

*Note: The following pronouncement, approved by General Synod 25 in Atlanta, should not be considered “final” until the minutes of the General Synod have been reviewed and approved by the Executive Council in October.*

## **APPROVED**

### **Ministry Issues: Forming and Preparing Pastoral Leaders for God’s Church**

#### **SUMMARY**

This Pronouncement seeks to address the needs of the United Church of Christ for well prepared and faithful ministerial leadership for God’s mission in the world both now and in the future. In order to have such well prepared leaders able to engage with a geographically and economically diverse, multicultural, multiracial church, it is necessary to:

- expand our definitions of learnedness and leadership
- provide multiple means for persons to be formed and prepared for authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ

In order to do this, we must pay attention to:

- our theologies of ministry, especially ordained ministry
- our understanding and practice of licensed ministry
- how we engage in deep and authentic discernment of both call and gifts for ministry
- how we help form leaders with an abiding identity and affinity with the United Church of Christ

#### **BACKGROUND**

*The gifts [God] gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-12, NRSV)*

The United Church of Christ asserts in its Constitution that “God calls the whole Church and every member to participate in and extend the ministry of Jesus Christ.” It also “recognizes that God calls certain of its members to various forms of ministry in and on behalf of the Church for which ecclesiastical authorization is required.” Since 1983 when the current provisions on ministry were adopted by General Synod 14 (and then ratified by the Conferences), the United Church of Christ has recognized three authorized ministries: ordained, licensed, and commissioned.

Based upon scriptural mandate and constitutional and bylaw provisions, a Manual on Ministry has been developed as a guide (sometimes adopted as policy) to the understandings, relationships, and procedures relating to these ministries. Ordained ministry is, and has been generally understood as the ministry of word and sacrament, the office of pastor and teacher. Licensed ministry is a temporary authorization for ministry under supervision, determined by the need of the Church, serving to provide a ministry of word or of word and sacrament in a specific setting. Commissioned ministry is a specific church-related ministry which is recognized and authorized by an Association.

The United Church of Christ continues to evolve. It is committed to becoming a multi-racial, multi-cultural, open and affirming, accessible to all, and just peace church. It seeks and welcomes an increasing diversity of persons and communities. The world in which the United Church of Christ lives and serves is also changing creating new opportunities and challenges. In addition, population shifts, geographic ethos and economic factors affect the mission and leadership needs of our local congregations. Thus, the church's understandings of and needs for ministry are not only being re-formed but expanded.

While striving to provide authentic, faithful leadership for the Church in God's mission, many settings of the United Church of Christ have found the current definitions and practices of authorization for ministry to be problematic.

- The diversities within the Church challenge the assumption that the same paths and preparation for ministry are appropriate for all.
- Many called and gifted racial/ethnic persons have been excluded from ordained ministry by present standards.
- With over 60% of UCC congregations under 200 members, many cannot afford the cost of supporting a pastor who is a seminary graduate who serves "full time."
- Some congregations are calling leaders who have little or no knowledge of, or commitment to, the United Church of Christ.
- Some licensed ministers who have served with skill and faithfulness for long periods of time feel called to ordained ministry but are hindered and often prevented from fulfilling that call by current policies and procedures.
- Persons perceiving a call to authorized ministry sometimes lack the support needed to discern the particulars of the call and its implications.
- Various settings of the Church are often not sure how to be appropriately involved in discerning and testing the character and validity of a person's perceived call to ministry including their responsibility to say no as well as yes.
- Many in the Church are seeking to articulate and understand a theology of ministry faithful to the Gospel in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

It has been widely recognized that these issues must be addressed so that the leadership of the whole Church may be effective and faithful in this time and into the future. This recognition led to a long series of conversations over ten or more years about "ministry issues" under the leadership of first the Office for Church Life and Leadership and then the Parish Life and Leadership Ministry Team of Local Church Ministries. These conversations have produced a rich body of papers and minutes addressing issues of ministry, including ordination, licensure, discernment of call, preparation for ministry, and the continuing accountability and relationships of authorized ministers and the church, as well as biblical, historical and theological understandings of the church's ministry. Parallel conversations concerning commissioned ministry led to a Pronouncement of affirmation and encouragement at GS 24.

Also recognized during these conversations has been the United Church of Christ's commitment around issues of authorized ministries to its ecumenical partners, particularly the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Churches Uniting in Christ, and the Formula of Agreement partners. The United Church of Christ must continue to be in conversation with these communions as together we strive to respond to God's call in this time and place while being faithful to its own particular vocation.

In response to the request of General Synod 22 that appropriate actions relating to ministry be submitted to a future Synod for its consideration, this Proposed Pronouncement draws upon all the conversations and consultations as well as a variety of groups and individuals with whom ideas and possibilities have been “tested” along the way. It also recognizes that the life of the church and the world are constantly changing so that the need to develop and define the ministries of the Church will not conclude with this statement.

The primary issues around which this Proposed Pronouncement focuses are:

- What do we, the United Church of Christ, mean now by ministry?
  - Particularly, what do we mean by ordination?
- What are the implications of our understandings
  - For discernment of call?
  - For fostering UCC identity in authorized ministers?
  - For preparation for ministry?
  - For licensed ministry?
  - For continuing covenantal relationships of authorized ministers and the Church?

## **BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, ETHICAL RATIONALE**

### **A Theological Basis for Ministry**

The Church needs a well prepared and faithful ministry to engage in God’s mission in this challenging and evolving future.

Ministry is grounded in the mission of God. This priority must be clear. The Church exists not to fulfill its own mission, but rather to fulfill the mission of God. Otherwise, the Church can lose its way by focusing on itself, procedures, requirements, or prerequisites for authorization, forgetting the base out of which ministry emerges.

With the Church in every age, the United Church of Christ confesses that God creates and sustains the universe, that God not only gives life but actively participates in the life of the universe, and that God through Jesus Christ calls all who would hear to join in the continuing creation of life and wholeness for all.

Viewing ministry through the lens of mission is new for some though it has been a consensus view throughout the Christian world for at least a half-century. Ministry serves the Church, and the Church’s reason for being is God’s mission.

As the Church implements God’s mission, there are three tasks: nurture, service and transformation.

- Mission nurtures: The Church equips, nurtures and educates the congregation for mission; inviting, attracting, and welcoming people into the community’s faith journey. This is accomplished by: nourishing the faithful, being transformed by and transforming members into the cultures of the faith while deepening their relationship to God.

It is these tasks of nurture where ministry's work of word and sacrament primarily occur. Ordained and licensed ministers preach the Word, administer the sacraments of baptism and communion (a basic faith expression and form of nurture), oversee nurture in the faith through education, and they lead the congregation in congregational formation. Also, they lead the congregation to witness to the local community in which the local church is placed for God's mission.

Evangelism attracts people to the faith in various ways: by pastoring those who are searching for faith and healing; nurturing people through the wonderful and painful passages of the human condition; providing an alternative for those wanting to abandon the emptiness of cultural individualistic consumerism; giving substance to those yearning for "being" to replace the "having" focus of culture; providing community and intimacy in a world designed for individuals and their competitively managed achievements; pointing to redemption for those searching for ways to deal with their shame and guilt; giving encouragement to those hoping for a world of justice; deepening a spiritual life in a spiritually impoverished culture.

Ordained and licensed ministry is needed to provide leadership for the nurturing work of the church.

- Mission serves: The Church provides services to those in need, particularly those unable to care for themselves—the hungry, the sick and the victims of wars and disasters; and those terribly alone in this world. There are so many people suffering deprivation; homeless because of disasters and/or poverty; children for whom hunger is their daily fare; aged and powerless persons who need care—there is no end to the service needs.

Ordained and licensed ministry is needed to provide leadership for the service work of the church.

- Mission transforms: The Church is called to undermining the demonic in whatever its manifestations; challenging unjust structures; combating the "isms" of the culture. The underlying notion is that God calls for a change in persons, cultures, societies, governments, economies, local churches and denominations—a change to bring them into congruence with God's purpose for the Creation.

Ordained and licensed ministry is needed to provide leadership for the transformative needs of the church.

The Church, therefore, needs a well prepared and faithful ministry to engage in God's mission in this challenging and evolving future.

### **Authorized Ministry for God's Mission**

#### **Ordained Ministry**

To accomplish God's mission in the world faithfully, the Church requires people prepared to nurture, serve, and transform. These tasks belong to all believers, who by virtue of their baptism are truly "ministers," participating in the mission of Christ in the world. The tasks Christians undertake and for which they prepare, however, are different,

because God's gifts are diverse: "...some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers...." (Ephesians 4:11).

From the time of the early Church, certain persons have been "set apart," or ordained, for leadership ministries of word and sacrament, specifically 1) to ensure the unity, good order, and continuity of the Church by calling it to faithfulness in God's mission; 2) to represent the Church and its commitments to justice and peace in society; 3) to ensure that theological and sacramental traditions retain their integrity; and 4) to encourage and equip others "for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). Ordination is that rite or ritual by which, through prayer and the laying on of hands, individuals are consecrated for special leadership in and on behalf of the Church. Some Christians hold a "high," or sacramental, view of ordination, believing that it marks a permanent and indelible change in the spiritual and psychological nature of the one ordained. Others hold a "low," or functional, view of ordination, believing that it simply represents a designation of individuals for certain tasks; thus one is no longer a "minister" when one no longer performs ministerial functions.

In the United Church of Christ, we hold these two views in creative tension, sharing what might be called a "high functional" perspective. On the one hand, we ordain persons only when they have a call, that is, a position or task which they have been invited to undertake. This suggests a functional view. On the other hand, we remove a person's "standing," but not his or her ordination, when he or she ceases to perform ministerial tasks; this suggests a more sacramental view. Moreover, we believe 1) that God is truly present in the acts, vows, and covenants of ordination; and 2) that once ordained, a person serves God and Church distinctively in both secular and ecclesial communities. In the United Church of Christ, therefore, ordination is understood as both a sacred and a practical undertaking.

Ordained ministry is at once *personal* (an individual believes he or she hears God's special call) and *communal* (the individual's perceived call is tested and affirmed—or not—by the Church). H. Richard Niebuhr helpfully describes the path to ordination as a sequential process with four parts: the *Christian call* summons an individual to basic faith; the *secret call* beckons toward more specific Christian service; the *providential call* tests both one's gifts and graces and one's ability to acquire appropriate training; and the *ecclesial call* represents the Church's affirmation of an individual's preparation and giftedness. In the United Church of Christ, from discernment of call through ordination, active ministry, and into retirement, ministers and persons "in care" participate in an ongoing, formal relationship of mutual accountability with the wider Church.

"Authorization" is the term used in the United Church of Christ to designate the formal, shared nature of certain ministries, both lay and ordained. Authorization involves three closely related elements. First, there is a *preparatory process of discernment and decision*: persons decide, both privately and in conversation with representatives of the Church, whether or not God is calling them to a particular form of ministry. This process typically involves 1) extended time; 2) prayerful reflection; 3) acquisition and/or refinement of relevant knowledge and skills; and 4) decision. For some the result will be a decision *not* to continue in, or to seek formal recognition of, a particular form of ministry. Second, authorization involves a *rite or service*: for some, preparation and decision for ministry will be confirmed and/or initiated formally by an ecclesiastical service, either of ordination or of commissioning. Finally, authorization involves an *ongoing relationship of covenantal accountability between an individual and different*

*settings of the Church.* This will continue as long as the individual pursues ministry in the United Church of Christ.

Authorization often involves a creative tension between the wider Church and particular communities within it. On the one hand, ministries of leadership take place in, and are derived from, *particular communities*. Such ministries are shaped by the histories, needs, cultures and present circumstances of those communities. On the other hand, whatever their particular location or focus, ministries of leadership are of and for the *whole* Church. Intentional and deliberate ministerial preparation is essential for all ministries of word and sacrament (ordained and licensed) for the sake of both local and wider church needs. Thus preparation—intellectual and academic training, spiritual growth, emotional and psychological development, training and skills acquisition, identity formation—must serve unity and mission in the wider Church, *and* meet particular needs in local settings.

The complex nature of authorization has two important implications. First, authorized ministries of word and sacrament, whether licensed or ordained, involve both the discernment of gifts and the refinement of skills and knowledge. This means that authorization processes must take into consideration *both* the individual's formal training *and* their special gifts exhibited in real ministry settings. In setting persons apart for ordination, the United Church of Christ historically has emphasized formal academic training, sometimes disregarding actual ministries of power and efficacy in local settings. In the future, we cannot assume that a college and seminary degree are always sufficient to ensure fitness for ordination, nor can we assume that years of effective ministry, without a seminary degree, are always *insufficient* to ensure fitness.

Second, the tasks of discerning whether a person is called to ordained ministry, what preparation he or she needs, and how he or she will be held accountable in ministry are shared by the individual, the local community, and the wider Church. In establishing its processes for discernment and decision, formation, and accountability, the United Church of Christ historically has emphasized the role of the wider Church, sometimes silencing or ignoring the local community's voice. In a multi-cultural and diversified culture in which the tasks of ministry for the accomplishment of God's mission are increasingly complex, we must further define and develop *multiple paths* that lead to and support ordained ministry.

The traditional, seven-year college/seminary path will continue to be the path for many persons. However, two other options must be developed to meet the needs of a changing Church. *Expanded regional opportunities for ministerial formation*, including distance learning, seminars, mentoring, intensive courses, and other "delivery" options, will provide, over an equivalent period of seven years, the necessary training and skills for those who, in conversation with representatives of both wider and local church, discern its appropriateness. A seven-year *mentoring process* with trained practitioners, familiar with the needs of a local community and skilled in the practice of ministry, will provide an option for others. All three paths—and any others that the Church may need to develop in the future—must 1) enable individuals, in prayerful conversation with others, to recognize God's call; 2) equip called and gifted individuals to serve effectively in and on behalf of the whole Church; 3) ensure that processes of formation and accountability are sufficiently diverse to meet the needs, norms, and cultural expectations of particular communities; and 4) ensure that ordained persons remain accountable and engaged learners both during active ministry and after retirement.

## Licensed Ministry

Licensed ministry is a second form of authorized ministry recognized by the United Church of Christ. In places—especially, but not only, rural and ethnic communities—where ordained ministers are not available, licensed ministers “perform specified duties in a designated local church or within an Association,” renewing their commitment and their license annually. Although some serve mainly as supply preachers, others perform the full range of pastoral tasks as ministers of small congregations. Some of these persons, with the support of their churches, eventually feel called to the additional step of ordination, but this option has typically been unavailable or difficult to negotiate in the United Church of Christ. Licensed pastoral ministries, however, have the same theological foundations as ordained ministries, and are identical in purpose. They 1) ensure unity, good order, and continuity; 2) represent the Church and its commitments to justice and peace in society; 3) ensure theological and sacramental integrity by calling the Church to faithfulness in God’s mission; and 4) encourage and equip others “for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.” The United Church of Christ needs to develop appropriate new educational opportunities through which licensure itself may become a path toward ordination.

For some, licensure itself is a final and sufficient commitment.<sup>1</sup> For others, however, a time of service, preparation and discernment within licensed ministry will lead to the decision to pursue a formal path toward ordination: regional ministerial formation, seminary training or mentoring. Such decisions will always be made in prayerful conversation with the local church and the Association. Upon completion of the training mutually agreed upon, a licensed minister may be ordained. Finally, licensed ministers, both during their period of preparation and decision and (when relevant) after ordination, will continue in a relationship of *covenantal accountability* with the United Church of Christ for as long as they pursue a ministry of word and sacrament.

## Commissioned Ministry<sup>2</sup>

Commissioned ministry is the third authorized ministry recognized in the United Church of Christ. As God calls some of the baptized to *general* leadership ministries primarily to *equip* others, so God also calls some to *specialized* leadership ministries primarily to *serve* others. From the time of early Christianity, certain women and men have been formally set apart to offer their particular gifts in and on behalf of the Church. In our own traditions, deacons, deaconesses, “ancient widows,” and elders have served the sick, elderly, or destitute; cared for orphans; aided in worship; and managed church finances. Today specialists in Christian education, church administration, mission outreach, spiritual formation, health, and music, among others, serve faithfully in and beyond local congregations.

Unlike ordained and licensed ministries, commissioned ministries are specific and clearly functional, focused on one or more aspects of life, worship, and mission in a given setting. (Commissioned ministers cease to be such if they cease to perform the task[s] for which they were commissioned; here there is no tension between a “sacramental” and a “functional” perspective.). Commissioned ministries often involve tasks common to all

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<sup>1</sup> Currently, there is no service specifically for recognition of the beginning of licensed ministry. We urge Local Churches and Associations to consider creating and celebrating services for such ministries.

<sup>2</sup> Prior to 1983, the same functions were fulfilled by “Commissioned *Workers*.” Their commissioning was setting-specific, that is, it was not transferable from one ministry setting to another.

the baptized; yet because these are 1) vocational, typically receiving remuneration; and 2) church-related, carried out in and on behalf of a setting of the Church, it is appropriate to authorize them.

Like ordained and licensed ministries, commissioned ministry involves *process, rite and accountability*. Individuals who feel they are called to a particular task of ministry first engage in a process of discernment and preparation, in prayerful conversation with others. A service of commissioning is the Church's formal authorization, specifically of the person's gifts for a particular ministry function, and more generally of the person's Christian faith, character, and knowledge. Once installed, individuals maintain a relationship of covenantal accountability with the United Church of Christ.

## **STATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN CONVICTION**

The 25<sup>th</sup> General Synod of the United Church of Christ affirms that our baptism calls us all to minister in Christ's name. Within the church, some are called to particular leadership roles in order to "equip the saints for the work of ministry" (Ephesians 4:12, NRSV).

The 25<sup>th</sup> General Synod affirms the current forms of authorized ministry: ordained, licensed, and commissioned. We believe that Christ's Church needs well-prepared and faithful servants to engage in God's mission.

The 25<sup>th</sup> General Synod believes that the United Church of Christ, along with the whole Christian church and every individual Christian, is called into God's mission in the world. We believe that in this mission, uniquely ours in Jesus Christ, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit. We believe that God's mission requires all the gifts and graces given by God to its members and to the church itself. We believe that the church requires faithful and effective leadership in order to respond to Jesus' call. We believe that each generation must be ready to change its practices of church life in response to the Spirit's call for each generation.

The 25<sup>th</sup> General Synod celebrates and gives thanks for the gifts of God and the call of Christ to the United Church of Christ and its members. Those gifts include a diversity of faith communities, a resolution to welcome fully all of God's children, a rich and diverse heritage, countless faithful leaders, and openness to Christ's call to faithfully witness to God's love in ways appropriate for new times and situations.

The 25<sup>th</sup> General Synod invites all in the United Church of Christ to join in repentance of those actions and practices which have prevented the leadership of some of its members from being effectively recognized, encouraged and authorized. As repentance requires change, we pledge ourselves and invite others to join in developing new patterns of calling forth leaders, of equipping them for service, and of authorizing and supporting their ministries on behalf of the United Church of Christ.

The 25<sup>th</sup> General Synod recognizes that in a church with many diversities, there must also be many patterns of leadership and, therefore, of discernment of call, preparation, authorization, and continuing covenantal relationships. At the same time, we affirm that we are called to be one church and, therefore, we will continue to develop common

understandings of ministry and leadership and live together into faithfulness by the power of God's Spirit.

Therefore, the 25<sup>th</sup> General Synod commits itself and calls upon all members and settings of the United Church of Christ to:

- Listen for God's call to mission and respond in faith;
- Participate actively in the discernment of call of particular persons to become authorized ministers of the church;
- Participate actively with called persons in discerning the appropriate ministerial vocation;
- Develop, support and engage in multiple patterns of preparation for authorized ministers, recognizing that preparation must be appropriate for the individual, the particular faith community, the United Church of Christ, and the ministry for which authorization is requested;
- Enter and live in continuing covenantal relationship with those authorized for ministry on behalf of the United Church of Christ, honoring and supporting all - commissioned, ordained, and licensed;
- Expect and encourage all authorized ministers to be lifelong learners, accountable to one another and the church for their learning and their ministry;
- Repent of all that has prevented us from faithfulness in the past, while continuing to give thanks for those whose leadership has brought us to this time and those who beckon us forward.

## **Proposals for Action**

Whereas the 25<sup>th</sup> General Synod, has adopted the Statement of Christian Conviction from the Pronouncement on Ministry Issues; the 25<sup>th</sup> General Synod calls upon:

### **I. Associations and Conferences to:**

- A. Make available paths of preparation for ordained ministry which are appropriate to the needs and possibilities of the church and community, including:
- a. Seminary education ("four/three")
  - b. Regional theological formation programs
  - c. Mentoring;

**NOTE: Each path of preparation requires a minimum of seven years of preparation. Life experience will be a consideration.**

- B. Engage with currently licensed ministers and their local churches in a process of discernment to determine:
- a. If the minister is called and prepared currently for ordination  
(if so, proceed to ordain those persons)  
or
  - b. If the minister is ready to enter a period of preparation toward ordination  
or
  - c. If the minister is called and gifted to remain and faithfully serve as a licensed minister.
- C. Require that all seeking standing in the UCC, whether through authorization for ministry, Privilege of Call, or Partner Standing, are knowledgeable about UCC history polity and practice and are committed to upholding its beliefs

(as articulated in the Constitution and Bylaws), common practices, and covenantal relationships;

- D. Discern with individuals, their Local Churches and their particular communities:
  - a. Whether or not the person is called to authorized ministry and
  - b. The appropriate path of preparation for that individual and that ministry;

**In addition, Conferences and Associations are called upon to:**

- c. Adapt their procedures of discernment and decision-making by including members of the candidate's own community in the decision-making processes, taking the time and effort to educate themselves concerning the community's traditions and needs, and acknowledging the validity of the community's discernment when a candidate is a member of a racial/ethnic community which is not represented in significant numbers (50% or more) among the members of the Committee on the Ministry;
  - d. Adapt their procedures of discernment and decision-making when a candidate is disabled so as to honor that person's gifts and needs, taking the time and effort to educate themselves appropriately and including other individuals with disabilities in the processes;
- E. Consider licensing individuals for periods of more than one year after they have served an initial seven years in one setting;
- F. Provide and engage in active, accountable covenant relationships with all authorized ministers:
  - a. By encouraging an attitude and posture of lifelong learning;
  - b. By requiring continuing education for all authorized ministers of the United Church of Christ;
  - c. By maintaining accountability for retired clergy.

**II. The Parish Life and Leadership Ministry Team of Local Church Ministries to:**

- A. Base the next revision of the Manual on Ministry on the theological understandings and procedural recommendations affirmed in this Pronouncement;
- B. Develop programs to train mentors in partnership with seminaries, conferences, and councils;
- C. Develop guidelines for Committees on Ministry to use in discerning:
  - a. The candidate's knowledge of and commitment to the United Church of Christ;
  - b. An individual's call to authorized ministry;
  - c. An appropriate path of preparation;
  - d. When the candidate is ready to be commissioned, ordained, or licensed;
- D. Provide consultation and training to Committees on the Ministry as they seek to determine the appropriate path of preparation for each candidate seeking authorization for ministry;
- E. Maintain and enhance the network for education and training for those who teach UCC history and polity in order to strengthen UCC identity in candidates for authorized ministry;
- F. Develop guidelines for and descriptions of theological training programs for licensed and ordained ministry;

- G. Consult with our ecumenical partner churches:
  - a. To discern ways we can work together to prepare faithful and effective leaders;
  - b. When our requirements for authorized ministry will create differences that affect their recognition of our authorization.
  
- III. **The Worship and Education Ministry Team of Local Church Ministries to:**
  - A. Revise and develop liturgies of authorization, including recognition of licensed ministry, in keeping with the theological understandings and affirmations of this Pronouncement.
  
- IV. **The Council for Racial/Ethnic Ministries, the Council for American Indian Ministry, the Council for Hispanic Ministries, the Ministers for Racial, Social, and Economic Justice, the Pacific Islander and Asian American Ministries, the UCC Coalition for Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Concerns, the UCC Disabilities Ministries, and United Black Christians to:**
  - A. Become resources and participants with Conferences and Associations in the discernment of call and appropriate paths of preparation.
  - B. Become consultants and participants with Parish Life and Leadership in the development of resources for Committees on the Ministry.
  - C. Where appropriate, participate in the development of regional programs of ministerial formation.
  - D. Serve as a resource to seminaries.
  
- V. **The Seminaries of the United Church of Christ to:**
  - A. Continue to engage with the Council for Theological Education and other settings of the church to articulate theological understandings of ministry;
  - B. Join in partnership with other settings of the church in developing and providing programs of preparation and continuing education for all authorized ministries,
  - C. Work in partnership with one another to develop expanded distance learning opportunities;
  - D. Provide resources where appropriate to non-seminary paths of preparation.
  - E. In partnership with Parish Life and Leadership, develop a training program for mentors.
  
- VI. **Local Churches of the United Church of Christ to:**
  - A. Strengthen their primary responsibility for nurturing and calling forth persons to the authorized ministries of the church;
  - B. Encourage and provide time and financial support for all authorized ministers to engage in continuing education;
  - C. Include in the preparation of all persons for membership, significant attention to the history, theology, polity, and covenantal relationships of the United Church of Christ;
  - D. Encourage and participate with the Committees on the Ministry in the process of discernment and preparation of candidates for authorized ministry.
  
- VII. **All settings of the church to:**
  - A. Recognize and articulate that in baptism all are called to ministry in God's mission;

- B. Join in inviting candidates with perceived gifts to consider authorized ministry in the UCC;
- C. Require those persons preparing for authorized ministry to participate in UCC gatherings in associations, conferences, and, where possible, national gatherings and meetings;

VIII **General Synod to:**

- A. Recommend the creation of line items in the appropriate budgets of the Covenanted Ministries for a period of six years to enable implementation and evaluation of these Proposals for Action. Funding subject to availability.