



MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT
PROCEDURE MANUAL

WISCONSIN CONFERENCE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

2026

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Introduction to the Member in Discernment Manual

Wisconsin Conference, UCC, 2026

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 this manual, you are either considering ordained ministry or you are supporting someone considering ordained ministry in the UCC. We are grateful for your willingness to discern this 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 everyone in discernment also obtain and read the MOM. (You will receive a PDF version of the MOM from the MID Team.) This manual contains additional WI Conference resources and process explanations not in the MOM.

In the WI Conference, the MID Team, part of the WI Conference Committee on Ministry (COM), oversees the entire MID process. The process is the same for every MID regardless of education level or ministerial experience. The Unified Member in Discernment Assessment Team (UMAT) is a subcommittee of the MID Team. UMAT works with MIDs and their Advisors to guide the MID in completing a Portfolio based on the UCC's *Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers* and in creating an individual Learning Covenant. UMAT information is contained in this manual.

The WI Conference continues to affirm licensed ministry as an important form of authorized ministry. For more information on licensed ministry, refer to the Manual on Licensed Ministry for the WI Conference.

Also included in the manual is information about scholarship 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 ordained ministry and those who journey with them in the WI Conference UCC.

Acronyms

COM	Committee on Ministry
LCDC	Local Church Discernment Committee
MOM	Manual on Ministry
MID	Member in Discernment
UMAT	Unified Member in Discernment Assessment Team
UCC	United Church of Christ

2 Ministerial Authorization

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/Conference for engagement with its formal discernment processes. A member of a Local Church who is approved by a Conference’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/Conference, 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.

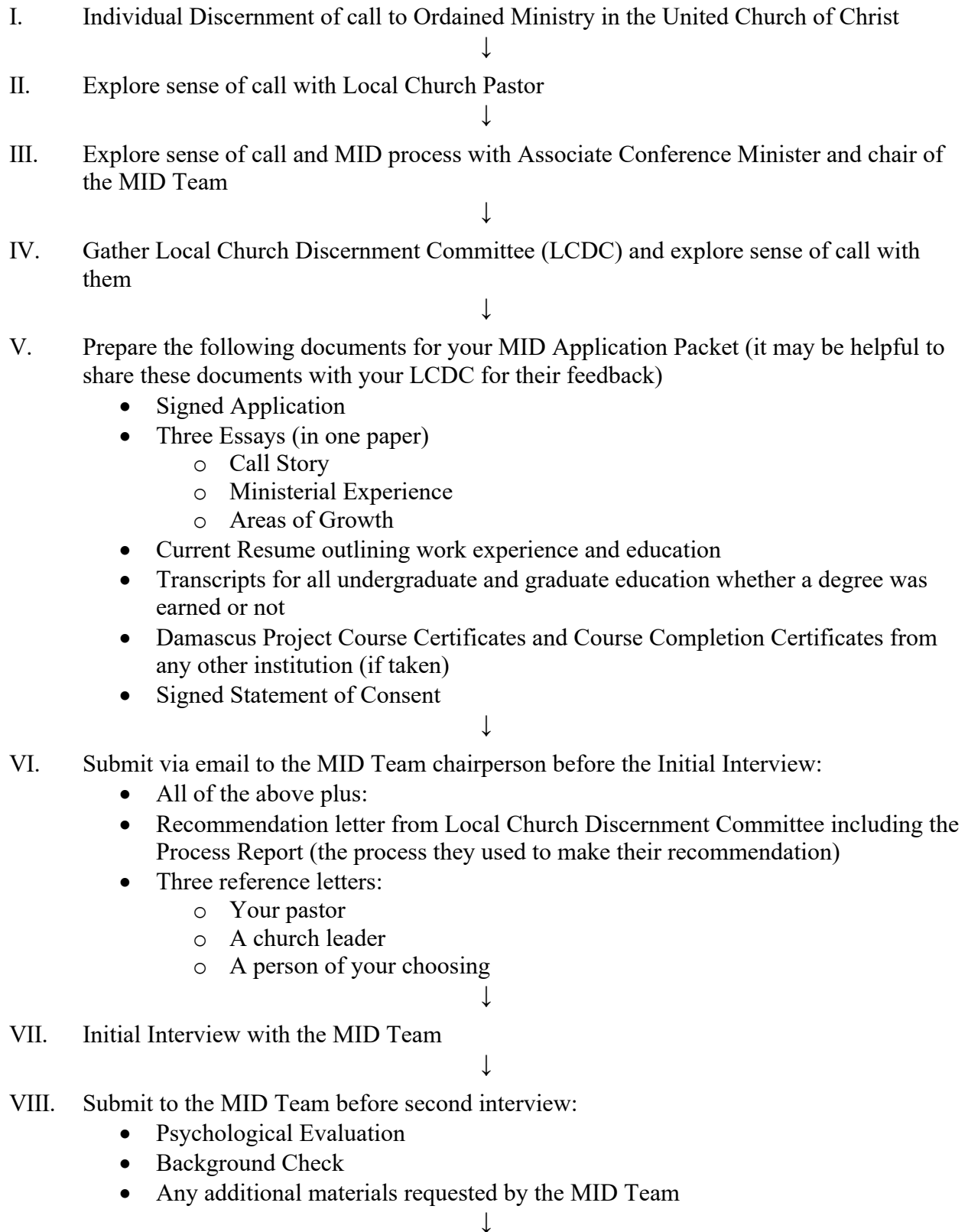
Section 2:1 Members in Discernment

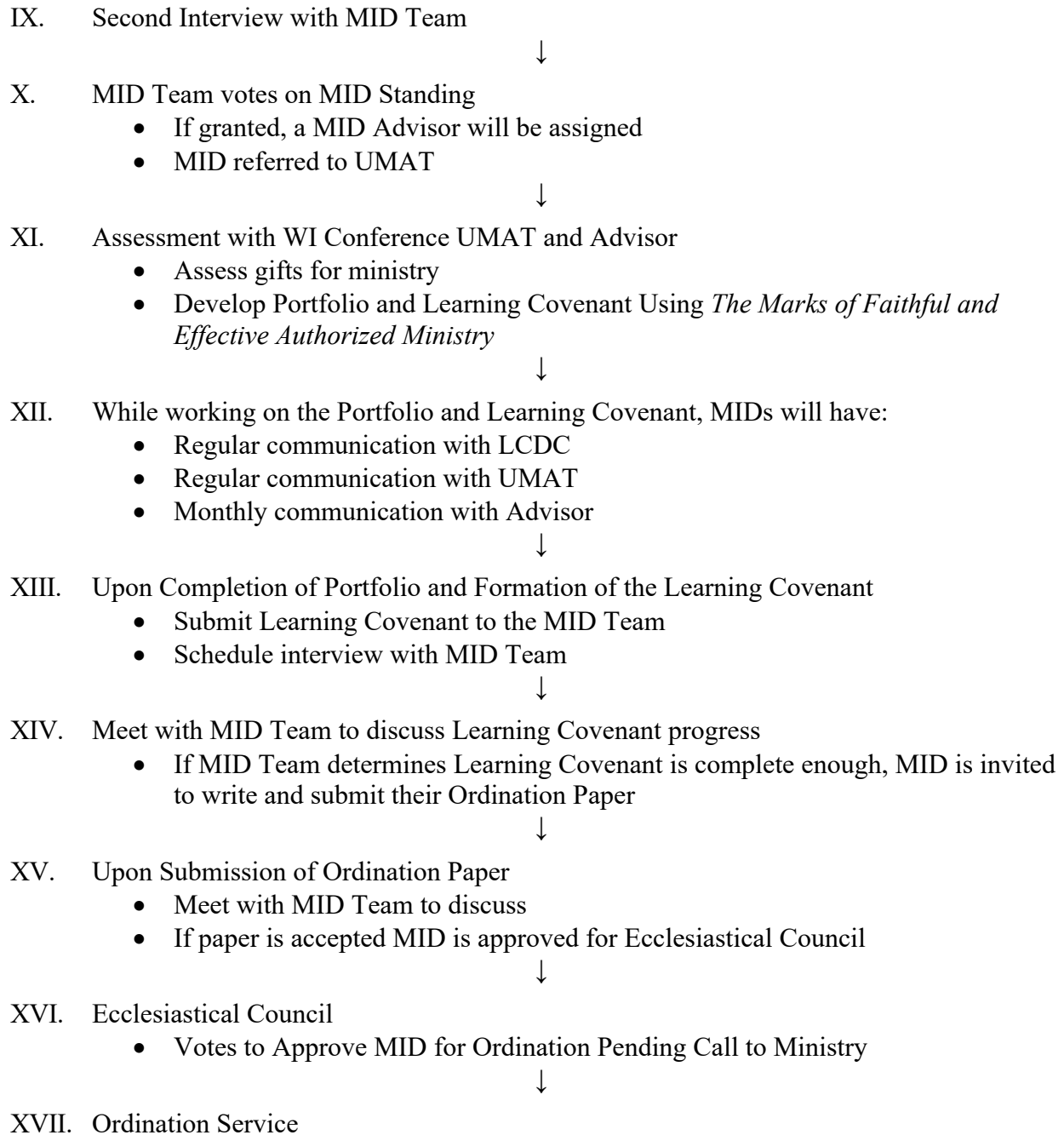
Ministry training experiences may include such opportunities as field education, clinical pastoral education (CPE), internships, and more.

- **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.

Member in Discernment Process Flow Chart





Materials for Member in Discernment Status

Notes: (1) Additional materials may be requested based on your experience and circumstances
(2) Materials submitted by others, such as letters of reference, are considered confidential and are shared only with the MID and MID team. (3) MID Team chairperson will email you a checklist of these.

Submit to the Local Church Discernment Committee *(recommended, not required)*

- Signed Application
- Three Essays (in one paper)
 - Call Story
 - Ministerial Experience
 - Areas of Growth
- Current Resume outlining work experience and education
- Transcripts for all undergraduate and graduate education whether a degree was earned or not
- Damascus Project Course Certificates and Course Completion Certificates from any other institution (if taken)
- Signed Statement of Consent

Submit to the MID Team for the initial interview

- All of the above plus
- Recommendation letter from Local Church Discernment Committee including the Process Report (the process they used to make their recommendation)
- Three reference letters:
 - Your pastor
 - A church leader
 - A person of your choosing

Submit to the MID Team before the second interview

- Psychological Evaluation
- Background Check
- Any additional materials requested by the MID following your initial interview with them

Unified Member in Discernment Assessment Team - Process

Once MID Status is granted by the MID Team

1. Email the following materials to UMAT:
 - a. UMAT intake form.
 - i. Looking at marks what 5 do you think are your strongest?
 - ii. Looking at the marks what 5 do you think you need the most growth in? (1-3 sentences for each.)
 - b. MID application (including essays).
2. Work with UMAT to provide information regarding Marks of Ministry
 - a. Attend UMAT Orientation
 - i. Attend initial orientation meeting as scheduled by UMAT.
 - ii. Goals for orientation meeting:
 - a) MID and advisor become familiar with UMAT process.
 - b) MID and advisor become familiar with UMAT technology.
 - c) UMAT responds to questions about the process and timeline.
 - b. Attend initial meeting with UMAT
 - i. UMAT contacts MID and advisor to schedule first meeting.
 - ii. Goals for UMAT initial meeting with MID and advisor:
 - a) Mutual introductions.
 - b) UMAT answers any remaining questions about the matrix/portfolio (introduced in the orientation meeting) and ways to document competency.
 - c) UMAT and MID discuss ongoing self-assessment.
 - d) UMAT and MID develop initial timeline and goals.
 - c. Work on Matrix/Portfolio
 - i. Over time, upload materials documenting competency into the on-line matrix form.
 - ii. Discuss ongoing concerns with Advisor and UMAT.
 - iii. Respond to questions from UMAT.
 - iv. Meet regularly with advisor.
 - d. Attend subsequent meeting(s) with UMAT
 - i. UMAT contacts MID and advisor for a second meeting approximately 3 months following first meeting. Subsequent meetings during the process may also be scheduled depending on progress and needs.
 - ii. Goals for subsequent meetings with MID and Advisor:
 - a) Review progress with documenting competencies and address gaps and weaknesses.
 - b) Evaluate if MID is ready to work on a Learning Covenant.
 - c) Update timeline and goals.

- e. Create and File a Learning Covenant: *A Learning Covenant is a document in which a MID, who has nearly completed the matrix/portfolio, outlines what competencies remain for completion prior to ordination. Learning Covenant Guidelines and Requirements are on page 23 of this manual. A Learning Covenant Template is on page 24.*
 - i. UMAT advises MID to create a Learning Covenant to address “gaps” in preparation. *MID does not create or upload a Learning Covenant until UMAT so directs.*
 - a) Identify competencies in the matrix/portfolio that have not been demonstrated. (These are the “gaps”.)
 - b) List specific, measurable ways to attain competency in the “gap” areas prior to ordination.
 - ii. Upload the proposed Learning Covenant into the MID’s UMAT Google Folder.
 - iii. Respond to subsequent questions from UMAT and attend whatever meeting UMAT might schedule to review the Learning Covenant.
 - f. Receive approval of the Learning Covenant from UMAT
 - i. UMAT approves their portion of the Learning Covenant, then sends an email containing the Learning Covenant to MID, MID’s advisor, and the MID Team chairperson.
 - ii. *This is UMAT’s final official involvement with MID although UMAT will respond to questions and concerns from the MID Team.*
3. Work with the MID Team toward ordination (see MID Process Flow Chart on page 9 of this manual).

BEST PRACTICES FOR LOCAL CHURCH DISCERNMENT COMMITTEES (LCDC) (Adapted from MOM)

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 continues 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 (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.

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, serving as a prayer partner, a sounding board and a source of feedback. In some instances, the pastor may serve on 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 (see list on page 8).

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 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 decision-making meeting 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: The person presents evidence of their belief 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 recommendations 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 sends a letter to the Member in Discernment Team of the Committee on Ministry recommending this candidate be accepted as a MID.
- If the governing body 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 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 Committee on Ministry

The person seeking MID status contacts the chair of the MID Team to ask for a place on the agenda for their initial interview and submits all the necessary documents (see list on page 8) at least two weeks in advance. A member of the LCDC and local church pastor attends the interview with the potential MID.

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

- If the 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 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 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

- To begin: at least once a month (in person or by phone or teleconferencing)
- Once the LCDC has reached a decision to recommend the candidate to MID Team (or to not recommend candidate): at least quarterly in person or 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 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.
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 if necessary).
4. The Center will invoice the Conference for full payment and the Conference will then invoice the individual, the home church, and the Member in Discernment Team.
5. The candidate 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 the Member in Discernment Team. The report should be emailed to you (and also to the ACM, the MID Team chairperson, or both).

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://oxfordportal.com/>

- Click “New here? Click here to register!” select “Candidate” and “Go to Registration.”
- Fill in your name, email, as well as the Client Number/Abbreviation 1956 and the Position Code. 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.

MID Advisor Responsibilities & Best Practices

Background Knowledge

- Be very familiar with the Wisconsin Conference Member in Discernment Procedure Manual (2022)
- Be very familiar with the sections of the 2018 Manual on Ministry that address the Member in Discernment journey (pp 19-34).
- Be very familiar with UMAT training video
- Be very familiar with the Marks of Faithful and Effective Ministry (best practice tip: use the marks as a way to frame your face-to-face meetings with your MID; asking your MID what in their educational/life experience speaks to each mark, helping them develop ideas for their portfolio. Help them understand/go deeper on Marks they may need to more thoroughly explore)

Initial work with new MIDs

- Set up initial meeting (ideally face to face) to get acquainted, talk through the process at a high level, and answer questions.
- Best practice tip: watch the introductory UMAT video with your MID at an early meeting; discuss together what came up for them as they watched it, what questions they have, etc. This should happen before the first meeting with UMAT
- Attend first meeting of UMAT with MID
- Follow up after initial UMAT meeting: how was the meeting for MID, any questions they have, are they clear on next steps etc.

Ongoing work with/support of MID

- Initiate and maintain regular (1x month is the goal) contact with the MID via email, telephone, written communication, face-to-face without overwhelming the MID
- Support MID if they get “stuck” in the process (i.e., help them assess if this is a technical challenge and they need Google sheet support or if they feel frustrated with the requirements, etc.). It’s not the advisor’s responsibility to “make sure” the MID gets through the process, that is the MID’s responsibility, but the Advisor can/should be watching/listening for what is leading to someone being stuck or stalled and see if there is a strategy that could be offered to help them move forward
- Attend all UMAT meetings with your MID. Make sure you understand what is being asked of your MID from UMAT (approx. every 3 months).
- Support your MID in creating and completing their Learning Covenant
- Give regular updates to the MID team related to your MID
- Encourage the MID to participate in the life of their local congregation
- Encourage the MID to be active in the Conference as appropriate
- Understand the scholarship opportunities available to MIDs and encourage your MID to make use of these resources as needed.
- Be present at Ecclesiastical Council and ordination service

MID Mentor Responsibilities & Best Practices

- Maintain regular contact with MID via emails, telephone calls, written communications and face-to-face meetings
- Offer on-going counsel and support
- Maintain confidentiality
- Engage in conversations about theology and ministry that help the MID reflect on their experience vis a vis the Marks of Ministry
- Encourage the MID to participate in the life of his/her local congregation
- Attend MID Team meeting with MID (when requested by the MID)
- Be present at Ecclesiastical Council and ordination service

MID 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 facilitators. 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 (avik@wcucc.org) to learn how to sign up.

MID Student Aid Program

St. John's UCC of Monroe and the Wisconsin Conference UCC work collaboratively to provide annual scholarships to Members-in-Discernment (MID) currently engaged in coursework. You can find the scholarship application at <https://wcucc.org/conference-giving/grants/> and/or by contacting Mary Gross Grant Coordinator at mgross@wcucc.org

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)

CPE is a professional education program that focuses on developing individuals as spiritual caregivers. CPE provides opportunities for self-reflection and self-awareness while also developing pastoral skills such as active listening, empathetic communication, and ethical decision-making. CPE programs include supervised clinical work in settings such as hospitals and care facilities and can also be done in other settings, including a congregation. CPE includes regular group and individual supervision with a certified supervisor.

In addition to CPE programs found on the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE) website (<https://acpe.edu>), the following CPE programs are approved by the MID Team to work with the MID in a setting of the MID's choosing.

- Rev. Lex Cade-White (UCC pastor in the WI Conference who is a CPE Supervisor) at Lcadewhite@gmail.com
- VMP Healthcare & Community Living: <https://www.vmpcares.com/clinical-pastoral-education-program/>

The MID Team will consider other CPE programs when provided with information about them. Individual exemptions for CPE will be considered after the MID discusses their reasons for requesting an exemption at an interview with our Team.

MID Learning Covenant Guidelines & Requirements

The Learning Covenant is created by the MID with the support and guidance of their Advisor and UMAT (Unified Member in Discernment Assessment Team) as they work on the Marks of Effective and Faithful Ministers Portfolio. It will include items that need to be completed before the MID's ordination paper will be accepted by the MID Team. It may also include items that will need ongoing attention throughout the MID's ministerial life.

The Learning Covenant is a living document, meaning items may be added as the MID moves through the discernment process.

The Learning Covenant must include:

- Recommendations from the MID's psychological evaluation
- Boundary Training
- Anti-Racism Training
- Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)

Boundary Training and Anti-Racism Training can both be taken through The Damascus Project (<https://thedamascusproject.org>). Alternative programs need to be approved by the MID Team before the MID takes them and must meet the following requirements:

- have interactive/small group reflection
- have a minimum of 6 contact hours
- Boundary Training must include content related to finances and social media
- Anti-Racism Training must include anti-bias/implicit bias component

Information on CPE options is available. The MID Team will consider individual exemptions for CPE after the MID discusses their reasons for requesting an exemption at an interview with our Team.

Scholarships are available for education and CPE.

The MID Team has final oversight of the Learning Covenant.

Learning Covenant Template (NAME)

The Learning Covenant is created by the MID with the support and guidance of their Advisor and UMAT (Unified Member in Discernment Assessment Team) as they work on the Marks of Effective and Faithful Ministers Portfolio. It will include items that need to be completed before the MID's ordination paper will be accepted by the MID Team. It may also include items that will need ongoing attention throughout the MID's ministerial life.

The Learning Covenant must include:

- Recommendations from the MID's psychological evaluation
- Boundary Training
- Anti-Racism Training
- Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)

In addition to the above requirements, look at your portfolio and list the gaps and learning edges you have on the following Marks of Effective and Faithful Ministers. After you list the gaps and learning edges, reflect and explain how you will obtain the knowledge, understanding, and skillset to better demonstrate the Mark.

Exhibit Spiritual Foundation

-

Nurture UCC Identity

-

Build Transformational Leadership

-

Engage Sacred Stories and Traditions

-

Caring for Others

-

Theological Praxis

-

Encounter Others with Justice and Mercy

-

Strengthen Inter/Intra Personal Assets

-

Ordination Paper Guidelines & Requirements

Ordination papers need to be 10-20 pages in length, double spaced, with 12-point font. While this is not an academic paper, please footnote any direct quotes that you use.

The WI Conference Committee on Ministry affirms and accepts many forms of ordination “papers” (e.g., written documents, original artwork, 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.

Please include the following statement at the end of your paper: *I certify that this work comes from my own discernment and is consistent with my beliefs and personal experiences. Any use of artificial intelligence tools (ChatGPT, etc.) is strictly for grammar, fluency, and summary, not to generate ideas. I have included attributions for all material taken from other sources.*

We recommend that you have others, such as your MID Advisor, Mentor, and Local Church Pastor, read your paper and give feedback before you submit it to the MID Team. Once we receive a draft of your paper, we will meet with you to discuss any revisions we may want. Depending on the type of revisions (if needed) we may decide to approve them without meeting with you again or we may want to meet with you again. A PDF of the final and approved form of your ordination paper will be attached to the Conference-wide invitation to your Ecclesiastical Council.

Unified MID Assessment Team MID Intake Form

Once you have been granted MID status by the MID Team, you will be connected with UMAT via email. Please then email a full copy of your MID Application (including essays), your resume, and this intake form to UMAT. Once all materials are received, UMAT will reach out to schedule your first meeting with them. Your MID Advisor will attend this meeting with you.

Name: _____ Pronouns: _____

Email: _____ Phone Number: _____

Region: _____ Date of MID Acceptance: _____

MID 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 ordained 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.

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

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. A-2 Nurture Spiritual Practices: Grow in spiritual maturity by adopting or deepening a personal spiritual practice	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. 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-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 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-2 Employ appropriate relational skills. E-2,3 Identify & use community resources for one's own personal & professional wellness. 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-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. 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-1 Clearly articulate a theology of mission consistent with mutuality, community, empathy, justice and peace. G-2 Consistently practice forgiveness and reconciliation. 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-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. H-4 Accurately identify own implicit biases that may impact interactions with and attitudes toward others and work to overcome these biases.

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

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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 out 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.

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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. 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-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. 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-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. C-5 Navigate organizations and community systems effectively. Build relationships of mutual trust and collaboration across diverse communities demonstrating sensitivity.	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. D-5 Form and empower faith leaders of all generations. D-6 Preside over the sacraments meaningfully and with integrity.	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. 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.	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 an 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.

SAMPLE MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT APPLICATION

(A fillable application will be emailed to you)

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 ¹¹¹ 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	

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 _____

Sample MID Applicant 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 Committees on Ministry 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 Committee on Ministry and persons seeking Authorization. In that spirit:

I have read and reviewed the Procedure Manual for Members in Discernment, Local Churches and the Committee on Ministry of the Wisconsin Conference United Church of Christ acting as an Association.

I authorize the Wisconsin Conference Committee on Ministry 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 Committee on Ministry of transcripts, reports, evaluations, and psychological and spiritual assessment results as outlined in the Member in Discernment policy.

Signature_____

Date_____



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, dilleve@ucc.org