



**Wisconsin Conference
United Church of Christ**

**MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT
PROCEDURE MANUAL**

**WISCONSIN CONFERENCE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

2022

Introduction to the Member in Discernment Manual

Wisconsin Conference, UCC, 2022

Welcome to the Member in Discernment (MID) Manual of the Wisconsin (WI) Conference of the United Church of Christ (UCC). If you are reading through the manual you are either considering authorized ministry or you are somehow supporting someone considering authorized ministry in the UCC, we give thanks for your discernment of call to serve God.

This manual is meant to be a companion manual to the Manual on Ministry (MOM) of the UCC. Portions of the MOM are duplicated in the manual, but it is recommended that all who are in discernment also obtain and read the MOM.

This manual contains additional WI Conference resources and process explanations not in the MOM. In 1995 the UCC established the Multiple Paths option for those discerning authorization for ministry. This option has prompted Conferences of the UCC to create new processes to guide MIDs in their journey to authorized ministry. The WI Conference created the Unified Member in Discernment Assessment Team (UMAT) to work with WI Conference Committees on Ministry (CoMs) to create individual learning covenants for all WI Conference MID candidates. UMAT information is contained in this manual.

This manual also includes information about the Damascus Project, an education resource of the WI and Minnesota Conferences.

The WI Conference continues to affirm licensed ministry as an important form of authorized ministry. This manual has resources for CoMs that apply to licensed ministry processes.

Also included in the manual are grant applications for the support of MIDs. The WI Conference has a deep commitment to the affordability of discernment, training and education of those seeking to serve God and the church.

Though this manual does not cover every detail of the discernment process, it does offer comprehensive guidance and resources for those discerning a call to ministry and those who journey with them in the WI Conference UCC.

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ARTICLE 1: MEMBERS IN DISCERNMENT

LOCAL CHURCH AS LOCUS OF MINISTRY

At the heart of the understanding of Christian ministry in the United Church of Christ is the theological conviction that God calls all disciples to serve Christ in their work and to witness in daily life. The Local Church of the United Church of Christ—in polity and in mission—is called to equip and empower the ministry of disciples. No matter the size or circumstance of a congregation, several habits reflect a culture of call:

- The congregation actively affirms a belief in the priesthood of all believers¹¹ and in the call of all Christians to be ministers (using their gifts and presence to serve the world with God's grace and love).
- The congregation has an identifiable mission providing many and varied opportunities for persons to have meaningful involvement in that mission.
- The congregation as a whole is connected to the life of the wider Church, including a familiarity with the processes by which congregants may explore vocational ministry in the United Church of Christ.

For some members, the call of discipleship may include specific preparation and formation in order to respond faithfully and effectively with their work and lives. For some members, the call of discipleship may include the exploration of ordination, to serve as a representative servant of Christ on behalf of the United Church

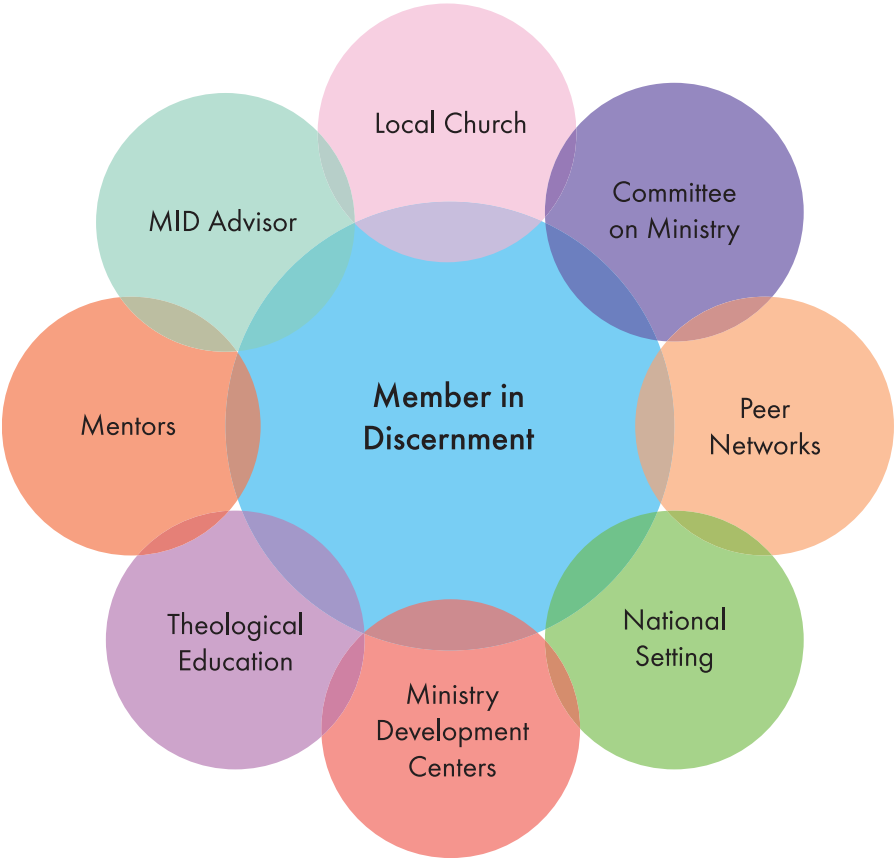
"Preparation" refers to the specific activities that contribute to a person's development spiritually, personally, professionally, and ethically. "Formation" is an open-ended and lifelong effort; it is the ongoing array of habits and intentional practices that contribute to a person's maturity, effectiveness,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

¹¹ Priesthood of all believers: The understanding that all persons have access to God without an intermediary and that all persons have the potential to show God to others (to minister for God).

of Christ. The Local Church’s culture of call takes a particular focus when a member feels called to ordained ministry, providing discernment support as well as connection to the Association for engagement with its formal discernment processes. A member of a Local Church who is approved by an Association’s Committee on Ministry to enter a discernment relationship is called a Member in Discernment (MID). Member in Discernment is an ecclesial status within the United Church of Christ.

DISCERNMENT PARTNERS

The Member in Discernment process involves interdependent and covenantal relationships, in support of the member as well as the Committee on Ministry making decisions on behalf of the United Church of Christ. These relationships help to form and examine the person’s capacity for ordained ministry, and they provide accountability so that discernment is not practiced in isolation.



- **Local Church.** To become a Member in Discernment, a person must first be an active member of a Local Church of the United Church of Christ for at least one year, in order to establish and demonstrate commitment to a particular faith community's ministry and to the United Church of Christ. The relationships developed through membership and the experiences of Local Church life allow the person, the pastor, and the congregation to pay attention together to the person's call. The pastor and a Local Church Discernment Committee¹² are the person's first and ongoing discernment partners. If these discernment partners agree that there is a potential call to ordained ministry to be explored formally, the Local Church's governing body recommends the person to the Committee on Ministry.
- **Committee on Ministry.** The Committee on Ministry of an Association, acting on behalf of the United Church of Christ, provides support, assessment, and accountability for the person's continuing journey of discernment, and the Committee engages in its own discernment to determine whether the person's call requires ordination. The Committee's discernment in relationship with the Member in Discernment should not take longer than seven years.
- **MID Advisor.** The Member in Discernment Advisor, assigned by the Committee on Ministry, is a UCC member (lay or ordained) whose familiarity with the polity of and commitment to the ministry of the United Church of Christ position them to serve as an effective process guide for the Member in Discernment. The MID Advisor meets with the Member in Discernment between the person's annual reviews with the Committee as a checkpoint on the Member in Discernment's adherence to formation and preparation plans, and as a resource to clarify the discernment process as needed.

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

¹² Local Church Discernment Committee: A small group of Local Church members who gather with the person exploring their call, in order to listen, encourage, and provide feedback before and during the MID process. The Local Church Discernment Committee may be a standing committee (elders, deacons, council, etc.) or an ad hoc group formed for this purpose.

Ministry training experiences may include such opportunities as field education, clinical pastoral education (CPE), internships, and more.

- **Theological Education.**¹³ Seminaries, field education sites, regional theological education programs, mentoring programs—and those who serve in such settings—offer knowledge and insight to the Member in Discernment and to Committees on Ministry. Professors and teachers are those persons directly involved in theological and educational development. Supervisors are those who oversee ministry training experiences.
- **Ministry Development Centers.** Development Centers are organizations that are called upon for psychological assessments, personality and gifts inventories, etc. A Committee on Ministry may require feedback from these professionals regarding the preparation and readiness of a person for ordained ministry.
- **Mentors.** Mentors are persons whose ministry experience and personal relationship with a Member in Discernment afford them opportunities to provide candid feedback and professional wisdom. Mentors are not assigned to Members in Discernment by Committees on Ministry and therefore are not required to submit feedback. Committees can encourage Members in Discernment to seek out mentors as informal but critical sources of support.
- **Peer Networks.** The connection—formally and informally—of Members in Discernment to one another is encouraged for support and networking. Denominational gatherings of Members in Discernment can be hosted by Associations, Conferences, and the National Setting.
- **National Setting.** The National Setting of the United Church of Christ provides guidance to Committees on Ministry, Associations, and Conferences in order to support Member in Discernment processes and to ensure the development of faithful and effective ministers.

¹³ See Section 3 for sample educational plans that follow multiple paths of theological formation and professional development.

Checklist – Materials for Member in Discernment Status for Ordination or Licensing

Note: (1) Additional materials may be requested based on your experience and circumstances

(2) Materials submitted by others, such as letters of reference, are for the use of the Committee on Ministry only and are considered confidential.

Submit to the Local Church Discernment Committee

- Application
- Essay describing your spiritual journey and call (see application)
- Resume outlining work experience and education
- If desired, portfolio including materials showing how you demonstrate the “Marks of Ministry”
- Transcripts for undergraduate and graduate education
- Signed statement of consent

Submit to the Committee on Ministry for the initial interview

- All of the above, and the following:
- Letter from the Local Church Discernment Committee with their recommendation
- Report from the LCDC outlining their process
- Three reference letters: your pastor, a church leader from your home congregation (such as the moderator), one person of your choosing

Submit to the Committee on Ministry before the final vote

- Psychological assessment
- Criminal background check
- Any additional materials requested by the Committee on Ministry following your interview with them

Member in Discernment Process

I. Individual Discernment of ‘call’ to Ordained Ministry in the United Church of Christ



II. Explore sense of ‘call’ with Local Church Pastor



III. Explore sense of ‘call’ and MID process with Associate Conference Minister



IV. Submit to Local Church Discernment Committee (LCDC):

- Application
- Essay describing your spiritual journey and sense of ‘call’
- Résumé outlining work experience and education
- Transcripts for undergraduate and graduate education
- Signed statement of consent



V. Explore sense of ‘call’ with LCDC



VI. Submit to the Division on Church and Ministry (DCM) for the Initial Interview:

- All of the above
- Letter from the LCDC with their recommendation
- Report from the LCDC outlining their process
- Three reference letters: your pastor, a church leader from your home congregation such as the moderator/council president, and one person of your choosing



VII. Initial Interview with the CoM



VIII. Submit to the CoM before vote on Member in Discernment (MID) Status:

- Psychological assessment
- Criminal background check

- Any additional materials requested by the CoM following the interview
- Vote to become a Member in Discernment



IX. CoM vote on MID Standing

- If affirmed, a MID advisor will be assigned
- CoM directs the Member in Discernment on next steps



X. Assessment with WI Conference UMAT Team

- Assess gifts for ministry
- Develop Learning Covenant Addressing “The Marks”
- CoM signs off on Learning Covenant



XI. While Completing the Learning Covenant, MIDs will have:

- Regular follow-up with LCDC
- Annual Update letter from LCDC to DCM prior to annual MID review
- Annual MID Review with DCM (either the whole CoM or MID subcommittee)
- Annual MID Retreat
- Periodic (no less than two times per year) MID Consultation with advisor while completing the Learning Covenant



XII. Upon Completion of the Learning Covenant, submit to the CoM:

- Portfolio Demonstrating Competency with “The Marks”
- Ordination Paper
- Approves Member in Discernment for Ecclesiastical Council



XIII. Ecclesiastical Council



XIV. CoM Approval for Ordination Pending Call

ORDINATION PAPER GUIDELINES

Committees on Ministry within the Wisconsin Conference affirm and accept many forms of ordination “papers” (e.g., written documents, original art work, dance or musical composition). Regardless of the form of expression, the ordination “paper” should include the following, incorporating reference to the eight “Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers” where relevant.

- An expression of your spiritual journey and sense of call
- Understanding of the history, theological roots, polity and practice of the UCC and how UCC ordination connects with your sense of call
- A statement about your theology/practice of ministry, how you understand the role of minister
- Theological reflection (e.g., how do you understand God/Christ/Spirit, sacramental theology, sin and salvation, etc)
- How you understand and approach the Bible and biblical material
- And (depending on your particular sense of call) – other pieces that may be relevant like: theology and practice of worship, community outreach/justice, youth ministry, pastoral care, etc.

You will be asked to present your “paper,” and be prepared to respond to questions before your Association’s Committee on Ministry and, when approved, an Ecclesiastical Council.

Unified Member in Discernment Assessment Team - Process

Granted MID Status by local DCM/COM (including Psych eval and background check)

1. Send the following materials to Conference Office staff
 1. UMAT intake form
 1. Looking at marks what 5 do you think are your strongest?
 2. Looking at the marks what 5 do you think you need the most growth in?
 3. 1-3 sentences for each.
 - b. Copy of MID application (including essays)

UMAT will contact MID to schedule first **in person (non covid time)** meeting

- . Advisor attends meeting
 1. Goals for that initial meeting:
 2. Get to know MID
 3. Introduction to the Matrix
 4. Practice in self assessment
 5. Develop process of documenting competency
 6. Schedule Learning Covenant meeting

Complete and submit initial Matrix within 2 months of first meeting

Second meeting 3 months after first (online)

- . Advisor attends
- a. Review their Matrix
- b. Begin to develop learning covenant draft

Work with advisor to complete learning covenant

Send final Learning Covenant to UMAT

- . If approved: will send to to COM for approval
- a. If edits needed: notes will be sent back for revision

Once Learning Covenant is approved:

- . Meet with UMAT annually to assess progress (these can happen in person or online)
- a. Meet regularly with Advisor
- b. UMAT available for consultation

Once the MID believes they have completed their Learning Covenant

- . Request final meeting with UMAT
 1. Review and sign off on Learning Covenant
 2. Reflect on growth
 3. UMAT will submit final Learning Covenant approval to COM

DCM/COM takes up question of ordination

Throughout process:

1. Continue to meet regularly with:
 1. COM (annually)
 2. Advisor (as needed to work through learning plan)
 3. Mentor (regularly to reflect theologically and practically on ministry)

MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT PORTFOLIO

(Association)

(Conference)

OVERVIEW

As a Member in Discernment (MID), you will be creating a Marks Portfolio. The Marks Portfolio is intended as a medium for MIDs to both integrate and demonstrate their personal, professional, and spiritual formation and preparation for ministry. Using the United Church of Christ's *Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers*¹ as a foundation, the Marks Portfolio should be curated and arranged to demonstrate competencies and experiences in each of the eight main categories.

Working alongside and in consultation with your MID Advisor, your portfolio should be assembled, edited, and amended throughout the duration of your discernment process. Think of it as a living document that should grow, change, and develop over the course of your discernment and formation process. For instance, you may find more clarity in your sense of call; and, therefore, materials in section one may need revision, or you may find that a sermon added in an early draft of the portfolio may later need to be replaced by a sermon that better reflects your preaching style or theology.

Each year, a working draft of your portfolio must be submitted to the Committee on Ministry (COM) one month prior to your annual review. Because the portfolio is a work in progress, you do not need to have the portfolio completed for your annual review.

At your first annual review, sections one and two should have drafted responses as well as at least two categories of the Marks in section three. Each subsequent annual review, your portfolio should reflect edits to sections one and two and further development of section three. Throughout your discernment process, at your annual review the COM will ask you to discuss and reflect upon the additions and changes you have made to your portfolio.

At the conclusion of your MID process, you will submit a completed portfolio. A portfolio that demonstrates integration of the Marks is a key part of the final assessment of a candidate's readiness for ministerial authorization.

¹ The Marks are available online at www.ucc.org/ministers_marks and in Section 1:1 of the Manual on Ministry.

CONTENTS OF YOUR PORTFOLIO

Marks Portfolios are comprised of four main sections. While there is room for creativity in the creation of the portfolio, be sure to center your work on the *Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers*.

Section 1: Spiritual Autobiography

Introduce yourself by way of sharing your spiritual autobiography². As a part of your reflection, be sure to interact with themes from the Marks. Conclude this section by writing your own personal Statement of Faith. You may structure your Statement of Faith in any variety of ways but may find it helpful to look at the structures and themes of the various versions of the UCC's Statement of Faith.

This section should be no more than three written pages.

Section 2: Understanding Your Call to Authorized Ministry

Clarity in articulating a call to ordained ministry by God and the Church and continuing discernment of one's call in community are fundamental practices. Please respond succinctly to the following:

- Describe your theological understanding of ordination and the role of the Church in discerning call.
- Describe in particular your call to the vocation of ministry and the setting to which you currently feel most called.
- Expanding on the understanding of ordination, why are you interested in ordination and ministry specifically in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ?

This section should be no more than two written pages.

Section 3: Reflection and Demonstration of the Marks

This section of the portfolio is for you to engage in reflection and demonstration of competencies in each of the eight categories of the *Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers*. The eight categories are as follow: Exhibiting a Spiritual Foundation and Ongoing Spiritual Practice; Nurturing UCC Identity; Building Transformational Leadership Skills; Engaging Sacred Stories and Traditions; Caring for All Creation; Participating in Theological Praxis; Working Together for Justice and Mercy; and Strengthening Inter- and Intra- Personal Assets.

For each of these eight categories, write a reflection that weaves experiences, education, and preparation that demonstrate your skills and speak to how you are integrating various particular Marks of that category into your ministry. You are expected to also discuss where your strengths and experiences are, and where you need continued development or practice.

² A spiritual autobiography is a story of how significant events, relationships, and cultural influences have contributed to the author's spiritual formation, relationship with God, interpretation of scriptures, and understanding of how to live as a disciple of Jesus.

As you write your reflection, discuss one specific example of your ministry in greater detail. Describe the process, tools, and resources you utilized; what informed you theologically, socially, and culturally; what you learned as a result; and what you would do or try differently next time.

Each of the eight reflections are a practice in the necessary skill for ministers of clear, concise, effective communication and should be no more than two written pages.

In addition to the reflection, include one ministerial example of your work that you reference in the narrative. Ministerial examples might include things like a sermon, lesson plans for a UCC polity class you taught, photos and descriptions from an art installation you created for Lent, meditations written, worship outlines and notes used for terrarium making to tell the story of creation in worship, etc. You are invited and encouraged to provide a diversity of ministry examples to reflect the Marks. In cases where your ministry example includes video, audio or large files, upload them to a server such as Dropbox, Google Drive, or Vimeo (all have free account versions) and then provide a hyperlink in the text of your portfolio. Be sure to password protect any sensitive information and provide details on how to access the file in your portfolio.

If you have Marks Portfolio related questions, contact the UCC Conference Office to be connected with the Associate Conference Minister who works with Members in Discernment.

An essential understanding as you approach the task of creating this section is to think of it as journey of integration, rather than a task of reiteration. Consider the Marks in each category holistically. Remember that no one is expected to reflect expertise in all of these Marks to the same degree. We each have particular gifts, interests, and strengths as well as areas for further growth and development. It is also the case that no minister ever achieves final mastery of these Marks. So as a resource for your ministry, the Marks are intended serve as a tool for assessment of readiness for authorization and also as a guide for lifelong learning and ongoing professional development and continuing education.

Section 4: Additional Documents

This section should be utilized to reflect five specific documents:

- Final Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) evaluation by your supervisor
- Final Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) self-evaluation
- Final educational and theological education transcripts or reports
- Certificate of Attendance at Pastoral Boundaries Training class within the past three years.
- Documentation of completion of an approved UCC History, Polity and Theology course

You may also include any other vital documents in this section needed to demonstrate the Marks that have not been previously included in your ministry examples. Accompany those documents with brief reflection on how these documents demonstrate integration of specific Marks.

SUBMITTING DRAFTS OR THE COMPLETED PORTFOLIO AS ONE FILE

Each draft of your portfolio should be reviewed and assessed by your MID Advisor prior to submission. This is an opportunity for constructive feedback, deeper discussion, and further discernment. Additional reviewers, such as your pastor and Local Church Discernment Committee, are recommended before your final portfolio is submitted.

Your portfolio, whether the draft due prior to your annual review or the completed version, should be emailed to the conference office as one PDF file. If the file is too large to be sent over email, upload it to a service like Google Drive or Dropbox, and send the link or URL for the file to the Conference office for her to provide for the committee. Technology is ever evolving so each of these services has extensive support and how-to guides located on their website.

Please be sure that on the first page of the PDF file, you include your name as well as the portfolio's submission date, and indicate whether it is a draft (in which case please also indicate whether it is your first, second, third, etc. submitted draft) or a completed portfolio.

BEST PRACTICES FOR LOCAL CHURCH DISCERNMENT COMMITTEES (LCDC)

Local Church Discernment Committee (LCDC)

The LCDC is an intentional small group of local church members who gather to listen to, encourage, and provide critical feedback for the Member in Discernment (MID) before that individual enters the MID process and continuing throughout the process. The discernment questions are: "to what ministry is this person being called by God?" and then "is this person being called to a ministry of the church requiring authorization?" The Local Church Discernment Committee may be a standing committee (elders, deacons, council, etc.) or an ad hoc group formed specifically for this purpose.

Organization of Local Church Discernment Committee:

Size: a group of 3-5 people

Membership qualifications:

Ideal members will exhibit the following characteristics and skills:

- Christian character that is respected by the person and the congregation
- Maturity
- Ability to listen for God's still small voice
- Practice of Prayer
- Patience and flexibility
- Ability to maintain confidentiality
- Understanding of the priesthood of all believers
- Ability to make difficult decisions
- Familiarity with the local church (at least two members)
- Experience with the wider church (Association, Conference, National setting)
- At least one person who is not already well-acquainted with the person

Selection

Ideally, this group is selected by the person seeking discernment about authorized ministry, with input from the pastor, other trusted friends, and the governing board of the local church.

Ordinarily the **local church pastor** participates as able/needed.

The **local church** may have a standing committee available for this work, as well.

Accountability and Relationships

The LCDC may take notes of meetings to keep track of progress and recommendations.

The LCDC is accountable to governing body for reporting and recommendations.

The LCDC does its work in covenantal relationship with the person seeking authorization and the local church pastor.

Role of Local Church Pastor

The local church pastor is an important person in the process of someone discerning a call to ordained ministry. This person may be an advisor, mentor, sounding board, and/or an active member of the LCDC. The pastor is not the sole person discerning qualifications and suitability for authorization, however. The consensus of the LCDC is important for adequate discernment.

Information Gathering

For the LCDC to do its best work and make appropriate decisions, specific information is needed from the person seeking authorization:

- Statement of the individual's spiritual journey
- Statement of the individual's understanding of their call in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ at this time
- Résumé or CV
- Beginning self-assessment of The Marks
- Documentation of educational and professional training (e.g. transcripts)
- Three letters of reference in support of the person entering the process for authorization in ministry

Discernment

[*A Discernment Travelogue*](#) is an important resource for intentional discernment work with the person seeking authorization. Study the Travelogue and work through it together. Individual members of the LCDC may want to increase their own intentional work by employing spiritual practices for discernment. Use as a guide when making a decision.

Set aside plenty of time to pray, digest information gathered, listen, pray, listen and pray.

The LCDC will learn to ask questions for clarification and depth of understanding.

The goal of discernment is to help the person understand more clearly "to what ministry is this person being called by God?" and then, "is this person being called to a ministry of the church requiring authorization?"

Sample Agenda

Check-in and Prayer

Discernment Issue

- What issue would be most helpful to talk about today?
- Listen, evoke more information and clarify what is being heard.
- Brainstorm ideas together and pray.
 - ▼ What action steps could be taken?
 - ▼ What clarity is surfacing toward the broader discernment questions?

Close with prayer

Decision-Making

Sample Agenda

When the person or the LCDC discerns a readiness to move ahead, a meeting of decision-making will be scheduled. An agenda for this meeting may follow a format such as this:

Gathering

Prayer for discernment

Focus questions: "to what ministry is this person being called by God?" and "is this person being called to a ministry of the church requiring authorization in the UCC?"

Presentation by the person indicating evidence that this person believes that they are being called by God and the church to seek authorization as an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ – written paper, drawings, video, or any other medium may be used.

Questions for discernment The LCDC asks questions related to their own discernment of the focus questions

Discussion

- The person is asked to step out of the room and may be invited to pray.
- The LCDC discusses their sense of readiness for the person to enter the formal process of seeking authorization as an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ.
- Prayer for God's guidance in this discernment
- The LCDC comes to a consensus or votes on the question

***Possible outcomes:**

- ▼ "yes, we think so" or "we believe this may be the case" and so we recommend going forward to the next steps in discernment of such a call.
- ▼ "not yet" ... there are some questions still unanswered.
- ▼ "no" ... the call is to lay ministry ... OR the call seems to come from some place other than God and/or the church ... OR this person doesn't seem to have the gifts and graces for ordination in the UCC.

The **decision is communicated** to the person with humility and grace.

Close with prayer

Care must be exercised in communicating the discernment of the LCDC to the person. It is important to express as clearly as possible the reasons for the decision. This will give the person the feedback that they need to discern next steps for answering God's call on their life.

- If the LCDC decides, "yes", the LCDC may find an appropriate way to celebrate this decision and will continue its work with the individual (see below).

- If the LCDC decides, “not yet”, then more discernment time may be beneficial for all involved. Any recommendations may be implemented. When conditions are met or the LCDC feels that sufficient discernment leads to continuing the path toward authorized ministry, another decision meeting with the LCDC is scheduled.
- If the LCDC decides, “no”, the LCDC will continue to meet with the person to discern what God’s call to ministry might look like as a lay person in the church. Celebrating lay ministry is always appropriate.

Meeting with Governing Body

Once it has made its decision, the LCDC makes a recommendation to the local church governing body regarding the person’s desire to answer a call to ordained ministry. The LCDC makes a formal request for a meeting with the governing body and the person. At this meeting, the LCDC shares its work, impressions, and recommendation with the governing body. The governing body will make an official decision regarding recommending the person to the Association Committee on Ministry.

- If governing body decides, “yes”, the LCDC may find an appropriate way to celebrate this decision and will continue its work with the individual (see below). The LCDC may prepare the person for meeting with the Committee on Ministry by reviewing the requirements of the Committee on Ministry for MID status (refer to pages 25-26 of the 2018 Manual on Ministry.)
- If the governing body decided, “not yet”, then more discernment time may be beneficial for all involved. Any recommendations may be implemented. When conditions are met or the LCDC feels that sufficient discernment leads to continuing the path toward authorized ministry, another meeting with the governing body is scheduled.
- If the governing body decides, “no”, the LCDC will continue to meet with the person to discern what God’s call to ministry might look like as a lay person in the church. Celebrating lay ministry is always appropriate.

Meeting With Association Committee on Ministry

The LCDC or local church pastor contact the chair of the Committee on Ministry to ask for a place on the agenda for recommending a person for MID status. A meeting time is scheduled and communicated to the person seeking MID, LCDC, and local church pastor. The LCDC may send a member to meetings with the Association Committee on Ministry. The local church pastor and a member of the governing body may also attend.

The purpose of this time is to be supportive of the person seeking authorization and to share relevant information about the person to the COM. Sharing strengths and areas of growth as discerned by the LCDC will help the COM have a clearer picture of this person’s call to ministry. The Association COM will decide about taking the person into the Member in Discernment (MID) process.

- If the Association COM decides, “yes”, the LCDC may find an appropriate way to celebrate this decision and will continue its work with the individual (see below).
- If the Association COM decides, “not yet”, then more discernment time may be beneficial for all involved. Any recommendations may be implemented. When conditions are met or the LCDC feels that sufficient discernment leads to continuing the path toward authorized ministry, another meeting with the COM is scheduled.
- If the Association COM decides, “no”, the LCDC will continue to meet with the person to discern what God’s call to ministry might look like as a lay person in the church. Celebrating lay ministry is always appropriate.

Ongoing Responsibilities of Local Church Discernment Committee

Purpose of Meetings

- On-going support
- Discernment group for Member in Discernment’s questions or wonderings; Continue to use *A Discernment Travelogue*
- Prayer
- Listening and reflecting
- Identifying strengths and growth areas using the *Marks of Faithful and Effective Ministers*

Frequency of Meetings

- At least once a month (in person or by phone or teleconferencing)
- At least quarterly in person
- As needed by MID

End of Responsibilities

Regular times for discernment and prayer should continue until the person has completed their Ecclesiastical Council and is “authorized for ministry pending a call” or until ordination occurs.

The MID may wish to invite a member of the LCDC to represent the group at the ordination service or other celebration of authorization.

The local church may wish to acknowledge the work of the LCDC with words of thanks in worship or other ministry setting and formally announce that this particular work is completed.

Member in Discernment Advisor Responsibilities

- Receive orientation from the Association regarding the advisor's role and seek appropriate training (spiritual direction, coaching, listening skills, etc.)
- Act on behalf of the Association Committee on Ministry (CoM) with the Committee's full knowledge of the MID's progress
- Initiate and maintain regular contact with the MID via email, telephone, written communication, face-to-face without overwhelming the MID
- Offer on-going advice and direction regarding the authorization process
- Provide guidance, in consultation with the CoM, concerning coursework and other educational opportunities, help the MID select appropriate opportunities to fulfill the learning covenant agreed upon with the Unified
- Help the MID understand the UCC procedures for authorization
- Encourage the MID to participate in the life of their local congregation
- Encourage the MID to be active in the Association and Conference
- Encourage the MID to explore sources of financial support for the preparation process
- Help the MID prepare the necessary documentation and reports required by the Association and larger church
- Be present with the MID at meeting of the CoM in order to review progress on their learning covenant
- Be present at ecclesiastical council and ordination service

Resources

WI Conference MID Manual on Ministry

UCC Manual on Ministry

Associate Conference Minister

Association Committee on Ministry

Member in Discernment Mentor Responsibilities

- Receive direction from Association regarding role
- Maintain regular contact with MID via emails, telephone calls, written communications and face-to-face meetings
- Offer on-going counsel and advice
- Provide guidance and encouragement in consultation with COM concerning the MID's formation plan
- Engage in conversations about theology and ministry that help fulfill the Marks of Ministry
- Help the MID understand the UCC procedures for authorization
- Encourage the MID to participate in the life of his/her local congregation

Helpful Resources for Mentors

UCC Manual on Ministry

Marks of Ministry (can be found in the Manual on Ministry)

WI Conference MID Manual

Member in Discernment
Communities of Practice (COPs)

The Wisconsin Conference of the United Church is committed to facilitating the sharing of wisdom and experiences between colleagues. In Wisconsin one of the primary ways that we invite pastors and persons moving into ministry to participate in this sharing is through participation in Communities of Practice (COPs). COPs are professional development support groups. They are led by trained facilitator. They meet both in person and/or online. The Wisconsin Conference has created Member in Discernment (MIDs) COPs and we encourage all MIDs to participate in one.

COPs are reorganized each summer to begin again each fall. Contact the Conference office to learn how to sign up.



The Ministerial Excellence, Support & Authorization Team (MESA)

Within the United Church of Christ, the *Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization team (MESA)* supports the critical implementation of denominational polity for authorized ministry, especially equipping the Committees on Ministry that determine authorization of those persons who hold or are pursuing ministerial standing.

In other words (to make metaphorical use of “mesa”), the Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization team serves as host at the table that is ministry in the United Church of Christ. Gathered at the table are authorized ministers, calling bodies, Associations, Conferences, and Committees on Ministry, to which the MESA team offers support and resources for faithful and effective ministry. Additionally, MESA’s role as host includes the encouragement of ongoing conversation regarding issues of ministry in the 21st century.

The MESA team works in a collaborative model to meet the needs of those at the table. To view the duties of the MESA staff please go to the ucc.org website. The MESA team leader’s contact information is listed below.

Rev. Elizabeth Dilley, Minister & Team Leader of the Ministerial Excellence, Support & Authorization Ministry Team

1300 East 9th Street, Suite 1100, Cleveland OH 44115
216-736-3841, dilleye@ucc.org

Member in Discernment Psychological Evaluation Policy and Process

Midwest Ministry Development Center
1840 Westchester Blvd
Suite 204
Westchester, IL 60154
708-343-6268
mmds69chgo@gmail.com

1. The Associate Conference Minister sends an email to the Center confirming that we have requested a psychological evaluation, and confirming which type of evaluation is requested.
2. After the ACM sends the confirmation email, the candidate contacts the Center directly to schedule the evaluation. The Center will request a deposit at the time of scheduling.
3. The Center can share with you contact information for nearby hotels who offer a special rate to their clients if you need to reserve lodging while you are there.
4. The Committee's policy is for the individual, the home church, and the Committee each to pay one third of the cost of the evaluation plus expenses (lodging, meals, mileage).
5. Please confirm the fee with the Center. Fees change over time and we do not keep an up to date list of Center fees.
6. You will receive a copy of the report after it's written to confirm accuracy and if necessary request corrections.
7. The final page of the report is the release of information. Please release the report to Committee on Ministry. The report should be sent to the Wisconsin Conference UCC, 4459 Gray Rd., DeForest, WI 53532 ATTN: Northwest Association ACM.
8. The Center will expect payment from the individual and the home church before the report can be released to the Division. The Center will invoice the Division for its share of the fee.
9. Please submit an expense request with receipts for travel expenses.

Member in Discernment Psychological Evaluation Policy and Process

Leader Wise
516 Mission House Lane
New Brighton, MN 55112
651-636-5120
admin@leaderwise.org

1. The Associate Conference Minister sends an email to the Center confirming that we have requested a psychological evaluation, and confirming which type of evaluation is requested. (Most MIDs and Licensed Ministers are level 1 evaluations)
2. After the ACM sends the confirmation email, the candidate contacts the Center directly to schedule the evaluation. The Center will request a deposit at the time of scheduling.
3. The Committee's policy is for the individual, the home church, and the Committee each to pay one third of the cost of the evaluation plus expenses (lodging, meals, mileage).
4. Please confirm the fee with the Center. Fees change over time and we do not keep an up to date list of Center fees.
5. You will receive a copy of the report after it's written to confirm accuracy and if necessary request corrections.
6. The final page of the report is the release of information. Please release the report to Committee. The report should be sent to the Wisconsin Conference UCC, 4459 Gray Rd., DeForest, WI 53532
7. The Center will expect payment from the individual and the home church before the report can be released to the Committee. The Center will invoice the Committee for its share of the fee.
8. Please submit an expense request with receipts for travel expenses.

Criminal Background Check Information

Here is the way you apply for a criminal background check in the United Church of Christ with the results sent to the Wisconsin Conference.

UCC pastors and MIDs are involved in the criminal background check when they work on their ministerial profiles and are working on their MID status. The results of their background checks are attached to their profiles when they come to the Conference office before they are forwarded to local church search committees.

In the case of MID applications, the results of the criminal background check will come to the Wisconsin Conference office.

You will be asked to provide the addresses, cities, counties and states of both your personal residences and the churches you have served (or your secular employment) during the past seven years. You may want to have that information in front of you before you begin the application process on your computer.

Go to: <https://www.oxforddoc.com/ucc/welcome-UCC.asp>

- Click into the Ministerial Applicants, Staff/Volunteer Applicants section, where it says “click here to complete your online Authorization Form”
- On this screen type in the client number 1956. Select Position Code “1” – which is for pastors.
- On the next screen click “yes” if it identifies the Wisconsin Conference UCC.
- Then follow the instructions and complete the rest of the screens.
- You will need a VISA or Master Card to pay the fee.

The fee is \$175 (as of April 2022)

Next Generation Leadership Initiative (NGLI)

Pension Boards

United Church of Christ

Q: What is the mission of NGLI?

A: Next Generation Leadership Initiative (NGLI) is a leadership development initiative that equips, energizes, and empowers younger United Church of Christ local church pastors to build vibrant congregations that change lives and further God's mission in the world.

NGLI seeks to honor and challenge younger clergy who demonstrate significant potential, who have accepted the high calling to parish ministry, who view parish ministry as a career path, and are willing to make a long-term commitment to service in congregational settings of the United Church of Christ.

Q: What is a transformational leader?

A: A transformational leader is one who manifests the capacity to:

- Live a faith that shows love of God, trust in Jesus, and openness to the Holy Spirit
- Practice self-reflection
- Develop an entrepreneurial spirit
- Exhibit a commitment to continuous improvement in their personal and professional life, welcoming feedback and integrating awareness and insights
- Participate in a network of mutual care and learning with colleagues
- Engage with the congregation to develop a vision/mission/core values statement that will shape the congregation's life and vocation
- Create an environment in which effective engagement with peoples of diverse ethnicities and cultures is encouraged
- Recognize dysfunction and practice self-differentiated leadership in order to avoid becoming enmeshed in dysfunctional issues and behavior
- Apply adaptive leadership methods-- embrace experimentation, manage anxieties, learn from failures, and demonstrate resilience in order to move into the future
- Pay attention to their holistic health and family relationships not only for themselves but also within the congregation they are called to serve
- Live out an appreciation of the United Church of Christ's historical, cultural and missional identity

Q: What would make me a good candidate for NGLI?

A: The ideal candidate will:

- Be 35 years of age or under at the point of admission to NGLI
 - Be authorized for ministry in and on behalf of the UCC by an Association/Conference
 - Have served a total of five years or less as an authorized minister in a parish
 - Hold a called position of 20 hours per week or more in a parish setting
 - Be committed to long-term ministry in local churches of the United Church of Christ
- Applicants will be considered without regard to race, sex, national origin, disability, marital status or sexual orientation.*

Q: Can you say more about what participants gain by being involved in NGLI?

A: NGLI consists of:

- An initial, four-year core educational program that engages participants in developing transformational leadership skills and gifts:
 - Year One: **Self-Differentiated Leadership and Bowen Family Systems Theory**, with an emphasis on practicing non-anxious leadership and applying systems theory in a congregational context
 - Year Two: **Inner Work: Adaptive Leadership and Reflective Practice** with an emphasis on the evolving context of pastoral leadership and its implications for leadership formation and one's inner life
 - Year Three: **Building Great Teams: From Story to Practice** with an emphasis on team formation and effectiveness in varied contexts.
 - Year Four: **Leading Congregations to Faithful and Fruitful Ministry**, with an emphasis on exploring trends that point toward a new paradigm of evangelism and spiritual formation and sharing practical strategies for more effective outreach and growth
- An additional two years (if accepted in 2018 or after) or six years (if accepted prior to 2018) of advanced continuing education
- NGLI will begin with an Orientation and end with a Capstone event. There will also be participation in two United Church of Christ General Synods to build relationships within the wider church, two on-site learning visits (field trips) to foster experimentation and creativity, and occasional webinars to reflect and grow in specialized topics
- Yearly assessments to determine strengths and to develop plans for growth as a transformational leader
 - If accepted in 2018 or after, a \$6,000 contribution to the participant's Annuity Plan account occurs during the first year to help seed the participant's pension account. The contribution should have the value of approximately \$46,000 at the end of a 35-year career. (These figures are calculated based on an assumed growth rate of 6% per year over a 35-year period.) It will be 50% vested at the end of the fourth year and fully vested at the end of the sixth year. If accepted prior to 2018, a \$10,000 contribution to the participant's Annuity Plan account occurred during the first year to help seed the participant's pension account. The contribution should have a value of approximately \$75,000 at the end of a 35-year career. (These figures are calculated based on an assumed growth rate of 6% per year over a 35-year period.) It will be 50% vested at the end of the fourth year and fully vested at the end of the tenth year.

Q: How can I learn more?

A: Explore the website at ngli2030.pbucc.org, or **contact:**

The Rev. L. Krista Betz, Director, Leadership Initiatives
The Pension Boards—United Church of Christ, Inc.

ngli2030@pbucc.org
1.800.642.6543, ext. 2716

Three Learning Tracks for Authorized Ministry Preparation

FAITH FOUNDATIONS

Winter Cohort

12 weeks

Starts in Jan.

Topics:

*Reading the New
Testament & Intro. to
Christian History*

Fall Cohort

12 weeks

Starts in Sept.

Topics

*Hebrew Bible/Old
Testament & Theology*

LEADERSHIP SKILLS

4-6 week
learning intensives
on
Leadership Topics
like

Exploring the
Enneagram

Conflict Transformation

Leading
Faith-Filled Meetings
and more

MINISTRY STUDIES

Winter Cohort

12 weeks

Starts in Feb

Topics

*Faith Formation &
Pastoral Care*

Fall Cohort

12 weeks

Starts in Sept.

Topics

Worship & Preaching

**Questions?
Want More
Information?**

APPLICATIONS/FORMS

SAMPLE MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT APPLICATION

This form should be submitted to the Committee on Ministry after a local congregation has recommended that an individual be accepted as a Member in Discernment by the appropriate UCC Association.

Full legal name _____

Preferred name _____ Date of birth _____

Full mailing address _____

Email address(es) _____

Phone number(s) _____

Home _____ Mobile _____ Other _____

Church of membership

Name _____

Address _____

Association _____

How long have you been a member? _____

List of activities in which you are engaged (you may attach a separate sheet). _____

Name of current pastor _____

Pastor's phone number(s) _____

Pastor's email address _____

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

Please describe your engagement in the wider church (Association, Conference, General Synod, Global Ministries, Justice and Witness Ministries, etc.).

Have you ever applied for Member in Discernment status with this or any other UCC Association?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, which Association? _____

When? _____

Outcome? _____

Education and Training

Include names and addresses of all institutions attended, years attended, date of graduation or anticipated date of graduation. (You may attach a separate sheet or resume with this information.) Note: If you are accepted as a MID with this Association, you will be asked to submit official transcripts from each of the schools or programs attended.

	Name and Location	Dates Attended	Major/Minor or Areas of Study	Graduation or Completion
High School				
College				
Vocational or Technical School				
Graduate School (other than seminary)				

Seminary or Theological School	
Regional Theological Education Program	
Continuing Education	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Please write three brief essays (one page each) to share with the Committee on Ministry, referring to the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the UCC:

- Describe your current sense of being called to ordained ministry by God and the Church and your understanding of continuing discernment of God's call in community.
- Describe your most significant experiences of formation for ministry thus far.
- Describe your areas of growth at this point in your process of preparation and formation for ordained ministry in the UCC. What kinds of learning experiences will most help you engage in this growth?

By signing this application, I affirm that the information provided 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 _____

**Student Aid Program for Members in Discernment
Wisconsin Conference United Church of Christ
Application for Grant**

This application is to be filled out in triplicate. Send all three copies to the Division on Church and Ministry of your Association. *Up to \$1,000 will be granted for each academic year. Talk to your Associate Conference Minister if you have additional financial need.*

Date of application: _____ Academic year for which application is made: _____

Name: _____

Address at home: _____
City State Zip

Address at seminary: _____
City State Zip

Phone number: _____ E-mail: _____

Home Church: _____ Pastor: _____

In Care Status

Date received In Care: _____ Association: _____

Seminary: _____

Year plan to graduate

As of the fall semester, you will be a: _____ junior _____ middler _____ senior

List all other grants/scholarships you are receiving, including previous grants from the Wisconsin Conference. Include the amounts for each year and the total. Use the other side of this form, if needed.

Amount for which you are applying: _____

Recommendation of the Division on Church and Ministry

Amount of grant recommended: _____

Reasons for recommendation: _____

Signature of chairperson _____ Date _____

Grant: approved / denied

Amount: _____ Date: _____

FORWARD IN FAITH
Wisconsin Conference, United Church of Christ

Grants in the Encouragement and Support of Pastoral Ministry
In Small Churches, Urban, Rural, and Small Town Settings

APPLICATION

This grant is for the purpose of assisting pastors who qualify by guidelines established by the Commission on Church and Ministry, to repay seminary loans. Grants are based on need and may be renewed annually for up to five years. The amount of the grant will depend on need and available funds. All applications will be received and reviewed by the regional Associate Conference Minister of the association where the pastor has standing and is serving. Upon the recommendation of the Associate Conference Minister, the grant will be approved by the Commission on Church and Ministry and presented to the Board of Directors (confidentially) for the release of funds.

I. Return this form and your statement to Mary Gross at the WI Conference.

1. What is your annual salary and housing (30% if parsonage)? _____
2. What is the amount of any additional income you personally have?
(include dividend, interest, other investment income, additional job, etc.) _____
3. If you have a spouse or partner, what is your total household income? _____
4. Please list the number of dependents in your household
(not including yourself) _____
5. Estimate any extraordinary financial responsibilities or obligations not
including educational loans _____
6. What is the total amount of your seminary debt and/or expense
Indebtedness accrued in your preparation for ministry? _____
7. What is your total monthly payment for seminary debt? _____

I certify that the above information is true, to the best of my knowledge.

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

*Please note: Only the regional Associate Conference Minister will review your financial data.

II. In addition: Please provide a one page statement describing your sense of call to your current ministry, with special emphasis on your gifts for this ministry and your vision for the smaller membership congregation or rural or urban ministry setting. (Use the back or an additional sheet.)

(Associate Conference Minister Use only)

Level of need: _____

Associate Conference Minister Signature: _____

Recommended level of grant: _____

Date: _____

Local Church Form

Date: _____

Pastor's Name: _____

Local Church Name: _____

Candidate's 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 or 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: _____

Candidate's 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 or 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: _____

Member in Discernment Advisor's Report Form

Date: _____

Advisor's Name: _____

Advisor's Phone Number: _____

Advisor's Address: _____

Advisor's Local Church or Place of Ministry: _____

Member in Discernment's Name: _____

1. What has been your involvement with the Member in Discernment named above?
2. What strengths does this person bring to ministry?
3. What areas of growth have you witnessed during your relationship?
4. What suggestions do you have for this candidate's continued preparation for effective ministry?
5. Do you have any 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: _____

**Wisconsin Conference United Church of Christ
United MID Assessment Team
Intake Form**

Once you have been approved as an MID by your association's COM/DCM please submit a full copy of your MID Application (including essays) and the following to Sue Taylor at the conference office. Once all materials are received a member of UMAT will reach out to schedule your first UMAT meeting. Your COM/DCM advisor will attend this meeting with you.

Name: _____ Pronouns: _____

Email: _____ Phone Number: _____

Association: _____ Date of MID Approval: _____

COM/DCM Advisor: _____

Advisor Email: _____ Advisor Phone: _____

Briefly share what formal ministry education and experience you have completed or are currently enrolled in. (This could be seminary, Lay Academy/Damascus Project courses, or other relevant classes/experiences.). If you have done coursework, please provide the relevant documentation.

Please take some time to read over the [UCC's Marks of Faithful and Effective Ministers](#). It is important to understand that no one minister ever fulfills all of these marks to perfection. However, the lifelong learning of ministry calls on Authorized Ministers to continue engaging and growing in each of these categories. This process is meant to familiarize yourself with the Marks and begin thinking about how a learning plan might aid in your preparation to serve the United Church of Christ as an authorized minister.

Which 5 marks do you believe you demonstrate the strongest capabilities and why? Please offer a short (1-3 sentences) reflection on each:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Which 5 marks do you recognize the most room for growth and why? Please offer a short (1-3 sentences) reflection on each:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

LEVEL ONE: ENHANCEMENT. (Providing Evidence of Effectiveness). FOLLOWING THE MARKS. (UCC)

A: Exhibit Spiritual Foundation	B: Nurture UCC Identity	C: Build transformational Leadership	D: Engage Sacred Stories & Traditions	E: Caring for Others	F: Theological Praxis	G: Encounter Other with Justice & Mercy	H: Strengthen Inter/Intra Personal Assets
A-1 Clearly articulate own faith stance as aligned with the UCC Statement of Faith.	B-6 Exhibit a commitment to the core values of the United Church of Christ: continuing testament, extravagant welcome, changing lives.	C-3 Speak confidently about one's faith C-4 Accurately assess own communication skills in speaking, listening, and writing.	D-1 Read Biblical texts using appropriate interpretive lenses, including those that bend toward love, compassion and justice. D-2 Discern and articulate one's own sacred story	E-2 Employ appropriate relational skills. E-2,3 Identify & use community resources for one's own personal & professional wellness.	F-1 Reflect theologically on one's own experience and articulate new insights and action that arise from reflection. F-3 Critically read theological texts & apply concepts to individual, social & global concerns.	G-1 Clearly articulate a theology of missions consistent with mutuality, community, empathy, justice and peace. G-2 Consistently practice forgiveness and reconciliation.	H-1 Demonstrate a commitment to spiritual, physical emotional and financial wellness. H-2 Interact with others in ways that affirm their sense of dignity and help others to do the same.
A-2 Nurture Spiritual Practices: Grow in spiritual maturity by adopting or deepening a personal spiritual practice		C-5 Listen Effectively to others, regardless of faith stance. C-6 Commit to lifelong learning and ongoing discernment about one's call to ministry.	D-3 Demonstrate knowledge of development of Christianity and its impact through history. D-6 Affirm 2 sacraments of Baptism & Holy Communion and distinguish between these and other rites of the church (such as funerals & weddings).	E-4 Pray with and for those in need. E-5 Participate in spiritual direction, counseling or other practices of growth healing and accountability.	F-5 Demonstrate understanding of the variety of theological perspectives in broader culture. F-5 Demonstrate appreciative knowledge of theological perspectives other than one's own.	G-3 Reflect self-critically on one's social location and areas of privilege. G-5 Reach across cultures with maturity for the sake of the Gospel	H-4 Accurately identify own implicit biases that may impact interactions with and attitudes toward others and work to overcome these biases.

Prepared by Sandra Graham, Ph.D., M.Div in Collaboration with MN/WI UCC Damascus Project Team (2018) (This is a representation of how we use the Marks within the context of the Damascus Project). Please copy only with permission.

LEVEL TWO: LEADERSHIP. (Providing evidence of effectiveness). FOLLOWING THE MARKS For Faithful/Effective Ministry (UCC)

A: Exhibit Spiritual Foundation	B: Nurture UCC Identity	C: Build transformational Leadership	D: Engage Sacred Stories & Traditions	E: Caring for Others	F: Theological Praxis	G: Encounter Other with Justice & Mercy	H: Strengthen Inter/Intra Personal Assets
A-4 Speak clearly with others about importance of faith, worship & prayer in daily living. A-4 Lead others in local church and/or community settings to embrace a consistent spiritual practice A-4,5 Effectively assist with worship, education or prayer within a local church (or equivalent)	B-1,2 Communicate a passion for the oneness of the Body of Christ. B-5 Accurately and effectively teach others in congregation about the history, vision and polity of the UCC. B-3 Hold active membership in a local church of the United Church of Christ. B-5 Speak knowledgeably about the history and basic polity of the United Church of Christ B-4 Participate in UCC meetings retreats and/or events within and beyond the local church	C-1 Commit to life-long learning and ongoing discernment about one's call to ministry. C-1,2 Use knowledge of change processes to effectively negotiate change within a community. C-4 Speak, listen & write in ways that are sensitive to others and that promote visionary insight within church and community contexts. C-6 Accurately assess own leadership strengths and challenges and seek out help from mentors as needed or required.	D-1 Explore the historical development of the Bible, including the social, economic and political contexts of which biblical literature grew. D-4 Lead Bible studies informed by scholarly methods of Biblical Interpretation D-4 Clearly affirm diverse practices in worship, proclamation and witness and appropriately use them in worship planning. D-5 Demonstrate knowledge of current best practices in faith formation and effectively implement for particular contexts.	E-1 Demonstrate healthy understanding of important life transitions. E-2 Refer constituents to mental health resources as needed and sensitively accompany them through periods of mental illness and recovery, or chronic illness with appropriate spiritual support. E-3 Engage in consistent self-reflection. E-5 Be cognizant of and practice appropriate personal boundaries when offering care or concern.	F-2 Effectively apply theological analysis to contemporary issues related to the UCC's mission and help others to do the same. F-3 Meaningfully teach others to reflect theologically. F-4 Identify and accurately interpret theological implications of social discourse, public policy and community engagement. F-5 Relate the theological and spiritual perspectives of others to one's own articulated theological stance.	G-1 Serve diligently as an educator, advocate, organizer or speaker for the sake of justice and mercy. G-2 Commit to minister in ways that are accessible to all. G-3 Engage in sacred conversations about the impact of oppression in all of its forms. G-6 Encourage others to support and participate in the wider church, including global and domestic ministry partnerships.	H-3 Lead by example and through active teaching to show others how to live responsibly in relation to self, family, church, community and the environment. H-4 Provide pastoral care to all: no exceptions. H-6 Actively listen to others with an empathetic ear.

Prepared by Sandra Graham, Ph.D., M.Div in Collaboration with MN/WI UCC Damascus Project 2018. (This is a representation of how we use the Marks within the context of the Damascus Project). Please copy only with permission.

LEVEL THREE: AUTHORIZATION (Providing evidence of effectiveness FOLLOWING THE MARKS for faithful/effective ministry. (UCC)

A: Exhibit Spiritual Foundation	B: Nurture UCC Identity	C: Build transformational Leadership	D: Engage Sacred Stories & Traditions	E: Caring for Others	F: Theological Praxis	G: Encounter Other with Justice & Mercy	H: Strengthen Inter/Intra Personal Assets
A-3 Clearly articulate one's own call to authorized ministry, using the tenants of the Christian faith.	B-3,4,5 Work consistently and in harmony with the Church and Ministry team and mentors provided. B-4 Provide evidence of ways you guide others to actively participate and engage in UCC mission and vision.	C-2 Plan, implement & evaluate ministries that meet identified church needs & partner with congregation to improve their future. C-2,4 Adeptly train team, board and committee members. C-4 Perform necessary and appropriate administrative tasks.	D-3 Demonstrate an understanding of the dynamic history of new expressions of the Church, both locally and globally. D-4 Craft and deliver cogent sermons that speak to individual and communal transformation that is grounded in sacred stories and traditions.	E-1 Enact the rites of the church with integrity and sensitivity to multiple contexts E-2 Distinguish limits of one's ability to provide pastoral care and refer to mental health resources as needed. E-5 Participate in ministerial oversight, pastoral relations and evaluations congruent with one's setting and within the UCC covenants of mutual accountability.	F-3 Assist others to appreciate theological perspectives reflected in the diverse communities that comprise the UCC. F-4 Relate own theology of ministry to the UCC's understanding of the priesthood of all believers and the nature of authorized ministry. F-6 Integrate own theology of ministry with the UCC covenants of mutual accountability.	G-4 Access resources provided by the UCC for change education, advocacy and empowerment and promote their use among the church community and beyond. G-4 Critically analyze systems and work for systemic change that promotes justice and mercy. G-5 Work effectively for justice with ecumenical and interfaith partners and others in the community and beyond. G-6 Demonstrate and understanding of and incorporate the UCC code of Ethics into one's personal and professional life.	H-1 Support moral and ethical development through teaching, preaching, counseling and engagement with the world, informed by Christian scriptures and traditions. H-1, 2, 3 Engage in ongoing reflective practice, demonstrating knowledge of personal and professional boundaries. H-1, 4 Treat both self and others with consistent dignity and respect. H-5 Using a knowledge of human development, minister appropriately to people at each age, state, and stage.
A-5 Effectively explain and enact the elements of Christian worship in nurturing a life of faith. A-6 Consistently covenant with members of the church and with other people of faith in ways that show accountability to God and to the UCC.	B-5 Use an accurate and appropriate grasp of UCC history and polity to articulate the vision and mission of the UCC church at both local levels and beyond. B-6 Clearly articulate the core values of the UCC to others and demonstrate a lived commitment to those values.	C-5 Navigate organizations and community systems effectively. Build relationships of mutual trust and collaboration across diverse communities demonstrating sensitivity.	D-5 Form and empower faith leaders of all generations. D-6 Preside over the sacraments meaningfully and with integrity.	E-6 Provide sound spiritual counsel to those facing life transitions, including end of life, and to those in recovery or making major life decisions.			

Prepared by Sandra Graham, Ph.D., M.Div. in Collaboration with MN/WI UCC Damascus Project 2018. (This is a representation of how we use the Marks within the context of the Damascus Project). Please copy only with permission.

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

Exhibiting a Spiritual Foundation and Ongoing Spiritual Practice

- Loving God, following Jesus Christ, and being guided by the Holy Spirit; living a life of discipleship.
- Praying actively and nurturing spiritual practices.
- Being called to ordained ministry by God and the Church.
- Continuing discernment of one's call in community.
- Understanding the power of the Holy Spirit at work through the elements of Christian worship to nurture faith.
- Exhibiting a commitment to lifelong spiritual development and faithful personal stewardship.

Nurturing UCC Identity

- Acknowledging Jesus Christ as the sole Head of the Church.
- Communicating passion for the oneness of the Body of Christ (John 17:21).
- Holding active membership in a Local Church of the United Church of Christ.
- Participating in the various settings of the United Church of Christ, including Local Churches, Associations, Conferences, General Synod, and global ministries.
- Knowing and appreciating UCC history, polity, and theology.
- Exhibiting a commitment to the core values of the United Church of Christ: continuing testament, extravagant welcome, and changing lives.

Building Transformational Leadership Skills

- Empowering the Church to be faithful to God's call, reflective of Christ's mission, and open to the surprises of the Holy Spirit.
- Strategically creating the future of God's Church.
- Witnessing in the public square to God's redeeming power.
- Performing necessary and appropriate administrative tasks.
- Working collaboratively with intercultural awareness and sensitivity.
- Encouraging leadership development of self and others through continuing education and lifelong learning.

Engaging Sacred Stories and Traditions

- Exhibiting knowledge, understanding, and continuing study of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament.
- Maturing in effective proclamation and preaching.
- Understanding the history of the Christian Church, from biblical times forward.
- Bringing life to sacred stories and traditions in worship, proclamation, and witness.
- Leading faith formation effectively across generations.
- Holding the Holy with integrity especially as represented in the Sacraments.

Caring For All Creation

- Nurturing care and compassion for God's creation.
- Maintaining a basic understanding of mental health and wellness.
- Practicing self-care and life balance.
- Providing hope and healing to a hurting world.
- Attending to one's own spiritual and pastoral care, including engagement in supervision as appropriate.
- Stewarding the resources of the Church.

Participating in Theological Praxis

- Practicing theological reflection and engagement as part of one's sense of ministerial identity.
- Integrating theological reflection in teaching, preaching, and ecclesial and community leadership.
- Articulating a theology and practice of ministry consistent with the UCC Manual on Ministry.
- Demonstrating an appreciation for and participation in the ecumenical and interfaith partnerships of the UCC.
- Experiencing and appreciating a variety of theological perspectives.
- Embodying the UCC Ministerial Code.

Working Together for Justice and Mercy

- Drawing on the ministry of Jesus Christ to confront injustice and oppression.
- Practicing the radical hospitality of God.
- Identifying and working to overcome explicit and implicit bias in the life of the Church.
- Understanding community context and navigating change with a community.
- Engaging in mission and outreach.
- Building relationships of mutual trust and interdependence.

Strengthening Inter- and Intra- Personal Assets

- Developing and maintaining a healthy sense of self as shaped by God, community, and life experiences.
- Living in relationships of covenantal accountability with God and the Church.
- Exhibiting strong moral character and personal integrity.
- Respecting the dignity of all God's people.
- Understanding and ministering to stages of human development across the life span.
- Demonstrating excellent communication skills.

