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# MINISTRY IN THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

A Background Document Prepared For:

Committee on Ministry Members, Local Church Members,  
Persons Discerning a Call to Authorized Ministry in the UCC,  
Seminaries of the UCC, Mentors, Learning Programs

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***“GOD CALLS THE WHOLE CHURCH AND EVERY MEMBER...”***

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### **BAPTISM: CHRIST’S MINISTRY**

44 The baptism of Jesus by John marked the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry of reconciliation.  
45 Named and claimed by God, Jesus emerged from the divine encounter with the profound self-  
46 understanding needed to sustain him during the following three years. He experienced the  
47 descent of the Holy Spirit and received the affirmation that he was the beloved, with whom God  
48 was well pleased. The unique and world-changing ministry to which he had been called was  
49 about to begin. But first the call had to be clarified through the agonizing discernment process  
50 Jesus experienced while in the wilderness. Power and authority may have been available to him,  
51 but only through prayer and discernment did he clarify how he was called by God to exercise  
52 those gifts.

53

54 The Gospel of Luke notes that Jesus was about 30 years old *“when he began his work.”*  
55 Following the time in the wilderness, Jesus returned to the synagogue in his hometown of  
56 Nazareth, and there he read from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Jesus’ vocation, his unique call  
57 from God, was made clear to his own community as he shared the ancient text,

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*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release  
to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,*

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65 *to let the oppressed go free,*  
66 *to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*  
67 *(Luke 4:18-29)*  
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70 The words of Hebrew scripture, claimed and proclaimed by Jesus, continue to provide direction  
71 for the "work" of the Church today. God calls every follower of Jesus Christ and every Christian  
72 community to participate in Christ's transforming work by carrying out ministries of healing,  
73 justice, and reconciliation. In the pursuit of this mission, the United Church of Christ has been  
74 blessed with exceptional and dedicated leaders. With profound gratitude for countless faith-  
75 filled laity and clergy who guided our once-new denomination, the UCC now focuses on the  
76 urgent need to prepare and equip new leaders for the inclusive Church that we are becoming.  
77 Within United Church of Christ tradition, that process of equipping new leaders always begins  
78 with the affirmation that all are called by virtue of the promises made in baptism.

79  
80 Baptism was central to Jesus' understanding of his own call from God, and the baptismal  
81 sacrament continues to mark, for Christians today, the beginning of growth into "full Christian  
82 faith and discipleship." Throughout its almost 2000 year history, the Christian Church has  
83 acknowledged the centrality of the sacrament of baptism. Whether the promises are made by  
84 parents on behalf of an infant or by individuals who are mature enough to profess their faith  
85 publicly, those who are baptized are in a new relationship with God and the community of Jesus  
86 Christ. The baptismal covenant always involves the one being baptized (and parents and  
87 sponsors if the baptized one is an infant), the members of the Local Church, and the God who  
88 initiated and who continues to sustain the covenant relationship. Promises are prayerfully made,  
89 and the newly baptized one is welcomed into the community of faith. The UCC Book of  
90 Worship describes that experience with these words, "*Baptism is the sacrament through which*  
91 *we are united to Jesus Christ and given part in Christ's ministry of reconciliation...."* The  
92 baptized one belongs to Christ and Christ's Church, marked forever as one called by God for  
93 ministry.

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## THE COVENANTAL RELATIONSHIP: CALL

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99 The baptismal covenant is never a “one time” moment but continues throughout the individual’s  
100 life. The covenant is affirmed again and again as the one baptized responds to God’s call. In the  
101 rite of confirmation and in liturgies of uniting with a congregation, the individual is “called”  
102 again and invited to respond faithfully. The covenant with *all* church members is renewed every  
103 time the church baptizes one. So too the invitation to the Lord’s Table is a constant summoning,  
104 a reminder of God’s grace-filled invitation to share in Christ’s ministry. Responding to God’s  
105 call is a process involving the total faith community as well as the individual person, and the  
106 exploration of each member’s unique call to ministry is one of the joys and privileges entrusted  
107 to the entire Christian community.

108

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

113

(UCC Constitution, Paragraph 20, emphasis added)

114

115 To say that God calls every member is to recognize the mystery and history of such a call;  
116 foundational to the Biblical narrative are the many experiences of God intentionally reaching out  
117 to the human family with guidance, warning, comfort, direction, and inspiration. Scripture  
118 reminds us that God’s call occurs in many ways, many circumstances, and many seasons of life.  
119 Jeremiah and Samuel were called by God at an early age; Mary was called as a young girl; Peter  
120 and Andrew were busy “casting a net into the sea;” James and John were “mending their nets,”  
121 and the early disciple Tabitha (Dorcas) no doubt was “mending dresses.” Call is often  
122 experienced as a continuing openness to hearing God’s direction. Long after his conversion and  
123 initial call, Paul continued to listen for a new direction; that new direction eventually came to  
124 him in a vision (Acts 16:9-10.).

125

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126 Too often the “call to ministry” has been understood narrowly in reference to the Church’s  
127 authorized leaders; thus Ordained, Licensed, and Commissioned Ministers have been mistakenly  
128 viewed as the only ones to have experienced a special “call.” All are called. And within an  
129 exploration of God’s particular call to each member of the baptized community, some  
130 individuals will indeed experience the beginnings of a call to authorized ministry in the United  
131 Church of Christ. Discerning the nature of that call then becomes the task of those who enter into  
132 a covenant of mutual accountability.

133  
134 One of the distinguishing aspects of ministry in the United Church of Christ is the affirmation  
135 that **ministerial leadership is always defined by an ongoing sacred covenant or agreement**  
136 **among partners; thus ministry is both communal and individual, and the call to**  
137 **authorized ministry is always discerned with others.** The use of the word “covenant” stands  
138 as a constant reminder that commitments and promises have been made in the name of God. This  
139 covenantal dimension of UCC ministry is grounded in the actions of a gracious God who was  
140 and is the initiator of covenant: with the people of Israel, with all humanity in the life, death, and  
141 resurrection of Jesus Christ, and with ongoing faith communities through the presence of the  
142 Holy Spirit. God initiates covenant, God holds us accountable when we neglect covenant, and  
143 God continually acts to renew covenant.

144  
145 Within that covenantal understanding of call, the United Church of Christ uses the term  
146 “authorization” to describe the designation and consecration of certain individuals called to  
147 particular representative leadership in and on behalf of the UCC. The **focus of the covenant is**  
148 **always on the leadership needs of the Church.** Covenantal relationships are always mutually  
149 accountable to one another as well as to Christ. Within the UCC authorization process, covenant  
150 always involves at least three parties: the individual who is discerning the call, the Local Church,  
151 and the Association through its Committee on Ministry.

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## **THE COVENANTAL RELATIONSHIP: DISCERNMENT, FORMATION, RESPONSIBILITY**

The UCC Bylaws identify this mutually accountable authorization exploration with these words,

*“A member of a United Church of Christ wishing to explore God’s call to ministry, and the potential of that call leading to authorized ministry (ordained, commissioned or licensed), requests, along with the member’s local church, to enter a Covenant of Discernment with the Association.”* (UCC Bylaws, Section 101)<sup>1</sup>

The Association Committee on Ministry enters into a discernment process by responding faithfully and attentively to all parties, grounding the response in a spirit of hospitable openness and welcoming the other covenantal partners (the Local Church and the individual discerning the call) as they mutually embark on a new venture. After appropriate consideration, a *“Covenant of Discernment and Formation”* may be formalized; the individual is recognized as a “Member in Discernment.” When this designation is celebrated with an appropriate liturgy in the Local Church community, that congregation’s role as an essential Covenant Partner is also lifted up before the assembled community.

Each time the members of a Committee on Ministry begin discernment with an individual and that individual’s Local Church, the lay and clergy members of the Committee on Ministry are also reminded that they themselves discerned a call to this particular responsibility. The composition of Committees on Ministry is determined by Associations in a variety of ways, but always there is a selection process that results in an invitation and a prayerful response on the part of the one invited. Such service to the United Church of Christ is a gift, a unique opportunity for involvement in the preparation and formation of future authorized ministers. It is a privilege to serve on a Committee on Ministry. The work begins with a sense of gratitude for that privilege and a promise to create a hospitable environment intentionally open to the movement of the Spirit. Every time a Committee on Ministry meets, members participate in decisions of profound importance to the entire United Church of Christ; the ones who are part of that Committee

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<sup>1</sup> The wording of this Bylaw was approved by General Synod 27 in 2009. Constitutional amendments related to authorized ministry were also approved by General Synod 27 and subsequently ratified by the Conferences

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184 process are empowered to make those vital decisions because others discerned that they had the  
185 gifts and graces needed for this challenge.

186

187 Discernment is a spiritual discipline, a practice of listening, a practice of developing the ability to  
188 perceive the various ways God is at work in individual lives, in communities, and in the world.

189 Discernment<sup>2</sup> may be understood as “... *the intentional practice by which a community or*  
190 *individual seeks, recognizes, and intentionally takes part in the activity of God in concrete*

191 *situations.*” To frame the exploration of a call to ministry within a mutual covenant of

192 discernment means that the Covenantal Partners will approach major decisions by seeking to

193 understand what God wills for their lives **in the context of the emerging leadership needs of**

194 **the church....**as the church itself responds to God’s call.

195

196 A covenant emphasizing discernment and formation is not necessarily sequential or predictable.

197 The Association does not expect the Member in Discernment to enter the process with a clearly

198 defined call, and the Covenantal Partners begin the process without any assumptions regarding

199 the nature of the outcome. The very language used by the authorizing body—“Member in

200 Discernment”—reflects the reality that the exploration of an individual’s call will include

201 openness to a variety of outcomes, even ones that are unexpected. **Discernment of call is itself**

202 **the primary task of the covenant relationship.** Yet certain specific moments or steps can be

203 identified in what is essentially a nonlinear process. There is a beginning, an entry point for the

204 development of the covenant among the Member, the Local Church, and the Association; that

205 beginning assumes that the relationship will extend over a period of at least two years. There is a

206 Local Church Discernment Committee and one or more discernment advisors from the

207 Association. The issue for United Church of Christ authorizing bodies is to listen to and discern

208 with that individual and that individual’s faith community in order to address the question: **to**

209 **what ministry is this person being called at this time? There are then questions that follow:**

210 **Does this particular ministry require authorization? If so, what form of authorization?**

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<sup>2</sup> Rogers, Frank, Jr., “Discernment” in Bass, Dorothy C, ed., *Practicing Our Faith*, 1997, page 107.

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212 As the nature of the call is clarified, there will be an assessment of gifts and needs. All are  
213 gifted, and each one is given gifts “*for the common good.*” (I Cor 12:7) The Committee on  
214 Ministry will explore—in a spirit of hospitality and mutuality—the special gifts the individual  
215 brings and discuss where that person may need more training or resources to nurture those gifts  
216 and the paths by which those needs might best be met. No single preparation process or path will  
217 be appropriate for every candidate. Rather, “*The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized*  
218 *Ministers,*” the needs of the church, and the gifts of the individual will provide the framework  
219 for the discernment process. The specific expectations will be explored covenantally with the  
220 individual and the individual’s particular faith community. The formation process may take  
221 several years. Each covenantal journey will be unique because each candidate will bring unique  
222 skills and life experiences into the process. From this mutual discernment process, learning plans  
223 will be developed; decisions will be made about appropriate preparation (such as attending a  
224 theological seminary or involvement in other learning programs). There will be supervised  
225 leadership practice and processes for assessing readiness. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the journey  
226 is fluid but formation always includes the Local Church, the Member in Discernment, and the  
227 Committee on Ministry. There may be formal authorization appropriate to a particular ministry  
228 combined with an ongoing covenant of mutual accountability; however, **authorization results**  
229 **from the communal covenantal process and is never a pre-determined outcome.**

230  
231 “*The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers*” is a core document Committees on  
232 Ministry, Local Churches, and Members in Discernment will use throughout the discernment and  
233 formation process. The *Marks* are the product of the Ministry Issues Implementation  
234 Committee in consultation with the whole church. The Committee’s work grew out of the 2005  
235 General Synod pronouncement titled “*Ministry Issues: Forming and Preparing Pastoral Leaders*  
236 *for God’s Church.*” The *Marks* are designed to be used by the covenantal partners as they  
237 explore the formation and preparation necessary for each of the forms of authorized ministry  
238 (Licensed, Commissioned, Ordained) as well as the expectations for continuing covenantal  
239 bonds on the part of those already authorized. Approaching the Marks within a Covenant of  
240 Discernment and Formation encourages honesty, reciprocity, and a willingness to risk meeting  
241 one another with a spirit of openness. An attitude of hospitality invites a genuine, trusting

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242 presence that enables partners in a conversation to enter into one another's worlds. Space is then  
243 created where individuals allow themselves to be changed by their experiences together.

244

245 Because **the *Marks* focus on the leadership needs of the church along with the aspirations**  
246 **of an individual candidate**, the *Marks* are essential components of the covenant relationship.  
247 This resource helps identify qualities that may clarify the actual ministry to which an individual  
248 is being called. The *Marks* are not a checklist, not a list of "things to do." Nor are they "entry  
249 requirements." Rather, they are **dynamic descriptions** of various aspects of Christian ministry  
250 that inform the preparation process for those discerning a call to authorized ministry; within that  
251 discernment process, the *Marks* are an essential guide in addressing whether a Member in  
252 Discernment demonstrates sufficient readiness to engage in authorized ministry. Of equal  
253 importance, the *Marks* also provide a way to assess ongoing faithfulness and effectiveness for  
254 the ministry to which authorized ministers are called; and the *Marks* continue to guide those  
255 engaged in authorized ministry throughout their entire lives.

256

257 Covenant is a commitment to be with and for one another for the good of Christ's Church rather  
258 than for the good of any one individual. To be part of such a relationship requires trust, openness,  
259 and spiritual maturity. When the Covenantal Partners embark on this journey, they do so in the  
260 expectation that all the partners will be changed. Listening to one another, welcoming and  
261 valuing the insights and wisdom of one another, hearing the Spirit speaking to the Church, the  
262 participants become open to transformation. Such a commitment involves holding one another  
263 accountable to the covenant without knowing where it will lead. With its focus on welcome,  
264 openness, trust, and mutual accountability, the covenantal process is a reflection of the faith  
265 expressed in one of the UCC formative documents:

266 *"We are united in striving to know the will of God as taught in the holy Scriptures,*  
267 *and in our purpose to walk in the ways of the Lord, made known or to be made*  
268 *known to us."*<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Kansas City Statement of Faith, 1913, emphasis added.

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**THE COVENANTAL RELATIONSHIP: AUTHORIZED MINISTRY IN THE UCC**

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Covenantal relationships are open-ended; at the same time they are binding. They are living, dynamic, and personal. A covenant belongs to all the Covenant Partners and the Covenant Partners all belong to one another. The covenant community and all its members depend upon the faithfulness of God and of each other, upon forgiveness and the possibility of newness.

The centrality of covenant locates the United Church of Christ ministerial authorization processes—in a somewhat fluid way—somewhere on the “ecclesiastical spectrum” between denominations whose structures are hierarchical or connectional and denominations where local congregations are completely autonomous in their credentialing processes. Whether an individual is a seminarian, a bi-vocational licensed minister, an ordained local church pastor, a military or institutional chaplain, a commissioned church musician, or a retired pastor, the authorized ministry relationship in the UCC is always grounded in mutually accountable promises that involve the individual, a Local Church, a calling body (which may be the Local Church), and the Association through its Committee on Ministry. In addition, other partners in the discernment process may include seminaries, learning programs, field education settings, mentors, and advisors.

Authorized ministers (Ordained, Commissioned, Licensed) are persons charged to minister in the name of Jesus Christ on behalf of the whole United Church of Christ. “*Ministerial Standing*” is the term used to describe the continuing relationship of an authorized minister to the United Church of Christ. The covenant that shapes call and authorization also shapes the ongoing understanding of Ministerial Standing, and that covenant may be life-long. Covenantal partners are always accountable to and responsible for one another. **Authorized ministry is the church’s ministry, and authorized ministry exists to serve both the current and the emerging leadership needs of the church.**

Just as the initial written document—Covenant of Discernment and Formation—shapes the requirements and expectations for the Member in Discernment, so too the formal Covenant of

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304 Ministerial Standing shapes the ongoing relationship among the partners after authorization.  
305 Those partners customarily are the authorized minister, the Local Church—which may also be  
306 the calling body—and the Association. *“The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized*  
307 *Ministers”* continue to assist in leadership development throughout the span of an individual’s  
308 entire ministry. Every authorized minister is expected to continue to learn and grow--spiritually,  
309 personally, and professionally. The *Marks* can be utilized for peer and periodic reviews, for  
310 assessment of an authorized minister’s commitment to regular continuing education, and for self-  
311 reflection. The *Marks* are also an invaluable tool when an authorized minister seeks guidance in  
312 the process of discerning whether God is calling him/her to consider new ministry opportunities.

313

314 **Ordained, Licensed, and Commissioned ministers serve on behalf of the whole United**  
315 **Church of Christ.** Such service on behalf of the UCC includes a commitment to, ongoing  
316 responsibility for, and participation in the Association, the Conference, and National Settings of  
317 the Church. *“The Marks of Faithful and Authorized Ministers”* describe that ongoing  
318 commitment as living *“in the covenants of mutual accountability that characterize authorized*  
319 *ministry in the United Church of Christ.”*

320

321 Discerning one’s gifts is always a life-long process. In retirement, the particulars of an  
322 authorized minister’s situation change, but the covenantal nature of the call continues. Many  
323 persons now spend one-third of their lives in retirement, and discerning God’s call as a retiree is  
324 an integral part of the covenant process. When the particular ministerial occupation ceases, the  
325 organization and routine of daily life undergo dramatic change. But the call to ministry—  
326 grounded in baptism—does not change because that call is a lifetime covenant.

327

328 *“The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers”* can be used as a retirement  
329 planning assessment tool, enabling authorized ministers to reflect on a call to ministry that will  
330 be unrelated to specific employment. Such a call always includes a commitment to a Local  
331 Church community and an awareness of the ethical responsibilities retirees have in relation to  
332 that community and their other clergy colleagues. The call to ministry--which belongs to every

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333 baptized person-- unfolds in new and enriching ways as the newly retired one discerns her/his  
334 own gifts and the new settings in which those gifts might be utilized.

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### THE COVENANTAL RELATIONSHIP: HOSPITALITY

342 When an attitude of hospitality frames the conversations related to call and authorization,  
343 Biblical insights and rich traditions of our Christian heritage will permeate the entire  
344 discernment/decision-making process. Hospitality, as an orientation to relationships, is deeply  
345 rooted in our faith traditions, and hospitality always has special meaning because of the countless  
346 narratives woven through Hebrew and Christian scripture. God's act of hospitality brought a  
347 scattered group of slaves into a new land, fulfilling an ancient promise God had made to  
348 Abraham. Jesus Christ, the one from God, welcomed all and shared table fellowship with  
349 "*sinners and tax collectors.*" The Apostle Paul addressed new believers in the church at Rome  
350 with this mandate, "*Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you....*"  
351 (Romans 15:7) Throughout its history, the Christian Church has carried out its hospitality  
352 mandate through monasteries, hospices, orphanages, hospitals, shelters, and countless programs  
353 focused on the continuation of Jesus' ministry to the oppressed and suffering. Today the  
354 revitalization and transformation of numerous UCC congregations is grounded in their  
355 intentional focus on a spirit of welcome to all.

356

357 Hospitality is a presence, not a set of guidelines or an object to be easily attained. A pervasive  
358 attitude of hospitality involves willingness to risk, openness to overcoming fear, a sense of  
359 gratitude and reciprocity, and awareness that an encounter with another can indeed be a means of  
360 grace. A sense of hospitality encourages Committee on Ministry members, Local Church  
361 members, and the Member in Discernment all to exhibit the openness to transformation required  
362 of a covenantal process where the outcome is not clearly defined. A commitment to hospitality  
363 will also inform the way the Committee on Ministry members actually relate to one another as  
364 they go about this vital work.

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365  
366 As important as hospitality is in Hebrew and Christian tradition, this essential aspect of our  
367 scriptural heritage has seldom been considered as a vital component of ecclesiastical  
368 authorization. Yet covenantal relationships and hospitality both require an openness to one  
369 another, a willingness to be changed, and a deep trust in the guidance of the Spirit. To affirm that  
370 all partners in the ecclesiastical process are embraced by Christ's welcome is to create a true  
371 sense of mutuality. **A hospitable process will continue to be rigorous in terms of academic,**  
372 **pastoral, and personal expectations for specific forms of authorization;** however, the  
373 relationship will be framed less by guidelines and more by an emphasis on genuinely welcoming  
374 one another, listening, and learning together.

375  
376 Committees on Ministry will find themselves learning from new opportunities as they prepare to  
377 respond in genuinely hospitable ways to diverse communities of faith, particularly when those  
378 communities are composed of individuals whose cultural/ethnic/racial backgrounds are not  
379 represented among the Committee on Ministry members. Hospitality always calls for mutual  
380 respect and patience; however, specific hospitality needs may include cultural and/or linguistic  
381 translators, awareness of appropriate foods or friendship rituals, or temporary expansion of the  
382 Committee with invited participants. In such situations Committees on Ministry will want to be  
383 aware of the ever-present danger that the covenantal assumptions of the dominant culture will  
384 unknowingly define and frame the discernment process.

385  
386 Committees on Ministry, in the past, have focused their efforts on responding to candidates who  
387 often came to them with a very specific goal: Ordained Ministry, Commissioned Ministry, or  
388 Licensed Ministry. A new way of working requires a shift because it is necessary for the focus to  
389 remain—always—on the Church's ministry. This model of nurturing individuals for possible  
390 authorized ministry asks much of Committees on Ministry; the challenge for Committee  
391 members will lie in recognizing "the new" and realizing that **a focus on Discernment and**  
392 **Formation does not require them to do additional work but rather to go about their work**  
393 **in a very new way.**

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395        **INTRODUCTION TO *THE MARKS OF FAITHFUL AND EFFECTIVE***  
396        ***AUTHORIZED MINISTERS OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST***

397

398        The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Church of Christ celebrated and affirmed—in publications,  
399        media presentations, and worship gatherings—the denomination’s emerging identity and self-  
400        understanding as a “*united and uniting, open and affirming, peace with justice,*  
401        *multiracial/multicultural, accessible to all*” community of Jesus Christ. The *Marks* reflect the  
402        reality that the United Church of Christ moves into its second half-century as a denomination  
403        with a profound awareness of the changing leadership needs of a Church in the midst of  
404        transformation. The *Marks* are indeed “markers,” offering essential and flexible guidance for  
405        Covenants of Discernment, Formation, Authorization, and ongoing Accountability to meet the  
406        changing leadership needs of the United Church of Christ.

407

408        Even with an abundance of resources to assist them (including the *Marks* and the many resources  
409        in the Appendices), persons privileged to serve on Committees on Ministry will still find  
410        themselves facing very difficult decisions. Flexibility and prayerfulness will both be essential to  
411        the work. Covenants need attention and renewal. When promises are broken, Committee  
412        Members will want to be direct with their challenges as well as supportive with their pastoral  
413        concern. Space needs to be created for a genuine discussion—without accusations—of the  
414        reasons for the broken covenant or unfulfilled promises. In some instances, the covenant may  
415        need to be revisited. In other instances the Committee on Ministry may be required to be very  
416        clear about the consequences of the Member’s actions, including the possible loss of Member in  
417        Discernment status or suspension or termination of Ministerial Standing.

418        Committees will also receive the gift of rich, Spirit-filled experiences; they may have the joy of  
419        discerning with a particular candidate—previously and painfully excluded by the church—that  
420        the individual is indeed an appropriate candidate for authorization in the United Church of  
421        Christ. Committees may also discern—with a particular candidate—that the individual’s call is  
422        to a ministry that does not require authorization at this time. Every situation will be different;  
423        every situation will require careful attention to the “*Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized*

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424 *Ministers in the UCC;*” and certainly every situation will require attentiveness to the God who  
425 calls all members of the United Church of Christ to “...*to participate in and extend the ministry*  
426 *of Jesus Christ...*”

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## THE MARKS OF FAITHFUL AND EFFECTIVE

431

## AUTHORIZED MINISTERS OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF

432

## CHRIST (Revised, April 2009)

433

### 434 ***SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION FOR MINISTRY***

435

1. A lived faith showing love of God, trust in Jesus, and openness to the Holy Spirit.

436

437

2. Devotion to the word of God as revealed through scripture and Christian traditions.

438

439

3. Commitment to life-long spiritual growth and practice, individually and in community.

440

441

4. A sense of being called by God and the community to authorized ministry in the church.

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5. Openness to continuing discernment of one’s call in community.

444

### 445 ***UCC IDENTITY FOR MINISTRY***

446

1. Acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as sole Head of the Church.

447

448

2. A passion for the oneness of the body of Christ as expressed through commitment to  
449 ecumenism, justice, and the full embrace of all persons in the radical hospitality of God.

450

451

3. Active membership in a local church of the United Church of Christ.

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## Ministry in the United Church of Christ

452

453 4. An understanding of the concept of covenant and how it informs the nature, purpose, and polity  
454 of the United Church of Christ.

455

456 5. A willingness to live in the covenants of mutual accountability that characterize authorized  
457 ministry in the United Church of Christ.

458

459 6. Ongoing demonstration of commitment to the United Church of Christ.

460

461 7. Stewardship of resources, including financial support of the church in all of its settings.

462

463 8. Participation in the various settings of the United Church of Christ, including the  
464 conference/association and local church.

465 The ability:

466 9. to articulate diverse histories that comprise the United Church of Christ, to situate them in the  
467 broader evolution of faith traditions and to relate them to the theology, polity, and practices of  
468 the Member's local church, association, and conference.

469

470 10. to explain and work within the current polity of the UCC and its denominational structure, and  
471 to describe the covenantal relationships among the General Synod, national setting,  
472 conferences, associations, and local congregations of the UCC.

473

474 11. to share key elements of the UCC's statement of faith, constitution with its preamble, and  
475 bylaws regarding the governance, mission, and theologies of the UCC and their implications for  
476 the life of the church.

477

478 12. to articulate the UCC's commitment to being a united and uniting, multiracial and multicultural,  
479 open and affirming, accessible to all and just peace church.

480

481 13. to envision how the UCC in its various settings may respond to religious, social, economic, and  
482 political trends, changing demographics, and other emerging factors.

483

484 14. to use and promote the informational and educational resources available through UCC  
485 publications and websites.

486

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487 ***PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL FORMATION FOR MINISTRY***

- 488 1. A healthy sense of self as shaped by God, community, and personal experience.  
489
- 490 2. A sense of theological identity and authority, while being responsive to the opinions and values  
491 of others, including those whom the Member will serve.  
492
- 493 3. A healthy awareness of strengths, weaknesses and limits, and assumption of responsibility for  
494 one's body, mind and spirit.  
495
- 496 4. Knowledge and observance of personal and professional boundaries in interpersonal,  
497 congregational, and community settings.  
498
- 499 5. A commitment to continuing education, professional development, and life-long learning.  
500 6. Demonstrated moral maturity, including integrity in personal and public life and responsibility to  
501 self, family, church, and community.  
502 The ability:
- 503 7. to affirm the identities of others, including others very unlike oneself.  
504
- 505 8. to engage in self-reflection and to seek and use feedback from others appropriately.  
506
- 507 9. to engage productively in public discourse, expecting to grow and be transformed through the  
508 exchange of viewpoints.  
509
- 510 10. to take initiative in leadership, and to frame and test a vision in community.  
511
- 512 11. to listen empathically, communicate appropriately, and keep appropriate confidences.  
513
- 514 12. to function as part of a team, to give and receive supervision, and to mutually equip and  
515 motivate the community of faith.  
516
- 517 13. to be resourceful and adaptable, and know where to locate additional resources and seek  
518 consultation when needed.  
519

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520 14. to accept and promote diversity, to inspire others to do so, and to minister in a multicultural and  
521 multiracial, open and affirming, just peace, accessible to all, united and uniting church.  
522

523

## 524 ***KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR MINISTRY***

### 525 **General Knowledge and Skills**

526 The Ability:

527 1. to understand and appreciate a variety of perspectives of life.  
528

529 2. to understand the profound differences that physical, psychological, gender identity, sexual  
530 orientation, age, class, cultural, religious, racial, and ethnic factors make in the ways that human  
531 beings experience the world.  
532

533 3. to comprehend the impact of historical change upon the thoughts, feelings, and actions of  
534 individuals and societies.  
535

536 4. to perceive how a person's perspectives and interests shape communication, and to appreciate  
537 the virtues and limitations of those perspectives and interests.  
538

539 5. to grasp and evaluate the justifications that people give for their opinions.  
540

541 6. to apply basic concepts of psychology to the understanding of oneself, others, and human  
542 interactions.

543 7. to appreciate the importance of symbols and images in human culture(s).  
544

545 8. to understand various meanings and purposes of the arts.  
546

547 9. to analyze social, political, environmental, and economic dynamics, using the tools of the social  
548 and natural sciences.  
549

550 10. to use respectfully and relationally a basic knowledge of specific human cultures.  
551

552 11. to communicate clearly and effectively with appropriate media and technologies.

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553

554 **Knowledge and Skills Specific to Authorized Ministry**

- 555 1. A thorough knowledge of, and personal engagement with, the Bible.  
556
- 557 2. Skill with methods of biblical interpretation, including the historic interpretive traditions of the  
558 church and contemporary methods, particularly those from historically underrepresented  
559 communities.  
560
- 561 3. A deepening familiarity with the global history of the Christian churches through the ages and  
562 across cultures, including the newest Christian populations, and an understanding of the evolution  
563 of Christian communities in the United States.  
564
- 565 4. A deepening familiarity with contemporary theological ways of thinking and with the rich and  
566 varied theological heritages, creeds, liturgies, and spiritual practices of the Christian churches.  
567
- 568 5. An understanding of other religions and their foundational documents.  
569
- 570 The ability:
- 571 6. to articulate a theological understanding of authorized ministry, and to relate it to the practice of  
572 ministry.  
573
- 574 7. to analyze, evaluate, and integrate the biblical, historical, theological, and pastoral disciplines and  
575 practices in ways that contribute to fruitful and faithful Christian ministry.  
576
- 577 8. to understand the nature, use, and misuse of power and authority, and to exercise them  
578 appropriately and effectively in authorized ministry.  
579
- 580 9. to engage in community leadership that is collaborative and transformative.  
581
- 582 10. to engage in respectful ecumenical and interfaith dialogue.  
583
- 584 11. to celebrate the unique features of local faith communities while encouraging them to be  
585 receptive to perspectives from the broader church and world.  
586

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- 587 12. to appreciate, practice, and pass on traditions of faith while interpreting them in light of the  
588 context of a diverse and changing world.  
589
- 590 13. to adapt the practices of ministry to the unique social, cultural, environmental and ecclesiastical  
591 aspects of particular settings.  
592
- 593 14. to discern God's mission in the world and, in response, to lead ministries of compassion, nurture,  
594 justice, and proclamation that support fullness of life for all people.  
595
- 596 15. to preach the good news, lead worship and participate in the sacraments in a manner faithful to  
597 the broader Christian heritage and appropriate to the characteristics of a specific culture and  
598 setting.  
599
- 600 16. to provide effective and appropriate pastoral care and Christian education, and to equip and  
601 motivate others to share in these ministries.  
602
- 603 17. to organize and implement programs, administer the operations of a complex organization, and  
604 initiate change when appropriate.  
605
- 606 18. to read the contexts of a community's ministry and creatively lead that community through  
607 change or conflict.  
608
- 609 19. to lead and encourage ministries of evangelism, service, stewardship and social transformation.  
610
- 611 20. to understand and participate in the financial administration of the church and other religious  
612 organizations.  
613
- 614

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618

## APPENDICES

619

620 In addition to the Marks, the Covenantal Partners will make use of an extensive array of  
621 resources available online. These resources will provide specific guidance for Members in  
622 Discernment, Local Churches, Calling Bodies, and Committees on Ministry.

623

### 624 **I Member in Discernment Resources/Documents:**

625

626 1) Creating a “Culture of Call” in the local church

627 2) Initial process for the local church

628 3) Initial process for the person discerning a call

629 4) Covenant of Discernment and Formation

630 5) Understanding and Practicing Discernment

631 6) Discernment Advisor Covenant

632 7) Local Church Discernment Committee

633 8) Mentor Covenant

634 9) Committee on Ministry Formation Committee

635 10) Initial Assessment: Assessing a Member in Discernment’s Gifts, Needs, and  
636 Circumstances and Shaping an Educational and Formation Plan

637

638 11) Liturgical resources for celebrating a Member in Discernment

639 12) Ongoing Assessment of a Member in Discernment while in an Educational Program

640 13) Authorization and Release of Information Form

641 14) Assessment for Authorization: Ordination

642 15) Assessment for Authorization: Licensure

643 16) Assessment for Authorization: Commissioning

644

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**645 II Ongoing Covenantal Relationships: Authorized Ministry Resources**

- 646 1) Covenant of Ministerial Standing
- 647 2) Continuing Education Covenant
- 648 3) Renewal of License
- 649 4) Ongoing Covenantal Accountability
- 650 A) Information Reviews
- 651 B) Periodic Support Consultations
- 652 C) Situational Support Consultations (For Occasional Use)
- 653 D) Fitness Review Procedures (For Use When Necessary)
- 654 E) Ecclesiastical Endorsement Resource (for Occasional Use with
- 655 Military/Institutional Chaplains)
- 656
- 657

**658 III Ecumenical Partner Resources**

- 659 1) Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing (Christian Church, Disciples of Christ)
- 660 2) Dual Standing (Ordained ministers of another denomination serving a UCC church or
- 661 institution who desire to retain authorization in their own denomination)
- 662
- 663 3) Privilege of Call (Ordained Ministers of another denomination who seek
- 664 authorization to circulate a UCC Profile and, once a position is obtained, become an
- 665 ordained minister in the United Church of Christ.)
- 666
- 667 4) Receiving Ministers from Other Denominations (Utilizing the basic components of
- 668 the Privilege of Call Process to examine ordained ministers from other denominations
- 669 serving in an institutional, academic, or ecumenical setting and desiring affiliation
- 670 with the UCC.)
- 671
- 672 5) Formula of Agreement/Orderly Exchange of Ordained Ministers of Word and
- 673 Sacrament among the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian
- 674 Church, USA, the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ.
- 675

676 (Underlined material is currently found in the Manual on Ministry)

677

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678 Overall supplemental documents and training materials are also available online; they provide  
679 essential background for the Covenantal Partners in their discernment, formation, assessment,  
680 and ongoing accountability processes:

681

682 **“Using the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the UCC”**

683 **“Christian Hospitality and Authorized Ministry”** (including Meeting Communities  
684 New to the UCC and Resources for Meeting with Persons with Disabilities)

685 **“UCC Identity Formation”**

686 **“Manual on Church”**

687 **“Ministry Issues Pronouncement Training Resources**