

TRAINING OF DELEGATES IN PREPARATION FOR AN ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCIL

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. It is essential to bear in mind that ordination is a privilege, not a right. All baptized persons are part of the priesthood of all believers, and thus 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 thoughtfully reading the candidate's ordination paper, hearing the recommendation of the Committee on Ministry, and prayerfully listening to responses given and received during the Ecclesiastical Council. Ask questions reflective of the candidate's paper, theology, ministry experience and expectations, and commitment to the UCC.

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
- _____ Cultural Competence Training (where/when)

Other:

The individual was interviewed and recommended to this Council by their home church and was received as a Member in Discernment by the _____ Association Committee on Ministry. Over the course of (amount of time) the candidate met with the _____ Association Committee on Ministry completed a preparation and formation plan, and wrote an ordination paper that reflects their ministerial journey and the Marks of Faithful and Effective Ministers.

If the candidate was previously ordained by another faith tradition, the Committee on Ministry and the candidate shared in a period of mutual discernment for at least one year. Documentation of good standing in the other tradition, demonstration of understanding of UCC history, theology, and polity, as well as other criteria were required for consideration of Privilege of Call for ministry in and on behalf of the UCC. If authorization for Privilege of Call is granted, the candidate will permanently relinquish their credentials with the other tradition and hold authorization solely within the UCC.

You are being asked to discern if the candidate should be authorized for ordination or Privilege of Call in the UCC. This decision is an important responsibility and is made for the entire United Church of Christ.

Your discernment today is not the only discernment that has taken place, however. The individual often must first discern a sense of God's call on their life. This may begin with a still, small voice from within or with questions and prodding from family or friends. It is confirmed in conversation with a pastor and/or church leadership, and with a Committee on Ministry. For persons seeking ordination, the road of preparation involves many opportunities to test the call and discern if this person has the temperament, skills, and heart for ordination. The Committee on Ministry discerns with the person whether this is a call to lay ministry or ordination. For persons seeking Privilege of Call, you will want to hear the reasons for their choosing to leave their current denomination, and why they have chosen the UCC.

You will have an opportunity to ask the candidate questions, as you seek to add your discernment to the process. What you are looking for finally, is a quality, a sense, that the person appearing before you is responding to the divine call and is answering that call honestly and faithfully. You need to be alert to both the tangible and intangible evidence of a candidate's fitness for ordained ministry in the UCC.

In developing your questions, it may be helpful to know the UCC's expectations of its candidates for authorization. The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the UCC will be provided to help you in your discernment (copies are available).

You will be asked to vote:

Yes, I believe this person should be ordained for ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ, pending a call.

No, I don't believe that this person is qualified or a good fit for the UCC.

-OR-

If the person is a candidate for Privilege of Call, vote:

Yes, I believe this person should be granted Privilege of Call status and be eligible to seek a call in the UCC.

No, I don't believe this person is 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.

THE MARKS OF FAITHFUL AND EFFECTIVE AUTHORIZED MINISTERS OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Exhibiting a Spiritual Foundation and Ongoing Spiritual Practice

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

Nurturing UCC Identity

- Acknowledging Jesus Christ as the sole Head of the Church.
- Communicating passion for the oneness of the Body of Christ (John 17:21).
- Holding active membership in a Local Church of the United Church of Christ.
- Participating in the various settings of the United Church of Christ, including Local Churches, Associations, Conferences, General Synod, and global ministries.
- Knowing and appreciating UCC history, polity, and theology.
- Exhibiting a commitment to the core values of the United Church of Christ: continuing testament, extravagant welcome, and changing lives.

Building Transformational Leadership Skills

- Empowering the Church to be faithful to God's call, reflective of Christ's mission, and open to the surprises of the Holy Spirit.

- Strategically creating the future of God's Church.
- Witnessing in the public square to God's redeeming power.
- Performing necessary and appropriate administrative tasks.
- Working collaboratively with intercultural awareness and sensitivity.
- Encouraging leadership development of self and others through continuing education and lifelong learning.

Engaging Sacred Stories and Traditions

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

Caring for All Creation

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

Participating in Theological Praxis

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

Working Together for Justice and Mercy

- Drawing on the ministry of Jesus Christ to confront injustice and oppression.

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

Strengthening Inter- and Intra- Personal Assets

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