

## MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT (MID) PROCESS

### Checklist

**The following process is used to move a potential Member in Discernment (MID) forward toward authorization.**

- The Member in Discernment explores their call with the local congregation by:
  - Meeting with a local pastor
  - Discerning with a Local Congregation discernment committee
  - Receiving affirmation from the Local Congregational governing body which forwards a letter of recommendation
- Preparation for an initial meeting with the Authorization Working Group of the Committee on Ministry
  - Complete the Application Form
  - Complete the Statement of Consent for Applicants for Authorized Ministry
  - Complete the Background Disclosure for Applicants for Authorized Ministry
  - Consent for Communication with Covenantal Partner & Consent to Duplicate Records
  - Submit 3 Letters of Reference & 3 Questionnaires for References (one of those being from local church pastor)
  - A written statement that the applicant is a member of their church and the church officially recommends this applicant.
  - Initiate & complete the Oxford Criminal Background Check
  - Submit Grade Transcripts and Certifications of completion of educational programs
  - 3 essays of not more than 2-3 pages each
    - \_\_\_\_\_ (1) Describe your Christian faith pilgrimage
    - \_\_\_\_\_ (2) Brief paper on your basic understanding of the Christian faith
    - \_\_\_\_\_ (3) Paper on your church activities you have engaged in
- Once the documents noted above have been received, the Conference Office will contact the potential MID with information about psychological/sociological evaluation.
  - All applicants must take part in psychological/sociological evaluation which consists of written materials and interviews.
  - It is expected that the applicant, the applicant's local congregation, and the Conference will share the cost of the evaluation program.
  - At the conclusion of the evaluation, a written report is reviewed by the student and the consultant and is forwarded to the Conference Office.
  - Once the evaluation has been received by the Conference, the chair of the Authorization Working Group will contact the applicant to schedule an Initial Interview with the Committee.
- Once the psychological evaluation is completed the Authorization Working Group will conduct an interview with the potential MID.
  - The complete application will be reviewed and specific questions may be asked of the potential MID

- When the conversation with the MID is completed, the MID will be excused so the Authorization Working Group may deliberate.
  - Decisions may be “yes” or “no” Once the decision is made, the MID will be brought into the meeting to be informed of the working group’s decision
- If the answer is “no” the candidate may wish to reconsider their discernment process.
- If the answer is “yes,” the MID will be assigned a advisor, given the Marks of Faithful and Effective Minister (Marks) assessment guide and the Journaling the Journey workbook.
- Once the advisor and the MID feel an adequate Marks assessment of the MID’s current status is completed, the MID will be scheduled for a second interview during which a development of a preparation and formation plan will be developed.
  - A portfolio to document education and competencies will be developed by each MID. *(Please utilize the Plan of Formation Document at the end of this checklist.)*
  - If the MID is enrolled in seminary, yearly interviews will be scheduled to assess progress.
  - If the MID is following one of the multiple paths toward ordination, the MID will schedule and hold regular meetings with their advisor as they progress through their learning plan, documenting coursework, individual learning and seminars attended.
    - Bi-yearly interviews, at minimum, should be scheduled with the Authorization Working Group.
- Educational formation should include:
  - theological and practical education for ministry, with learning outcomes oriented toward the Marks;
  - the development of a portfolio to document competencies around the Marks;
  - successful completion of a COM-approved UCC History, Polity and Theology course;
  - practical ministry experience under supervision (Clinical Pastoral Education, field placement, internship, etc.) – see *Guidelines for Supervised Ministry* at the end of this checklist;
  - successful completion of professional boundaries training;
  - successful completion of anti-racism training;
  - participation in regional or national MID gatherings;
  - participation in conference Annual Meetings;
  - engagement with the wider church, such as participation in General Synod;
  - annual report of progress on the Preparation and Formation Plan at the annual in-person meeting with the Committee on Ministry;
  - ongoing self-assessment based on the Marks;
  - periodic meetings with and reports from the MID Advisor;
  - Completion of an ordination paper meeting the requirements set forth by the Authorization Working Group *(please see the outline at the end of this document)*;
  - prior to the Ecclesiastical Council, a drafted UCC Ministerial Profile including the Profile’s criminal background check.

- When the MID has completed their educational formation and has submitted all required documentation, the Authorization Working Group will conduct an interview to determine if the MID is approved for an Ecclesiastical Council.
- The ecclesiastical council will be scheduled as a part of the quarterly Committee on Ministry Meetings. A conference-wide invitation will be made for attendance at the Ecclesiastical Council.
  - The MID will prepare a 30-minute worship service.
  - The MID will present a summary of their ordination paper including 3 highlights from their ordination paper which describe their faith journey, their understanding of ministry, and their understanding of ordination in the United Church of Christ and respond to questions.
  - At the conclusion of the questioning the MID will be excused so the Committee on Ministry and other conference representatives may deliberate.
    - A vote will be taken. The results of the vote may be:
      - *Yes.* The Committee affirms the individual's continued status as a MID and ongoing progress in formation and preparation.
      - *Yes, but...* The Committee continues the individual's MID status and adds particular learning or behavioral goals within a given time frame as a requirement for the discernment process, with a date set for reassessment.
      - *No, but...* The Committee terminates the MID status and discernment process due to the MID's lack of progress and/or substantial need for growth over time, with constructive feedback offered that could help the individual begin the discernment process again at a future undetermined date.
      - *No.* The Committee determines that the individual is not called to or suited for ordained ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ.
  - Based on the decision of the Ecclesiastical Council the MID may:
    - If, *Yes.* - Be approved for ordination pending call, their profile will be validated and they may circulate their profile for open pastoral positions.
      - If they are called, an ordination service is planned and conducted.
    - If *Yes, but* the MID will review and update their plan of formation and continue working on their planning.
    - If, *No, but* the MID will be instructed to take some time and determine if the call they are hearing is to a ministry that requires authorization. The congregational discernment committee and the MID's local congregational pastor may offer support and insight.
    - If, *No.* The MID process for this individual is completed.