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KEY TERMS AND PEOPLE

Conference Minister (CM): Judicatory staff person for the Cumberland Association. Provides support to the Cumberland Association and the Church and Ministry Committee. **Please see Appendix 10 for current contact information**

MID Advisor: After being accepted as a Member in Discernment (MID) with the Cumberland Association Church and Ministry Committee, the CMC will assign MIDs an advisor who is a clergy person with ministerial standing in the Cumberland Association. . This advisor plays a key role throughout the Member in Discernment process, including helping the MID to prepare for each phase of the process.

Church and Ministry Committee (CMC): A standing committee of the **Cumberland Association (CA)**, the elected, volunteer body of lay and ordained clergy members of the association, Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Clerk, and Chair, who, for the purposes of this document, are charged with accompanying MIDs on the Member in Discernment journey.

Local Church Discernment Committee (LCDC): This is a small group (usually 3 – 5) of faithful members from a MIDs local congregation who have a heart for helping candidates in their discernment towards ordination. LCDCs are encouraged to reach out to their Church and Ministry Committee for further discussion and training around how to raise up and support MIDs in their congregation. [This best practices document](#) helps congregations identify ideal members for this committee and LCDCs prepare to accompany prospective MIDs in their discernment. It should be reviewed as early as possible.

Local Church Pastor: A MID's pastor plays a critical role in supporting the MID.

Member in Discernment (MID): A member of a local congregation who is formally discerning a call to ordained and authorized ministry with an association, under the oversight of the Church and Ministry Committee . MID status cannot be transferred from one church or association to another and may be withdrawn at any time after review of the Church and Ministry Committee.

Member in Discernment (MID) Portfolio: The MID Portfolio is the central piece of the Member in Discernment Process and is reviewed each time a MID meets with the CA-CMC. MIDs are encouraged to work with their MID Advisor (MA) to proactively update their portfolio throughout the Member in Discernment journey. The MID Portfolio should consistently be updated to reflect a MIDs experience, maturation, and journey of integration in the Marks of Ministry. Proactive use of the portfolio allows the CMC to best respond to the multiple and personalized paths to ordained and authorized ministry in the 21st century. More information about the Portfolio can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

Association Clerk: Clerk for the Cumberland Association. Provides administrative support to the Cumberland Association. Anytime this document instructs to contact the Clerk, those communications should go directly to him/her/them. If something needs to be mailed, they can provide an appropriate address. **Please see Appendix 10 for current contact information.**

INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the process and the responsibilities of:

- a person seeking authorization for ministry in the Cumberland Association of the United Church of Christ (“the Member in Discernment” or “the MID”);
- the local Cumberland Association church (“sponsoring church”) where the Member in Discernment for authorized ministry is a member, including specifically the pastor and Local Church Discernment Committee (LCDC); and
- the Church and Ministry Committee of Cumberland Association, Maine Conference.

This document will also explain the roles of other people and organizations that contribute to the process of discerning whether or not a person is called, qualified, and prepared to be ordained in the Cumberland Association on behalf of the entire UCC. This process is consistent with guidelines found in the *Manual on Ministry* (MOM), published by Ministry Excellence Support and Authorization (MESA), and available [on the national UCC website](#). All UCC Covenantal Partners in the Member in Discernment Process are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the MOM.

Theological Foundation

At the heart of the United Church of Christ is the belief that all Christians are called to minister in our world and that the local congregation is the locus in which all ministers are equipped and empowered. However, the UCC affirms that some individuals are “set apart through prayer and the laying on of hands in the rite of ordination. In ordination, the individual makes a lifetime commitment to God in Jesus Christ and to the Church, relying on the Holy Spirit...Ordained Ministers have particular responsibilities for the proclamation and practice of the Christian faith and for the life of the Church itself.”¹

In the United Church of Christ, the responsibility for the authorization and oversight of Ordained Ministers is held within an Association’s Committee on Ministry. The Church and Ministry Committee of the Cumberland Association acts on behalf of the entire UCC and is called to counsel, evaluate and discern each Member in Discernment’s call, gifts, and preparation for Ordained Ministerial Standing within the UCC.

General Timeline

“The Member in Discernment process is intended to engage all discernment partners in reflection, conversation and assessment, so that the need of the Church for excellent and faithful ministers may be met through wise decisions of Committees on Ministry, informed by all partners in the discernment process.” This process may take three to five years to complete from acceptance as a MID with the ² Cumberland Association. In some circumstances, people with significant ministerial, seminary, theological education and life experiences and the ability to demonstrate ministerial readiness may move more quickly through the process. There is no way to faithfully and equitably expedite any of

¹ United Church of Christ *Manual on Ministry* (“MOM”), Page 8

the processes described within. For that reason, we recommend that candidates prepare to be in the Member in Discernment process for no longer than seven years.

Local Church Membership & Baptism

A candidate must be an active member of a Cumberland Association church for **at least one year before being recommended by that local congregation to the CA-CMC for MID status**. MIDs must remain active members of the sponsoring church for the entire Member in Discernment Process. MIDs may not move congregations nor can MID status transfer to another association. If a MID wishes to move to another association, they will need to begin the Member in Discernment process over again, under the requirements of the new association. If a candidate anticipates any concerns, or a problem arises, they are encouraged to reach out to their Conference Minister (and CMC Chair, if applicable) for support.

It is expected that educational programs, and formative ministry opportunities, among other experiences, will limit opportunities for Sunday morning worship and/or church leadership at a MID's sponsoring church. However, MIDs, in cooperation with their Local Church Pastor are expected to be proactive and creative about maintaining relationships and engagement with their sponsoring church throughout their time as a MID.

Additionally, a candidate should be in discernment about their plans for baptism if they have not been baptized. While a MID may enter the formation process having not been baptized (as some churches no longer require that for membership), it is expected that the MID will be baptized prior to the completion of Phase IV.

UCC Formation

It is not uncommon for both recent converts to Christianity and those with a faith background outside of the UCC to seek MID status with the Cumberland Association. The Church and Ministry Committee accepts Christians into the Member in Discernment process from any faith background. However, deep experience with, understanding of, and love for the UCC is crucial in people who would lead its local congregations. Therefore, the CMC will be especially attentive to the depth and breadth of each applicant's experience of church life within the UCC. Plans to gain leadership experience in the UCC should be formulated as soon as a call to authorized ministry is perceived.

Discerning a Call to Ordained vs. Lay Ministry

The ministry of all Christians is a foundational belief of the United Church of Christ. However, some are called to lead as ordained and authorized ministers in the UCC. While the whole Member in Discernment process is a journey of discerning God's call on one's life, it is expected that candidates will be prepared to demonstrate and discuss their sense of call to *ordained and authorized* ministry, as distinct from the call placed on all our lives as Christians. A candidate's local congregation, pastor, and Local Church Discernment Committee (LCDC) are invaluable resources for beginning that discernment prior to meeting with the CA-CMC. Candidates are also encouraged to reference the [Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers](#) and the [Guidelines for Discerning an Ordainable Call](#) for additional guidance.

The Cumberland Association Church and Ministry Committee (and the MOM) also recognizes that the needs of the Church " are found many times in settings outside of a local congregation. Regardless of the setting, the responsibility for articulating the need for authorization to ministry in the UCC rests with the MID.

One final note: Once a MID is ordained and authorized, and remains in good standing, they have access to the full Search and Call system of the United Church of Christ. A MID who articulates a call to a non-local church setting throughout their Member in Discernment journey may decide to apply for positions in the local congregation at any point after their ordination without additional discernment or oversight of their vocational shift. For that reason, even as the CMC honors the movement of the Holy Spirit to empower new vocational visions for authorized ministry, the Cumberland Association Church and Ministry Committee will expect MIDs to develop gifts in and for ministry in a local congregation during their Member in Discernment process.

UCC Ministerial Profile

The UCC Ministerial Profile is the central document by which authorized ministers apply for open positions in the UCC Search and Call system. While a Member in Discernment with the Cumberland Association may not circulate a UCC Ministerial Profile until they have had a successful Ecclesiastical Council (EC), a MID can begin to work on their profile well in advance of their EC. Reach out to the Conference Minister with questions around creating an account in the [UCC Profiles Portal](#).

Input Based vs. Outcome Based Discernment and Formation

In the past, the Member in Discernment process was heavily influenced by input-based models of ministerial formation. This model worked when most authorized ministers attended traditional, three-year, residential Master of Divinity programs and were called to traditional ministry settings. As the nature of theological education and settings for ministry have shifted, so too has the approach to the Member in Discernment process.

While many MIDs will still take a more traditional path, some may explore other paths to formulate an educational plan and obtain formative ministry experiences. The MID will work in covenant with their local congregation, the Cumberland Association CMC, their MID Advisor, and other discernment partners to formulate and agree upon how best to develop necessary competency in the [Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the UCC](#). The MID Portfolio plays a key role in helping the MID's covenantal partners discern appropriate recommendations for a MID's discernment and formation especially as paths to authorized ministry grow more unique and individualized.

Despite growing personalization, there are still requirements of the Member in Discernment process in the Cumberland Association that will be asked of every MID. MIDs and Covenantal Discernment Partners (see below) should be mindful of this as they review the guidelines. Regardless of the path, it remains the responsibility of the MID to proactively work with the CMC to identify areas of growth and opportunities for ministry and learning.

Covenantal Discernment Partners

While a MID retains primary responsibility for their Member in Discernment process, there are many discernment partners who play a key role in accompanying candidates for ordained and authorized ministry. Additionally, many other entities contribute to ministerial formation. "These relationships help to form and examine the person's capacity for ordained ministry, and they provide accountability so that discernment is not practiced in isolation." All MIDs are encouraged to proactively engage with their³ discernment partners throughout their journey towards authorized ministry. Each of the covenantal partners plays a key role in the discernment and formation journey. While the following lists are not exhaustive, they are meant to give key discernment partners a sense of their covenantal responsibilities prior to a candidate seeking MID status.

In covenant, the **local congregation** will:

- Assist in providing annual financial support when possible;
- Share in the cost of the required psychological assessment and background check;
- Maintain communication with the MID, especially if they are physically distant, to keep them updated regarding the ministry of the church and provide ongoing congregational care;
- Regularly, and publically, pray for the MID;
- Whenever possible, invite the MID into leadership roles including in worship;
- Participate in meetings with the CMC, as requested;
- Maintain the LCDC to actively discern with and support the MID throughout their journey;

In covenant, the **MID** will:

- Be a member in good standing of the congregation which includes support and participation in congregational life through time, talent, and treasure; and a commitment to earnest prayer for the well-being of the congregation and its ministry;
 - Communicate regularly with the congregation about their discernment journey through newsletter articles, reports at annual meeting, etc;
 - Be in conversation with their pastor regarding leadership opportunities;
 - Attend Association, Conference, and National Setting gatherings whenever possible
- Adhere to oversight and all requirements as presented by CMC;
- Appropriately prepare for and attend all meetings as requested by CMC;
- Ask clarifying questions of the CMC, MID Advisor, and/or Conference Minister whenever there is confusion or uncertainty around the MID journey.

In covenant, the **CMC** will:

- Hold the MID in prayer during this time of discernment;
- Create an environment of hospitality when meeting with MIDs, and their covenantal partners, including adhering to the CMC Covenant.
- Graciously receive and review feedback from the MID and covenantal partners, related to the discernment process.
- Communicate clearly the requirements and expectations of the MID;
- Appoint an Advisor to support the MID in all phases of the MID process.
- Offer appropriate support and oversight of the MID in covenant with discernment partners;
- Offer scholarships.

The CMC hopes this clear articulation of expectations will pave the way for a full and rich formation process for the MID and the sponsoring church. The CMC appreciates the local congregations that accept the important role of sponsoring someone through the process, forming people who are called for leadership in the UCC.



MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT JOURNEY OUTLINE

Meet w/ local congregation pastor

Prepare Initial MID Portfolio ([Appendix 1](#)):

Sections 1 & 2: A Spiritual Journey & Call Paper (no more than five written pages)

Section 3: Reflection on and Demonstration of the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers

Section 4: Additional Documents, specifically:

Professional Resume or CV, including work, education, civic, church and other pertinent experience.

Official academic transcripts from any undergraduate and graduate school experience, including seminary, sent directly to the Clerk of the Cumberland Association. (Electronic is acceptable.)

Current Educational Plans, if any

Meet w/ LCDC (for recommendation to Cumberland Association Church and Ministry Committee)

Affirmation and consent of the Board of Deacons or other local church body to proceed to Cumberland Association Church and Ministry Committee.

Complete the Application, and Authorization and Release Forms

Complete the Background Self-Disclosure Form. ([Appendix 3](#))

Schedule date for initial interview with Cumberland Association CMC

One month prior to the initial interview, send updated MID Portfolio ([Appendix 1](#)), which includes:

Sections 1 & 2: A Spiritual Journey & Call Paper (no more than five written pages).

Section 3: Reflection on and Demonstration of the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers

Section 4: Additional Documents, specifically:

Professional Resume or CV, including work, education, civic, church and other pertinent experience.

Official academic transcripts from any undergraduate and graduate school experience, including seminary, sent directly to the Cumberland Association CMC. (Electronic is acceptable.)

Current Educational Plans, if any

Minimum of three Phase II: Initial Letters of Reference (See Page 14-15 for description) including at least one from each of these categories

MID Local Church Pastor; A professor, teacher, mentor, or spiritual guide;

Someone with whom MID has worked, collaborated, or volunteered in the past two years.

After receiving MID status, in collaboration with partners, draft a Preparation and Formation Plan for CMC approval and CMC to host the gathering, craft an order of worship, and recruit participants.

PHASE I: EXPLORATION OF CALL WITH LOCAL CHURCH

The journey of discernment begins in the heart of our denomination at the Local Church. No subsequent step may be taken unless both a MID's Local Church Pastor and the Local Church Discernment Committee (LCDC) agree to consider someone's potential candidacy for ordination in the UCC.

When a candidate has made their Pastor aware of a growing call to ministry, the Pastor should notify the Chair of the Cumberland Association CMC that a member of the local congregation is considering applying to the Member in Discernment process.

While informal conversation will, and should, take place, it is recommended that formal meetings are set up between the candidate, the Local Church Pastor, and the LCDC as soon as practical. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss a candidate's call to authorized ministry in the UCC. Additionally, these meetings should also include a review of the Member in Discernment Guidelines, including responsibilities of the candidate, Local Church Pastor, and LCDC. If requested, the Conference Minister is available to join for at least one of these meetings.

If all agree to continue discussing a candidate's discernment, an official decision-making meeting should be set up with the LCDC. The primary purpose of the meeting is to ascertain and vote on whether it is willing to recommend that the candidate be received as a Member in Discernment by the Cumberland Association Church and Ministry Committee.

Preparation for Initial LCDC Meeting

Both the candidate and the LCDC are encouraged to review ([Appendices 1 & 2](#)) to prepare for this meeting. Two weeks prior to that official decision-making meeting, the candidate should provide to the Local Church Pastor and LCDC their initial MID Portfolio ([Appendix 1](#)), which includes:

- 1. Sections 1 & 2:** A Spiritual Journey & Call Paper (no more than five written pages).
- 2. Section 3:** Reflection on and Demonstration of the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers. This is not expected to be robust for potential or new MIDs.
- 3. Section 4:** Additional Documents, specifically:
 - a.** Professional Resume or CV, including work, education, civic, church and other pertinent experience.
 - b.** Academic transcripts from any undergraduate and graduate school experience, including seminary.⁴
 - c.** Current Educational Plans, if any.

⁴ Note that official transcripts will be required for the initial meeting with the CA-CMC. 0

Vote of the LCDC

At the end of the meeting, a vote should be taken on whether the LCDC is willing to recommend that the candidate be received as a Member in Discernment by the Cumberland Association. While discerning, the LCDC should consider the nature of the candidate's call, their readiness to maturely engage in a faithful and robust discernment and formation process, and their comfortability recommending the candidate to the wider Church. However it is *not* expected that the candidate's call will be fully-formed or even completely clear at this point.

There are three possible outcomes to this vote ([Appendix 2](#)):

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

If the decision is **“yes...”**, the LCDC should introduce the candidate to their local congregation Board of Deacons, or other relevant body, for their affirmation of the commitments to a MID and consent to present them to the CA-CMC. This meeting should not duplicate the work of the LCDC, but rather invite broader support and investment in the candidate's discernment journey.

The **“yes”** decision should also be communicated via email to the Cumberland Association Clerk. This letter shall incorporate the following:

1. The record of the above vote;
2. Length of time the candidate has been a member of the UCC, including the sponsoring church (minimum one year), and other congregations, if applicable;
3. A description of the process used by the church to discern with the candidate and recommend them to the Association;
4. A statement regarding how the church and pastor will continue to relate to and support the candidate, including financial support and opportunities to develop ministerial readiness and experience leading rites and sacraments of the church;
5. The name, address, phone, and email of the person chairing the LCDC.

If the decision is **“not yet”** or **“no,”** more details can be found in [Appendix 2](#).

PHASE II: INITIAL INTERVIEW WITH THE CHURCH AND MINISTRY COMMITTEE

Preparation for the Initial Interview with the CA-CMC

Upon notification to the CA-CMC of the affirmative vote of the LCDC, the candidate should work with the CMC Chair and Association Clerk to complete the following steps to prepare for an initial meeting with the CA-CMC:

1. Complete the *Application for the MID Program* and *MID Authorization and Release Forms* ([Appendix 3](#)). Plan to get paperwork in to the Association Clerk one month in advance of meeting date with CMC
- 2.. Complete the *Background Self-Disclosure Form* ([Appendix 3](#)).
3. Schedule an Initial Interview with the CA-CMC

Upon notification of the affirmative vote of the LCDC, completion of the above steps, a candidate can schedule a date for an initial interview with the CA-CMC Chair.

One month prior to that meeting, the MID Portfolio ([Appendix 1](#)) should be revised based on the LCDC's recommendations (where applicable) and provided by the candidate, electronically, to the CA-CMC Clerk. It should include:

1. **Sections 1 & 2:** A Spiritual Journey & Call Paper (no more than five written pages).
2. **Section 3:** Reflection on and demonstration of the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers (this is not expected to be robust for potential or new MIDs).
3. **Section 4:** Additional Documents, specifically:
 - a. Professional resume or CV, including work, education, civic, church and other pertinent experience.
 - b. Official academic transcripts from any undergraduate and graduate school experience, including seminary, sent directly to the Cumberland Association Clerk.. Electronic formats are acceptable.
 - c. Current educational plans, if any.
 - d. Minimum of three Phase II: Initial Letters of Reference:
 1. The reference letters should include at least one from each of these categories:
 - a. MID's local congregation pastor;
 - b. A professor, teacher, mentor, or spiritual guide;

c. Someone with whom MID has worked, collaborated, or volunteered in the past two years.

2. References should address the following questions:

a. How long and in what capacity have you known the applicant?

b. Consider specifically the [Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers](#), and reflect on:

i. Where do you see this person's strengths? Give examples.

ii. Select one area in which you think this person needs further development and explain.

c. What comments do you have regarding: the Member in Discernment candidate's emotional maturity, attitude toward self and toward others, and readiness for the Member in Discernment process?

3. These letters may come via Word document or PDF, but must be on identifiable letterhead and come directly from the reference. References can be emailed to the Cumberland Association Clerk.

The Initial Interview

“The purpose of this initial meeting is to offer hospitality to the person and the Local Church, to listen prayerfully to the movement of the Spirit, to engage in conversation about the person's spiritual journey and call, to outline expectations of the process, and to clarify any questions,”⁵ and ultimately, determine whether or not to grant a candidate Member in Discernment status in the Cumberland Association. Candidates should plan to be accompanied by their Local Church Pastor, and the chair of the LCDC (or other designee). One or two others may be invited by the candidate, if so desired.

Prior to this meeting, the CMC will have reviewed the submitted paperwork and the MID Portfolio provided

During the interview, candidates will be asked to respond to questions about the content of their Spiritual Journey and Call Paper, resume, church and other life experiences, current sense of call, Portfolio and possibly the results of the psychological assessment. Additionally, the CMC will also consider a candidate's maturity and readiness for a robust discernment and formation process. It is *not* expected that the candidate's call will be fully-formed or even completely clear.

At the end of the meeting, a vote is taken on whether to receive the candidate as a Member in Discernment in the Cumberland Association. There are **three possible outcomes** to this vote:

1. **“yes, we think so” or “we believe this may be the case”** and so we recommend going forward to the next steps in discernment of such a call. The candidate is received as a Member in Discernment.

2. **“not yet”** ... there are some questions still unanswered. The Committee withholds MID status due to lack of readiness and/or substantial need for growth, with constructive feedback offered that could help the person begin the discernment process again at a future undetermined date.

3. **“no”** ... the call is to lay ministry ... OR the call seems to come from someplace other than God and/or the church ... OR this person doesn't seem to have the gifts and graces for ordination in the UCC.

When the decision of the CMC is to grant Member in Discernment (MID) status, an Advisor will be appointed to work with the MID and Local Church Pastor/Ministerial Advisor (MA). The CMC may have requirements or recommendations regarding how candidates proceed, gaining additional experience in the Marks of Ministry areas, and it may have suggestions about the plans described in the Marks of Ministry Portfolio. After this meeting, a MID should ask their MID Advisor to help understand these expectations.

The Member in Discernment will be in touch with the Cumberland Association Clerk to begin the process of setting up a psychological evaluation, recommended to be done in the first six months of being accepted as a MID. The psychological evaluation will help inform the MID's preparation for ministry. The cost of the psychological evaluation is split equally among the MID, their local congregation, and the Cumberland Association. The testing center bills the Association (through the Clerk), and the Clerk will bill the MID and the local church for their shares. Checks should be made payable to the Cumberland Association and sent to the CA Treasurer. Please note that this fee is non-refundable. The candidate, the local church, and the Association are responsible for the cost of the psychological testing regardless of whether the candidate completes the MID program. If the cost of the testing is a hardship, please be in touch with the CMC Chair as soon as possible. **See Appendix 10 for current contact information.**

When the decision of the CMC is “No, but” or “No,” the Local Church Pastor who accompanies them to this meeting will work with them to understand the reasons why this is so, and to potentially explore other vocational options to fulfill their sense of call to ministry.

Please note that MID status does not guarantee ordination or authorization.

Crafting a Preparation and Formation Plan Covenant ([Appendix 4](#))

After an affirmative vote by the CMC, the MID will set up subsequent meetings with their MID Advisor and other relevant discernment partners to develop a Preparation and Formation Plan Covenant for the short and long term. The purpose of the plan is to outline how the MID will grow in their experience and competence related to the Marks. The plan will be “based on the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers in relation to the Committee's assessment of the Member in Discernment's Portfolio. Preparation and formation plans are individualized and may take multiple paths based on the nature of the call, the available options for a Member in Discernment to develop

their competencies, and the needs of the Church.” Plans should include a mix of academic ⁵ coursework and experiential learning (e.g. supervised ministry, participation in wider church activities, and public acts of ministry).

As with every phase of the MID journey, ongoing adherence to the plan ultimately resides with the Member in Discernment.

At a subsequent meeting of the CA-CMC, the MID and their Advisor will present the updated Preparation and Formation Plan Covenant for acceptance by the body. If the formation plan is deemed inadequate by the CMC, the MID Advisor, and MID should regroup to discuss the input of the CMC and adjust the plan for future discussion and approval.

Communication With the CMC Following the Initial Interview

It is the MID's responsibility to adhere to the Preparation and Formation Plan Covenant and maintain contact with key covenantal discernment partners throughout the MID journey. Specifically, MIDs are required to:

- be in contact with their MID Advisor at least every six months;
- provide their MID Advisor, the chair of their LCDC and the Cumberland Association Clerk with an updated Formation Plan and MID Portfolio at minimum every 12 months, reflecting on both steps taken and what is planned for the next 12 months; and
- Attend yearly check-in meetings with the CA-CMC.

MIDs are encouraged to invite their MID Advisor to attend a future meeting with their LCDC to support their discernment journey.

Updates to the portfolio should include how a MID did or did not follow their plan for development and what they believe their current readiness level to be. Failure to comply with this is one of the grounds for dismissal from the process.

PHASE III: MARKS OF MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT

There are a variety of ways in which MIDs prepare for authorized ministry in the UCC. Some are well-established practices, such as earning a Master of Divinity. The Cumberland Association CMC also accepts MIDs who have completed their academic preparation through the Maine School of Ministry (MESOM). Yet, there are many ways to gain skills, experience and wisdom during the discernment process.

Throughout this phase, it is expected that MIDs will continually reflect on and update their MID Portfolio in anticipation of Phase IV.

⁵ MOM, page 28

While some of the following elements may have been completed prior to Phase III, progression Phase IV cannot happen until they are reflected in the MID Portfolio.

UCC Polity, History, and Theology of Church and Call

MIDs will successfully complete a course in UCC polity in which they will:

- learn the history, theology, polity, and governance of the UCC and its predecessor traditions;
- reflect on the UCC's Statement of Faith and the theology of church, authorized ministry, call, lay leadership, covenant; and
- represent their understanding of these matters in their Marks of Ministry Portfolio.

This course can be found at a UCC-affiliated seminary, various summer polity courses offered through the national setting of the UCC, regional theological education programs, and/or a directed study approved by the CA-CMC .

Additionally, all MIDs are expected to write two papers for inclusion in their portfolio: 1) a UCC Polity paper, and 2) a Theology paper. Consequently, it is recommended that the MID attend a UCC Polity Course that asks them to prepare these papers as a part of their coursework. Guidelines for both of these papers can be found in [Appendix 5](#).

Ministry Competencies and Practice

Practical, contextual opportunities for pastoral ministry with theological reflection are key ways of growing in and demonstrating competency in the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers. Therefore, it is essential that all MIDs build a variety of these experiences into their Formation Plan. These opportunities may include (but are not limited to):

- Supervised contextual education in a local congregation (Field Education)
- Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)
- Pulpit Supply, Weddings, Funerals, Sacraments, Rituals (at sponsoring/home church, or another congregation)
- Writing/Leading Liturgy/Spiritual Retreats
- Christian Education leadership (developing/teaching/facilitation)
- Faith Formation leadership/Spiritual Direction
(developing/teaching/facilitation)
- Participation in public/civic acts of ministerial leadership
- Providing pastoral care through home and/or hospital visits

The CA-CMC holds the opinion that all people it authorizes for ministry on behalf of the entire United Church of Christ need to demonstrate capacity for pastoral ministry in local congregation settings whether or not they perceive a call to local congregation leadership at this point in time.

No matter the understanding of their call to ministry, each MID must work toward competency in the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministry through the practice of and reflection on the roles, responsibilities, and identity of a pastor through practical, hands-on experiences.

The nature and context of these experiences will differ for each MID and will be determined in discernment with the MID's Covenant Partners and reflected in the Formation Plan Covenant.

PLEASE NOTE: Employment of 20 hours or more per week for a UCC entity triggers the 90-day window for entry into the UCC Health & Dental Insurance plans.

Mentored Practice / Field Education

In every case, there must be a minimum of one academic year, supervised contextual education experience as a pastor; which includes theological reflection and results in further competency as reflected in the Marks portfolio.

Mentored Practice/Field Education experiences should include robust opportunities for ministerial and pastoral leadership, including but not limited to: preaching, designing and leading elements of worship, providing pastoral care, planning with lay leaders and committees, key administrative functions in ministry, and faith formation for all ages. MIDs should pay particular attention to the Marks of Ministry and find multiple opportunities to engage them throughout their experience.

- Any plan should culminate in a final evaluation by the supervisor and the integration of outcomes and competencies into the Marks of Ministry Portfolio.
- A copy of the Mentored Practice/Field Education final evaluations should be added to the MID portfolio.

Mentored Practice/Field Education opportunities are not *required* to be at an approved UCC setting; however, MIDs should be in discernment with their advisors and covenantal partners around what might be best for them based on their previous background in and with UCC congregations. The CA-CMC reserves the right to require more mentored practice/field education in a UCC setting.

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)

CPE is a specialized and intensive form of education and practice that trains individuals, typically clergy, chaplains, and others in pastoral roles, to provide spiritual and emotional support to individuals and their families. A CPE experience is designed to engage the participants in personal and group reflection on the theological and psycho-social concerns of those in crisis while addressing personal growth and self awareness through systemic and facilitated self reflection, a competency that is imperative in faithful and effective pastoral ministry and leadership.

The CA-CMC requires MIDs to complete CPE through an ACPE accredited program of study. MIDs who are unable to do a "traditional" CPE program can, with CMC approval, gain the required skills through an alternative course of study (Appendix 10). CPE often leads to a

range of positive outcomes that align with the goal of competency in the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers. These outcomes may include:

- **Improved Pastoral Skills:** including active listening, empathy, communication, and crisis intervention;
- **Increased Self-Awareness:** including their own beliefs, biases, and values;
- **Enhanced Cultural Competency:** through experience with and sensitivity to a diverse population;
- **Emotional Resilience:** through exposure to challenging and emotionally charged situations, CPE participants can develop greater emotional resilience and coping skills.
- **Integration of Theology, Spirituality, and Pastoral Practice:** through the application of theological concepts and principles to real-life situations;
- **Ethical Reflection and Decision-Making:** with the opportunity to grapple with complex ethical dilemmas and develop the skills to navigate them;
- **Confidence, Competence, Personal Growth:** graduates typically report increased confidence and competence in the pastoral role, capacity to provide emotional and spiritual support in times of crisis, a deepening of their spirituality which enriches their own faith and sense of purpose.
- **Collaboration and Holistic Care:** participants learn to collaborate with other team members contributing to a holistic approach to care addressing physical, spiritual, and emotional needs.
- **Continuing Education:** CPE is often just the beginning of a lifelong journey of learning and growth for those in pastoral care roles.

MIDs may wish to complete one (or more) unit(s) of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) at an accredited ACPE site. If done so, the MID should integrate their learning and experience into the Marks of Ministry portfolio and include the final CPE evaluation in their portfolio.

Wider Church Involvement

The CA-CMC wishes its MIDs to be familiar with the various settings of the UCC, and to experience the covenantal dimensions that define each setting of the church. MIDs are required to participate in Association, Conference, and National Setting gatherings and workshops throughout their discernment journey. The MID Portfolio should not only document these experiences, but also articulate how these covenantal relationships impact the MID's theology of call and their understanding of ordained and authorized ministry in the UCC.

Boundary Awareness Training

Boundary Awareness Training (BAT) is a requirement of standing of all authorized ministers in the Cumberland Association. An introductory BAT course is required for all MIDs. Subsequent, “refresher” courses (e.g. those that build on the introductory BAT course, but may not cover the foundational topics) are permitted after an initial introductory course. With many BATs now offered online, there are numerous options throughout the wider UCC. A certificate of completion must be sent to the Cumberland Association Clerk and included in the MID portfolio.

MIDs should consult with their advisors and CMC to see if the courses they have found would satisfy the requirements described above.

Creation of a Ministerial Profile

“The UCC Ministerial Profile is an authorized minister’s denominational credential, presenting an individual’s verified standing, criminal background check, disciplinary records, and employment history. The UCC Ministerial Profile is also the document by which an authorized minister reaches local congregation search committees.” A MID may be granted access to the ministerial profile portal ⁶ prior to completing their Ecclesiastical Council (EC), but it will not be validated by Conference staff until *after* successful completion of the EC. MIDs are advised to set up a profile well in advance of their EC. Not all MIDs will prepare a Ministerial Profile; MIDs already serving in churches in positions that will result in a call, are not required to create a profile. Questions should be directed to their Conference Minister . You can learn more about the ministerial profile and to request an account at the [UCC’s Profile Portal](#).

Leave of Absence

A Member in Discernment may apply for a leave of absence at any time during the Member in Discernment Process. This application must be in writing and addressed to the Chair(s) of the Church and Ministry, and the Cumberland Association Clerk, and describe the reason(s) for the request. Authority for granting or denying a leave of absence rests with the Church and Ministry.

If a leave of absence exceeds two years, the member in discernment shall re-enter the process under the guidelines current at the time of re-entry. At the time of re-entry, the Church and Ministry Committee may require the member in discernment to repeat any previously-completed requirements that the Committee deems to be out-of-date.

PHASE IV: EVALUATION OF MARKS OF MINISTRY

Documenting Readiness Through the MID Portfolio

Throughout the Member in Discernment journey, the MID Portfolio should consistently be updated to reflect their experience, maturation, and journey of integration in the Marks of Ministry. To plan for and prepare for the final phase of the MID process the MID, MID Advisor, and should meet to review the MID Portfolio.

⁶ https://www.ucc.org/who-we-are/team/leadership/ministers_profile/

Additionally, the following should be included in the MID Portfolio prior to Phase IV:

1. A copy of the action of the LCDC as outlined below, sent by a representative of the church.
2. Evaluations from Ministry Competency and Practice experiences that were agreed upon in the Formation Plan ([Appendix 4](#)).
3. Certificates of completion of Boundary Awareness Training and training.
4. Three (3) letters of endorsement regarding readiness for ordination from ([Appendix 6](#))
 - a. Committee on Ministry - Formation Advisor,
 - b. MID Advisor, and
 - c. a ministry supervisor with whom the MID has served.
5. A UCC Polity Paper ([Appendix 5](#))
6. A Theology Paper ([Appendix 5](#))

Phase IV with the Local Church Discernment Committee

When the Covenantal Discernment Partners concur with the MID, based on examination and review of the MID Portfolio, that the MID's experience, maturation, and journey of integration in the Marks of Ministry is sufficiently deep and other elements of the Member in Discernment Process are complete, they will help the MID demonstrate their readiness for ordination to the CA-CMC.

When a MID believes they are ready to begin this phase, they should ask the Local Church Discernment Committee (LCDC) to examine their MID Portfolio for readiness to present to the CA CMC. The LCDC then considers the following motion:

Voted: That the LCDC [or appropriate name] of [Church] believe [Member in Discernment] has demonstrated sufficient competencies and maturation in the Marks of Ministry and requests that the Cumberland Association Church and Ministry Committee examine [MID] regarding their readiness for authorization and ordination to Christian ministry in the United Church of Christ. Further, if the examination is found satisfactory, it requests that the Association be summoned to meet as an ecclesiastical council to review the committee's findings and the MID Portfolio. Upon satisfactory completion of an ecclesiastical council, it requests that the Cumberland Association allow [MID] to search for a Call within the UCC Search and Call process leading to ordination by the Association on behalf of the UCC if the call they receive is deemed ordainable by the CA-CMC.

Details on voting options and the discernment process can be found in [Appendix 2](#).

If the LCDC vote is “not yet”, the MID Advisor and the LCDC chair will discuss with the MID what steps might be taken for the sponsoring church to re-consider the MID’s readiness to move to the interviews portion of Phase IV with the CA-CMC.

Anticipating a positive action by the sponsoring church committee, a MID may contact the CA-CMC Chair to schedule interview IVa. A tentative schedule of interviews IVb and IVc may also be developed at this time and will reflect the CMC’s availability as well as a MID’s readiness to proceed. In order to ensure a positive and consistent process, the CMC strongly recommends that MIDs plan to complete Interviews IVa, IVb and IVc within a 12-month period.

In all of the Phase IV interviews, the MID Advisor is expected to be in attendance. Discuss with the CA-CMC who, if anyone might also accompany the MID to these interviews, especially Interview IVc, the Marks of Ministry Assessment. The chair of the LCDC is generally the person most appropriate to accompany the MID to interview IVa.

The members of the Cumberland Association CMC are deeply committed to evaluating each MIDs documentation of their Marks, their portfolio, and thus their readiness for ordination without bias, prejudice, or personal opinion or familiarity. The goal of the CA-CMC is to have a “level playing field” for each of the MIDs in its care - to be as fair as possible.

Phase IV with the CMC

IVA: Re-introduction to the CMC through the Polity and Theology Paper Papers

Prior to the Phase IVA meeting, the CMC will review the updated MID Portfolio for updates provided that reflect experience, maturation, and journey of integration in the Marks of Ministry and with an eye to being reintroduced to the MID.

The MID will open our time together in prayer. The CMC will discuss both the UCC Polity and Theology Papers ([Appendix 5](#)), and other topics of interest related to the MID portfolio. Following that, the MID will be asked to leave while the CMC continues conversation with the representative(s) from the LCDC and the MID Advisor. They will then be offered the opportunity to share briefly how they have experienced the MID’s ministerial competencies as well as their theological grounding in ministry. After discussion, they will join the MID in waiting as the CMC completes their discussion and discernment. Everyone will then be recalled and the CMC’s discernment will be shared. In this, as in all meetings with the CMC, there may be expectations for additional development or demonstration of readiness. Following this meeting, the MID Advisor will reflect the CMC’s intent and help the MID to construct a plan to meet these expectations.

A member of the CMC will be asked to pray at the conclusion of our meeting.

IVB: Worship Leadership and Preaching Interview

The CMC would like to have direct experience of the MID’s capabilities in the critical ministries of crafting and leading worship. The MID will invite members of the CMC to a worship service he/she/they are leading or provide electronically a worship service they have led. After attending or viewing the service, the CMC will engage with the MID in theological reflection regarding the

choices made in preparing for and leading this worship service.

Following that, the MID will be asked to leave while the CMC continues conversation with the representative(s) from the LCDC and the MID Advisor. They will then be offered the opportunity to share briefly how they have experienced the MID's worship leadership. After discussion, they will join the MID in waiting as the CMC completes their discussion and discernment. Everyone will then be recalled and the CMC's discernment will be shared. In this, as in all meetings with the CMC, there may be expectations for additional development or demonstration of readiness. Following this meeting, the Ministerial Advisor and Committee Advisor will reflect the CMC's intent and help the MID to construct a plan to meet these expectations.

A member of the CMC will close our time together in prayer.

IVC: Ordination Interview

Guided by the [Ordination Interview Plan](#) and the Manual on Ministry, the CMC's attention in this interview will turn to a comprehensive review of the entire MID Portfolio to assess readiness for ordination and to prepare the MID for an Ecclesiastical Council.

MIDs will prepare a presentation for the CACMC, highlighting portions of their Marks of Ministry portfolio, and emphasizing their readiness for ordained and authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ. The same presentation, with feedback from the CA-CMC, may be used again for the MID's Ecclesiastical Council.

MIDs are encouraged to bring a guest(s) with them to this interview who is/are able to attest to the MID's Portfolio and their readiness for an Ecclesiastical Council and authorized ministry.

When the MID and those who accompany the MID join the committee, the MID will open in prayer, present, and then be asked questions related to both the MID portfolio and this presentation.

Following the conversation, the MID will be asked to leave while the CMC continues conversation with the representative(s) from the LCDC and MID Advisor. After discussion, they will join the MID in waiting as the CMC completes their discussion and discernment. The CA-CMC will once again vote, this time on a MIDs readiness to present before an Ecclesiastical Council. Everyone will then be recalled and the CMC's discernment will be shared. In this, as in all meetings with the CMC, there may be expectations for additional development or demonstration of readiness.

If the CMC's discernment is affirmative, it will pass the following motion:

*Voted: That **[Member in Discernment]**, member of **[Church]** be approved for authorization in the United Church of Christ pending successful completion of an Ecclesiastical Council and participation in the UCC Search and Call process that results in receipt of a call.*

If there is not an affirmative vote, following this meeting, the MID Advisor and Local Church Pastor will reflect the CMC's intent and help the MID to construct a plan to meet these expectations.

Continuing “MID” Status

A MID who has been approved for ordination by an Ecclesiastical Council is still considered a “MID” of the Association until a call has been received and the ordination has taken place. The MID’s approval for ordination is reviewed and re-affirmed by the Church and Ministry Committee annually. During this time, the MID has access to the support and counsel of the CMC and the MID Advisor. The MID will be invited to check-in annually with the CA CMC, and update them as it relates to their discernment and their Search and Call journey.

After annual review, the CMC will communicate its decision about the continuation of “MID” status.

PHASE V: ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCIL AND SEARCH AND CALL

Ecclesiastical Council

“In the United Church of Christ, the authority to ordain ministers and to grant ministerial standing is given to Associations. The Ecclesiastical Council (EC) is a gathering of delegates on behalf of an Association to decide, on behalf of the United Church of Christ, for or against the ordination of a Member in Discernment (pending the receipt of an ordainable call) following the affirmative recommendation of a Church and Ministry Committee.

At the Church and Ministry Committee recommendation, the Association schedules an Ecclesiastical Council and shares the appropriate portions of a MID Portfolio with the Association for its consideration. Delegates from Local Churches in the Association gather as an Ecclesiastical Council to examine the Member in Discernment and to vote for or against their ordination.”⁷

The general steps to prepare for an Ecclesiastical Council are:

1. Work with MID’s local congregation and the Cumberland Association Chair to reserve a date
2. MBA Office issues the letter/invitation to the Ecclesiastical Council to all MBA Churches
3. Work with MID Advisor, LCDC, and Cumberland Association Chair to ensure attendance of sufficient representatives from Cumberland Association churches to meet a quorum: a minimum of twelve Cumberland Association congregations
4. Collaborate with MID Advisor and others to adapt the Ordination Interview Presentation for an Ecclesiastical Council.

The Cumberland Association Chair and Clerk will assist the MID in advertising and appropriately

⁷ MOM, page 33

preparing for an Ecclesiastical Council. MIDs are encouraged to work proactively with the Cumberland Association Chair to ensure clarity around official roles at the Ecclesiastical Council ([Appendix 7](#)).

Search and Call

Upon successful completion of an Ecclesiastical Council, a MID may complete and submit a Ministerial Profile to the Conference Minister for validation, and formally begin the Search and Call process to seek an ordainable call. [More information on the Search and Call Process can be found here.](#)

When a MID believes they are close to agreeing a call, either through the Search and Call system or otherwise, the call must be reviewed and approved by the CA-CMC as an “ordainable call.” MIDs should review the [Guidelines for Discerning and Ordainable Call](#) well in advance of the CA-CMC’s review and approval. Once completed, and the call extended to the MID, an ordination may be scheduled in consultation with the Cumberland Association.

PHASE VI: ORDINATION

Ordination is a service of the association in cooperation with the local congregation and the pastor being ordained. In this service, the people of God celebrate Christ’s gift of ministry to the church. The pastor and the local congregation take the initiative in planning the service in consultation with the Moderator of the Cumberland Association. The Moderator of the Cumberland Association will preside over the ordination rite itself. The pastor to be ordained and the local congregation will select all other participants in the service.

Guidelines for the preparation of a service of ordination can be found in [Appendix 8](#).

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Member in Discernment Portfolio

Overview

The Member in Discernment (MID) will create a MID Portfolio, held in an electronic folder collected by the Cumberland Association Clerk and accessible by the members of the Church and Ministry Committee.. The MID Portfolio is the MID's medium to both integrate and demonstrate their personal, professional, and spiritual formation, preparation, and readiness for authorized and ordained ministry.

Using the United Church of Christ's [Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers](#), the [Preparation and Formation Covenant](#) and the [Assessment Rubric for the Marks](#) as a foundation, the MID Portfolio should be developed, curated, and arranged to demonstrate competencies and experiences in each of the Marks of Ministry. Working alongside and in consultation with the MID Advisor and other Covenant Partners, the MID Portfolio should be assembled, edited, and amended throughout the duration of the discernment process. Think of it as a living collection, with documents that will grow, change, and develop over the course of the discernment and formation process. For instance, the MID may find more clarity in their sense of call; and, therefore, materials in section one may need revision; or a sermon added in an early draft of the portfolio may later need to be replaced by a sermon that better reflects the MID's preaching style or theology.

Each year, a working draft of the portfolio must be submitted to the Church and Ministry Committee one month prior to the annual review. As the MID moves through the discernment journey and works with the recommendations of the Formation Plan Covenant they will note the completion of recommendations on the formation plan and integrate their learnings and outcomes in their reflections on the Marks of Ministry from section three. Throughout the discernment process the CMC will ask MID's to discuss and reflect upon the additions and changes made to their portfolio.

The MID Portfolio is a work in progress and the following schedule is suggested:

- At the first annual review, sections one and two should have drafted responses as well as an initial reflection on the Marks of Ministry from section three.
- Each subsequent annual review, the portfolio should reflect edits to sections one and two and further development of section three.
- Section Four Additional Documents will be added in each phase per the schedule noted below.
- At the conclusion of the MID process, a completed portfolio will be submitted. A portfolio that demonstrates integration of the Marks is a key part of the final assessment of a candidate's readiness for ministerial authorization.

Contents of the MID Portfolio

MID Portfolios consist of four main sections. While there is room for creativity in the creation of the portfolio, be sure the work is centered on the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers.

Section 1: Spiritual Journey

Introduce yourself by way of sharing your spiritual autobiography.⁹ Be sure to interact with themes from the Marks of Ministry as a part of this reflection. This section should be no more than three written pages.

Section 2: Understanding A Call to Authorized Ministry

Clarity in articulating a call to ordained ministry by God and the Church and continuing discernment of one's call in community are fundamental practices. This section should be no more than two written pages.

Guidelines for Sections 1 and 2:

- General faith pilgrimage: Christian experience, insights and encounters that have shaped the MID's faith through home, local congregation, education, community and other settings.
- Call to ministry: a theological statement reflecting on personal faith and life experience that leads the MID to believe they are called by God to ordained ministry. This should include, but not be limited to, reasons for seeking to be a Member in Discernment and any vocational plans, in so far as they are currently understood.
- An explanation of why the MID believes the UCC is the denomination into which they are called to authorized ministry.

Section 3: Reflection on and Demonstration of the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers

In this section of the portfolio the MID engages in reflection and demonstrates competencies in each of the eight categories of the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers. The eight categories are as follow: Exhibiting a Spiritual Foundation and Ongoing Spiritual Practice; Nurturing UCC Identity; Building Transformational Leadership Skills; Engaging Sacred Stories and Traditions; Caring for All Creation; Participating in Theological Praxis; Working Together for Justice and Mercy; and Strengthening Inter- and Intra- Personal Assets. The [United Church of Christ's Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers](#) and the [Assessment Rubric for the Marks](#) can be used as tools for this reflection.

The MID will write reflections that a) demonstrate the maturation, skill, and integration of the particular Mark into their ministry; weaving into their reflection outcomes from experience, education, and learnings; and b) reflect on both strengths and opportunities for continued development or practice in the Mark. In writing this reflection, discuss one specific example of ministry experience in greater detail. Describe the process, tools, and resources utilized; include theological, social, and cultural observations about the ministry experience; what was learned as a result; and what's next or how this might be approached differently next time. Each of the eight reflections are a practice in the necessary skill for ministers of clear, concise, effective communication and should be no more than two written pages.

⁹A spiritual autobiography is a story of how significant events, relationships, and cultural influences have contributed to the author's spiritual formation, relationship with God, interpretation of scriptures, and understanding of how to live as a disciple of Jesus.

In addition to the reflection, the MID should include one ministerial example of work referenced in the narrative. Ministerial examples might include things like a sermon, lesson plans for a UCC polity class taught, photos and descriptions from an art installation created for Lent, meditations written, worship outlines and notes used for terrarium making to tell the story of creation in worship, etc. The MID is invited and encouraged to provide a diversity of ministry examples to reflect the Marks. In cases where the ministry example includes video, audio or large files, upload them to a server such as Dropbox, Google Drive, or

Vimeo (all have free account versions) and then provide a hyperlink in the text of the MID Portfolio. Be sure to password protect any sensitive information and provide details on how to access the files.

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

Section 4: Additional Documents

This section should be utilized to include documents that demonstrate growth throughout the MID journey; however, it must include these specific documents referenced throughout the phases:

PHASE I
Professional resume or CV, including work, education, civic, church and other pertinent experience. Official academic transcripts from any undergraduate and graduate school experience, including seminary or other theological education, sent directly to the Cumberland Association Clerk. (Electronic is acceptable.) Current educational plans, if any
PHASE II
Minimum of three (3) reference letters. (MID pastor; A professor, teacher, mentor, or spiritual guide; Someone with whom the MID has worked, collaborated, or volunteered in the past two years.) Preparation and Formation Plan
PHASE III
Final evaluation of at least one year of supervised ministry Final evaluations of any other supervised ministry experiences (e.g. CPE) Certificate of completion of introductory Boundary Awareness Training course Certificate of completion of UCC Polity Polity Paper

Theology Paper
PHASE IV
Three (3) letters of endorsement regarding readiness for ordination (the MID's Local Church Pastor, MID Advisor, and a ministry supervisor with whom the MID has served.)

Other vital documents may be included in this section as needed to demonstrate Marks that have not previously been included.

Submitting Drafts of the Completed Portfolio as One File

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

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

Use this format to name all files: *Last name_First Initial_MIDPortfolio_Date*. For example: *Smith_J_MIDPortfolio_2023_01_01*.

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

The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers

Exhibiting a Spiritual Foundation and Ongoing Spiritual Practice

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

Nurturing UCC Identity

- Acknowledging Jesus Christ as the sole Head of the Church.
- Communicating passion for the oneness of the Body of Christ (John 17:21).

- Holding active membership in a Local Church of the United Church of Christ.
- Participating in the various settings of the United Church of Christ, including Local Churches, Associations, Conferences, General Synod, and global ministries.
- Knowing and appreciating UCC history, polity, and theology.
- Exhibiting a commitment to the core values of the United Church of Christ, continuing testament, extravagant welcome, and changing lives.

Building Transformational Leadership Skills

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

Engaging Sacred Stories and Traditions

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

Caring For All Creation

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

Participating in Theological Praxis

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

Working Together for Justice and Mercy

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

Strengthening Inter- and Intra- Personal Assets

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

Appendix 2: Making Decisions with Discernment

The word “discernment” is used intentionally throughout the journey towards authorized and ordained ministry. In this context, we define discernment as the Holy act of listening for the will of God, through the movement of the Holy Spirit, both in individual prayer and in the collective wisdom of the Church gathered together in various contexts. It is critical that every covenantal partner engages this journey with a heart for discernment.

The discernment journey often begins in an intensely personal way for those seeking MID status. However, it soon broadens, like an expanding circle, to include the Local Church Pastor, the Local Church Discernment Committee (LCDC), the Church and Ministry Committee of the Cumberland Association, and many others. As the circle expands, covenantal partners will be asked to center discernment in their ministry and decision making process.

Things for an LCDC to consider during their initial discernment with a candidate:

- The candidates' history with the UCC and this local congregation. How have their experiences contributed to their sense of call? How have these experiences given evidence that they have gifts and maturity necessary for ordained ministry, gifts distinct from those of committed lay leaders? To what extent have they gained experience in each of the Marks of Ministry and what opportunities for further growth might take place in this local congregation? (We ask that the local congregation pastor, the LCDC, and the candidate specifically discuss how the candidate might gain experience in leadership in administration of the sacraments of Holy Communion and Baptism, as well as pastoral leadership for weddings, funerals and memorial services, liturgical holidays, etc. We recognize especially that presiding at Holy Communion prior to ordination is governed by local congregation practices, and that Baptisms involve seeking the agreement of participants and / or parents. Nonetheless, we regard the local congregation where the MID has membership as one of the primary formation sites for ministry and believe that thorough preparation in leadership of the rites and sacraments of our church is essential for those who would lead our local congregations.)
- A candidate's understanding of ordained ministry. What is their view of the role of ordained ministry, of the church's expectations of its ministers, and of the variety of tasks entailed in ordained ministry? How do they understand authorized ministry within the UCC?
- The requirements and procedures for the preparation for ordination, including the roles played by the MID Advisor and the committee of the sponsoring church.
- Please remember: This meeting is not meant to demonstrate *readiness* for ordination. This is a beginning step in *discerning* a call to ordained ministry. The LCDC should be in discernment about whether the candidate demonstrates maturity and readiness for engagement with the Church and Ministry Committee and wider church.

The task of the Church and Ministry Committee is to discern appropriate gifts for ordained/authorized ministry in the UCC with MIDs who apply for and are received into the Member in Discernment Process. As a MID proceeds through the process toward ordination, the CMC continues its work of discernment regarding the development of the Marks of Ministry. Finally, the CMC must decide if these Marks are developed to a point that the MID may be authorized to provide pastoral leadership in the Church.

In this act of discernment the CMC uses a number of criteria to reach a decision, including: the MID portfolio, personal interviews with the member in discernment, and last, but not least, the assessment of the sponsoring local Cumberland Association church.

Whenever a decision making moment is reached with covenantal partners, there are always three possible outcomes:

1. **“yes”** - the Member in Discernment journey continues without reservation.
2. **“yes, but”** - the Member in Discernment journey is paused. Particular learning or behavioral goals are set within a given time frame as a requirement for the discernment process to continue, with a date set for reassessment.
3. **“no”** - the Member in Discernment journey ends. It is discerned that the call is to lay ministry ... or the call seems to come from someplace other than God and/or the church ... or this person doesn't seem to have the gifts and graces for ordination in the UCC.

All decisions that result from interviews will be communicated in writing and added to the Member in Discernment's file. If the MID's status is terminated, either “with” or “without bias,” the results are to be recorded in the UCC Data Hub.

If a MID is given a “no” decision, it is not a decision that is made lightly or without considerable deliberation. But in cases where it is clear that the member in discernment does not appear to have the potential for ordained/authorized ministry, or is not authentic in their intentions, exhibits obvious immaturity or emotional problems, or fails to follow the expectations for MIDs, the Committee can express its caring for the MID and for the Church by removing the person from the process. As mentioned above, failure to comply with expectations for meetings with the CMC and MID Advisors and revisions to the MID Portfolio are grounds for potential removal from the Member in Discernment process. There are other reasons why this action might be taken, among them ethical difficulties, failure to complete an educational program, as well as problematic evaluations in the psychological assessment, or supervised ministry evaluations. This is not an exhaustive list. In the event of a “no” decision, the MID Advisor and the Local Church Pastor will help the discharged MID understand and process the decision.

Appendix 3: Background Self Disclosure Form

“The United Church of Christ recognizes that God calls the whole Church and every member to participate in and extend the ministry of Jesus Christ by witnessing to the Gospel in church and society.” Have you ever been a Member in Discernment for Authorized Ministry, or been licensed or ordained, in any other association/conference/denomination?

Yes No

Commentary:

Have you ever been the subject of an official disciplinary proceeding by another denomination, professional association, credentialing body, guild or employer that resulted in disciplinary action?

Yes No

Commentary:

Are there any official disciplinary proceedings pending against you at this time by another denomination, professional association, credentialing body, guild or employer?

Yes No

Commentary:

Have you ever been the subject of a civil lawsuit alleging that you attempted or actually engaged in sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct; which has resulted in a judgment being entered against you, settled out of court, or dismissed because the statute of limitations had expired?

Yes No

Commentary:

Have you had your driving license suspended or revoked within the last five years?

Yes No

Commentary:

Have you ever been found guilty of, pled guilty to, or pled no contest to criminal charges? (Exclude convictions that have been sealed, expunged or legally eradicated; any misdemeanor conviction for which probation was successfully completed; offenses about which inquiry is not permissible in the state in which you are seeking a position; acts of civil disobedience. With respect to driving record, only include matters of reckless driving, driving while intoxicated and/or driving under the influence of a controlled substance.)

Yes No

Commentary:

Has your employment, a volunteer position, or professional credentials, ever been terminated or revoked, or have you been asked not to return to employment or a volunteer position in the future because you attempted or actually engaged in:

Sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct?

Yes No

Physical abuse?

Yes No

Child abuse?

Yes No

Financial misconduct?

Yes No

Commentary:

Have you ever terminated your employment, a volunteer position, 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?

Yes No

Physical abuse?

Yes No

Child abuse?

Yes No

Financial misconduct?

Yes No

Commentary:

Are there any facts or circumstances involving you or your background that should be disclosed and/or further reviewed before you are entrusted with the responsibilities of ministry on behalf of a calling body of the United Church of Christ?

Yes No

Commentary:

If you answered yes to any of the above questions, please provide a detailed explanation for all such affirmative answers. In addition to providing other relevant material, be sure to include dates and information for related official decisions, actions, reviews, etc. (by you and/or other parties) that affected your employment and/or ministerial standing and/or professional credentials.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 4: Crafting a Preparation and Formation Plan Covenant

Guidelines

Based upon the Phase I interview and the initial MID Portfolio, the MID Advisor and MID will recommend and document a Plan of Preparation and Formation Covenant for discerning a call to ordained ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ. This plan for formation is unique to each MID and considers the level of competency in the Marks of Faithful and Effective Ministers that the MID has demonstrated along the discernment journey. Consideration is given to the candidate's demonstrated experience, deep understanding, integration, passion and love regarding each Mark.

Progress on this plan is to be reported by the Member in Discernment to the Committee on Ministry in writing, on a minimally annual basis and be included in the Member in Discernment Portfolio. A copy is to be shared with the Local Church Discernment Committee and the Member in Discernment Advisor. This plan should be amended on an ongoing basis as needed.

Format of the Formation Plan Covenant

1. Names and Dates

Name of MID: First Name Last Name

Date Entered MID Status: MM.DD.YYYY

Date of this Plan Submission: MM.DD.YYYY

Association and Conference: Cumberland Association, Maine Conference

MID Advisor: First Name Last Name

2. Summary

Please provide a brief introductory summary of MID's relevant experiences; status regarding the requirements of the Cumberland Association MID process; and as appropriate, updates to the Formation Plan since the last time this Covenant was submitted. (Sample is included below)

3. Marks of Ministry for Formation

Readiness for an Ecclesiastical Council is not based on the completion of "requirements" but by demonstrating competencies in the core areas of ministry and readiness for authorized ministry on behalf of the United Church of Christ. Therefore, each category of the Marks of Faithful and Effective Ministers of the United Church of Christ is reviewed and used to make recommendations for formation. In the Formation Plan, please note the Mark(s) of Ministry that is/are suggested for formation, a brief comment reflecting the reason for the recommendation, and the recommended action. Please organize the recommendation as suggested in the samples included below.

4. Formation Plan

Please list any outstanding requirements and any recommended actions from Marks of Ministry for Formation (Item C. above)

5. Covenant

Crafted in collaboration with the MID, this plan was reviewed and approved by the COM on: _____

Formation Plan Updates

As appropriate, please update the Formation Plan with completed requirements, further development in Marks, outcomes, and any new recommendations.

Sample Formation Plan Covenant

Based upon an interview with Jane and a review of their spiritual journey and call paper, psychological assessment, ministry experience, education, and résumé, the Cumberland Association Committee on Ministry Formation recommends the following plan of preparation and formation for discerning a call to ordained ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ. This plan, developed specifically for this MID, considers the level of competency in the Marks of Faithful and Effective Ministers this Member in Discernment has demonstrated as of the above date. Consideration is given to the candidate's demonstrated experience, deep understanding, integration, passion and love regarding each Mark.

Name of MID: Jane Doe

Date Entered MID Status: 12.25.2025

Date of this Plan Submission: 01.01.2025

Association and Conference: Cumberland Association, Maine Conference

MID Advisor: Rev. Janice Doe

SUMMARY

Jane comes to the MID process with considerable experience in their first career in public service. Additionally, they have recently enrolled in a Master of Divinity (or certificate) program from Thoughtful Divinity School (or other approved education program). They have already completed UCC Polity.

REFLECTING ON THE MARKS OF MINISTRY FOR FORMATION

Exhibiting a Spiritual Foundation and Ongoing Spiritual Practice

Mark

Praying actively and nurturing spiritual practices.

Comments

It was noted in Jane's psychological assessment that she does not have a personal spiritual practice outside of corporate worship.

Actions

Develop a personal spiritual practice, outside of work, which nourishes her ministry and life. Potentially taking a course through her MDiv program.

Nurturing a UCC Identity

Mark

Knowing and appreciating UCC history, polity, and theology, and participating in the various settings of the United Church of Christ, including Local Churches, Associations, Conferences, General Synod, and global ministries.

Comments

While Jane has taken a UCC Polity Course, she has yet to serve in a UCC setting.

Actions

Complete one year of supervised ministry in a UCC setting, attend multiple wider church gatherings.

Building Transformational Leadership Skills

Mark

Performing necessary and appropriate administrative tasks.

Comments

Jane brings significant experience in this area from her previous career; however, does not have much experience in a UCC or local congregational setting.

Actions

Use one year of supervised ministry to grow in competency around the Mark and/or complete a related course in her MDiv or other approved educational program.

Engaging Sacred Stories and Traditions

Mark

All

Comments

Jane has little experience preaching and in worship leadership, and no previous theological education.

Actions

Utilize MDiv or other approved education program and practical ministry opportunities to grow in theological learnedness, comfort and experience preaching, and other worship leadership opportunities.

Caring for All Creation

Mark

No specific mark

Comments

Jane is working on a Faith and Ecological Justice certificate in her MDiv (or other approved education) program, and received a grant from BU's Campus Climate Lab. Administers the budget of the youth group and young adult programming at First Parish.

Actions

No specific action, keep marks portfolio up to date

Participating in Theological Praxis

Mark

Demonstrating an appreciation for and participation in the ecumenical and interfaith partnerships of the UCC.

Comments

Jane has limited experience outside of her own Christian tradition

Actions

Take a course with an interfaith focus, and/or engage in interfaith community work.

Working Together for Justice and Mercy

Mark

No Specific Mark

Comments

Jane has a passion for social justice and a lot of experience working for change in the public sector. Completed an Anti-Racism Workshop and attended multiple public rallies for social justice issues.

Actions

No specific action, keep marks portfolio up to date

Strengthening Inter- and Intra- Personal Assets

Mark

Developing and maintaining a healthy sense of self as shaped by God, community, and life experiences.

Comments

Jane's psychological assessment suggested that she would benefit from further self-exploration and development of her ministerial identity.

Actions

Complete one unit of CPE .

FORMATION PLANS

Before Jane's final ordination interview and the recommendation of an Ecclesiastical Council, the following course of action is agreed upon:

Completion of MDiv or Maine School of Ministry leadership certificates
Completion of one year of supervised ministry in a UCC setting
Completion of Clinical Pastoral Education with a satisfactory report from the program. Alternative program will be accepted if approved by CMC
Completion of Boundary Awareness Training
Meeting with CMC for Phase IV-A and IV-B Interviews
Completion of a draft Ministerial Profile
Participation in conference or association events: Spring Association Gathering, Maine Conference Annual Meeting, etc.
Develop a personal spiritual practice, outside of work, which nourishes her ministry and life. Potentially taking a course through her MDiv or other approved education program.

COVENANT

Crafted in collaboration with the MID this plan was reviewed and approved by the CMC on:
_____ Date

Appendix 5: Guidelines for UCC Polity and Theology Papers

The purpose of these papers is to demonstrate a MID's theological literacy, articulation and depth, as well as their understanding of and call to authorized ministry in the UCC. The papers should be in conversation with scripture and other theological voices, and grounded in the embodiment of theology through storytelling. The CMC is interested in hearing the authentic theological voice of the MID. The papers may be revised following discussions with the LCDC and MID Advisor.

MIDs are encouraged to find a UCC History, Theology, and Polity course that incorporates the writing of these papers into their coursework in order to avoid duplicating work.

Polity Paper Guidelines

For the paper, the MID should reflect on the following:

- Describe how UCC principles of covenant and autonomy, local congregation governance practices that they have experienced, and how our denominational polity shapes their understanding and practice of pastoral authority.
- Describe their understanding of lay and ordained ministry in the UCC.
 - Describe how the constituent traditions of the UCC are experienced in contemporary polity. Which tradition do they relate to most and why? Which traditions challenged them the most?
- What are the sources of authority recognized in the UCC? What are the sources of authority upon which ordained pastors draw? How would this impact their ministry?
- How have they experienced the difference between local and denominational polity? How has this influenced them?
- Given the differences in denominational polity, why do they feel called to ministry in the UCC rather than another denomination?

This paper is not merely a theology, history paper or an encyclopedia article. Rather this paper should describe the relationship between the UCC Polity, Theology and the MID's personal theology of church and ministry. Where are the places of agreement? What are the areas of struggle? As they learned and engaged with these issues, where have they changed their mind? How have they grown in understanding or appreciation?

Theology Paper Guidelines

The MID will select five theological topics from the list below and in no more than 3 pages per topic:

- Provide a summary of their own theology in each area they choose (see below); and
- Describe a situation in their local congregation, Field Education, CPE site or other setting where this aspect of theology has been the basis for ministerial actions taken or services provided.

Theological Topics for the MID Theology Paper (choose 5 per instructions noted below):

1. Baptism and the Lord's Supper (required)
2. God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit (choose two topics)
 - a. The Trinity
 - b. Creation and Providence
 - c. Judgment and Grace
 - d. The Person of Christ; Incarnation; Atonement; Salvation and Resurrection
 - e. Revelation and Holy Scriptures
3. Humanity (choose one topic)
 - a. Sin, Repentance, Forgiveness
 - b. Prayer
 - c. Eternal Life
4. The Church and God's New Era (choose one topic)
 - a. Doctrine of history and eschatology
 - b. Church and the world (including evangelism, social action, mission)
 - c. Ecumenism and Interfaith Dialogue

Appendix 6: Phase IV Letter of Endorsement

The purpose of this letter is to recommend a MID for final assessment by the Cumberland Association Church and Ministry Committee (Phase IV) regarding readiness for ordination in the United Church of Christ, as demonstrated in the MID Portfolio. Therefore, writers are invited to consider a candidate's readiness for authorization and ordination, in light of the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers, when writing their letter.

The following are suggested prompts:

1. Please describe the Member in Discernment (MID) journey with this candidate.

Particularly:

- a. How long have you known the MID and in what capacity?
 - b. How has the MID demonstrated initiative?
 - c. How has the MID demonstrated openness to learning, feedback and coaching?
 - d. How has the candidate grown over the MID journey?
2. In which of the Marks of Ministry areas is this MID particularly gifted?
3. Which Marks of Ministry area(s) are areas of growth for this MID?

4. As you consider their future wellness as an ordained minister please reflect on this MID's leadership and interpersonal capacities. Specifically address the health of their relationships with colleagues and congregants, their humility and trustworthiness, their ability to accept responsibility and keep confidences appropriately, and their ability to work constructively towards restoration in problematic relationships.

5. You are welcome to also reflect on the authenticity of their call to ordained ministry, their understanding of covenant, and commitment to the values of the UCC.

These letters may come via Word document or PDF, but must be on identifiable letterhead and come directly from the reference. References can be emailed to the Cumberland Association Clerk at cumberlandassocclerk@gmail.com

Appendix 7: Ecclesiastical Council

Call to Ecclesiastical Council (aka: Letter Missive)

To Churches and Ministers of the Cumberland Association

Greetings:

At the request of [church name], an Ecclesiastical Council of the Association, comprised of the Churches listed for the Cumberland Association, is called to examine [member in discernment] as to their fitness to be ordained to the Christian Ministry.

Each Church, represented by pastor(s), lay delegates, and other ministers, is urged to attend in person or by Zoom on behalf of the Association and [church name] on [day, date, time].

Representation and voting at such Council shall follow the guidelines of the Cumberland Association Constitution and Bylaws. If the examination of the candidate is sustained and the ordination approved, the council will recess until a date to be determined for the Service of Ordination. Lay delegates from twelve (12) of the Member Churches and twelve (12) ordained ministers whose standing is in this Association shall constitute a quorum

So Ordered,

Association Moderator

Attest,

Association Clerk

Ecclesiastical Council Agenda, Script, and Assignments

Call to Order *Moderator*

Calling of the Roll/Declaration of Quorum *Clerk*

“At the request of [church name], an Ecclesiastical Council of the Association, comprised of the Churches listed for the Cumberland Association, is called to examine [member in discernment] as to their fitness to be ordained to the Christian Ministry.

Representation and voting at such Council shall follow the guidelines of the Cumberland Association Constitution and Bylaws.

If the examination of the candidate is sustained and the ordination approved, the council will recess until a date to be determined for the Service of Ordination. Lay delegates from twelve (12) of the Member Churches and twelve (12) ordained ministers whose standing is in this Association shall constitute a quorum.”

Welcome, Gathering Prayer *Host Pastor*

Delegate Training *Moderator*

The Ecclesiastical Council is the opportunity to hear and interview candidates for authorized ministry in and on behalf of the entire United Church of Christ. In collaboration with laity and clergy, you will discern if an individual has been called by God to ordained ministry. All Christians are called to ministry in a variety of contexts. Ordination is a specific type of lifetime calling that God places upon some persons to be sent to proclaim and teach the Gospel, administer the sacraments and rites of the Church, and exercise pastoral care, leadership, and prophetic witness in the UCC. Your determination will be made after reading through the candidates materials, receiving the recommendation of the Church and Ministry Committee, listening to the candidates presentation, and prayerfully reflecting on responses given and received during the Ecclesiastical Council. Ask questions reflective of the candidate’s materials, theology, ministry experience and expectations, and commitment to the UCC.

You are being asked to discern if the candidate should be authorized for ordination in the UCC. This decision is an important responsibility and is made for the entire United Church of Christ. However, your discernment today is not the only discernment that has taken place. The candidate first discerned a sense of God’s call on their life. It was confirmed in conversation with a pastor and/or church leadership, and with the Church and Ministry Committee. As a Member in Discernment, the road of preparation involved many opportunities to test the call and discern if they have the temperament, skills, and heart for ordination. To arrive at this moment before an Ecclesiastical Council, many covenantal partners have seen and affirmed the gifts of the candidate before us. One perspective on our role today is to be curious about why so many have said “yes” in affirmation of the candidate’s call prior to this moment and how our questions might provide clarity for us who are just meeting the candidate.

What you are looking for finally, is a quality, a sense, that the person appearing before you is responding to an authentic call and is ready for authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ. In developing your questions, it may be helpful to wonder what you need to know to faithfully respond to the question on the floor: Yes, I believe this person should be ordained for ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ, pending a call. Or, no, I don’t believe that this person is qualified or a good fit for the UCC.

As we proceed with this Ecclesiastical Council, remember that we do this work together with the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is God’s work and we believe that God is moving in our midst. As we have gathered here in Christ’s name, we are standing on holy ground.

Introduction of the Candidate *MID Advisor*

The following is a suggested list of items to include in introducing the candidate. However, a personalized introduction should be written and prepared ahead of time, by the MID Advisor, in

consultation with the candidate.

Prior to appearing before you, the candidate has completed a plan of preparation and formation using the Marks of Faithful and Effective Ministers of the United Church of Christ, including:

- _____ Mentoring by local pastor (who/where/when)
- _____ Lay leadership courses (list: where/ when)
- _____ Seminary – M.Div. or equivalent (where/when)
- _____ Coaching (organization or person/ when)
- _____ Psychological Assessment (where/when)
- _____ UCC History, Theology, and Polity Course (where/when)
- _____ Practical Experience (where/when)
- _____ Boundary Training (where/when)
- _____ Criminal Background Check
- _____ Other:

Motion to Recommend Examination *MID Advisor*

The Cumberland Association Church and Ministry Committee recommends that _____ be examined for Ordination by an Ecclesiastical Council of the Cumberland Association of the Maine Conference, United Church of Christ.

Ordination Interview Presentation *MID*

An approximately ten to fifteen minute presentation offering the person's sense of call, theological grounding, and/or readiness for ministry using The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers in the UCC.

Examination of the Candidate *Moderator*

The Moderator asks for questions for the candidate from the floor. Any person with voice may ask a question, however, it is up to the Moderator to make sure that delegates are given the opportunity to address concerns and/or gather the information needed to make their decision. Alternatively, the Moderator may choose to ask for questions by roll-call of churches present. Generally, plan for approximately 30- 45 minutes of examination.

Close of Discussion *Moderator*

The discussion ended. The candidate, members of his or her family, and members of the candidate's home church (except delegates) are asked to leave and go to another space during the deliberation.

Motion to Authorize Ordination

The Ecclesiastical Council then deliberates, together, on the following motion:

“To approve _____ for Ordained Ministry in the United Church of Christ pending a call to ministry approved by the COM of the Cumberland Association UCC.”

The Moderator then opens the floor to discussion related to the motion. Questions may be asked of the covenantal partners of the candidate, if they are present.

After the vote is taken, the candidate is asked to return with those accompanying them.

Return of Candidate (and others) Moderator

The Moderator announces the results of the vote. If the decision is affirmative, the candidate may be welcomed with applause or singing. If the decision is negative, the vote results are presented in a manner sensitive to the feelings and dignity of the candidate.

Closing Prayer MID Motion to Adjourn Moderator -----

Follow-up

The Association Clerk prepares minutes of the meeting, including vote count, ballots, and sign-in lists which will be kept in the person’s file and updating of the UCC data hub.

Appendix 8: Ordination Planning Documents Date and Time

It is traditional that services of ordination are scheduled for Sunday afternoons. This allows for other clergy and association members to be present. Additionally, the plan to have at least one month between confirming the date with the Association Clerk and the service of ordination itself. With those parameters in mind, the pastor to be ordained and the congregation should work together to pick two potential dates for the service. Once they have been decided, reach out to the Association to coordinate on which date will be best. It is the policy of the Association to avoid scheduling overlapping events, so please share potential dates well in advance and understand that both dates may be unavailable. Please see Appendix 10 for current contact information

Invitations

The association will send an email announcement of the ordination to the churches of the Cumberland Association in advance of the date. We do not do any physical mailing. If the MID or LCDC would like to include a special announcement of their own design in the Association email announcement, please provide that to the Association Clerk prior to the one month notice. Additionally, we encourage sharing the invitation far and wide through the MID and local congregation's community and networks.

Order of Worship

A good starting place for an order of worship is likely a "typical" worship outline for the congregation hosting the ordination. Additionally, the UCC Book of Worship is another resource. From there, pieces that may not feel appropriate for this occasion can be subtracted, while pieces specific to the ordination service can be added. Ideally the service should not exceed 75 minutes.

It is the practice of the Association to use inclusive language in all Association worship services. We ask that this tradition be honored in your service of ordination.

Here are some notes around specific parts of the service:

Sermon

While the motivation for gathering is to ordain a called pastor, the ordination occurs in the context of the worship of God. Therefore, the sermon is primarily a moment to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Care should be taken by the preacher to center this reminder as they reflect on the occasion of ordination.

Rite of Ordination

The liturgy has specific language to be shared by the pastor, local congregation, and a representative of the Association. Please take note of the portions that will need to be included in a bulletin or other means of visual display. Pieces of the liturgy may be divided up among clergy and lay representatives based on the wishes of the ordinand. Please consult with the Association Moderator to discuss dividing up these roles.

Presentation of Gifts

Often, a congregation will present a newly ordained pastor with a gift (or gifts) after the rite of ordination. While it is natural to want to surprise a pastor with gifts, and that may be welcome, it is advised to coordinate around any gifts to be given to ensure that this would be welcome and appropriate. The home church hosting the ordination will want to coordinate with the calling body/congregation to see if there are multiple gifts to be shared. One or two gifts may be symbolic for all gifts. An after-worship reception might be a more appropriate moment for extensive gift giving.

Charge to the Pastor (optional)

In a service of ordination, “the pastor is charged to accept the responsibilities of their ministry.” It is common for the charge/s to occur after the rite of ordination.

The ordinand should be thoughtful about whom they would like to invite to deliver the charge. The person may be lay or ordained but are typically not members of the calling body. Ideal candidates are those whom you trusted to speak faithfully, wisely, and honestly; and are unafraid to share words of truth in love. The Ordained Minister’s Code offers a variety of worthwhile reminders for a charge.

Particular attention should be paid to the charge(s) to ensure they are not a “second sermon” nor a series of testimonies about the pastor being ordained. Sometimes the Charge to the Pastor is not included at all.

Offering

We ask that any offerings taken at the ordination go towards the Cumberland Association Scholarship Fund for Members in Discernment. Arrangement will be made by the Church as to how best to get the offering to the Association Treasurer.

Role of the Congregation

It is expected that lay members of the congregation will have roles in the service. The pastor to be ordained should take the lead in extending the invitations to participate in the service.

A small group of leaders from the congregation should work together to plan any potential reception or celebration and the presentation of gifts during the ordination. =

Questions

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to the Association Moderator.

Appendix 9:

Clinical Pastoral Education A Resource for Multiple Paths for CPE

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) began in New England about 75 years ago in response to a need for persons of faith to learn how to practice effective pastoral care and to integrate their own spiritual history into that process. At that time, CPE was primarily for ordained clergy and seminary students. That has now been expanded to clergy, lay people and persons seeking to explore the spiritual dimensions of their professions.

In 1967, four separate organizations joined together to form The Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. (ACPE). Since that time, students of all denominations and faiths have been encouraged to bring their spiritual understandings to people going through critical life experiences to support, encourage and enhance healing.

Believing strongly in the value of Clinical Pastoral Education as a vital part of preparation for the pastoral ministry, the Cumberland Association Church & Ministry Committee requires its Members in Discernment to complete one unit of CPE from an accredited program or an alternative program that has been approved by the Church & Ministry Committee.

MID's in the Cumberland Association are eligible for scholarship help at the time they apply for CPE. Scholarship information is available on the Cumberland Association website at www.cumberlandassoc.org.

For general information and a list of all education programs with ACPE accreditation go to – <https://acpe.edu/>

Traditional CPE Programs

The Maine Medical Center CPE Program

The Maine Medical Center CPE program is offered completely onsite at Maine Medical Center and includes clinical practice, supervision, and peer group instruction. The MMC CPE program, fully accredited by ACPE, involves assignments to patient units, interpersonal group interaction, written impressions, verbatim reports, personal supervisory conferences, didactic lectures, worship leadership and personal and program evaluation. Students spend approximately 60% of their time in contact with patients and 40% in seminars, didactics and supervision. Other learning occurs through working with peers and hospital staff. Heather Weidemann, who is an ACPE certified instructor, supervises the program. She can be contacted at hweidemann@mmc.org

The summer session is a 12-week, full-time program designed to accommodate those in a graduate academic program or other ministry workers with schedule availability for an intensive (40+ hours), three month-long clinical immersion experience. The cost of this program is \$1,200.

The fall session is a part-time, 30-week program designed to accommodate those in a graduate academic program or working in a part-time job with flexibility in their hours. The cost of this program is

\$900.

Beginning in Summer of 2024 and continuing into Fall-Winter 2024-25, we will be offering individual CPE units at Southern Maine Health Care (200 beds)

The application process involves completing the ACPE application, which is found on the ACPE website (<https://acpe.edu/>), and an interview.

The completed application can be mailed to:

Spiritual Care Department

Maine Medical Center

22 Bramhall St

Portland, ME 04102

207-662-2951

Or emailed to KaseyGrover@mainehealth.org

Applicants receive an acknowledgement of receipt within four business days.

<https://www.mainehealth.org/Maine-Medical-Center/education-research/Clinical-Pastoral-Education>

Dartmouth Hitchcock Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE certified)

From their website: <https://www.dartmouth-hitchcock.org/clinical-pastoral>

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) is a distinctive learning process that helps individuals develop effectiveness in ministry.

The goals of CPE are to foster growth in four areas: the ability to be reflective about the personal and professional dimensions of the practice of ministry; formation and integration of pastoral identity in the context of covenantal relationships; competence in the skills of pastoral care; and expertise in areas of pastoral specialization.

CPE is distinctive because it is:

- Experience-based learning: Students spend half or more of their time in the actual experience of ministry, providing care and learning from the persons with whom they are in ministry.
- Student centered: Although a basic curriculum is provided, the emphasis is on the student's determination of what she or he needs to learn in order to grow in effectiveness.
- Deeply personal and intensely interpersonal: The learning process relies heavily on a small group of peers dedicated to a covenant of mutual learning in order to develop the habits of a reflective professional.

Accredited Online CPE Programs:

Sankofa

Accredited by ACPE: The Standard for Spiritual Care & Education to offer Level I and Level II Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) Units, Sankofa CPE Center, LLC offers innovative, unique CPE programming that features online CPE groups, African-centered curriculums, LGBTQIA+ inclusivity,

along with social justice-oriented and digital ministry clinical site placements.

This program allows students to attend all group sessions, individual supervision sessions, and didactics/workshops in an online learning format. Students will use Zoom video conferencing for group interactions and individual supervision encounters.

The cost of Sankofa CPE is \$2000 a unit. Sometimes that can be subsidized when one works with a seminary or organization. There can be a payment plan which starts with \$300 down.

Phone number is 773-953-9398

The UCC has endorsed the Sankofa CPE program and is approved by the Cumberland Association Church & Ministry Committee.

The JED Center

A JED Center participant practices in a local spiritual care site complemented by an online peer group and course work.

The JED Center has provisional ACPE CPE certification. From the web site: "Students at the JED Center will offer spiritual care at a clinical placement site that is appropriate to the student's learning. The placement site will be negotiated with the certified educator and the student upon admission to the program. Students need an existing affiliation with the placement site such as a place of employment; member, clergy, staff in a congregation; volunteer status at a service agency or hospital. Students offer a minimum of 250 hours of care. A requirement of the clinical placement site is the provision of an on-site preceptor to be negotiated with the certified educator and site in advance of the start. Preceptors orient students to the site and are available to the student throughout the unit."

JED tuition and fees are as follows: \$50 non-refundable application fee; \$250 confirmation deposit, to reserve placement; \$2,900 remaining tuition balance. No scholarships are available directly from JED.

The JED programs meet the criteria of having supervision and a peer group. The application process involves submitting the application with the application fee. Three references are also required followed by an online interview before an applicant is accepted into the program.

The JED Center
We Work, Floor 4
120 West Trinity Place
Decatur, GA 30030
404-320-1472
www.thejedcenter.org

Guidelines for Alternative Clinical Pastoral Education for MIDS and Advisors

MIDs are encouraged, where possible, to consider an existing ACPE program – full time or part time, in-person or online. What follows are guidelines and requirements for the MID who determines,

through discussion with their advisor, that it is necessary to explore options other than an accredited in-person or online CPE program. Under the appropriate circumstance, the MID can consider an independent course of study. *However, if the MID chooses this option, they must realize that non-accredited courses of study will not provide the credentials needed for employment as a chaplain.*

The MID who is considering an independent study of clinical pastoral education must first have successfully completed the psychological evaluation (refer to the Cumberland Association MID Guidelines Checklist)

An independent clinical pastoral education course proposal requires the MID to have an off-site CPE supervisor approved by the Church and Ministry Committee, an on-site supervisor, and a peer learning group. In addition, the proposed curriculum must meet the standards of both the “Meet the Standards” and the “Guidelines for Multiple Paths to Clinical Pastoral Education” which can be found at the end of this document. All proposals must be submitted to the Cumberland Association Church and Ministry Committee for approval. It is recommended that the MID submit proposals by April 1 for the summer or fall semester, and September 1 for the winter semester.

A recommended reference is *How to Get the Most Out of Clinical Pastoral Education, A CPE Primer* by Gordon J. Hilsman

Suggested steps for creating a proposal are below.

1. Arrange a meeting with MID and Advisor to determine learning arrangement for Alternative CPE requirement.
2. In this meeting, choose outcomes to be accomplished by MID.
3. Determine whether outcomes can best be achieved in a clinical, institutional, congregational, or alternate setting.
4. Where an alternative setting is selected, consider the following factors:
 - a. Total time-period for the program
 - b. What traditional academic “semester” will define the alternative program timeframe – fall, spring or summer – understanding that the availability of a peer group may help define the preferred time frame.
 - c. Person to oversee the alternative clinical pastoral education program of study (i.e. retired CPE director/educator)
 - d. Person to provide on-site supervision: Advisor or designee (Pastor, Chaplain, Spiritual Director, Pastoral Counselor, Campus Chaplain...)
 - e. A designated person who will run a peer group of others within the Maine Conference also working on their CPE at the same time. The Committee on Ministry will help with these using connections through the Maine Conference.
 - f. Clinical tools to be used for meeting learning goals and outcomes.
 1. Verbatim Report(s) of Client Visit
 2. Sociogram of group discussion and/or group seminar
 3. Case Study – in depth study of a client, family, committee, or other group setting
 4. Schedule for supervisory meetings, -weekly to once every two weeks
 5. System of evaluation, mid-term and final evaluation

- 6. Permission forms provided, signed and dated by all parties as necessary
 - 7. Weekly peer group
5. Arrange a meeting with one's advisor and/or Discernment Committee to prepare a presentation to the Committee on Church and Ministry.

Cost Considerations

- A stipend for the professional advisor (see c. above) who will oversee the program of study
- Possible fee of the on-site supervisor
- Cost of curriculum resources

Meet the Standards

Suggested Resource: "How to Get the Most Out of Clinical Pastoral Education: A CPE Primer," Gordon J. Hillsman, D.Min p 142ff.

Level 1 ACPE Programs address the fundamentals of

1. pastoral formation, it refers to bringing together diverse processes to make a person ready and able to be a practitioner, especially a professional practitioner, a spiritual care.
 - a. Articulate the central themes and care values of one's religious spiritual heritage and the theological understanding that informs one's ministry.
 - b. Identify and discuss major life events relationships, social location cultural contexts and social realities that impact personal identity as expressed in pastoral functioning.
 - c. Initiate here group and supervisory consultation and receive critique about one's ministry practice.
2. pastoral competence, competence is what one needs in order to compete for something, a kind of preparation for excellence.
 - a. Risk offering appropriate and timely critique with peers and supervisors.
 - b. Recognize relational dynamics within group contexts
 - c. Demonstrate the integration of conceptual understanding presented in the curriculum to pastoral practice.
 - d. Integrate helping relationships within and across diverse populations.
3. pastoral reflection, it is a new reshaping of something already formed. In the ACPE standards it refers to the professionals need to continually reshape themselves to stay competitive in spiritual care in an evolving world.
 - a. Use the clinical methods of learning to achieve one's educational goals.
 - b. Formulate clear and specific goals for continuing pastoral formation with reference to one's strengths and weaknesses as identified through self reflection, supervision, and feedback.

Guidelines for a Multiple Path to Clinical Pastoral Education

Why: Since its inception in the early 1920's, Clinical Pastoral Education has been a valuable component of the pastoral formation process. In more recent years, with the closings of seminaries and CPE programs in the Northeast, the requirement for CPE has an obstacle for MIDs on the path to ordained ministry. It is our hope that, by creating multiple pastoral education experiences, we can encourage reflective spiritual care and an integrated working knowledge of pastoral care. Reflective, knowledgeable and effective spiritual care provider.

What: Identify a setting beyond current pastoral setting which includes the opportunity to develop:

- Appropriate use of pastoral authority and pastoral competence
- Theological integration/theological praxis
- Awareness of pastoral boundaries
- Reflective spiritual care
- Learnings in the Marks of Ministry
- Exhibiting a spiritual foundation and ongoing spiritual practice
- Nurturing UCC identity
- Building transformational leadership skills
- Engaging sacred stories and traditions
- Caring for all creation
- Participating in theological praxis
- Working together for justice and mercy
- Strengthening inter- and intra-personal assets

How:

- Develop written Learning Agreement and present to COM.
- Minimum of 100 Contact hours
- Weekly Reflection
- Small group work with peers or advisors facilitated by supervisor.
- Presentation of learnings by student with small group (peers or advisors)
- Weekly meetings with supervisor
- Written Final Evaluation

Measurable Outcomes:

Self-evaluation and supervisors' evaluation demonstrating that student met learning goals and demonstrated appropriate use of pastoral authority, theological integration/ theological praxis, awareness of pastoral boundaries, reflective care and pastoral competence.

Readings, assignments and student presentations should address the student's learning goals, pastoral interests, strengths and weaknesses. They should also be flexible to meet needs as they arise. Here is a list of books and topics that are worth considering

Recommended Reading:

- The Real Good Church, Molly Phinney Baskette
- Canoeing the Mountains, Tod Bolsinger
- Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling, Howard Clinebell

Pastoral Care Casebooks, John Gleason

Being Mortal : Medicine and What Matters in the End, Atul Gawande

Generation to Generation, Edwin Friedman

Listening & Caring Skills: A Guide for Groups and Leaders, John Savage

Topics for Exploration:

Family systems theory, genograms and small group development

Multiple Intelligence (MI) theory

Sociograms

Personality Theories

Pastoral Ethics

Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

Appendix 10: Current Address & Contact Information

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