DISTANCE EDUCATION

The ATS web site is also the place to go if you are looking for seminaries that have been approved to offer distance education courses on an on-going basis, up to and including entire degree programs. This list of such approved schools is also found in the "Member Schools" section of the ATS web site (www.ats.edu). Clicking on the name of the school in the list will take you to the school's information page on the ATS site. You must click on the school's name on that page to go to the school's web site. In order to find just what courses a school offers over the Internet you must go the school's web site and discover that there. The ATS listing simply tells you that the school is approved to do this. If the school is approved, and the Internet course carries credit towards degrees at the school, you may trust that the course has had to pass the same quality standards as a face to face class. You will have to check out the school, however, to determine whether this is one that will serve your MID well (see the section on "Assessment of Ethos").

BEYOND THE MINIMUM: DEVELOPING THE PROFILE OF A SCHOOL

Beyond the kind of basic quality assessment just described there is a second, and perhaps more important assessment task you need to carry out. This is the one implied by the marks of an effective M.Div. program listed in the previous section. The aim here is to develop a profile of the school's strengths and limitations. Of course, if the limitations are too great, you may want to discourage members from attending there. More commonly this profile will help you determine if you need to add other educational and formational opportunities into a MID's educational plan to supplement what the seminary does. It might also lead you to want to address certain concerns directly with the seminary administration.

There are three foci here:

1. How completely does the seminary support a student's development of the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers in the section "Knowledge and Skills Specific to Authorized Ministry"?
2. How completely does the seminary support a student's development of the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers in the sections "Spiritual Foundation for Ministry" and "Personal and Professional Formation for Ministry"?
3. How completely does the seminary support a student's development of the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers in the section "UCC Identity for Ministry"?

For your assessment in all of these areas there are three major sources of information that you should consider:

- the seminary's catalog and web site;
- direct conversation with seminary officials, especially the academic dean and instructors of specific courses;
- experiential knowledge and course materials gained by your MID in the course of studying at the school.

1. Knowledge and Skills Specific to Ordained Ministry

Here is a set of steps to follow to check how thoroughly the seminary's curriculum covers the knowledge and skills specific to ordained ministry.

1. Begin with this section of the list of Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers. With that to one side as a kind of check list, go through the requirements for the M.Div. degree at the seminary you are assessing (these will be in the catalog and on the web site), and identify the courses required for the degree.
2. Course by course find the course description in the catalog or on the web site. Based on the course descriptions, check off the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers as you find them covered by courses the seminary requires for the M.Div. degree.

3. If you have a MID already enrolled at this seminary, or a recent graduate of this seminary is a member of your association, you might want to verify this list with them based on their experience.

4. It is also entirely appropriate for you to contact the school in question to ask how particular topics in the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers are covered in the requirements for its degree. The best person with whom to begin this conversation is the academic dean. If she or he does not know the answer to your question, she or he will know who does and will refer you to them.

Ideally, all the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers will be addressed in some way by at least one of the courses required for the M.Div. at this seminary. If there are any Marks for which this is not true, you can always address this by encouraging the MID to find an elective that covers those topics.

2. Spiritual Foundation for Ministry, and Personal and Professional Formation for Ministry

In this area seminaries are quite uneven in what they require, and so are quite different in the degree to which they support the spiritual, personal and professional formation of their students (all the way from “not at all” to “very intensively”). This means that you must pay especially careful attention here, as this is one of the areas where you may most need to supplement a seminary education for your MIDs depending on the seminary they are attending.

Begin with the sections of the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers titled “Spiritual Foundation for Ministry, and Personal and Professional Formation for Ministry,” as well as information about the seminary (starting with catalog and web site). You are looking for opportunities and resources that support the kind of spiritual, personal and professional formation described in the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers. These opportunities might include:

- courses,
- the supervised practice of ministry in field education sites,

- clinical pastoral education (CPE) units,
- spiritual formation groups,
- integrative portfolios,
- regular chapel worship,
- the presence of a chaplain or pastor to students,
- opportunities to learn spiritual disciplines,
- psychological assessments.

You will want to find out a number of things about these opportunities:

- what is required, and what is optional;
- the extent or frequency with which a particular resource or opportunity is available;
- most importantly, whether the criteria for assessment of students in field education contexts are consistent with the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers in the area of professional formation.

Some of this information will be available in the school's catalog or on its web site. Some of it you will be able to discover by talking to MIDs attending the seminary or recent graduates in your association. However, some of the information you will only be able to obtain by calling someone at the seminary. Again, the academic dean is a good person to start with. However, if you see from the school's information that it has a director of field education (or contextual studies or supervised ministry), or a chaplain, or a director of spiritual formation, you might do well to contact them directly with your questions.

As in the previous section, in an ideal world you would discover that the seminary had cared fully for all these matters of spiritual, personal and professional formation, and indeed some do a very good job of this. However, the reality is that you will find some unevenness. These then become areas where you will want to think about adding some supplemental activities to your MID's educational and formational plan.

3. UCC Identity for Ministry

You can, and should, approach assessing a seminary's program in regard the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers in the area of UCC Formation for Ministry in the same way as for the previous two areas.

However, especially for non-UCC seminaries, support for development of these Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers will tend to be concentrated in two areas, UCC courses and field education. Here effectiveness can be relatively easily measured by focusing on items 4 through 11 in the list of marks of an effective M.Div. program (see above). Ask:

- whether your students' field education experiences are in UCC contexts and under the supervision of experienced UCC clergy (mark #4),
- and whether there is instruction in UCC history, theology and polity that matches the requirement of mark #5.

Look for marks 6 through 11 in five ways.

1. Ask whether these subjects are covered in the two UCC studies courses.
2. Scan the elective courses listed in the seminary's catalog or web site to see how many deal with the topics and concerns in these marks.
3. Ask any MID studying at this seminary, and any recent graduates in your Association to what extent these themes are present in coursework and the life of the community at this seminary.
4. Ask about the degree to which mark #8 is cared for in required courses in areas such as Biblical studies, theology, worship, preaching, administration, Christian education, and pastoral care.
5. Look at the degree of diversity represented in the faculty, staff, trustees and student body of the seminary.

Assessment of Ethos

In considering any particular seminary it is always important to ask how the ethos or climate of that particular seminary relates to the essential commitments of the United

Church of Christ. Your answer to this question is always a judgment call, of course, but it is essential that you ask it since the intellectual climate of a school (the implicit curriculum) exerts a considerable formative power on the students who pass through it. That will have a real impact on how well prepared a student is to lead effectively in a UCC ethos.

Where can you find the information you need to make such a judgment?

You can find useful information related to this question in a seminary's catalog and on its web site. A school's catalog can easily be obtained by contacting its Admissions Office, and sometimes by request through the school's web site. Once you have the catalog, here's what to look for:

- statements about the kinds of students the school seeks;
- about the kind of graduates it turns out;
- about the educational climate it seeks to create in its classrooms and on campus;
- about its commitment to freedom of inquiry;
- and any mission or vision statements;
- its curricular requirements and the kind of elective courses offered to see whether they reflect the array of concerns characteristic of the United Church of Christ;
- descriptions of how diverse the student body is in terms of gender, race, age, denominational background, etc.;
- if the school uses a doctrinal statement to define its character, look for whether people are expected to agree with it in all particulars, and if so who: trustees?, faculty?, staff?, students?.

For anything about which you have questions, feel free to call the school and ask for clarification. Regarding academic programs, the Academic Dean is always a good person to put your questions to. Most deans have responsibility for responding to just such questions about their seminary from the churches. If you prefer, a call to the President would serve the same purpose since presidents typically have a high responsibility for church relations. Of course, you should also ask your Member in Discernment for their

own sense of the school on these matters. Although that will only be a single student's experience of a more complex community, it is important perspective for you. There may also be recent graduates of the seminary in your Association. They would also be good sources of perspective as well.

Working With Seminaries for Improvement

In the course of your work with Members in Discernment attending seminaries you may discover that there is a seminary that attracts a number of your MIDs as students for good reasons, but that has some significant limitation in providing the kind of preparation you believe is best for your students. As mentioned above, you can take the approach of arranging individual supplementary experiences for those students to make up for the deficits you uncover in the seminary education. You can also take the approach of addressing your concerns to the seminary in search of a more permanent improvement in the education it offers your students.

On the whole, seminaries are always interested in improving the preparation of their students for ministry, and so will actually welcome conversation with those responsible for the ordination process in a denomination they serve. (If they do not welcome such an approach and potential partnership, that in itself is a significant sign for you.) So if you have concerns that you would like to see addressed by a particular seminary, you are encouraged to take the initiative and ask for an appointment to discuss this with the academic dean. It will certainly help if you can be specific and detailed about the problems you are seeing. Especially in the area of UCC Identity for Ministry, it will also help if you or your Association/Conference can be part of the solution in some way.

4. What have you done to take care of yourself?

5. Are you experiencing financial difficulties? If so, please share your situation.

6. How have you experienced growth in your spiritual development?

7. What has been your involvement with your Mentor?

8. Please take a few minutes to give us your comments about the Member in Discernment process. How can we be more helpful to you?

Signature _____ Date _____

Local Church Form

Date: _____

Pastor's Name: _____

Local Church _____ Name: _____

Candidates Name: _____

Chairperson of Governing Board: _____

1. How has your church offered support to the Member in Discernment over the last year?
(spiritual, emotional, financial, etc.)

2. In what ways has the Member in Discernment been involved in the life of your church?

3. Have you seen evidence of growth in the Member in Discernment over the last year?
Please share your observations.

4. Do you have any reservations or concerns about this person preparing for our
exploring ordained ministry? If so, please explain.

5. Do you have any recommendations or comments to pass on to the Church and Ministry Committee about this person.

Signature _____ Date _____

Local Pastor Form

Date: _____

Pastor's Name: _____

Local Church _____ Name: _____

Candidates Name: _____

Chairperson of Governing Board: _____

1. How has your church offered support to the Member in Discernment over the last year?
(spiritual, emotional, financial, etc)

2. In what ways has the Member in Discernment been involved in the life of your church?

3. Have you seen evidence of growth in the Member in Discernment over the last year?
Please share your observations.

4. Do you have any reservations or concerns about this person preparing for our exploring ordained ministry? If so, please explain.

5. Do you have any recommendations or comments to pass on to the Church and Ministry Committee about this person?

Signature _____ Date _____

5. Do you have concerns or reservations about this person preparing for, or exploring ordained ministry? If so, please explain.

6. Do you plan to share these concerns or reservations with the Member in Discernment?

Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX 8: FINANCIAL WORKSHEET; INCOME AND EXPENSES TO DEGREE OR AUTHORIZATION FOR MINISTRY

Members of the United Church of Christ in Wisconsin who have been called by God to a particular form of ministry, who are preparing themselves for authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ and who are presently or are considering becoming a Member in Discernment, are required to carefully examine the financial implications of the path to their intended degree, other educational goal, and authorization for ministry. This worksheet is designed to prepare the MID for informed discussions about personal finances with the MDC of their local church, with their Committee on Ministry and with the appropriate person at their seminary or other academic institution. This worksheet is intended to assist anyone considering authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ, whether that person is pursuing a traditional or alternative path to authorized ministry.

INCOME:	One year	Total to Degree/ Authorization
Employment income:	_____	_____
Savings and investments available for costs to degree:	_____	_____
Work/study income:	_____	_____
Field education stipends (if applicable):	_____	_____
Grants/scholarships/Fellowships/other financial aid:	_____	_____
TOTAL INCOME:	_____	_____

EXPENSES:	One year	Total to Degree/ Authorization
Living expenses (individual/family) (food, clothing, entertainment, moving costs [if applicable], commuting costs for time on-campus if required for distance		

learners, children's school expenses, home upkeep, etc.)	_____	_____
Housing expenses (mortgage payments or rent):	_____	_____
Automobile:		
(payments and estimated number of miles driven, using federal income tax rates for cost-per-mile):	_____	_____
Insurances:		
(health, life [if there are children under 18 in the family], renters or homeowners, etc.):	_____	_____
Tithing/giving to home church:	_____	_____
Tuition:		
(cost per credit multiplied by number of credits necessary to achieve the intended degree):	_____	_____
Books:		
(Seminary or degree-granting institution may have figures to be used for budgeting purposes):	_____	_____
Fees:		
(Student fees, technology fees, on-line fees, etc.):	_____	_____
Existing educational debt:	_____	_____
Existing revolving debt (credit cards, etc.):	_____	_____
Miscellaneous:	_____	_____

TOTAL EXPENSES: _____

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:

1. If the total expenses exceed the total income (annually or to intended degree or authorization for ministry), how will the difference be financed?
2. Given the current age of the MID and a probably Social Security retirement age 67, do the number of years available for exercising authorized ministry make this financing manageable and reasonable? Bear in mind that recently graduated/authorized ministers very rarely receive a call to serve a congregation that pays in excess of the Conference guidelines of the Conference in which that church is located.
3. Has the MID conferred with a Certified Financial Planner regarding all aspects of his/her long term financial planning, including present and anticipated debt repayment, financing of post-high school education for children, care for aging parents, personal retirement needs, etc? If not, the MID is strongly encouraged to do so before committing to a financially burdensome path to an intended degree or form of authorization for ministry in the United Church of Christ.

APPENDIX 9: MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT STEPS

Member in Discernment Procedures	
<u>Procedure for Member</u>	<u>Procedure for the Local Church</u>
Step 1. A local church member of the United Church of Christ interested in exploring authorized ministry talks with his or her pastor about expectations and procedures.	None
Step 2. If the church member and the pastor decide to proceed, application is made to the Ministry Discernment Committee (MDC) of the local church for an interview.	The governing board of the church creates a MDC. The MDC should consist of 4 to 6 members; one or two chosen by the person considering the covenant of discernment and formation, one or two chosen by the governing body from the church's membership who exhibit maturity of faith and commitment to the Church of Jesus Christ, one member of the governing body itself, and the pastor.
Step 3. The member enters into a process of discernment with the MDC	The MDC and the pastor enter into a process of discernment with the member. The MDC, pastor and member shall use Appendices 1, 5, and 8.
Step 4. The person is interviewed by the MDC.	The MDC reviews the material and interviews the person. They determine whether or not to recommend to the member to the Association Committee on Ministry.
Step 5. The member supplies to the Committee on Ministry (CoM): a. Completed Appendix 2 b. Completed Appendix 3 c. Completed background check d. Completed psychological assessment (the professional is chosen by the CoM)	If application is made to the CoM, the local church provides the following documentation about the person in support of the application: a. The material provided to the governing board and pastor, revised if necessary. b. A description of the process used by the local church to interview and recommend the person. c. The reasoning for making the recommendation. d. Any areas of concern identified by the MDC.

Member in Discernment Procedures	
<u><i>Procedure for the Calling Body</i></u>	<u><i>Procedure for the Association</i></u>
Step 1. None	None
Step 2 None	None
Step 3. None	None
Step 4. None	None
Step 5. None	None

Member in Discernment Procedures	
<u>Procedure for Member</u>	<u>Procedure for the Local Church</u>
Step 6 None	Step 6 None
Step 7 The member participates in the interview with the CoM	Step 7 The pastor may attend the interview and participate as necessary.
Step 8 The member enters into a covenant of discernment with the local church and the CoM. The MID shall complete Boundary Training within one year of obtaining MID status.	Step 8 The church enters into a covenant of discernment with the member and the CoM
Step 9 The member shall meet regularly with the MID Mentor	Step 9 None

Member in Discernment Procedures	
<u><i>Procedure for the Calling Body</i></u>	<u><i>Procedure for the Association</i></u>
	Step 6 The CoM receives the application and recommendations and reviews the material received from the member and the local church. If it decides to proceed, it notifies the person and local church and sets a date to meet with and interview the candidate. The Committee also sends an agenda for the interview and shares this information with the applicant.
	Step 7 The CoM interviews the candidate to determine (a) fitness, (b) aptitudes, (c) Christian experience, and (d) commitment as a basis for preparing for authorized ministry. It uses Appendix 1 If the Committee is satisfied, it receives the member into the care of the Association, shares with him or her it's expectations, and appoints a MID Mentor.
	Step 8 The CoM enters into a covenant of discernment with the member and the local church.
	Step 9 The CoM arranges for the presentation of the person to the Association and the Conference. The Association presents the MID a certificate to the person. Official notification of the action is provided to the Conference.

Member in Discernment Procedures	
<i>Procedure for Member</i>	<i>Procedure for the Local Church</i>
<p>Step 10 The member maintains regular contact with the Mentor.</p>	
<p>Step 11</p>	
<p>Step 12 The MID shall complete the appropriate section of Appendix 7 prior to the annual meeting with the CoM.</p>	<p>The MDC and pastor shall complete the appropriate sections of Appendix 7 prior to the annual meeting with the CoM.</p>
<p>Step 13 Six months prior to the completion of theological training, the MID may begin ordination procedures.</p>	

Member in Discernment Procedures	
<i>Procedure for the Calling Body</i>	<i>Procedure for the Association</i>
	Step 10 The MID Mentor maintains regular contact with the MID and offers advice and counsel as the member proceeds toward authorized ministry. The Mentor consults about sources of support, including financial, and periodically reviews the course of study to make certain it will enable the member to meet ordination requirements. The member is expected to pursue a learning and formation plan. Supplemental studies may be planned to develop competencies and skills not addressed elsewhere.
	Step 11 The CoM working with the Mentor assures the following: a. Training for and oversight of the Mentor and review of her or his work to see that the necessary tasks are being performed. b. Regular communication with the MID. c. Events or gatherings with the Committee, Mentors, and MID. d. The member’s participation in the regular life of the Association. At times this will mean that the member participates in the life of the Association where the member is in school. e. The member’s participation in the life of a local church of the United Church of Christ.
	Step 12 The CoM conducts an annual review of the MID using Appendices 1, 4 and 7 including learning and formation plan progress, participation in the life of a local church and Association, the Mentor relationship, and progress toward meeting the requirements for authorized ministry. Based on the review, the Committee decides whether or not to continue the MID relationship for another year.
	Step 13 The CoM instructs the MID of its expectations and requirements in carrying out the authorized ministry procedures.