

**Cumberland Association  
of Churches and Ministers  
Maine Conference ~ United Church of Christ**



**Guidelines for the  
Ministerial Discernment Process**

Revision Adopted September 2016

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## **Introduction**

The purpose of these Discernment Guidelines is to describe the entire process associated with being a Member in Discernment (MID), as practiced by the Committee on Church & Ministry of the Cumberland Association of the Maine Conference, United Church of Christ.

Ministerial Excellence Support Authorization (MESA) of the UCC and those working to implement the Pronouncement passed at General Synod 25 — “Ministry Issues: Forming and Preparing Pastoral Leaders for God’s Church” — have recommended a change from “Student in Care” status to “Member in Discernment” (MID) status that will appear in the next revision of Manual on Ministry. This terminology change represents a shift in terms of the emphasis on and the understanding of ministerial formation and discernment, both for candidates and those who will assess their fitness for authorized ministry. This shift is reflected in these Discernment Guidelines. However, during this time of transition, the terms should be considered essentially interchangeable.

In addition to describing the journey to be taken by the MID, these Discernment Guidelines also state the relationship of the candidate for authorized ministry to each of the following Covenantal Partners:

- I. The Local Church Discernment Group (and/or)
- II. The Local Church Sponsoring Body  
(e.g., Church Council or Board of Deacons)
- III. The Association, including the following who serve on its behalf:
  - The Committee on Church & Ministry
  - The Discernment Advisor

The process that the candidate will follow is the responsibility of the Committee on Church & Ministry (C&M). C&M is made up of both clergy and lay members from the Cumberland Association of the Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ. Among its several responsibilities are granting the licensing and recommending the commissioning and ordaining of ministers. Each of the other Covenantal Partners listed above makes contributions toward the candidate’s readiness for ministry and helps in discerning the candidate’s fitness for ministry.

No single set of guidelines can hope to cover all possible situations. However, it is expected that deviations will be rare. When C&M feels that deviations are warranted, it will attempt to make exceptions in a way that is respectful of all parties involved in the process, and in the best interest of the United Church of Christ, and the candidate, insofar as it can discern them. Throughout this document there are references to the United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry. References are cited as section number followed by page numbers. Manual on Ministry is available on line at [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org).

## **Application for Member in Discernment Relationship — An Overview**

The purpose of being in Discernment is to seek support and guidance in the process of discerning a call to the authorized ministry of the United Church of Christ — ordained, licensed, or commissioned.

## **When to Apply**

To be considered for MID status, a candidate must be a member of a local church. A person seeking authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ is strongly encouraged to apply for MID status as early possible in one’s process of discerning a call to authorized ministry; for example, upon enrollment in an accredited theological seminary or the Maine School of Ministry (MESOM) if not before. To be considered for MID status it is recommended that a candidate have acquired a high school diploma and be participating in a bachelor’s degree program or its equivalent. (Exceptions may be considered by the C&M committee.) For licensed ministry, college education is encouraged but not required.

## **Length of Relationship**

In order to be considered for an authorized ministry, it is recommended that the candidate be in the MID process for at least two full years. MID status is not transferable from one association to another either within the Maine Conference or with other conferences of the United Church of Christ. MIDs who are moving from another association in the United Church of Christ to the Cumberland Association and who wish to continue their MID status must make application as outlined in these guidelines. Consideration will be given to years already in Discernment and where the candidate currently is in her or his process. MID status, once granted, is reviewed and renewed on a yearly basis. Those MIDs who have completed their education and have been approved for ordination pending a call by Ecclesiastical Council of the Association will continue as a MID until receiving a ministerial call. Though the formal advisory relationship will cease, candidates approved for ordination pending call, licensure, or commissioning will meet with C&M at least annually in an agreed upon review process, in addition to maintaining their participation in the local church.

## **The Discernment Journey**

The Discernment relationship is covenantal, with the purpose of helping the candidate in the discernment of a call to authorized Christian ministry and the process of moving toward ordination, licensure, or commissioning. This journey begins with an individual's seeking to clarify his or her call to ministry and moves from there to application for MID status. If MID status is granted, the journey continues until such time as the candidate is ordained, licensed, or commissioned, or the Discernment relationship is terminated by either the candidate or C&M. It is expected that all Members in Discernment will have a copy of these Discernment Guidelines and will reference the United Church of Christ publication, *The Manual on Ministry*, available online at <http://www.ucc.org>, in particular Sections 2 (Students), 6 (Commissioned Ministry), and 7 (Licensed Ministry).

MIDs are expected to be familiar with Section 2 and any updates. MIDs seeking Commissioned or Licensed should be familiar with the applicable sections 6 (Commissioned Ministry), and 7 (Licensed Ministry) and any updates. Each person granted MID status is expected to be familiar with the Codes of Conduct as outlined in the United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry. While MIDs, candidates are held accountable to the ethics outlined in *"The Church's Expectations of Its Applicants for Student In-Care,"* Section 2, p. 18, Manual on Ministry. Any breach of these ethics will be investigated by C&M in consultation with the candidate's Discernment Advisor and the Discernment Group of his or her local church. A serious or chronic breach of ethics may be grounds for terminating MID status.

## **I. THE LOCAL CHURCH DISCERNMENT GROUP**

**A. Role of Pastor of the Local Church in which the MID holds membership:** The candidate for authorized ministry will seek out the pastor of the local church in which she or he holds membership to discuss his or her sense of call. The pastor will listen to and counsel the candidate regarding his or her call, and will continue to be available throughout the successive stages of the process. A copy of these Discernment Guidelines is given to the candidate by the pastor. These Guidelines may also be obtained from the Association Clerk.

**B. Formation of Discernment Group:** A Local Church Discernment Group is formed by the local church, consisting of the pastor and representatives from the local congregation. Its purpose is to meet with the candidate to discern and clarify the call that the candidate has received. The Discernment Group should explore with the candidate the issues outlined in Section 2, page 4, of Manual on Ministry. The composition of this group is left to the local church to determine. This may be a pre-existing committee (e.g., Council or Board of Deacons) or one created specifically for the purpose. (It may be that Discernment Group will be formed as the candidate's journey continues.) The candidate and the Discernment Group may be helpfully guided in their work of initial discernment through the use of the resource, *"Ask the Question: A Resource for Discernment of Call,"* available through the UCC website at [www.askthequestion.org](http://www.askthequestion.org).

**C. Request of Formal Sponsorship by the Local Church:** When both the Local Church Discernment Group and the candidate agree that the candidate is prepared to enter into the MID process

with C&M, the candidate may be presented to an authorized group of the congregation's choice (e.g., Church Council or Board of Deacons) by the Discernment Group to request formal sponsorship by the local church as a MID. Note: This step may be omitted if the Sponsoring Body has already acted as the Discernment Group (see Section IB).

## II. THE LOCAL CHURCH SPONSORING BODY

**A. Candidate's Formal Request:** When a candidate is ready to make a formal request to the local church for its sponsorship in the MID process with C&M, the local church will determine which group within the congregation will serve as the Sponsoring Body (e.g., Council or Board of Deacons).

**B. Church Notification of Committee on Church & Ministry:** A lay leader or pastor notifies the Clerk or Chair of the Committee on Church & Ministry. C&M will make available to the pastor, the candidate, the Local Church Discernment Group (if other than the Sponsoring Body), and the local church Sponsoring Body the outline of the Discernment journey and the requirements and expectations of all those in the Discernment Covenant, Appendix F. C&M will schedule a meeting with all parties at the local church to review this document.

**C. Candidate's Documentation:** The local church Sponsoring Body receives the request of the candidate for sponsorship, which includes statements about his or her Christian pilgrimage and biography, how the call to ministry is understood by the candidate at the present time, educational plans for the future, as well as documentation of formal education (i.e., a high school diploma and/or other post-high school degrees, and all post-high school academic transcripts). The appropriate body (Discernment Group, Pastor, Board of Deacons), on behalf of the local church, then decides whether to recommend the candidate to C&M to be received as a MID. If the Sponsoring Body approves the request for sponsorship, the Application for Member in Discernment Status, Appendix B, should be filled out and added to the candidate's application materials.

**D. Sponsoring Group Meeting with Church and Ministry:** Only with the formal sponsorship of the local church may the candidate be presented to C&M for consideration of MID status. It is expected that the candidate will continue her or his membership and relationship with the sponsoring congregation.

**E. Role of Church and Pastor after MID Status Granted:** If MID status is granted by C&M, the pastor and the local church can participate with the candidate in the following ways:

1. Assist in providing annual financial support. Financial aid to the candidate after approval for MID status by C&M is recommended when appropriate. The local church is also encouraged to defray the costs of travel for interviews.
2. Maintain contact to remind the candidate of the constant prayer and support that he/she receives from many different sources. Examples:
  - a. Regular public prayers for the MID may be offered by the pastor or lay leaders.
  - b. The pastor and/or local church members may offer spiritual direction to the MID.
  - c. For candidates moving toward ordination, the pastor may be asked to read a rough draft of the candidate's ordination paper in advance of an Ordination Interview.
3. While the candidate is in seminary or the Maine School of Ministry, the local church is strongly encouraged to keep him or her on mailing lists and remember him or her through prayer and cards on birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays. Visits by local church members when in the geographic area of the seminary are also encouraged.

4. The MID's participation in worship when the candidate is at his/her home or sponsoring church is another way in which the ongoing relationship between the sponsoring church and the candidate can be strengthened.
5. Continuing conversations between the local pastor, the Local Church Discernment Group, and candidate may reveal concerns that may need to be conveyed to the C&M for its consideration, advice, and assistance.
6. Participate in the candidate's Annual Reviews (Section III G (MID Guidelines). Also, see the format in Manual on Ministry, Section 2, pages 10&11, entitled "The Annual Review.")
7. If the sponsoring church has not already done so, it will create a Church Discernment Group of two to four parishioners to support the candidate for her or his journey to authorized ministry, meeting with the candidate quarterly.
8. With the help of the candidate, the Local Church Discernment Group may create a Student Profile that lists the individual's past and continuing experience with his or her local church (e.g., keeping records of conferences attended, teaching Church School, singing in the choir, Peace & Justice Committee work). The sponsoring Discernment Group, along with the sponsoring church pastor may help the candidate create a plan for participation when attending the local church. This plan may help fill out the profile of experience, including but not limited to preaching and participating in worship; learning how to conduct a funeral, communion, baptism, or wedding; working with the ministries of stewardship, evangelism, and mission; and ministering to the dying and their families.

**F. Request for Ecclesiastical Council:** At the completion of the discernment journey, the local church shall request in writing that C&M examine the candidate for ordination or licensure. Upon recommendation of C&M, the Cumberland Association will be asked to convene an Ecclesiastical Council.

### III. COMMITTEE ON CHURCH & MINISTRY (C&M)

**Role of the Committee:** The Committee on Church & Ministry is the authorized body that oversees the MID process. It relies on the local sponsoring church and the Discernment Advisor to be in close relationship with each MID, and it relies upon their recommendations. Candidates seeking MID status and ordination, licensure, or commissioning will be required to meet with C&M at specific times during the process.

**A. MID Guidelines Distribution:** When a candidate, pastor of candidate, or church inquires about the MID process, C&M will make available a copy of the MID Guidelines to the Candidate, his/her pastor, the church's Discernment Committee, and/or the local church's sponsoring body (e.g., Church Council, Board of Deacons). The Guidelines are to be used to help the church make its decision to recommend or not recommend the candidate to C&M for MID status.

**B. Preliminary Interview:** Upon the approval by the Local Church Sponsoring Body, the candidate is introduced in person to C&M by the sponsoring pastor and a lay member (the chair of the Deacons or other key layperson) of the sponsoring church at a preliminary interview.

**C. Documents Provided by Candidate:** The following documents must be submitted to the Association Clerk, who will distribute to the C&M Committee in advance of this initial meeting:

1. The Application for Member in Discernment Status and Statement of Consent and Background Disclosure, Appendices B and C.

2. Written verification of membership by a sponsoring church of the United Church of Christ.
3. The Questionnaire for Those Seeking Member in Discernment Status, Appendix D, completed by three people, one of whom is the candidate's pastor. The Questionnaire is used in place of or in addition to narrative recommendations.
4. The background materials the candidate presented to the sponsoring church, revised if necessary, including the person's life pilgrimage, understanding of call, and formal education.
5. A letter from the sponsoring church describing the process used by the local church to examine the candidate.
6. A written statement from the candidate outlining a financial plan for pursuing theological education and living with the financial limitations that accompany authorized ministry. The candidate should respond to the following questions:
  - How will you financially support your seminary or Maine School of Ministry education?
  - Have you and your family discussed accruing what may be significant educational debt and the challenges of repaying that debt based on the average salaries of authorized ministers?
  - Do you have any significant financial factors that may affect your proposed choices in ministry (e.g., mortgage payments, elderly parents to support, child's college tuition to pay)?
  - Are you currently able to meet your debts as they become due? Do you expect this situation to change? Please explain.
  - Do you now need or do you anticipate needing financial assistance?
  - Do you have health care coverage?
  - With whom have you consulted in making your financial plans?
7. Any other materials that were provided to the local church Sponsoring Body, revised if necessary.

**D. The Interview Process:** C&M will examine the candidate at the preliminary meeting based upon the material submitted, as well as the oral presentation and dialogue. This is a two-way interview; the candidate should take the opportunity to ask questions regarding the discernment relationship and process, as well as any special concerns related to the candidate's particular situation. These questions or any others may and should be raised by the candidate at any point in the discernment process if these matters require clarification.

#### **E. Decision Concerning MID Status and Follow-up**

1. After interviewing the candidate and reviewing all the candidate's materials, C&M may, according to the criteria in Section 2, pages 5-8 of Manual on Ministry, formally receive him or her as a MID of the Cumberland Association. C&M will assign a Discernment Advisor, share a copy of "Guidelines for Members in Discernment and Advisors," and enter into the Discernment Covenant, Appendix F.
2. C&M will introduce the candidate as a MID at a meeting of the Cumberland Association.
3. If C&M decides not to grant MID status, the candidate will be informed and invited to discuss the Committee's concerns. The candidate may choose to address the concerns C&M has outlined and may later reapply for MID status.

## **F. Meeting with Partners in the MID Process**

1. Two representatives from C&M shall meet with the MID, his/her pastor, advisor, and Local Church Discernment Committee as soon as possible following acceptance of MID status.
2. The purpose of this meeting will be to review written copies of the role of the sponsoring pastor, advisor, discernment committee, and MID for the duration of the MID process.

**G. Psychological and Career Assessment:** After the MID completes his/her first year of seminary, the candidate is provided with the information needed to make arrangements for a psychological and career assessment by an examiner approved by C&M.

1. The results of the assessment are confidential and are sent to the MID and directly to the Clerk. A subcommittee of C&M will review this assessment and make appropriate recommendations.
2. A copy of the assessment may be shared by the candidate with his/her Discernment Advisor and sponsoring pastor.
3. The cost of the assessment will be split between the MID, the Local Sponsoring Church, and C&M.

## **H. Annual Reviews**

1. Annual Reviews are held with C&M for the purpose of evaluating the past year and looking ahead to the next year of the discernment journey. The Annual Review also seeks to maintain the covenantal relationship with the candidate and explores ways to improve the supportive relationship between C&M and the MID.
2. All MIDs are invited to an Annual MID Day for the purpose of annual reviews.
3. The pastor of the candidate's sponsoring church and the Discernment Advisor are expected to participate in each Annual Review. The Annual Review is expected to be face-to-face.
4. Annual Reviews with the candidate and C&M consist of four parts:
  - a. Review of seminary transcripts, Academy valuations, and reviews
  - b. An oral, face-to-face interview
  - c. Written responses to the questions assigned for each Annual Review (see I-K below)
  - d. The Annual Review Preparation Sheet, Appendix G1, filled out by the candidate and Appendix G2 by his/her Discernment Advisor
5. Candidates are asked to forward materials to the Clerk 30 days prior to each Annual Review:
  - a. All seminary transcripts, MESOM evaluations, or field education evaluations
  - b. Any CPE evaluations



- c. Any review processes initiated by the seminary or MESOM in any area
- d. Written reflections to Annual Review questions as outlined in the directions for each Annual Review, covering each subject adequately but concisely (see I-K below).

6. Some of the questions that the candidate may be asked to respond to orally at the annual review are listed below:

- a. What aspects of your academic program do you most and least value?
- b. What is your understanding of the authorized ministry requirements and what progress do you see yourself making toward meeting them?
- c. Describe a time when your relationship with God deepened or otherwise changed this year.
- d. Name a person who has made an impact on your spiritual life and describe that impact.
- e. How do you experience the influence of Jesus in your life?
- f. What inhibits you from living out your faith?
- g. What do you do to take care of your spiritual, physical and emotional wellbeing?

#### **I. First Year Annual Review Questions**

1. Reflect upon this past year's seminary or MESOM experience in terms of expectations met and/or surpassed, disappointments, and overall impressions.
2. In the midst of all the pressures of going to school, be specific about how you have been able to attend to your spiritual journey.
3. Share any significant developments in your thinking in matters of faith, style of ministry, and ordination or authorization plans.
4. Name at least one issue that you believe the church, in any of its various settings, needs to address as it moves into the next decade.
5. How are you meeting your seminary's or MESOM's requirements for theological education and/or those suggestions made by your Discernment Advisor and/or C&M?
6. Are there physical or emotional health issues that you want to share with C&M?

#### **J. Second Year Annual Review Questions**

1. Describe a difficult real-life situation you encountered this past year and comment on the theological/spiritual concepts that may apply in this situation.
2. Reflect upon the past year's discernment experience in terms of expectations met and/or surpassed, disappointments, and overall impressions.

3. Address how you might deal with a congregation when your ethical position runs contrary to the norms of the majority of the congregation using one (1) of the following issues or another of your choice:

abortion	marriage equality	parenting
divorce	addiction	inclusive language
justice	issues of sexual orientation	UCC identity
women in ministry	peace/war	race
politics	church U.S. flag display	human sexuality

4. What do you see as your special personal qualities? What will you uniquely bring to the United Church of Christ that is needed?

5. How are you meeting your seminary's or the Academy's requirements for theological education and/or those suggestions made by your Discernment Advisor and/or this C&M?

6. Do you have physical, mental, and/or emotional health issues of which C&M should be aware?

#### **K. Third and Subsequent Year Annual Review Questions**

If applicable, these will be developed each additional year and given to the candidate four weeks prior to their due date.

#### **L. Vote to Renew MID Status**

1. One copy of all materials is placed in the candidate's permanent file.
2. A vote is taken by C&M to recommend either renewing or terminating the candidate's MID status.
3. If C&M votes to recommend termination of MID status based on failure to adequately fulfill the requirements, the candidate will be informed and invited to discuss this decision.
4. Following a vote to renew MID status, the candidate will be notified in writing.

**M. Ordination Paper Interview:** The ordination paper is a critical aspect of the MID's preparation for the Ecclesiastical Council. The paper should be started following completion of the MID's seminary school. The C&M committee will review and discuss the paper and meet with the candidate to discuss the paper and help ensure that the candidate is prepared for the Ecclesiastical Council. If all of the requirements identified in Section N - "Ordination Interview" have been completed, and verified by the Clerk, the Ordination Interview may be included as part of the Ordination Paper Interview.

1. The ordination paper will follow one of the three suggested outlines listed in Appendix H of this document. It should be double-spaced, using a 12-point font, and should not exceed 25 pages.
2. A draft of the candidate's ordination paper is prepared in consultation with the Discernment Advisor
3. The Discernment Advisor will review the paper with the candidate, making suggested revisions for when it is to be presented to the C&M committee for the Ordination Paper Interview.

4. A candidate is encouraged to consult with his/her pastor prior to submitting the paper to the C&M committee. The candidate may also consult with his/her seminary advisor.
5. Following approval from the Discernment Advisor and local pastor, the candidate should send an electronic copy of the candidate's ordination paper to the Clerk at least 30 days prior to meeting with the C&M committee for review.
6. The C&M committee will review the Paper and schedule an interview with the candidate to discuss contents of the paper. The Discernment Advisor and Candidate's Pastor will accompany the Candidate to the Ordination Paper Interview and will be free to participate.
7. The C&M committee may decide that there are areas of the paper that the candidate needs to rewrite before a recommendation can be made. If no editing is required, the committee will proceed to Section N (Ordination Interview) subsection 1.d Preparation for engaging in four areas of dialogue.

**N. Ordination Interview:** The final interview before a candidate is granted authorization for an Ecclesiastical Council is the Ordination or Commissioning Interview. This interview is conducted following the Final Year Review with the C&M committee. The primary purpose of the Ordination Interview is to determine the candidate's readiness and fitness for ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ.

1. The following are required of candidates for the Ordination Interview:
  - a. Successful completion of the following:
    - a.1. Education: The requirements for an undergraduate degree from an accredited college or university, or its equivalent as determined by C&M, together with an appropriate degree and final transcripts from an accredited seminary relative to her or his particular area of ministry.
    - a.2. At least one basic unit of an accredited Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) program that is accepted by the C&M committee.
    - a.3. One school year (2 semesters) of a mentored field education program accepted by the C&M committee and the candidate's seminary.
    - a.4. A Clergy Boundary Training workshop or seminar accepted by the C&M committee.
    - a.5. A United Church of Christ history, polity, and identity course.
    - a.6. A final draft of the candidate's ordination paper as approved by the C&M committee.
    - a.7. An application from the candidate's local congregation requesting that the Association examine the candidate for ordination, submitted no earlier than six months prior to the candidate's completion of theological education (see Section 3, page 18, Manual on Ministry).
  - b. At least four letters of reference, including one from the seminary, one from the candidate's Discernment Advisor, and one from an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ, emailed if possible to the Clerk.

c. An audio or video recording of a sermon recently delivered. This should be sent the Clerk for distribution to C&M committee 60 days before the interview.

d. Preparation for engaging in four areas of dialogue, as follows:

d.1 The candidate's personal faith and her/his journey to this day.

d.2 The content of the candidate's ordination paper.

d.3 The candidate's knowledge of the history, polity, and identity of the United Church of Christ.

d.4 The candidate's ability to articulate thoughts and feelings meaningfully and authentically.

e. The Discernment Advisor and Candidate's Pastor will accompany the Candidate to the Ordination Interview and will be free to participate.

f. Upon completion of the Ordination Interview, a vote is taken by the C&M committee to determine whether to recommend ordained ministerial standing to the Association. If there is a negative vote by C&M, the candidate is brought back and concerns are expressed.

g. The C&M committee may decide that there are areas the candidate needs to work on before a recommendation can be made. The candidate may then choose to work on the areas of concern C&M has outlined and return for further examination or the candidate may terminate his/her MID status.

h. The C&M committee may decide that its decision to deny a recommendation is final. In this case the MID status is terminated with regret. If the vote is favorable, the candidate is recommended for an Ecclesiastical Council for the purpose of determining whether to award ordained ministerial authorization.

#### **O. Ecclesiastical Council**

1. The chairperson of C&M coordinates with the candidate to set the date, place, and time for an Ecclesiastical Council.

2. The chairperson of C&M establishes a subcommittee to work with the candidate to plan for the candidate's presentation to the Ecclesiastical Council.

3. The Clerk of the Association sends out a call to all Association Churches, authorized Ministers, and delegates for Ecclesiastical Council and includes the Ordination Paper.

4. The Ecclesiastical Council is held in accordance with the bylaws of the Cumberland Association, using Appendix J as a guideline.

5. If the vote of the Ecclesiastical Council is in the affirmative, "ordination pending call" status may be granted.

6. The MID is then authorized to circulate his/her Ministerial Profile, if not previously authorized to do so.

## **P. Ordination Service Process**

1. When the candidate receives a call from an appropriate Calling Body, as approved by C&M, the ordination date is set by the Association Moderator, in consultation with the chairperson of C&M, the ordinand, and the sponsoring church. Coordination of the event is handled by the candidate and C&M. The Clerk of the Association sends out the announcement to the churches in the Association.
2. The C&M committee assigns a liaison to work with the ordinand to design the ordination liturgy and service of worship based on the UCC Book of Worship.
3. During the ordination service, the Ordination Certificate is presented.

**Q. Licensure Review for Candidates Seeking Licensure:** Members in Discernment considering licensed ministry may be received by the Association through the same MID process as for other forms of authorized ministry.

As with any discernment process, the requirements of preparation are for a form and type of ministry, not for a particular call. The C&M Committee must evaluate a candidate's preparedness and fitness for ministry, before considering whether a particular call is appropriate for authorization. Candidates should therefore be cautioned that undertaking a program of preparation for authorization does not assure authorization, or authorization for a particular call. For more information, refer to the Manual on Ministry, Section 7.

1. Materials Required:
  - a. A letter from the local church/calling body requesting that the candidate be licensed for ministry. (Refer to Manual on Ministry, Section 7, page 21, Step 14)
  - b. The candidate's licensure paper, prepared in consultation with the Discernment Advisor. The ministerial paper will include:
    - b.1 The candidate's faith journey
    - b.2 The candidate's written reflection on the sacraments
    - b.3 History and polity of the UCC
    - b.4 A list of books read from the recommended reading list
  - c. The Annual Review Preparation Sheet, filled out by the candidate (Appendix G1) and his/her Discernment Advisor (Appendix G2).
2. C&M Committee Interview and Decision: Following the interview, C&M will decide whether to recommend the candidate for a Licensing Interview. If C&M denies or postpones a recommendation, the candidate will be informed in writing and invited to continue conversation with the Committee concerning what, if any, work still needs to be accomplished before a favorable recommendation can be made.
3. Intake Interview: The final interview before a candidate is granted authorization for licensed ministry is conducted by C&M following the Final Year Review with the Committee. The primary purpose of the Licensing Interview is to determine the candidate's readiness and fitness for licensed ministry in the United Church of Christ.

4. Requirements: The following are required of candidates for the Licensing Interview:

a. Successful completion of the following:

a.1 Documented education and demonstrated proficient knowledge of the bible, theology, and church history to be determined on a case-by-case basis as determined by C&M.

Possible requisites include:

- Two years of participation in the Academy for Congregational Life and Leadership, MESOM, or its equivalent
- Study in the Old Testament, New Testament, Biblical Interpretation, UCC Polity (if this course is audited, written work must be submitted to C&M), Knowledge of Worship, and Sacraments and Liturgy of the UCC

a.2 A mentored field education program accepted by C&M.

a.3 A Clergy Boundary Training workshop or seminar accepted by C&M.

b. At least four letters of reference, including one from MESOM or its equivalent, one from the candidate's Discernment Advisor, who is an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ, one from the mentor of the candidate's field experience, and one from the candidate's Local Church Discernment Group or Sponsoring Body. These should be submitted to the Clerk

c. A copy of a sermon recently delivered should be submitted to the Clerk 30 days before the interview. (Audio or video recordings welcomed.)

d. Copies of the candidate's licensure paper as approved by the C&M committee, emailed at least one month prior to the Licensing Interview to the Association Clerk. A packet of all materials must be submitted for the official file.

e. Completion of a criminal background check, with the candidate financially responsible.

4. Licensure Interview: The Discernment Advisor and a representative of the local church/calling body will accompany the candidate to the Licensure Interview and will be free to participate.

a. Upon completion of the Licensing Interview, a vote is taken by C&M to determine whether to grant licensed ministerial authorization.

b. If there is a negative vote by C&M, the candidate is brought back and concerns are expressed.

b.1 C&M may decide that there are areas the candidate needs to work on before a recommendation can be made. The candidate may then choose to work on the areas of concern that C&M has outlined and return for further examination, or the candidate may terminate his/her MID status.

b.2 C&M may decide that its decision to deny a recommendation is final. In this case the MID status is terminated with regret.

c. If the vote is favorable:

c.1 Licensure will be for one year and will be considered for renewal annually by C&M. Subsequent licensing after the first couple of years may be extended for 2 years then 5 years with concurrence of C&M, Church Pastor and Licensed Minister

c.2 The nature and terms of the licensure will be put forth in writing and shared with all covenanting partners.

c.3 The licensed minister may be assigned an advisor with whom to share the joys and challenges of ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ.

c.4 There may be a service of celebration and recognition at one of the semiannual gatherings of the Association (see Book of Worship).

c.5 C&M will continue to serve as a resource of support and nurture for the licensed minister.

c.6 Licensed ministers are required to audit one class per year to qualify for licensed renewal

**R. COMMISSIONED MINISTRY:** Members in Discernment considering commissioned ministry may be received by the Association through the same MID process as for other forms of authorized ministry.

As with any discernment process, the requirements of preparation are for a form and type of ministry, not for a particular call. The C&M Committee must evaluate a candidate's preparedness and fitness for ministry, before considering whether a particular call is appropriate for authorization. Candidates should therefore be cautioned that undertaking a program of preparation for authorization does not assure authorization, or authorization for a particular call. For more information, refer to the Manual on Ministry, Section 6.

1. Types of Commissioned Ministry: The C&M Committee has approved the following specific church related ministries as commissionable ministries. Examples listed below each type of ministry are not exclusive.

a. Faith Formation: Ministry of education and nurture in Christian discipleship for people all ages in the United Church of Christ, such as Christian Education, Youth and Young Adult Ministry, Outdoor Ministries, Spiritual Direction.

b. Administration: Ministry of organizational administration in settings of the United Church of Christ such as Parish Administration, Administration in other church related settings.

c. Sacred Arts: Ministry of artistic leadership and creation in musical, movement, liturgical, visual or other arts in church settings, such as Ministry of Music, Artist in Residence.

d. Health and Wholeness: Ministry of health and healing, such as Parish Nursing, Pastoral Counselor, Spiritual Direction

e. Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations: Ministry of relationship, dialogue, and connection with other denominations and faith traditions, such as Ecumenical organization, Academic religious community life, Interfaith dialogue.

f. Advocacy, Transformation, and Mission: Ministry and mission within the global community with organizations or agencies seeking peace, justice, or systemic transformation, such as Community organizing, Missionary work.

2. General Qualifications for Commissioned Ministry: The qualifications required of all commissioned ministers, regardless of the specialty include:

a. A bachelor's degree or its equivalent.

b. Documented education and demonstrated proficient knowledge of the bible, theology, and church history to be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Possible requisites include:

- 1 semester or the equivalent of study in both Hebrew and Christian Scriptures at an accredited educational institution. Undergraduate or graduate level.
- Mentored study of a book on Christian Basics as recommended by the committee.

c. Completed UCC History and Polity Course at an accredited institution, such as:

- Andover Newton Theological Seminary
- General Synod intensive

d. Basic skills in working with persons and groups, in administration, planning, and organizing to be evaluated through references. This may be determined by references submitted at the time the Member was accepted into Discernment. Additional references may be requested to evaluate these skills, such as from

- A local church representative
- A pastor or other UCC clergy person
- A professional supervisor

3. Specialized Preparation for Commissioned Ministry: In preparation for an area of specialization for Commissioned Ministry, a MID is asked to design and propose, in collaboration with her/his Discernment Advisor, an individual program of study that will best prepare him/her for this ministry focus. The design of this program is itself a demonstration of the MID's understanding of commissioned ministry, and what skills, knowledge, and understanding are needed for entering this ministry. Each plan must include a syllabus of educational resources, including mentors in similar types of ministry, and some period of supervised practice.

a. The proposal must be reviewed, revised, and approved by C&M before it is implemented.



b. The progress of this program of study will be reviewed by C&M at the time of each annual review and renewal of MID status, and/or at the request of C&M.

c. A report documenting the completion of this program of study will be prepared for C&M to review, in addition to all other requested documents.

4. Documents requested of the candidate: The following materials shall be compiled and presented to C&M by the candidate upon completing a discernment process with a request for commissioning:

a. Commissioning paper that will be developed in three parts:

a.1 Part one is the candidate's theological perspective.

a.2 Part two is intended to provide an opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate his or her knowledge and understanding of the history, theological roots, polity, and practice of the United Church of Christ.

a.3 Part three is intended to be an integrating statement that invites the candidate to relate the faith and practice of the Church to her or his own pilgrimage of faith and understandings of and intention for her or his ministry as a person commissioned by the United Church of Christ.

b. Certification of educational attainment, including the formal education and training programs previously specified by the Committee.

c. Documentation of ability, skills, knowledge, and training required for the specific type of church-related ministry. This will include both formal education and training experiences, as well as the skills and knowledge gained through life experiences and the individual study program approved by C&M and completed by the candidate.

d. Four letters of reference. One is to be from the advisor appointed by C&M and one from a person knowledgeable about the candidate's educational preparation. If possible, one should be from a commissioned minister of the United Church of Christ. The references should be asked to speak directly to the question of the candidate's preparedness and fitness for commissioned ministry.

e. A Ministerial Profile. This is the resource used in the United Church of Christ for persons seeking a ministry position.

f. A psychological evaluation of the candidate must also be completed in accordance with Association policies for Members in Discernment.

5. Commissioning Interview: The C&M Committee will review the materials and meet with the MID to review the candidate preparedness in relation to the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers in discerning whether to recommend the Candidate to an Ecclesiastical Council for Commissioning, pending an approved call.

a. The Discernment Advisor will accompany the candidate to the Commissioning Interview and will be free to participate.

b. Upon completion of the Commissioning Interview, a vote is taken by C&M to determine whether to recommend commissioned ministerial authorization to the Association.

c. If there is a negative vote by C&M, the candidate is brought back and concerns are expressed.

c.1 C&M may decide that there are areas the candidate needs to work on before a recommendation can be made. The candidate may then choose to work on the areas of concern that C&M has outlined and return for further examination, or the candidate may terminate his/her MID status.

c.2 C&M may decide that its decision to deny a recommendation is final. In this case the MID status is terminated with regret.

d. If the vote is favorable, the candidate is recommended for an Ecclesiastical Council for the purpose of determining whether to award commissioned ministerial authorization.

6. Evaluation of Call: A call to a commissioned ministry position will be evaluated by C&M in accordance with the guidelines of the Manual on Ministry. A call must be approved in order to proceed with authorizing a Commissioned Minister.

7. Ecclesiastical Council: An Ecclesiastical Council will be called and conducted as described in Section III O on page 12 of these Guidelines.

8. Commissioning Service: When the candidate receives a call from an appropriate Calling Body, as approved by C&M, the commissioning date is set by the Association Moderator, in consultation with the chairperson of C&M, the candidate, and the sponsoring church. Coordination of the event is handled by the candidate and the C&M chairperson or his/her delegate. The Clerk of the Association sends out the announcement to the churches in the Association.

a. The commissioning liturgy is based on the United Church of Christ Book of Worship.

b. The Clerk of the association provides the Commissioning Certificate.

#### **IV. DISCERNMENT ADVISOR**

**A. Assignment of Discernment Advisor:** When a candidate is accepted as a Member-in-Discernment (MID), C&M assigns a Discernment Advisor, who will be an additional covenantal partner with the MID, alongside the MID's home church, local church pastor, the Association, and other relevant advisors or supervisors involved in the MID's ministerial formation. Together, this group participates in a communal discernment process with the MID as the MID prayerfully and practically pursues his or her understanding of God's call. At any time the MID may call on C&M for assistance with understanding the Discernment Process. The Discernment Advisor is typically an ordained, retired, licensed, or commissioned minister with standing in the Cumberland Association.

**B. Assistance Provided:** The primary responsibility of the Discernment Advisor is to engage the MID in theological and spiritual reflection relative to the MID's evolving sense of call and experience of ministerial formation. Fulfillment of this responsibility includes:

1. Pray for the candidate.

2. Have conversations (in person, if at all possible) with the MID at least four times a year, with an intentional focus on how the MID is experiencing God in the midst of his/her formation; the MID's understanding of call; the joys and challenges of the MID's spiritual life and practice.
3. Be accessible for the MID to raise and explore questions about faith, the church, and the Christian ministry throughout the year.
4. Contribute to the MID's Annual Review process as requested by the MID or C&M.
5. For candidates seeking ordination, advise the MID on the drafting of the ordination paper and required documentation prior to the paper being submitted to C&M.
6. Accompany the MID to all C&M interviews.
7. Provide written references on behalf of the MID when requested, as appropriate. In addition, the Discernment Advisor will have the following responsibilities:
  8. Be familiar with the general process and covenantal partners involved with the MID's experience as a MID.
  9. Communicate with C&M regarding the MID.
  10. Encourage the MID to take an active part in the various settings of the UCC: Association, Conference, and Denomination.
  11. Provide the MID with recommendations for further development, including reading, formal and informal opportunities for learning or growth, and mentors.
  12. As applicable and as invited, provide preparation support and attend the MID's ecclesiastical council and ordination service.
  13. When a Discernment Advisor's relationship with a MID has ended for any reason, all confidential records (transcripts, evaluations, etc.) relevant to the MID will be returned to Clerk and placed in the MID's files or destroyed.

## Appendix A:

### Glossary of Terms

**Association:** A geographical area within the Conference in which local churches have gathered together for mutual support. The Committee on Church & Ministry (C&M) acts on behalf of the Association, which supports the MID through encouragement, engagement, financial assistance where possible, and, in particular, by paying one-third of the fee for the psychological and career assessment. Associations receive the recommendation of C&M concerning candidates who have completed the Discernment process and call Ecclesiastical Councils for the purpose of examining candidates and determining whether to authorize candidates for ordination. Ministerial authorization is conferred by and ministerial standing is held in the Association and not by and in C&M.

**Candidate:** A term used in this document to refer to persons considering or in discernment about authorized ministry, regardless of whether these individuals have been formally received as Members in Discernment (MID) by C&M.

**Covenantal Relationship:** A relationship based on promises of mutual, shared responsibility and caring. Covenantal relationships are the fundamental organizing premise of the entire United Church of Christ.

**Covenantal Partners:** All participants in the discernment process as defined by those who contribute to the candidate's readiness for ministry and help in discerning the candidate's fitness for ministry (e.g., the Local Church Representative Committee, Local Church Sponsoring Body, the candidate's pastor, the Association, C&M, field education supervisor, CPE supervisor, academic advisor, or Discernment Advisor).

**Committee on Church & Ministry (C&M):** This committee is made up of both clergy and lay members who recommend the licensing, commissioning, and ordaining of ministers to the Association. The committee also determines, confers, and certifies standing of the local churches of the United Church of Christ within its geographical area.

**Discernment Advisor:** Upon approval of the candidate for MID (MID) status, C&M assigns a Discernment Advisor who engages the MID in theological and spiritual reflection relative to the MID's evolving sense of call and experience of ministerial formation. The Advisor usually is an ordained, licensed, or commissioned minister in good standing with the candidate's home Association. On occasion C&M may assign a candidate to an ordained, licensed, or commissioned United Church of Christ minister not of the candidate's home Association, or a qualified lay person.

**Local Church:** The candidate for ministry's home church. The local church is a party to the MID relationship and is responsible for continued guidance and support of the candidate as he or she progresses toward authorized ministry.

**Local Church Discernment Committee:** A committee, consisting of the pastor and representatives from the local congregation, that meets with the candidate to discern and clarify the call that the candidate has received. This group may or may not be a pre-established group such as the Church Council or Board of Deacons. When both the Discernment Committee and the candidate are in agreement that the candidate is prepared to enter into the MID process, it presents the candidate to Sponsoring Body and requests local church sponsorship (unless the Discernment Committee and Sponsoring Body are one and the same; see note on Section I, part C).

**Local Church Sponsoring Body:** A group within the local church (e.g., Church Council or Board of Deacons) that has been authorized to receive and act upon the request of the candidate for sponsorship as a MID. After meeting with the candidate, and hearing from a representative of C&M concerning the Discernment process, the Sponsoring Body may approve the request for sponsorship and submit the

Application for MID Status to C&M. It is only with the sponsorship of the local church that the candidate may be presented to C&M for consideration of MID status.

**Maine School of Ministry (MESOM):** Successor to the Academy of Congregational Life and Leadership, the Maine School of Ministry seeks to support and deepen the spiritual growth of the people of Maine; encourage a culture of learning in our congregations; with the oversight of the MESoM board, and in partnership with Committees on Ministry of the Conference, to work on the preparation and ongoing education of the church's leaders, lay and clergy; offer tools and education required for Authorized Ministry in the Maine Conference; and continue to explore the theology, practice, and requirements of the ordained ministry as various paths to ministry are developed.

**Manual on Ministry (MOM):** The United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry provides perspectives and procedures for ecclesiastical authorization of ministry. All candidates for authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ should obtain a copy of Manual on Ministry or view it at [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org) and have a thorough understanding of Sections 2 and 3, 6 or 7 as applicable ("Student In Care of Association" (Member in Discernment), "Ordained Ministry," "Commissioned Ministry," "Licensed Ministry").

**Member In Discernment (MID):** Also referred to in this document as a "candidate" or, more simply, as a "MID." This term describes a relationship and a process. The relationship is expressed as a covenant between the MID, the candidate's home church, the candidate's home association, and C&M. The MID process is that which the candidate follows on his or her way to authorized ministry and is largely described in these Guidelines. In order to be considered for authorized ministry, the candidate should expect to be in the MID process for at least two full years. While authorization is normally the end result of the MID process, this is not automatic, nor is it always the case.

**MID:** See above.

**Psychological and Career Assessment:** A psychological and career assessment is required of every person seeking MID status. The assessment helps the candidate and C&M determine those areas of ability and aptitude that will give shape and direction to the candidate's ministry, as well as those characteristics of personality and interest where growth would be desirable. The assessment is an essential tool that helps C&M offer the candidate guidance and assistance. C&M uses the assessment along with other considerations to help assess the candidate's suitability and readiness for authorized ministry. Although valuable, the psychological and career assessment is never the sole criterion for deciding a person's fitness for ministry. The assessment is handled in the strictest confidence. After a candidate has been formally received as a MID, one copy of the assessment remains in a secure file in the Conference Office.

**Appendix B:  
Application to Receive a Member in Discernment**

(Please Print)

Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Pastor: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Church Leader: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Responding to this person's desire to prepare for the authorized Christian Ministry in the United Church of Christ, this congregation hereby applies to the Committee on Church & Ministry of the Cumberland Association for acceptance of this candidate as a "Member in Discernment." We affirm that the attached application form is accurate and complete.

**I. Enclosed with this application:**

1. Statement of Consent and Background Disclosure (**Appendix C**)
2. Verification of candidate's membership in a local United Church of Christ.
3. Three questionnaires (**Appendix D**), including one from the local church pastor.
4. A statement from the candidate describing his/her faith pilgrimage, biography, educational and vocational plans.
5. Documentation of the candidate's years of formal education.
6. A letter describing the process used by the Local Church Sponsoring Body to examine the candidate.
7. A written statement from the candidate outlining a financial plan for academic expenses related to training for authorized ministry.

**II. *The candidate has met with the local church Governing Board or Diaconate on \_\_\_\_\_ and this body hereby recommends that the candidate be considered for acceptance as a Member in Discernment.***

**III. *The candidate agrees to make arrangements for a psychological and career assessment by an examiner approved by the Committee on Church & Ministry during the first year as a Member in Discernment or after completing one year of study (whichever is later). These results shall be sent to the Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ. The congregation agrees to pay a portion of this assessment.***

Signature of Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Sponsoring Church Leader: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Position of Sponsoring Church Leader: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return completed application and all documentation to:

Harry L. Marsters II, Clerk, Cumberland Association  
9 Belden St., Portland, ME 04103  
Email: [cumberlandassocclerk@gmail.com](mailto:cumberlandassocclerk@gmail.com)

## **Appendix C: Statement of Consent and Background Disclosure**

The United Church of Christ Constitution recognizes that God calls the whole church and every member to participate in and extend the ministry of Jesus Christ [paragraph 17]. God also calls certain of the church's members to various forms of ministry in and on behalf of the church 2.paragraph 18]. Persons completing a Member in Discernment application bring unique gifts, skill, and experiences. The Association understands the integrity of the MID process to depend upon supportive cooperation and considerate and appropriate sharing of information among the Committee on Church & Ministry, Maine Conference staff, Member in Discernment partners, and others involved in providing nurture or making decisions.

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 the Association and persons seeking Member in Discernment status require honesty, integrity, and truthfulness for the health of the church. In that spirit:

*I attest that the information contained in my application is true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of consideration for Member in Discernment status.*

An open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for continuing healthy relationships between the Association Committee on Church & Ministry and persons seeking Member in Discernment status. In that spirit:

*I authorize the persons or entities to whom I have submitted this application and/or their agents to make inquiries regarding all statements contained in my application. I also authorize all persons, entities, former employees, committees on the ministry and their agents, courts, law enforcement and other public agencies to respond to inquiries concerning me, and to supply verification of the information contained in my application. I understand that such persons may comment on and state their opinions regarding my background and character to agents of the Association Committee on Church & 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 without malice.*

The Member in Discernment process of the Association further rests on the sharing of the application and relevant information in considerate and appropriate ways with those involved in the Member in Discernment process. In that spirit:

*I authorize the Association Committee on Church & Ministry to share information gathered in connection with the Member in Discernment process with the Maine Conference staff, my Discernment Advisor, and the Association Council. I understand that those gathering information about me concerning my Member in Discernment application are encouraged to share such information with me if requested by me to do so.*

*I affirm that the position, power and authority associated with a ministry authorized by the United Church of Christ, extends and participates in the ministry of Jesus Christ and is intended to be of benefit to all served by this ministry.*

*I affirm that I have not been an in-care student/member in discernment, licensed or ordained in any other association/conference/denomination.*

*No civil law alleging that I attempted or actually engaged in sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct has ever resulted in a judgment being entered against me, settled out of court, or dismissed because the statute of limitations had expired.*

1. With respect to driving record include matters of reckless driving, driving while intoxicated and/or under the influence of a controlled substance; with respect to criminal charges do not include acts of civil disobedience: (please initial each item)

I have not had my driving license suspended or revoked within the last five years.

I have not been found guilty or plead guilty or no contest to criminal charges.

2. My employment has not been terminated because I attempted or actually engaged in:

sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct

physical abuse

child abuse

financial misconduct

3. I have not terminated my employment or professional credentials in order to avoid facing or to avoid being terminated because of charges of actual or attempted:

sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct

physical abuse

child abuse

financial misconduct

In my judgment, there are no facts or circumstances involving me or my background that would warrant further review before my being entrusted with being a Member in Discernment in the Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Candidate Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate's Name Printed: \_\_\_\_\_

If you wish to provide comment for any of the above statements you may do so below or on an attached sheet of paper.

Please return completed application and all documentation to:

Harry L. Marsters II, Clerk, Cumberland Association

9 Belden St., Portland, ME 04103

Email: [cumberlandassocclerk@gmail.com](mailto:cumberlandassocclerk@gmail.com)



**Appendix D:  
Questionnaire Regarding Those Seeking Member in Discernment Status**

(Candidate's Name)

On behalf of \_\_\_\_\_, who has given your name as an evaluator, please return this questionnaire to the Cumberland Association Committee on Church & Ministry of the Maine Conference, United Church of Christ. This evaluation is intended to assist the process of selection and preparation of candidates for ministry in the United Church of Christ. As best you can, please rate this person on the following characteristics. Please circle the number you think best fits using the following criteria:

X means you are unable to rate because of insufficient data on this trait.

A rating of 1 = POOR, 2 = FAIR, 3 = AVERAGE, 4 = EXCELLENT, 5 = SUPERIOR

In addition, your comments will help. Please add any comments or anecdotes at the end of this form and identify by trait number, using an additional page if necessary.

**RATING      TRAIT**

X 1 2 3 4 5      1. Academic Potential: Intellectual alertness (i.e., ability, curiosity, openness of mind, enjoyment of learning)

X 1 2 3 4 5      2. Communication Skills: Ability to express himself or herself verbally and in writing

X 1 2 3 4 5      3. Psychological Stability: Ability to establish and maintain harmonious interpersonal relationships with others, cope well with stressful situations, display adequate emotional control

X 1 2 3 4 5      4. Leadership Ability: Capacity and confidence to lead

X 1 2 3 4 5      5. Sensitivity to and Awareness of the Needs and Motives of Others: Ability to care about and consider others' feelings; ability to understand why people behave as they do; capacity to show concern about social issues

X 1 2 3 4 5      6. Resourcefulness and Capacity to Assume Responsibility: Ability to deal effectively and creatively with problems and to be counted on to fulfill responsibilities

X 1 2 3 4 5      7. Self-Care: Ability to care for body, mind, and spirit

X 1 2 3 4 5      8. Interpersonal Relationships: Ability to relate intimately to others socially, spiritually, and emotionally; ability to elicit trust from others

X 1 2 3 4 5      9. Breadth of Interest: Capacity for varied interests, hobbies, leisure, and creative pursuits

X 1 2 3 4 5      10. Ability to Articulate and Share His/Her Spiritual Journey

X 1 2 3 4 5      11. Awareness of His/Her Own Physical, Emotional, and Spiritual Needs

X 1 2 3 4 5      12. Overall Potential for Ministry in the United Church of Christ

Comments or Anecdotes:

A. What are the first words that come to mind to describe this person?

B. To the best of your knowledge, is he/she experiencing any current crises or problems (e.g., vocational, financial, marital, familial, etc.)?

C. Please give any additional perceptions that might be relevant (e.g., work experience, health record, personal lifestyle).

Evaluator's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you known this person and in what capacity?

Please check the appropriate statement:

Please keep this information strictly confidential and do not share my perceptions with the candidate.

You may share my perceptions with the candidate if appropriate.

This information is for the exclusive use of the Cumberland Association Committee on Church & Ministry.

This questionnaire should be mailed or scanned and emailed directly to:

Harry L. Marsters II, Clerk, Cumberland Association  
9 Belden St., Portland, ME 04103

Email: [cumberlandassocclerk@gmail.com](mailto:cumberlandassocclerk@gmail.com)

**Appendix E:  
Authorization and Release Form**

For: Committee on Church & Ministry of the Cumberland Association,  
Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby authorize  
(Name of Candidate)

\_\_\_\_\_ to release the evaluation, Person, Program, School either written or oral, of my performance (academic transcripts and reviews, field education evaluations, spiritual development reviews, psychological assessments, Clinical Pastoral Education evaluations) to the Cumberland Association Committee on Church & Ministry, as well as to the Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ (if requested).

I acknowledge that this evaluation will provide the Committee on Church & Ministry and the Maine Conference with insights into my fitness for authorized ministry on behalf of the United Church of Christ.

I authorize the release of this evaluation to the Cumberland Association Committee on Church & Ministry members, as well as to Maine Conference staff, officers, attorneys and consultants. I further authorize the evaluator(s) to answer questions, give opinions, and provide further information related to this evaluation to the Cumberland Association Committee on Church & Ministry members as well as to Maine Conference staff, officers, attorneys, and consultants, and to share this evaluation with ecclesiastical officers of other associations or denominations, where I may apply for employment, standing, or authorized minister status.

I release, indemnify, and agree to hold harmless the Cumberland Association Committee on Church & Ministry, and Maine Conference staff, officers, attorneys, and consultants, from any action or cause of action arising from any action taken under the above authorization, or from any use of the evaluation and further information in reviewing my fitness for authorized ministry, or from the dissemination of the evaluation or further information to or among the persons authorized, or from the unintentional dissemination of the evaluations or further information to other persons.

Any documents provided to the Cumberland Association Committee on Church & Ministry or to the Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ in accordance with the Authorization & Release shall become its sole property and may be retained by the Cumberland Association Committee on Church & Ministry and the Maine Conference, notwithstanding any subsequent withdrawal of my application for, or resignation from, authorized ministry status. This Authorization & Release may not be rescinded or modified, except with the express written agreement of the Cumberland Association Committee on Church & Ministry and by the Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Executed as a sealed instrument.

Signature of Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions to the Candidate:**

1. Sign your name to the top of the form, print the person(s) program or school from which this evaluation, transcript, or review is coming.
2. Fill in the date on the bottom of the page.
3. Retain a copy for your files.
4. Send a completed form to the following persons (if appropriate) and any others required of you by the Cumberland Association Committee on Church & Ministry:  
Psychological Assessor/Examiner, Academic Advisor, Seminary Dean of Students  
Seminary Field Education Director, Seminary Field Education Supervisor, Seminary Registrar  
Clinical Pastoral Education Director and/or Supervisor, MESOM Director, Discernment Advisor

## **Appendix F: Discernment Covenant**

Covenant made between a Member in Discernment, the Cumberland Association of the Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ and the Local Church.

### **Preamble**

A covenant is “an intentional agreement made between or among parties in the name of God. (It) has both horizontal and vertical dimensions and is not accidental, but deliberate.”\* Recognizing that carrying out the Covenant of Ministry in the United Church of Christ is both delicate and demanding, calling us to live by relationship with God and each other and not by rules — by grace more than law — still the Cumberland Association Committee on Church & Ministry feels the need for minimum guidelines for candidates for authorized ministry. These minimal guidelines follow.

### **The Covenant**

The Committee on Church & Ministry of the Cumberland Association of the Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ has accepted \_\_\_\_\_ into the Discernment relationship. If the process leads to the candidate’s request for authorized ministry, a minimum of two years of reflection and discernment with the Committee on Church & Ministry and its appointed advisors is recommended prior to authorization.

#### Part 1 — The Association

The Cumberland Association of the Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ covenants:

1. to support and hold in prayer \_\_\_\_\_ as he or she continues the journey of ministerial preparation.
2. to remain faithful to the processes for an Association as described in the United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry.
3. to assume one-third of the cost of the candidate’s psychological and career assessment.

#### Part 2 — Cumberland Association Committee on Church & Ministry covenants:

1. to provide a Discernment Advisor to guide the candidate toward a vocational understanding consistent with the faith and mission of the United Church of Christ;
2. to provide scholarship information to the Member in Discernment, within the limits of available Association funds, in support of seminary preparation for ministry.
3. to provide advice and counsel regarding the skills and gifts required for the practice of authorized ministry;
4. to schedule a meeting at the local church involving the candidate, pastor, Discernment Committee, and advisor to review the roles of each in the MID Discernment process.
5. to provide the opportunity for the candidate’s psychological and career assessment, ensuring that the costs for the same will be shared by the candidate’s home church, the Association, in addition to the Member in Discernment.
6. to review and consider annual renewal of the Discernment relationship.

#### Part 3 — Member in Discernment

\_\_\_\_\_ as a candidate preparing for authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ, agrees to follow the guidelines for the Discernment process, to accept the fellowship, counsel, evaluations, support, and guidance of the Committee on Church & Ministry, and covenants:

1. to communicate periodically with the appointed Discernment Advisor to share academic progress and faith, vocational and personal development.
2. to complete a psychological and career assessment for ministry administered by qualified provider chosen by the Committee on Church & Ministry.
3. to worship regularly in a local UCC congregation and if time permits, participate in the work of the life of the Association and Maine Conference.

4. to meet with the Committee on Church & Ministry at least once annually for a review of the Discernment relationship and process.

Part 4 — Discernment Committee and Sponsoring Congregation

The Discernment Committee and sponsoring congregation, \_\_\_\_\_, covenant:

1. to support and hold in prayer \_\_\_\_\_ as he or she continues the journey of ministerial preparation.
2. to help with the cost of the candidate's psychological and career assessment as needed and possible.
3. to meet periodically with the candidate to share gifts and experiences that might be mutually beneficial.
4. to consider financial assistance to the candidate to defray the cost of education.
5. to remain faithful to the processes for a Discernment Committee and sponsoring congregation as described in the United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry.

So Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_ Member in Discernment \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

\_\_\_\_\_ Committee on Church & Ministry Chair \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

\_\_\_\_\_ Discernment Advisor \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

\_\_\_\_\_ Sponsoring Church Representative \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

Note: A copy of this Covenant should be given to the following:

- Member in Discernment
- Association Clerk
- Discernment Advisor
- Local Sponsoring Church

**Appendix G-1:**  
**Annual Review Preparation Sheet for Member in Discernment**

PLEASE PRINT (Use separate sheet for explanations)

Candidate's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Do you feel that you are knowledgeable and familiar with the current Discernment process and requirements? Yes / No
2. If in seminary or in the Maine School of Ministry, what year (and semester, if applicable) are you currently in? \_\_\_\_\_
3. In your judgment, are you on track for meeting the Committee on Church & Ministry's required educational standing? Yes / No Explain:
4. If no, please list areas where you need further development:  

___ Biblical Exegesis	___ Ethics	___ Attention to Spiritual Direction
___ O.T.	___ Liturgies	___ Christian Education
___ N.T.	___ Church History	___ Personal Fitness for Ministry
___ Systematic Theology	___ UCC History and Polity	___ Other _____
5. How would you rate your overall academic performance to date (if you are in seminary):  
\_\_\_ Excellent \_\_\_ Good \_\_\_ Fair \_\_\_ Poor
6. Do you have any concerns that should be raised at this year's C&M Annual MID Review?
7. Are you currently experiencing any physical or emotional challenges that are affecting your path to authorized ministry?
8. Where are you in your journey with God?
9. Are you satisfied with your spiritual life at this time?
10. What do you feel are your present gifts, talents and skills for authorized ministry?
11. Are there areas of ministry, other than parish ministry, to which you might be called?
12. Are there ways that your Local Church, your Discernment Advisor or C&M might be more helpful to you on your journey?
13. Other comments/concerns:
14. Dates of Quarterly Meetings with Discernment Advisor  
\_\_\_\_\_

Member in Discernment Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This form should be mailed or emailed six weeks in advance of the Annual Review in May.

Send to: Harry L. Marsters II, Clerk, Cumberland Association 9 Belden St., Portland, ME 04103

Email: [cumberlandassocclerk@gmail.com](mailto:cumberlandassocclerk@gmail.com)

**Appendix G-2:**  
**Annual Review Preparation Sheet for Discernment Advisor**

PLEASE PRINT

Candidate's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Discernment Advisor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Is the candidate knowledgeable and familiar with the current Discernment process and requirements?  
Yes / No
2. In your judgment, is the candidate on track for meeting the Committee on Church & Ministry's requirements for the authorized ministry to which he or she has experienced call? Yes / No  
Explain:
3. If no, please list areas of suspected/acknowledged deficiency:  

___ Biblical Exegesis	___ Ethics	___ Attention to Spiritual Direction
___ O.T.	___ Liturgies	___ Christian Education
___ N.T.	___ Church History	___ Personal Fitness for Ministry
___ Systematic Theology	___ UCC History and Polity	___ Other: _____
4. Please speak to any deficiencies in the candidate's progress in coursework or other requirements:
5. Rate the candidate's overall academic performance to date (if applicable):  
\_\_\_ Excellent \_\_\_ Good \_\_\_ Fair \_\_\_ Poor
6. Do you have any concerns that should be raised at the candidate's yearly interview?
7. Does the candidate have physical or emotional health issues that should be addressed?
8. Please comment on the candidate's spiritual development:
9. What initiative has she or he shown in (a) scheduling, (b) honoring scheduled encounters, (c) openness in sharing, and (d) preparation when requested?
10. What gifts, talents and skills does she or he exhibit that give evidence of aptitude for authorized ministry?
11. Are there areas of ministry, other than parish ministry, for which you believe she or he is better suited?
12. Are there areas of growth you believe the Committee on Church & Ministry should be lifting up and/or challenging the student?
13. Does she or he trouble or perplex you in any way?
14. Is the candidate accepting of you as the Discernment Advisor? Yes / No Comments?
15. Is the candidate accepting of his/her relationship to the Committee on Church & Ministry?  
Yes / No Comments?
16. Other comments/concerns:

17. Dates of Quarterly Meetings: \_\_\_\_\_

18. Please describe other contacts that you may have had with the candidate:

Discernment Advisor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This form should be Emailed or mailed one month in advance of the May Annual Review directly to:

Harry L. Marsters II, Clerk, Cumberland Association  
9 Belden St., Portland, ME 04103  
Email: [cumberlandassocclerk@gmail.com](mailto:cumberlandassocclerk@gmail.com)



## **Appendix H: Recommended Ordination Paper Outlines**

The following three outlines for ordination papers are accepted by the Cumberland Association Committee on Church & Ministry. Any other outlines must be approved by the Committee before writing the paper.

The Ordination Paper should be double-spaced, using a 12-point font, and should not exceed 25 pages.

### **Outline I**

Based on the Manual on Ministry, Section 3 pages 3-6

#### **I. Theological Perspectives**

- A. What is your understanding of the historic Christian faith?
- B. What is your own theological perspective? Refer to the UCC Statement of Faith and paragraph two of the Constitution of the United Church of Christ.

#### **II. The United Church of Christ**

- A. How do you understand the historical and theological roots of the United Church of Christ?
- B. How would you explain the polity and practice of the United Church of Christ? (Please address the issues of covenant, unity, autonomy, etc., and discuss paragraphs 3, 7, 14, 15, 16 of the Constitution of the United Church of Christ.)

#### **III. Ministry and Pilgrimage**

- A. How would you relate the previously discussed issues to your own faith pilgrimage?
  - 1. What is your understanding of call, ordination, church, mission, preaching, the sacraments and ministry?
  - 2. What is the challenge and vision of your own ministry?
  - 3. How do you see your gifts fitting into your call?
  - 4. What is the meaning of ordination in the United Church of Christ?
- B. How do you understand your commitment to the United Church of Christ and the ecumenical church?
- C. What aspects of the history, polity, and practice of the United Church of Christ are most valued by you?

### **Outline II**

Based on the United Church of Christ The Book of Worship, pages 407-408

#### **I. Are you persuaded that God has called you to be an ordained a minister in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and are you ready to enter this ministry and faithfully serve in it?**

- A. Briefly relate a summary of your faith journey and your call to the Christian Ministry in the United Church of Christ.
- B. Within the context of the universal ministry of God's people, why have you chosen to seek ordination, and what particular gifts do you bring to this ministry?

#### **II. Do you, with the Church throughout the world, hear the Word of God in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and do you accept it as the rule of Christian faith and practice?**

- A. How do you understand the nature of the Word of God as it is revealed in the Scripture of the Old and New Testaments?
- B. What does it mean to accept this Word as the rule of Christian faith and practice?

#### **III. Do you promise to be diligent in your private prayers and reading of the scriptures, as well as in the public duties of your office?**

- A. How do you practice your devotional life and what is the place of prayer in your life?

- B. How do you intend to find rest and renewal in the context of the Biblical theme of Sabbath within the context of the “public duties of your office,” and how do the present (or future) demands of family life (or of single life) fit within the context of those duties?
- C. What do baptism and the sacraments mean to you in your personal life and to you in your role as a leader in the UCC Worship?

IV. Will you be zealous in maintaining both the “truth of the gospel” and “the peace of the Church,” speaking the truth in love?

- A. Concerning the “truth of the gospel,” what is your understanding of the doctrine of salvation: the person of Christ, the incarnation, the Cross and Resurrection, sin, repentance, forgiveness judgment, grace, and eschatology?
- B. Concerning the “peace of the Church,” how would you deal with those conflict situations when you are called to speak the prophetic word of “truth in love,” both in personal and social justice situations?

V. Do you accept the “faith and order” of the United Church of Christ; and will you, as an ordained minister in this communion show compassionate affection toward all who are in Christ?

- A. How do you understand the “faith and order” of the United Church of Christ, specifically concerning the Trinity, Baptism, Communion, Covenant, and the Statement of Faith?
- B. What is your understanding of “The Church,” local church, covenant, the wider church, and how does “The Church” relate to the world through evangelism, social action, and mission?

### **Outline III**

I. Statement of Christian Experience

- A. Home and local church
- B. Education
- C. Call to the ministry

II. Statement of Christian Beliefs

- A. God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit
  - 1. Creation and Providence; Judgment and Grace
  - 2. Person of Christ; Incarnation, Atonement (problem of evil), Salvation Resurrection
  - 3. Revelation and the Holy Scriptures
- B. Humanity
  - 1. Sin, Repentance, Forgiveness
  - 2. Prayer
  - 3. Eternal Life
- C. The Church and the Kingdom
  - 1. Doctrine of history and the second coming
  - 2. Church and the world (including evangelism, social action, mission)
  - 3. My denomination and the Church
  - 4. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper
  - 5. The ministry (lay and ordained)

III. Conclusion: Including “Why I desire ordination in the United Church of Christ”

**Appendix I:**

**Annual Seminary Advisor Evaluation for Members in Discernment**

PLEASE PRINT

Member in Discernment / Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Seminary Advisor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Seminary: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, state, zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of time you have served as student's advisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Frequency of contact with the student: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Is this student an active participant in seminary classes? Does her or his written and oral work show clarity and depth? Is the student able to theologically reflect and integrate course material?
  
2. What strengths have you noted in the student which commends him or her for leadership as pastor and teacher in the United Church of Christ?
  
3. What growth areas do you observe which would be helpful for this student to address during the member in discernment process in preparation for authorized ministry as pastor and teacher in the United Church of Christ?
  
4. What is your perception of the faith and integrity of this individual? \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Other comments:

Should you need to, feel free to attach additional pages. Thank you for your time in providing important information about the education of one of our Members in Discernment. After you have completed this evaluation, please email/mail it to:

Harry L. Marsters II, Clerk, Cumberland Association  
9 Belden St., Portland, ME 04103  
Email: [cumberlandassocclerk@gmail.com](mailto:cumberlandassocclerk@gmail.com)

## **Appendix J: The Ecclesiastical Council**

**I Purpose:** The purpose of the Ecclesiastical Council, according to the MOM, is for the association to authorize the candidate for ordination pending a Call to Authorized Ministry.

### **II Requirements:**

1. In order for this to happen, two things must take place.
  - a. First, the members of the association must have confidence that the Church and Ministry (C&M) committee has provided the thorough care and oversight necessary.
  - b. Second, the Ecclesiastical Council (EC) must provide the members of the association with enough information to make a reasonable assessment of the candidate. This should cover their professional and theological preparation as well as insight into the character, personality and gifts for the ministry of the candidate.
  - c. The primary way that the association members will know about preparation is through the Member in Discernment's (MID) ordination paper. The Cumberland Association has guidelines for this paper, and it is the responsibility of the C & M committee to review, and if necessary, ask for revisions of this paper prior to recommending the MID for an Ecclesiastical Council.
  - d. The Clerk will validate that the appropriate documentation has been received from the MID and all applicable covenantal partners.

### **III Process:**

1. Distribution of the paper: When the C & M committee feels the candidate is ready, the Ecclesiastical Council is called, and the paper is distributed to the churches of the association. It should be made clear to pastors and delegates that the paper will not be read in its entirety at the council, so that delegates must read it in advance to be prepared.
  - a. Call of Ecclesiastical Council (EC): When a date has been set for the Ecclesiastical Council, the Association Clerk drafts the Call to Association Clergy and Delegates which includes the date, location, time and directions.
  - b. The Call clearly states that the Ordination Paper will be emailed to Clergy and delegates for review.
2. Preparation of the interview: The C&M Committee will appoint a committee member to represent the committee in the EC interview. This could be a different person each time, or, if the Committee has someone who is a particularly adept interviewer, could appoint him/her to serve regularly in this capacity.
  - a. The C&M Representative will meet with the candidate, and the candidate's advisor and pastor. They will review the ordination paper. They will determine the part of the paper that will be read or summarized at the meeting. (This section should not take longer than 10 minutes to read out loud.)
  - b. This group, minus the MID, will also develop 3-6 questions that will be asked in the interview to help stimulate questions from the Delegates and Clergy.
3. The church will set up a comfortable meeting space, preferably not in the sanctuary. If there is room, tables for the delegates could be set up, and simple food and drink provided.

- a. The Candidate should present or read his/her paper from a podium and in the standing position to ensure that there's good projection to the audience
  - b. A public address system should be used if available
4. The Council (EC): The Association Representative (Moderator) will open the meeting. Welcomes, announcements, and other business may be taken care of first.
- a. The Chairman of the C&M Committee can then briefly review, for the delegates, the MID process and explain the procedure for the EC.
  - b. The candidate will be introduced, and will present or read the previously chosen section of the ordination paper.
  - c. Following the reading, the interviewer will sit with the candidate and ask questions. This will begin with the agreed upon questions, and include any follow-up questions that come from the MID's answers. These may be related to any part of the candidate's paper, not just the part that was presented/read.
  - d. It would be appropriate to ask questions that are both personal and professional—a mix would offer the delegates a more complete view of the MID.
  - e. After the interviewer has completed a 15-20 minute question period, the delegates will have the opportunity to ask questions as well. The Moderator or Chairman of the C&M should be prepared to step in if the questions become argumentative or off the point.
  - f. Following the question and answer period, the Candidate and visitors are asked to leave the room.
  - g. The C&M Chair opens the floor to discussion from delegates and clergy. When discussions end, the Chair asks for a motion "to authorize the candidate ordination pending a call to authorized ministry". A vote is taken. The candidate returns and is immediately informed of the decision.
  - h. A member of C&M offers a prayer for the candidate.
5. The Ecclesiastical Council is adjourned and a reception follows hosted by the Sponsoring church.