Guidelines for the
“Member in Discernment” Process
in the
Illinois South Conference
United Church of Christ
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Introduction

The following guidelines are designed to be a working document for ministerial authorization and ongoing evaluation. It is a support for Local Church Discernment Committees (LCDC), and will be used by the Preparation Committee (PC) of the Illinois South Conference (ISC) Church and Ministry Team.

This document draws primarily from Ministry Issues Draft 3.1 but incorporates material from the United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry (2001) as well as policies developed by the ISC Church and Ministry Team. It is an attempt to provide an “easy to use” resource that reflects these traditions of the Conference, and denominational guidelines.

The guidelines encourage us to discern together in a relationship determined by our understanding of covenant. The most basic definition for covenant is an agreement, usually formal, between two or more persons to do or not to do something specified: to come together, to agree.

Article 3, of the United Church of Christ Constitution and Bylaws reads: Covenantal Relationships: “As members of the Body of Christ, each expression of the church is called to honor and respect the work and ministry of each other part. Each expression of the church listens, hears and carefully considers the advice, counsel, and requests of the others. In this covenant, the various expressions of the United Church of Christ seek to walk together in all God’s ways.”

A covenant, while formal, relies on the parties involved to embrace and engage these covenantal expectations with a heartfelt spirit for the good of the whole. There is within the fabric of covenant threads of trust, transparency, clarity and accountability. There is a belief that all parties are focused on the benefit of all and not solely on personal gain or retribution for one participant. A covenant demands that those involved are in continual communication with the others and that, individually and collectively, their aims and goals are visible to all contributors. Mutual understanding is essential to redefine or renegotiate the covenant should any participant become unable to fulfill the covenantal agreement or conditions. The essential thread of accountability is the need to articulate to others about how one is contributing to the fulfillment of the covenant. An example of this might arise if there are infractions, violations or falling short of the mutually agreed upon conditions of the covenant.

In the case of covenants within the Church, the spirit of covenant requires that honesty, truthfulness and the Holy Spirit permeate all aspects: from the services required to expectations of the participants, from remuneration to the well-being of each party, always with concern for the spiritual health of all expressions of the church that are involved. If there are challenges to the covenant, the parties are expected to come together in sacred space affirming the ministry that has transpired and genuinely seeking to amend in good faith the covenant. The process of authorization involves a three or four-way covenant between the person, the local church where that person holds membership, the calling body (if different from the local church,) and the authorizing body, the Conference.
While applicants for authorization and Members in Discernment may use this guide to keep track of their progress, it is tailored for the needs of the Preparation Committee which will complete one form for each Member in Discernment (MID). In this way, the Preparation Committee will be able to document the process, in cooperation with the MID, the local church, and, finally, the calling body.

In addition to this document, the Preparation Committee uses *The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ* (hereafter abbreviated, “The Marks”) delineated in *Ministry Issues Draft 3.1*.

*The Marks* are the same for all forms of authorized ministry, and are to be viewed not simply as a “one-time” tool for assessment but as an ongoing guide throughout a person’s ministry. They may be found in this document in Appendix E (for use in forming “Educational Formation Plans”) or Appendix H (for use in assessment; see [www.uccfiles.com/pdf/Marks-Assessment](http://www.uccfiles.com/pdf/Marks-Assessment)).

**DEFINITIONS**

**AID:** Advisor in Discernment – a member of the Conference identified by the Preparation Committee who will serve as the advisor, mentor, and guide for the MID on behalf of the committee.

**EFP:** Educational Formation Plan – the process designed by the MID, in conversation with the AID, Local Church Discernment Committee, and Preparation Committee, that will guide the training and growth of the MID within the framework of *The Marks of Faithful and Effective Ministry*.

**MID:** Member in Discernment – a member of a local church in the Illinois South Conference who is engaged in a formal process of discerning God’s call and claim on their life and is working with the Preparation Committee through a process toward authorization for ministry.

**LCDC:** Local Church Discernment Committee (in the local church) – the group identified by the local church to develop an ongoing relationship with the MID, tending to the process of learning and growth toward authorization.

**PC:** Preparation Committee – one of three committees of the Illinois South Conference Church and Ministry Team, Preparation Committee is responsible for shepherding any person who holds membership in a congregation in the Illinois South Conference who is seeking authorization to serve in the United Church of Christ. The PC is responsible for the development, standardization and compliance of processes to be used throughout the journey to authorization.

**PCL:** Preparation Committee Liaison – a member of the Preparation Committee appointed by PC, who, on behalf of the Committee, maintains at least monthly connection with a MID throughout the process of preparation for authorization. The PCL will be the resource of record for all questions of process as inquired by the MID.
The First Movement

The First Movement involves the call to authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ. Call occurs in many ways, circumstances and seasons of life. It is not a single moment but a continuing openness to God’s direction. A call to authorized ministry is discerned with others and it is important in this first movement for candidates and committees to discern the form of authorized ministry to which candidates are called. Calls from local churches to candidates for ministry are integral parts of both the authorization and placement processes. Conferences and local churches alike are charged to nurture a “culture of call” within their lives.

According to Constitution of the United Church of Christ (2013) Article VI:

- “The United Church of Christ recognizes that God calls the whole Church and every member to participate in and extend the ministry of Jesus Christ by witnessing to the Gospel in church and society. The United Church of Christ seeks to undergird the ministry of its members by nurturing faith, calling forth gifts, and equipping members for Christian service.” AND

- “The United Church of Christ recognizes that God calls certain of its members to various forms of ministry in and on behalf of the church for which ecclesiastical authorization is required.” These forms of authorized ministry include:

  - “An Ordained Minister of the United Church of Christ is one of its members who has been called by God and ordained to preach and teach the gospel, to administer the sacraments and rites of the Church, and to exercise pastoral care and leadership."

  - “A Licensed Minister of the United Church of Christ is one of its members whom God has called and who has been recognized and authorized by a Conference to perform specified duties in a designated Local Church or within that Conference, mainly preaching and conducting services of worship for a designated time within a covenant of mutual accountability that includes appropriate supervision and guidance of that Conference.”

  - “A Commissioned Minister in the United Church of Christ is one of its lay members who has been called by God and commissioned for a specific church-related ministry.”

While the United Church of Christ recognizes these three forms of ministerial authorization, this guide will focus specifically on discernment toward ordination and/or licensure, not commissioning.

The main question for discernment is, “To what ministry is this person called?” This is followed by, “Does this ministry require authorization? If so, what form?”
The Second Movement

The **Second Movement** involves the preparation and formation of those who are called to authorized ministries. One of the key pieces involved in this movement is a **portfolio**.

A portfolio is a folder or container that will grow throughout the discernment process and into authorized ministry. The contents of the portfolio should be kept current and the items in it will differ depending on the type of authorization the person, in the context of the discernment process, is seeking.

In this movement, Church and Ministry Committees are asked to make a **paradigm shift** from the concepts on the left to those on the right:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student In-Care</th>
<th>Member in Discernment (MiD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for Authorization</td>
<td>Discernment of Call and Formation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Educational Requirements</td>
<td>Developing and Assessing Readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation Ending in Authorization</td>
<td>Ongoing Formation and Lifelong Learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For purposes of clarity, this movement will contain three parts, described here as:

1. **Beginning Steps toward Authorization**,  
2. **Assessment** (including **Initial Assessment, Ongoing Assessment, and Final Assessment**),  
3. **Concluding Steps toward Authorization**.

The following steps show the flow of this movement. The lines in front of the steps are provided so that the Preparation Committee may work with local churches and persons seeking authorization to record the dates when each step took place, or when the necessary documentation was received.
Part I: Beginning Steps toward Authorization

Candidates will track and record the journey through application, MID acceptance, assessment and conclusion of process.

Ordination Candidates use A1, A2, and A2-1 progress reports

Licensure Candidates use A1, and A3 progress reports

1. A member of a local church approaches the governing body of that local church and shares with them her/his sense of call to authorized ministry.

2. The local church appoints a “Local Church Discernment Committee” (LCDC) to work with him/her in the discernment process (see Appendix A). She/he will provide the LCDC with the following:

   a. Statement of the person’s faith journey
   b. Biography
   c. How the person understands his/her call at this time
   d. Initial self-assessment using “The Marks” (see Appendix H)
      Please use the resource Journaling the Journey from UCC resources.
   e. Documentation of formal education (transcripts, evaluations)
   f. Educational plan

These initial documents become the foundation of the person’s portfolio. (See page 6.)

3. The LCDC meets to review the portfolio in conversation with the person, as they discern together the sense of call at this time.

4. When they feel the person is ready for a move forward with the process the LCDC shares the information collected above with the governing body of the local church and recommends the person to them as an applicant for authorization for ministry.

5. The local church governing body approves this request and asks that the Preparation Committee (PC) of the Conference Church and Ministry Team receive this person as a “Member in Discernment” (MID).

6. The applicant will supply the following additional information to the Preparation Committee (PC) which will also be included in the portfolio that is submitted to the Preparation Committee (PC).

   g. Formal request/application (which includes complete current contact information) to be submitted as a letter or email to ISC Conference office.
   h. The signed Statement of Consent for Collection, Storage and Release of Information needs to be filled out and signed. (see Appendix C-2.)
i. Verification of membership in a UCC congregation (for at least one year) to be submitted by church leadership by letter or email to ISC Conference office.

j. Three letters of reference, including one from the pastor of his/her local church, one from the leader of the church’s governing body, and one additional letter to be submitted by letter or email to the ISC Conference office.

7. The PC meets with the applicant and together they discern her/his movement to becoming a MID (for deeper insights into how discernment works in the authorization process, see “Understanding and Practicing Discernment” in *Ministry Issues Draft 3.1*, pp. 36-44) **The applicant must be an active MID for a minimum of two years prior to a request for final assessment.** (p.11-12)

8. The PC receives the applicant as a MID. It informs her/him of its decision and appoints an Advisor in Discernment (AID) to guide the MID in the process (see Appendix B) and a PC Liaison (PCL) as the personal contact with the PC (see Appendix C). The Committee also forms a plan with the MID to complete the Career/Psychological Assessment and Criminal Background Check/Self-Disclosure Form. (see Part II: Assessment) **The cost for the assessment and background check are to be shared by the local church and the MID.**

9. The PC chairperson informs the Illinois South Conference Office about the decision and provides the office with the MID’s contact information. The Conference Office records this decision and reports it to the national office of the United Church of Christ.

10. The Conference, MID and local church enter into a *Covenant of Discernment and Formation* together (see Appendix D)
Part II: Assessment

Initial Assessment

1. The PC meets with the MID, along with a member of the LCDC and her/his AID. The purpose of the meeting is to identify the MID’s gifts and needs. The following materials should be provided before the meeting and included in the MID’s portfolio.

   k. The Career/Psychological Assessment as reported by the AID and PCL to the PC.
   l. Criminal Background Check and Self-Disclosure Form.
   m. Suggested components of an “Educational Formation Plan” (EFP) developed by the MID in consultation with the LCDC. The MID considers her/his educational/experiential history and reviews his/her self-assessment of The Marks, then explores options for educational content or experiences to develop The Marks where growth is needed. These EFP possibilities may be documented in the first column of Appendix E.

The PC reviews the MID’s portfolio, conducting their own assessment of the MID’s readiness, and referring to the suggested EFP components that he/she has submitted. Following this review the PC drafts an EFP. The second column of Appendix E may be used for this purpose.

Variations in EFPs should be expected among MIDs depending on what they and the committee discern is lacking in their educational/experiential background and/or meeting of The Marks. The EFP is to include specific plans to address and meet The Marks. These might include college or seminary coursework, work experience in churches or related settings, books or articles to be read and discussed, mentoring relationships to be established or other activities.

“It is anticipated,” p. 29 of Ministry Issues Draft 3.1 reads, “that a seminary degree program will continue to be the preferred primary educational process for most candidates for ordination.” To quote p. 89 of Ministry Issues Draft 3.1, “Years of service alone do not necessarily prepare one for ordination; years of service including an intentional plan of preparation faithfully pursued offer a rich opportunity.”

The MID expectations of the Illinois South Conference for ordained ministry include:

- 12 academic hours of historical and constructive theology
- 25 academic hours of Biblical studies
- History and Polity of the United Church of Christ
- At least one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)
- Courses in liturgy, homiletics and the theology of the sacraments
- Courses in pastoral care, faith formation and administration
- Three years (or equivalent) of contextual education in a variety of settings

For MIDs seeking license the academic expectations will include the completion of the 15 basic LIFE courses offered at Eden Theological Seminary, or its equivalent, with an acceptable
reflection paper, approved by PC, on each course, identifying date, instructor, reading materials and one satisfactory completion of one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)

The final outcome of the meeting should include an EFP that is agreed upon by both the PC and the MID. As each item on the EFP is accomplished, the MID and PC may note the date of completion in column 3 of Appendix E.
**Ongoing Assessment**

The focus of ongoing assessment is to monitor and mentor the MID’s progress on an annual basis and adjust their EFP and/or discernment of call as needed. Evaluations and reports from educational institutions, as well as other forms of documentation that demonstrate competencies with regards to *The Marks*, will be a core part of the process. Conversation centered on *The Marks* and competencies demonstrated in the portfolio guide this movement from discernment to decision-making.

_________ 1. The MID will request all transcripts, evaluations, oral exam results, CPE final evaluation and contextual education reports be forwarded from the educational institution to the Conference Office at the conclusion of each semester’s work, or as other EFP goals are met. These items will also become part of the MID portfolio.

_________ 2. Semi-annual feedback (see Appendices B and C) from the AID and PC Liaison will be discussed with the PC, and will become part of the portfolio.

_________ 3. The MID will meet with the LCDC at least semi-annually, and more frequently as needed, for ongoing discernment, reflection, support and growth assessment.

_________ 4. The LCDC will send semi-annual assessments of their work with the MID to the PC Chairperson and these assessments will become part of the portfolio.

As the MID works on their EFP, they should be adding documents, papers, case studies, activities, etc., to their portfolio. These materials should indicate ways in which they are strengthening their competencies of *The Marks*. To make this clear the materials in the portfolio should be divided into four separate sections. These sections will reflect the four basic sections of *The Marks*: Spiritual Foundations for Ministry, UCC Identity for Ministry, Personal and Professional Formation for Ministry, and Knowledge and Skills for Ministry: General Knowledge and Skills.
Final Assessment for MIDs Seeking Ordination

The purpose of this third step is to determine if the MID is ready for authorization as an ordained minister. The MID is interviewed by the committee, accompanied by their AID and a member of their LCDC.

MIDs seeking ordination will present the Preparation Committee with their updated portfolios, which should now include, at minimum, the following documentation:

- n. a revised self-assessment of *The Marks* (see Appendix H)
- o. a recommendation from the Local Church Governing Board requesting that the MID be considered for ordination
- p. Authorization Paper (see Appendix F)
- q. a worship service of the MIDs design including the sermon
- r. a case study from a church setting in which they have served
- s. evidence of the attainment of the educational goals/degrees articulated in the MID’s EFP
- t. at least four letters of reference – including one from the seminary or other educational institution, one from the person’s AID, one from an ordained minister in the UCC, and one of the MID’s choosing.
- u. a certificate of completion for at least one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) from an approved CPE setting
- v. certificate of completion within the past three years of a Boundary Awareness Training course as approved by the Authorization Committee of the Conference
- w. a draft of the UCC Ministerial Profile

The following items *may* also be included in the portfolio of a MID seeking ordination:

- audio and/or video recordings
- records from non-credit courses, workshops
- demonstration of self-directed learning projects/reflective practice/on-the-job training
- Works of art (with interpretation, if desired)
- Written papers/case studies/interview recordings
- Programs from worship services
- Performance assessments
- Descriptions of projects undertaken in the local congregation, regional or national church, or community
• Evidence of related experience, knowledge, skills from other experiences
• Evidence of applicable corporate training (e.g., conflict resolution, financial management, computer skills)
• College level exams
• Military training and/or corporate/agency training
Final Assessment for MIDs Seeking Licensure

MIDs seeking licensure will present the Preparation Committee with their updated portfolios, which should now include the following documentation:

___________ x. a revised self-assessment of *The Marks* (see Appendix H)
___________ y. a recommendation from the Local Church Governing Board requesting that the MID be considered for licensure
___________ z. Authorization Paper (see Appendix F)
___________ aa. A worship service of the MIDs design including sermon
___________ bb. a case study from a church setting in which they have served
___________ cc. an updated report on church-related activities
___________ dd. evidence of the attainment of the educational goals/degrees articulated in the MID’s EFP
___________ ee. Certificate of completion of at least one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education from an approved CPE setting
___________ ff. at least four letters of reference – including one from an educational institution, one from the MID’s AID, one from an ordained minister in the UCC, and a fourth one of the MID’s choosing

___________
___________
___________

___________ gg. certificate of completion within the past three years of a Boundary Awareness Training course as approved by the Authorization Committee of the Conference
___________ hh. a draft of the UCC Ministerial Profile

The following items *may* also be included in the portfolio of a MID seeking licensure:

- Reports of previous assessments with the Preparation Committee (and any other similar ecclesial bodies)
- Documentation of other educational and life experiences related to *The Marks*
- Testimonies of the MID’s faith journey, call to ministry, and gifts for licensed ministry from the MID and others
- Assessments of the MID’s knowledge, experience, strengths, weaknesses, and development related to *The Marks*
- Additional case studies, sermons, liturgies, or lesson plans
Concluding Steps toward Authorization

When the MID is prepared to seek *ordination*:

___________ PC sets a date and location site other than the home church of the MID for an Ecclesiastical Council (EC) which is required by the Illinois South Conference (see Appendix G). Once PC sets a date and location for the EC, they will distribute the MID’s material to local church delegates one month in advance of the EC, and records the decision of the body in minutes of the meeting. The Conference notifies the national setting.

___________ Upon successful completion of the EC the MID is “approved for ordination pending a call.

___________ Church and Ministry Authorization Committee is informed of the result of the EC.

___________ If the MID receives a call within the ISC, the Authorization Committee approves a copy of the call agreement between calling body and MID and informs the PC.

___________ If the MID receives a call within another Association she/he will provide the ISC with a copy of the call agreement and PC will be informed.

___________ The Preparation Committee, MID, and local church work together to prepare a Service of Ordination.

___________ The MID is ordained and granted Ordained Ministerial Standing “in and on behalf of the UCC.” This action is reported to the national setting.

When the MID is prepared to seek *licensure*:

___________ PC sets a date and location for a Joint Meeting of the ISC Church and Ministry Team to serve as an Ecclesiastical Council (EC) which is required by the Illinois South Conference (see Appendix G). Once the PC sets a date and location for the EC they will distribute the MID’s material to the full Church and Ministry Team one month in advance of the EC. The PC will be responsible for recording the decision of the EC in the minutes of the meeting. The Conference Council will then be notified of the decision.

If the MID is approved for *licensure*:

___________ The Authorization Committee receives a letter from the local church (calling body) seeking to have the MID licensed to serve as pastor.

___________ The Authorization Committee meets with the MID and members of the calling body to review the terms of call and affirm this setting for ministry.
The PC, MID, and local church work together to prepare for a service of licensure within the local church that has requested the license.

The request for license by the local church will be renewed annually through the Authorization Committee.
The Third Movement

The Third Movement involves the authorized minister’s continuing covenant with the church. This is understood as Ongoing Assessment in Covenant Relationship. Its purpose of life-long assessment is to promote continued development and accountability in ministry. The Marks may be used for ongoing assessment of ordained ministers and for the renewal of license for licensed ministers. We encourage all authorized ministers to continue using Journaling the Journey as an essential companion to The Marks.

The process of ongoing assessment for all authorized ministers includes:

___________ continued and consistent reflection on ministry using The Marks

___________ an annual minimum of twenty hours of continuing education

___________ submission of the Annual Information Review document required by the Authorization Committee

In addition, for authorized ministers who are licensed:

___________ annual request by local church (calling body) for renewal of license
Appendix A: Local Church Discernment Committee (LCDC)

This section is offered for local churches with members whose call they have nurtured and who are interested in being received into a Covenant of Discernment and Formation as the initial step on the path to authorization for ministry. Experience indicates that it is critical for the well-being of the potential MID that the church in which the person holds membership forms a Local Church Discernment Committee (LCDC) as soon as the member makes his/her interest known, rather than assigning this discernment to an existing group or committee within the church.

The LCDC should be appointed by the governing body of a local church whenever one of its members is interested in being received into a covenant of discernment and formation with the Conference. The LCDC assumes responsibility, together with the pastor, for fulfilling the steps as detailed in the current Manual on Ministry (Section 2; pages 3-5) regarding the local church’s role in the discernment process.

The makeup of the LCDC will vary depending on the structure of a local church. One model for composing the committee calls for 4 members; 1 or 2 chosen by the person considering the covenant of discernment and formation, 1 or 2 chosen by the governing body from the church’s membership who exhibit maturity of faith and commitment to the Church of Jesus Christ. The LCDC will be trained in its responsibilities by a representative of the Church Committee of the Illinois South Conference Church and Ministry Team. The local church pastor may serve ex officio to the LCDC, but should not be a member or convene the LCDC.

The LCDC should meet at least quarterly with the member. The purpose is to create a caring and exploratory environment in which she/he can risk testing his/her vocational aspirations. The LCDC represents the local congregation in helping the member discern their particular gifts for ministry which God has given him/her; it also provides a forum for exploring the individual’s call to authorized ministry. This exploration includes discussing the meaning of ministry in general and looking specifically at differences between the call to authorized ministry and the baptismal call of all God’s people. The LCDC also reviews the member’s personal history, experience in the local church and spiritual journey.

There are varieties of discernment practices among UCC congregations. Discernment will look different in the various settings of the UCC and will reflect the multiracial and multicultural diversity of our church. Approaches to discernment will be shaped by the culture and tradition of the congregation as well as the specifics of the relationship the congregation has with the member (how long the member has been part of the congregation and how active in the life of the Church).

Discernment is a way to arrive at understandings, decisions and outcomes that are different from processes that some will have used previously. Discernment starts with the desire to become aware of God’s will. Discernment requires deep and careful listening. It involves asking questions, not in isolation, but within community. Discernment is rooted in prayer and it is comfortable with silence as member and committee take the time needed to ponder questions and to wait for God’s will to be made manifest. The member and LCDC listen for God by listening to each other and by sharing the silence together where God’s still small voice may be heard.
Discernment requires trust in the goodwill of the covenant partners and a willingness to accept the outcomes of the discernment process. Discernment is open to God’s surprises. Discernment calls for flexibility. A rigid format may thwart the movement of the Spirit. Discernment emerges from a relaxed posture that is willing to allow direction to be known according to God’s timeline. Discernment rests in the joyous and supportive assurance of Emmanuel, God-with-us. Discernment invites covenant partners into mutual sharing and unfolding awareness.

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

- The member’s understanding of Christian faith and practice including beliefs about God, Christ, and church, and commitments to a Christian life including worship, prayer, and service.
- The member’s sense of call and articulation of their faith journey.
- Exploration of the member’s gifts for ministry, including ways the gifts have been used in and beyond the church, and how others have understood and affirmed these gifts.
- The member’s understanding of their call to authorized ministry as distinctive from the call to ministry of all God’s people within the community of the church.
- Exploration of licensure, commissioning and ordination, the authorized ministries of the UCC. Final determination regarding authorization will entail ongoing discernment.
- How the member envisions functioning as an authorized minister. Understandings of faithful and effective authorized ministry.
- Questions about authorized ministry. Particular challenges anticipated as the member imagines fulfilling the office of an authorized minister.
- Experience in conflicted situations and the member’s approach to conflict and/or experiences of joyous moments and member’s approach to celebration.
- Experiences in leadership.
- Understandings of the physical and emotional stamina and maturity that are needed to function effectively as an authorized minister.
- Examination of financial realities. Preparation can be expensive. What is the initial plan to finance the time of preparation and formation?
- Issues of employment during the time of preparation and experience and concerns with balancing academic preparation and working. How might balance be achieved?
- Household and relationship issues. If the member is part of a household or has a partner, children, or other covenantal relationships, how do the others in the relationships feel about a decision of the member to pursue authorized ministry?
What does the member envision regarding balance in household commitments and the maintaining of relationships during the time of preparation?

- Reflection on some of the authorized ministers the member admires and respects, and exploration of how the member sees her/himself as similar to/different from them.

It is vital that the member and the LCDC enter and continue in discernment as the open-ended spiritual practice that it is. No one truly knows the outcome at the beginning. Discernment is a process of conversation, prayer, listening, waiting, gathering and sharing information and insights, and, most especially, being open to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

At the appropriate time, if the LCDC believes the member is ready to pursue a covenant of discernment and authorization with the Conference, the LCDC recommends the member to the governing body of the local church. The governing body will make the formal request in writing to the PC asking that the member be received as Member in Discernment (MID). If the member enters into the covenant with the Conference, the role of the LCDC will change to reflect this new relationship and the ongoing support of the local church.

Because the whole discernment process can be exciting, difficult and sometimes confusing for the member, it is vital that the local church and the Conference seek to support the member all along the way, not just at the beginning of exploration. The LCDC of the local church will stand with the MID if she/he becomes discouraged, loses the way, or feels put upon or disregarded by the discernment process. The LCDC will both challenge and support the MID; will serve as a communication link between him/her and the congregation; will maintain quarterly contact with the PC; will continually review and support the processes as the MIDs formation continue. The LCDC will play a particularly important role during times in the process when decisions are called for such as a decision to recommend the MID for authorization or a decision that more preparation is needed, or that the covenant of discernment and formation has ended without the MID proceeding to authorization.
Appendix B: Advisor in Discernment (AID)

The Advisor-in-Discernment (AID) is appointed by the Preparation Committee of the Church and Ministry Team, and serves many functions analogous to the role of the In Care Advisor as identified in the current Manual on Ministry. The role of the AID is critical in the MID’s exploration of various forms of ministry and preparation for the possibility of authorized ministry. The AID performs several essential functions in this spiritually rich and multi-dimensional process.

Most importantly, the AID serves as a trusted companion, guide and mentor on the discernment journey, listening to the MID’s aspirations, anxieties, and uncertainties, and helping to clarify the individual’s sense of God’s calling to a particular form of ministry. The AID helps the MID discover whether authorized ministry is the most appropriate response to the individual’s call and what type of authorization (licensure, commissioning, ordination) is most suited to that individual’s gifts and graces. This spiritual companionship involves the encouragement of the MID’s prayer life, habits of disciplined study, participation in corporate worship, meditation, and other devotional practices. The AID fosters an atmosphere of trust and candor in which the MID can raise and explore questions concerning faith, the Christian life, ministry, and the church. In conversation, the MID and the AID will discuss the MID’s educational plans in the broader context of the MID’s spiritual and vocational formation. In an ethos of mutuality, the AID will help the MID connect theory and practice, vocational and personal life, and study and action. In short, the AID serves as a coach and counselor throughout the discernment process and the preparation for the possibility of authorized ministry. The MID is expected to be proactive in meeting with their committee Liaison and their AID at least once every month. The MID is expected to be able to articulate personal spiritual growth, understanding and work on growing edges, and developing sense of call to authorized ministry as they converse with AID, LPCL and PC.

The AID is an essential component in the network of covenant relations between the MID, the Conference, the PC, and the local congregation. Most centrally, the AID serves as a link between the MID and the PC. In many ways, the AID represents the Conference as well as the PC. The AID embodies the church’s support for the MID. The AID will help the MID explore ways to implement the recommendations of the PC regarding the individual’s plan of preparation. A crucial aspect of this advisement process is the determination of which specific combination of educational opportunities (seminary courses, regional theological educational programs, mentoring possibilities, etc.) will be most appropriate to the MID’s unique path of preparation for ministry.

The AID also helps represent and interpret the MID to the PC. The AID helps the MID clarify for the Committee the ways in which the MID’s educational experiences are addressing the Conference’s requirements and recommendations concerning preparation for ministry. With the possibility of preparing for authorized ministry through multiple educational experiences (not just college and seminary courses), this role requires close collaborative advisement and monitoring.
The responsibilities of the AID are as follows:

- Receive orientation from the PCL regarding the advisor’s role and seek if necessary, appropriate training (spiritual direction, life coaching, listening skills workshops, etc.) for the work of advisement.
- Acting on behalf of the PC, the AID will articulate and discern with the MID their educational and spiritual journey.
- Maintain frequent contact with the MID via e-mails, telephone calls, written communication, and face-to-face meetings.
- Offer on-going advice, counsel and mentoring.
- Provide guidance, in consultation with the PC, concerning course work and other educational opportunities.
- Help the MID understand the expectations of the Committee on Ministry concerning the individual’s path of preparation for authorized ministry.
- Help the MID understand the UCC’s procedures for the authorization of ministries.
- Encourage the MID to participate in the life of his/her local congregation.
- Encourage the MID to be active in Conference and Conference activities.
- Help the MID evaluate and select appropriate educational opportunities from among the possible paths of preparation for ministry (seminary courses, regional theological education programs, mentoring, etc.).
- Help the MID prepare the necessary documentation and reports required by the Conference and the broader church.
- Accompany the MID to meetings of the Committee on Ministry in order to review progress.
- Foster the deepening of the MID’s Christian faith and life.
APPENDIX C: Preparation Committee Liaison (PCL)

The Preparation Committee Liaison (PCL) is an elected member of, and appointed by, the PC. The role of the PCL is critical in the MID’s ongoing and effective relationship with the PC. The PCL serves as a trusted connection to the PC and knowledgeable representative of the PC regarding expectations and concerns.

The PCL fosters an atmosphere of trust and candor in which the MID can raise and explore questions the PC process and guidelines.

The MID is expected to be proactive in connecting with their PCL at least once every month.

The MID is expected to be able to articulate personal spiritual growth, understanding and work on growing edges, and developing sense of call to authorized ministry as they converse with AID, PCL and Preparation Committee.

The PCL is an essential component in the network of covenant relations between the MID, the Conference, the PC, and the local congregation. Most centrally, the PCL serves as a link between the MID and the PC. In many ways, the PCL represents the care of the Conference and its PC. The PCL embodies the church’s support for the MID.

The responsibilities of the PCL are as follows:

- Meets with the MID on behalf of the PC with the Committee’s full and current knowledge of the MID’s progress.
- Maintain monthly contact with the MID via e-mails, telephone calls, written communication and personal contact.
- Help the MID understand the expectations of the PC concerning the path of preparation for authorized ministry.
- Help the MID understand the UCC’s procedures for the authorization of ministries.
- Provide orientation to AID for the role with MID.
APPENDIX C-2: Collection, Storage, and Release of Information

I hereby authorize Illinois South Conference of the United Church of Christ to access, request, and receive, as well as release, information and records pertinent to the Member In Discernment process. Illinois South Conference agrees to process, handle, and store information and records in a confidential manner. Their authorization will continue in effect through the culmination of the discernment process to ordination and/or licensure.

MID/Candidate Signature: ________________________________ Date: ______________

To be filed with the MID/Candidate’s file held at the Illinois South Conference office.
Appendix D: Covenant of Discernment and Formation

LOCAL CHURCH

We, the members of (Church) __________________________ United Church of Christ, promise to support and nurture ________________________________ (MID) in her/his period of discernment and formation as she/he explores a call to authorized ministry. We covenant with him/her and the __________________________ Conference of the United Church of Christ as a sign of our mutual ministry in Christ’s name.

__________________________________________  ______________________
Moderator                                      Date

CONFERENCE

We, the members of the Illinois South Conference of the United Church of Christ, covenant with the people of ____________________________, (Church) and ____________________________ (MID) to explore a call to authorized ministry in the United of Christ. We will develop an educational plan with _____________ (MID) and accompany her/him as she/he engages in a path of preparation and formation. We will provide counsel and support, and will meet with ________________ (MID) at appropriate intervals to discern readiness for the authorized ministry sought.

When _________________ (MID) is ready, we will authorize her/him for ministry according to the faith and order of the United Church of Christ. We covenant with him/her and ____________________________ (Church) as a sign of our mutual ministry in Christ’s name.

__________________________________________  ______________________
Conference Moderator                          Date

MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT

I, ________________________________, promise to continue to faithfully discern with my covenant partners my call to ministry, including exploration regarding which form of authorized ministry may be the most appropriate response to my call. I will engage in the educational plan and formative practices developed with the Conference that will prepare me for this calling. During this time I will continue to participate with my Local Church, contributing to its life and witness as possible and appropriate. I will maintain contact with the Preparation Committee of the Church and Ministry Team, and provide materials as requested that reflect my progress. I covenant with ____________________________ (Church) and the Illinois South Conference as a sign of our mutual ministry in Christ’s name.

__________________________________________  ______________________
Member in Discernment                        Date
REPORTS REQUIRED FORM:

TO THE CONFERENCE
I, ________________________________, (MID) will meet with and submit reports as necessary and agreed upon to the Preparation Committee of the Church and Ministry Team.

TO LOCAL CHURCH
I, ________________________________, (MID) will meet with and submit reports as necessary and agreed upon to the Local Church Discernment Committee of my local church.

___________________________   __________
Member in Discernment        Date
# Appendix E: Chart for Educational Formation Planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adapted from <em>Ministry Issues Draft 3.1 The Marks</em></th>
<th>Options for Educational Content or Experiences to Promote The Marks (EFP Possibilities)</th>
<th>Conference Church &amp; Ministry Committee’s Recommended Educational Content or Experiences to Promote The Marks (Actual EFP)</th>
<th>Date Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION FOR MINISTRY</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. A lived faith showing a love of God, trust in Jesus, and openness to the Holy Spirit.</td>
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<td>2. Devotion to the word of God as revealed through scripture and Christian traditions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Commitment to life-long spiritual growth and practice, individually and in community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. A sense of being called by God and the community to authorized ministry in the church.</td>
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<td>5. Openness to continuing discernment of one’s call in community.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>UCC IDENTITY FOR MINISTRY</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Acknowledgement of Jesus Christ as sole Head of the church.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. A passion for the oneness of the body of Christ as expressed in the work of ecumenism, justice, and the full embrace of all persons in God’s radical hospitality.</td>
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<td>3. Active membership in a local church of the UCC.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4. An understanding of the concept of covenant and how it informs the nature, purpose, and polity of the United Church of Christ.</strong></td>
<td>Courses in UCC theology and polity</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5. A willingness to live in the covenants of mutual accountability that characterize authorized ministry in the UCC.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>6. Ongoing demonstration of commitment to the United Church of Christ.</strong></td>
<td>See Resources on UCC Identity</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>7. Stewardship of resources, including financial support of the church in all its settings.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>8. Participation in the various settings of the United Church of Christ, including the conference and local church.</strong></td>
<td>See Resource on UCC Identity</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Ability:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>9. to articulate diverse histories that comprise the United Church of Christ, to situate them in the broader evolution of faith traditions, and to relate them to the theology, polity and practices of the Member’s local church and conference.</strong></td>
<td>Courses in UCC history, church history</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>10. to explain and work within the current polity of the UCC and its denominational structure, and to describe the covenantal relationships among the General Synod, national setting, conferences and local congregations of the UCC.</strong></td>
<td>Courses in UCC polity</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>11. to share key elements of the UCC’s statement of faith, constitution with its preamble and by-laws regarding the governance, mission and theologies of the UCC and their implications for the life of the church.</strong></td>
<td>Courses in UCC theology and polity</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>12. to articulate the UCC’s commitment to being a united and uniting, multiracial and multicultural, open and affirming, accessible to all, and just peace church.</strong></td>
<td>Courses in UCC polity; courses in social justice issues related to the UCC’s commitments</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>13. to envision how the UCC in its various settings may respond to religious, social, economic, and political trends, changing demographics, and other emerging factors.</strong></td>
<td>See Resource on UCC Identity</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>14. to use and promote the informational and educational resources available through UCC publications and websites.</strong></td>
<td>Courses in UCC polity</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL FORMATION FOR MINISTRY</strong></td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. A healthy sense of self as shaped by God, community and personal experience.</td>
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<td>Courses in constructive theology; courses in theological method</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. A sense of theological identity and authority, while being responsive to the opinions and values of others, including those whom the MID will serve.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Units of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE); supervised practice of ministry</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. A healthy awareness of strengths, weaknesses and limits, and assumption of responsibility for one’s body, mind and spirit.</td>
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<td>A basic course in pastoral care; courses in pastoral ethics, courses in ministry; courses in ministerial practice/leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Knowledge and observance of personal and professional boundaries in interpersonal, congregational, and community settings.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Courses in Christian ethics help one think about this, but do not necessarily produce the practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. A commitment to continuing education, professional development and lifelong learning.</td>
<td></td>
<td>A basic course in pastoral care</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Ability:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. to affirm the identities of others, including others very unlike the one’s own self.</td>
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<td>A basic course in pastoral care</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. to engage in self-reflection and to seek and use feedback from others appropriately.</td>
<td>Courses in pastoral care, CPE</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. to engage productively in public discourse, expecting to grow and be transformed through the exchange of viewpoints.</td>
<td>Courses in speech, writing and critical thinking could help</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. to take initiative in leadership, and to frame and test a vision in community.</td>
<td>Courses in pastoral leadership could help; contextual or field education with appropriate supervision and reflection</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. to listen empathically, communicate appropriately, and keep appropriate confidences.</td>
<td>A basic course in pastoral care</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. to function as part of a team, to give and receive supervision, and to mutually equip and motivate the community of faith.</td>
<td>Courses in leadership and/or administration; supervised practice of ministry</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. to be resourceful and adaptable, and know where to locate additional resources and seek consultation when needed.</td>
<td>Courses in leadership and/or administration; supervised practice of ministry</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. to accept and promote diversity, to inspire others to do so, and to minister in a multi-cultural, multi-racial, open and affirming, just peace, accessible-to-all, united and uniting church.</td>
<td>Courses in UCC history, theology and polity will educate on these specific commitments; courses on ethical issues related to the named commitments; courses in nurturing and leading multicultural, multiracial congregations may impart more specific skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR MINISTRY</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>General Knowledge and Skills</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Ability:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. to understand and appreciate a variety of perspectives on life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. to understand the profound differences that physical, psychological, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, class, cultural, racial, and ethnic factors make in the ways that human beings experience the world.</td>
<td>Psychology courses, cultural studies courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. to comprehend the impact of historical change upon the thoughts, feelings, and actions of individuals and societies.</td>
<td>Survey courses in history</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. to perceive how a person’s perspectives and interests shape communication, and to appreciate the virtues and limitations of those perspectives and interests.</td>
<td>Literature courses, communications courses, writing courses, courses in critical thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. to grasp and evaluate the justifications that people give for their opinions.</td>
<td>Writing courses; courses in critical thinking, philosophy courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. to apply basic concepts of psychology to the understanding of oneself, others, and human interactions.</td>
<td>Basic psychology courses</td>
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<td>7. to appreciate the importance of symbols and images in human culture(s).</td>
<td>Art appreciation courses, cultural studies courses, literature courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. to understand the various meanings and purposes of the arts.</td>
<td>Arts appreciation courses, art history courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. to analyze social, political, and economic dynamics, using the tools of the social and natural sciences.</td>
<td>Sociology courses, political science courses, economics courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. to use respectfully and relationally a basic knowledge of specific human cultures.</td>
<td>Cultural studies courses, anthropology courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. to communicate clearly and cogently with appropriate media and technologies.</td>
<td>Communications courses, writing courses, speech courses</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge and Skills Specific to Authorized Ministry</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. A thorough knowledge of, and personal engagement with, the Bible.</td>
<td>Courses in Old Testament literature, history and theology; courses in New Testament literature, history and theology</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Skill with methods of Biblical interpretation, including the historic interpretive traditions of the church and contemporary methods, particularly those from historically under-represented communities.</td>
<td>Courses in Old Testament interpretation; courses in New Testament interpretation; courses in Biblical interpretation</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. A deepening familiarity with the global history of the Christian churches through the ages and across cultures, including the newest Christian populations, and an understanding of the evolution of Christian communities in the USA.</td>
<td>Courses in church history; courses in American church history or religious histories; courses in global Christianity</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. A deepening familiarity with contemporary theological ways of thinking and with the rich and varied theological heritages, creeds, liturgies, and spiritual practices of the Christian churches.</td>
<td>Courses in historical theology or history of Christian thought; courses in contemporary global theologies; courses in Christian ethics; courses in worship; courses in spiritual practices</td>
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<td>5. An understanding of other religions and their foundational documents.</td>
<td>Courses in world religions; courses in specific non-Christian religions</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**The Ability:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6. to articulate a theological understanding of authorized ministry, and to relate it to the practice of ministry.</th>
<th>UCC history, theology, and polity; course of study about the pastoral office</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. to analyze, evaluate, and integrate the biblical, historical, theological, and pastoral disciplines and practices in ways that contribute to fruitful and faithful Christian ministry.</td>
<td>Constructive theology courses, pastoral theology courses, integrative courses of various types</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. to understand the nature, use, and misuse of power and authority, and to exercise them appropriately and effectively in authorized ministry.</td>
<td>Supervised practice of ministry with appropriate reflection; courses in theology, philosophy, social sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. to engage in community leadership that is collaborative and transformative.</td>
<td>Courses in leadership of religious communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. to engage in respectful ecumenical and interfaith dialogue.</td>
<td>Courses in ecumenics, courses in comparative religions, courses from an interfaith perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. to celebrate the unique features of local faith communities while encouraging them to be receptive to perspectives from the broader church and world.</td>
<td>Courses in congregational dynamics; courses in contextual analysis; courses in the global diversity of faith traditions</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. to appreciate, practice, and pass on traditions of faith while interpreting them in light of the context of a diverse and changing world.</td>
<td>Courses in historical theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. to adapt the practice of ministry to the unique social, cultural, environmental, and ecclesiastical aspects of particular settings.</td>
<td>Courses in the leadership of religious communities, courses in contextual analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. to discern God's mission in the world and, in response, to lead ministries of compassion, nurture, justice, and proclamation that support fullness of life for all people.</td>
<td>Courses in mission, courses in leadership of religious communities, courses in contextual analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. to preach the good news, lead worship and participate in the sacraments in a manner faithful to the broader Christian heritage and appropriate to the characteristics of a specific culture and setting.</td>
<td>Courses in preaching, courses in worship</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. to provide effective and appropriate pastoral care and Christian education, and to equip and motivate others to share in these ministries.</td>
<td>Courses in pastoral care, courses in Christian education</td>
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<td>Objective</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>to organize and implement programs, administer the operations of a complex organization, and initiate change when appropriate.</td>
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<td>18.</td>
<td>to read the contexts of a community’s ministry and creatively lead that community through change or conflict.</td>
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<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>to lead and encourage ministries of evangelism, service, stewardship, and social transformation.</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td>to understand and participate in the financial administration of a church and other religious organizations.</td>
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Appendix F: The Authorization Paper

The Illinois South Conference has traditionally expected that themes to be covered in the authorization paper are: God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, Interpretation of Scripture, sacraments, the purpose of the church, sin and salvation, worship and pastoral ministry. The Manual on Ministry (section 3, pp. 4-5) describes the authorization paper as consisting of three parts.

Part one of the authorization paper is the candidate’s theological perspective and grasp of the historic Christian faith. This paper is to be seen as a setting forth of one’s own theological perspective, not as an academic term paper. There are many ways in which a candidate could go about writing this paper. One way to approach this paper is to articulate what one believes in the context of or in relation to the United Church of Christ Statement of Faith, or in the context of or in relation to paragraph 2 of the Constitution of the United Church of Christ. The purpose of part one of the authorization paper is to provide a way for the student to share his/her present grasp and understanding of the teaching and traditions of the Christian Church down through the ages and to relate this to his or her own theological perspective.

Part two of the authorization paper is intended to provide an opportunity for the student to demonstrate his or her knowledge and understanding of the history, theological roots, polity, and practice of the United Church of Christ. The candidate could write an interpretation of the history and theological roots of the United Church of Christ, referring to and commenting on key dates, persons, events, and documents that illustrate his or her interpretation in addressing the polity and practice issues. The candidate could identify and define some key words and use them to characterize the polity and practice of the United Church of Christ (e.g. covenant, unity, autonomy, congregational, etc.). The candidate then could illustrate how these understandings make claims on the way he/she will practice ministry as an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ. Another approach would be to write an interpretation of paragraphs 6, 9, 16, 17, and 18 of the Constitution of the United Church of Christ.

Part three of the authorization paper is intended to be an integrating statement that invites the person to relate the faith and practice of the Church to her or his own pilgrimage of faith and understandings of and intentions for her or his ministry as a person licensed/ordained by the United Church of Christ. Following are suggestions for subject matter for part three of the authorization paper:

- The person as a person of faith. What has been your faith pilgrimage? How has your understanding of yourself as a person of faith changed and grown during the time of preparation for ministry?
- The person as one called to licensed/ordained ministry. How has your understanding of call changed or grown during the period of preparation? What is your understanding of authorization? Church? Mission? Ministry? What is the challenge and vision you have for your ministry?
• The person as one called to a particular authorized ministry. How do you see your gifts for ministry being used in the type of ministry to which you have been called or to which you are seeking a call? If you are seeking a call to a pastorate, describe how you see yourself functioning as a pastor of a local church. If you are seeking a call to a ministry other than in a local church, how do you see yourself functioning in that kind of ministry and setting? Where do you see your ministry in five years? If not in a local church, how does your ministry relate to the local church?

• The person as one called to ordained ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ. How do you understand yourself as an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ? What are your commitments to the United Church of Christ and the Church Ecumenical? What are those aspects of the history, tradition, polity, and practice of the United Church of Christ that are most valued by you, and how will these shape the way you engage in the tasks of ordained ministry?
APPENDIX G: ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCIL

Preparation for an Ecclesiastical Council to Examine a Candidate for Ordination

Introduction
You are a delegate to this Ecclesiastical Council and you may be wondering what your responsibilities are and how you should exercise them. The Preparation Committee of the Church and Ministry Team of Illinois South Conference understands the uncertainties you may be feeling. The purpose of this paper is to help you understand the process the candidate has been through in reaching the point where he or she was recommended for this Ecclesiastical Council and to give you some insight into the Council itself. Many of the questions that were asked of the candidate in reaching this point are questions you should also ask the candidate. When the Ecclesiastical Council approves a candidate for ordination it is speaking on behalf of the entire United Church of Christ.

This is a very important time in the life of the candidate. We must be very intentional in our preparation and keep in mind the obligation we have to the Church.

The Authorization paper
You have a paper that the candidate has written. The United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry recommends that that paper be in three parts. The Preparation Committee relays that request to the candidate. The three parts are:

- Part one is the candidate's theological perspective and grasp of the historic Christian faith.
- Part two is intended to provide an opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate his/her knowledge and understanding of the history, theological roots, polity and practice of the United Church of Christ.
- Part three is intended to be an integrating statement that invites the person to relate the faith and practice of the Church to her/his own pilgrimage of faith.

We understand that not everyone has the theological background to appreciate or even understand all the nuances in each authorization paper. Read the paper for what you do understand. Try to understand what the candidate is saying about the faith, about the church and about himself or herself. In the Ecclesiastical Council ask questions about those areas that you did not understand. Do not allow yourself to be intimidated by the thought that your question will be thought to be dumb, stupid or reveal your lack of understanding. Questions that appear to be simple are often the most profound and are among the most difficult to answer. Remember that the ordination vow is to be pastor and teacher, and a good teacher must be able to explain the difficult concepts in a way that can be understood by all.
The Ordination Examination
The Preparation Committee conducts its own examination prior to the Ecclesiastical Council to determine if the candidate is ready to appear before the Council. Many of the questions that are asked in the ordination examination are those that should also be asked by delegates to the Ecclesiastical Council. We follow the guidance of the Manual on Ministry of the UCC and that manual contains some suggestions that may be helpful to you. They are repeated here:

Below are samples of questions which may enable the Committee to inquire into the substance of the candidate's fitness for ordained ministry.

- Faith and Calling. Is this a person of mature Christian faith? Does this person have a personal spiritual life and practice which can sustain her/him in the rigors of ordained ministry? Does this person understand the meaning of call to ministry and give evidence of an authentic call to ordained ministry? Can this person clearly articulate his/her theological perspective?

- Church Loyalty and Commitment. How does this person understand the polity of the United Church of Christ and the role and expectations of an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ within this polity? Is this person committed to the United Church of Christ? Will this person be a respected representative of the United Church of Christ? How does this person understand the ecumenical commitments of the United Church of Christ and what are his or her ecumenical understandings and commitments?

- Knowledge and Skills. Does this person have a general liberal arts education and give evidence of being an educated person? Is this person adequately educated in Bible, theology, church history, worship, pastoral care and counseling, administration, church education, etc.? Is there documentation that this person has acquired the skills necessary for ordained ministry? Does this person give evidence of knowing the norms of the United Church of Christ in these areas? Can this person do the work of an ordained minister?

- Character and Personal Qualities. Is this a mature person with a sense of integrity? Is this a person whom others will be able to trust and upon whom they will be able to rely? Will this person be dependable? Will he/she continue to grow?

- Understandings of Ordained Ministry. Does this person have a realistic understanding of the expectations, requirements and demands of ordained ministry? Has the person received or is the person seeking a call to a particular type of ordained ministry? How does the person see herself or himself function in that particular type of ministry and particular setting for ministry?

The key question that the ordination exam addresses is "fitness for ministry". This is the same question that you will be determining as a delegate to the Ecclesiastical Council. The difference is that only the Ecclesiastical Council can approve a candidate for ordination. The task of the Church and Ministry Team is to nurture the candidate, examine, and finally recommend the candidate to the Council. When we recommend candidates to Ecclesiastical Councils we believe they are “fit for ministry”. This does not mean that you must share our opinion, or
because the Church and Ministry Team has recommended the candidate for ordination that you must rubber stamp the process. It is still the decision of the Ecclesiastical Council as to whether the person is fit for ordination and for ministry. As you make this decision keep in mind the diversity of the United Church of Christ. The diversity of the UCC is at once our strength and joy as well as a source of exasperation; Theology is one of the areas of diversity in the UCC. It is up to you to decide acceptable bounds for diversity in this area as well as others.

**The Ecclesiastical Council**
The agenda for the Council is drawn from the UCC Manual on Ministry.

A. Opening  
B. Introduction of Candidate by the Chair of the Church and Ministry Team  
C. Short statement by the candidate  
D. Questioning of candidate by the delegates  
E. Candidate excused, discussion of candidate by delegates  
F. Vote by paper ballot, announce results to the delegates, candidate absent  
G. Recall the candidate and inform her or him of the results of the vote, but not the actual vote breakdown (This will be done later in private.)  
H. Adjournment  
I. Reception

The process can be lengthy and you should be prepared for this. It is a very important event in the candidate's life and we have an obligation to not rush the process. The moderator will continue taking questions as long as the questions are coming with little pause. The questioning of the candidate is at the heart of the process. It is your chance to be informed about the candidate, for you to ask questions that will aid in your understanding of the person and his or her fitness for ministry. Use some of the pointers given in previous portions of this paper in formulating your questions. You should also depend on your own experience.

The discussion of the candidate among the delegates after the candidate has been excused is a very important part of the process:

1. The strengths of the candidate should be reviewed.  
2. Problem areas explored.  
3. Are these areas of sufficient importance to call into question the candidate's fitness for ministry?

After the discussion period we will vote by secret ballot. Your choices are:

1. Yes for ordination.  
2. No to ordination.  
3. Abstain by not marking your ballot.
Appendix H: The Marks: An Assessment Rubric

The following link (www.uccfiles.com/pdf/Marks-Assessment) connects to the .pdf document “The Marks of Faithful and Effective Ministers of the United Church of Christ: An Assessment Rubric.” This version of The Marks will be most helpful for assessment purposes.

The additional and strongly recommended support document is:

Journaling the Journey: Engaging The Marks...for Personal Discernment and Professional Growth.
This document is also available on the UCC.org website.
Member In Discernment (Ordained and Licensed)

Name

Address

City

State

Zip

Email

Home Phone

Cell Phone

Local Church  
Membership  
Date

Local Church  
Pastor  
Date

Date Accepted into Discernment

Advisor in Discernment (AID)

Email

Phone

Preparation Committee Liaison (PCL)

Email

Phone

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A1 Progress Report (Ordained OR Licensed)  
Date Completed

A2 (Ordained) OR A3 (Licensed) Progress Report Assessments  
Date Completed

created 8/2/16
IL\NLS\N CONFERENCE

A1 Progress Report (All)
Applicant for Member In Discernment (Ordained OR Licensed)

Name ___________________________ Phone # ___________________________

Local Church ___________________________

Requirements (from ISC's Member in Discernment document)
All copies of documents are to be forwarded to the Illinois South Conference (ISC) office to be filed in each candidate’s personal file. Please provide the date completed on the corresponding blank lines.

1 __________ Applicant shares with governing body of local church his/her sense of call.
   Local church appoints a “Local Church Discernment Committee (LCDC) to work with applicant’s discernment process (Appendix A)

2 __________ Applicant will provide to LCDC the following:
   a ______ Statement of personal faith journey (3-4 pages)
   b ________ Biography (1 page)
   c ________ Understanding of call (2 pages)
   d ________ Initial Marks Assessment (Appendix E)
   e ________ Transcripts, evaluations of formal education for high school, college, military, business
   f ________ Initial education plan (Appendix E)

3 __________ LCDC reviews materials with applicant to determine sense of call

4 __________ LCDC recommends applicant to local church governing body as a candidate for authorized ministry (ordained or licensed)

5 __________ Local church governing body approves applicant to be entered into ISC MID process as managed by Preparation Committee (PC).

6 __________ All information from candidate will be forwarded to PC consisting of the following:
   g ________ Formal application request in the form of letter or email to be sent to ISC office to include all contact information.
   h ________ Signed statement of release for collection, storage, and release of information (Appendix C2)
   i ________ Verify membership in UCC congregation for at least one year, to be submitted by church leadership by letter or email to ISC.
   j ________ Three letters of reference:
               Pastor
               ________ Church leadership
               ________ MID’s choosing

PC meets with candidate to discern acceptance into ISC MID process. Decision to be recorded in minutes.

7 __________ PC accepts candidate into 2 year MID process. Committee assigns:
   a ________ Advisor in Discernment (AID) (Appendix B)
   b ________ Preparation Committee Liaison (PCL) (Appendix C)

8 __________ PC informs ISC office of acceptance of MID. ISC office to inform National UCC office.

9 __________ ISC, MID, and local church enter into Covenant of Discernment (Appendix D) (PCL to complete)

created 8/2/16
Requirements (from ISC’s Member in Discernment document)

All copies of documents are to be forwarded to the Illinois South Conference (ISC) office to be filed in each candidate’s personal file. Please provide the date completed on the corresponding blank lines.

1. Schedule and complete career/psychological assessment. Request and execute criminal background check and self-disclosure form
   (http://www.insuranceboard.org/assets/AgentDocuments/Consent_Form-50_State-2011-03-07.pdf)

2. Draft an Educational Formation Plan (EFP) using MARKS (Appendix E)
   Candidate will ensure each semester all documents are forwarded to ISC office for candidate personal file.

3. Transcripts: __________________________ Contextual Education: __________________________
   __________________________ __________________________ __________________________
   __________________________ __________________________ __________________________
   __________________________ __________________________ __________________________

   __________________________ __________________________ __________________________
   __________________________ __________________________ __________________________
   __________________________ __________________________ __________________________

5. Semi-Annual Reports:
   AID (Appendix B) __________________________ PCL (Appendix C): __________________________
   __________________________ __________________________ __________________________
   __________________________ __________________________ __________________________
   __________________________ __________________________ __________________________

6. LCDC will meet with candidate for semi-annual reflection of support and growth assessment.
   LCDC will send semi-annual assessment regarding MID to PC Chairperson and ISC office for candidate personal file.

7. Candidate to develop materials for fulfillment of portfolio.

8. Final Assessment (Ordination)
   A2.1 Revised self-assessment of MARKS
   Local church request for candidate consideration of ordination (letter/email from church leadership)
   Authorization paper (Appendix F)
   MID’s design of worship service and sermon
   Case study of a church setting of personal experience
   Confirm attainment of educational goals and degree

created 8/2/16
Four letters of reference

Seminary

AID

Ordained Minister

MID's choosing

Completed CPE unit

Complete Boundary Training within 3 years

Draft of UCC Ministerial Profile

PC reviews completion of candidate requirements, final interview of MID to confirm accomplishment by candidate.

PC sets date, time, location for ecclesiastical council (Appendix G)

Completion of ecclesiastical council, vote recording of decision "approved for ordination pending call". File in ISC office.

Inform Authorization Committee

Call agreement to be approved by Authorization Committee, sent to personal file.

Ordination service prepared by local church, MID, and PC.

Ordination performed, action reported to ISC office.
A3 Progress Report Assessment (Licensed)

Name: ____________________________ Phone #: ____________________________

Local Church: ____________________________

Advisor in Discernment (AID): ____________________________

Preparation Committee Liaison (PCL): ____________________________

Requirements (from ISC's Member in Discernment document)

All copies of documents are to be forwarded to the Illinois South Conference (ISC) office to be filed in each candidate's personal file. Please provide the date completed on the corresponding blank lines.

Required completion of 15 basic LIFE courses offered at Eden Theological Seminary to include acceptable reflection paper approved by PC.

Date of LIFE Course: ____________________________ Date of Reflection Paper: ____________________________

- On the Road to Discipleship
- Exploring the Presence of God (Thinking Theologically)
- Reading and Understanding Scripture: Old Testament
- Reading and Understanding Scripture: New Testament
- What is the Church and What is its Purpose?
- God in Scripture (Biblical Theology)
- Shaping Faithful Worship (Worship and Sacraments)
- The Church Is a Learning Community (Christian Education)
- How Do We Live Our Faith? (Christian Ethics)
- Confronting Reality: Life and Faith (Justice and Witness)
- Exploring the UCC (UCC History and Polity)
- Proclaiming the Good New (Preaching)
- Caring in Community (Pastoral Care)
- Telling and Living the Story (Evangelism)
- Christianity in America (Church History)

Candidate will ensure each set of documents are forwarded to ISC office.

Semi-annual Reports

AID (Appendix B)

PCL (Appendix C)

(created 8/2/16)
Local Church Discernment Committee meets semi-annually for reflection on support and growth. Forward review to ISC office.

Candidate to develop portfolio material.

1. Psychological Evaluation
2. Boundary Awareness Training (within 3 years)
3. Satisfactory Completion of 1 Unit of CPE
4. Draft of the UCC Ministerial Profile
5. Revised Self-Assessment of MARKS (Appendix H)
6. Authorization Paper (Appendix F)
7. Case Study from church setting in which candidate has served.
8. Four letters of reference
   - Educational Institution
   - AID
   - Ordained Minister
   - MID’s choosing
9. Design of worship service including sermon
10. Additional case studies, sermon, liturgies, essays, art, lesson plan, etc. for portfolio development.
11. Local church governing body’s letter requesting MID consideration for licensure.
12. PC to set date and location for joint meeting of Church and Ministry Team for candidate Ecclesiastical Council. Record results (pending call) and report to Conference Council.
13. Calling local church body petitions Authorization Committee seeking licensure.
15. PC, MID, and local church propose service of installation.
16. Licensure to be renewed annually through Authorization Committee.