

Committee on Church and Ministry: Section A Report

April 17, 2021

Section A of the Committee has the responsibility of discerning with those considering ordained ministry or serving as a minister in the United Church of Christ as well as discerning with local churches considering covenanting with (becoming a local church in) the United Church of Christ.

We are currently working with two “MIDs”, and exploring covenanting with one church. We generally meet via ZOOM on a monthly basis.

According to our Eastern Association Bylaws, “Section A shall be responsible for persons and churches seeking initial standing in the Association. This shall include the nurture, support, and examination of Candidates/Students in Care, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) partners seeking Dual Standing, Privilege of Call, commissioning or licensing, ordinations, and scholarships. The Section shall be empowered to take action on behalf of the Association on matters dealing with ministerial standing.”

It is a great responsibility, a wonderful opportunity, and a privilege to work with “Members in Discernment” and “Churches in Discernment”, as we together explore all that is involved in the exciting opportunities inherent in the authorization of ministers for and on behalf of the UCC, and the welcoming of churches into the association.

In order to truly fulfill this mission – over the last year, Section A has spent considerable time on orientation and training in the “new” Manual on Ministry, and in reviewing the current Manual on Church, as well as becoming familiar with and utilizing additional tools and resources available through MESA (the *Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization team* of the UCC). These tools include the publication, “Journaling the Journey”, and the revised publication, “The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ”.

These are used in discernment, professional assessment, or the development of a Member in Discernment Portfolio, and in the formation and preparation of a candidate for an Ecclesiastical Council.

Those persons interested in pursuing a path to authorized ministry will follow many steps in that path.

A general example would be:

1. Be a member of a UCC congregation
2. Consult with the local Pastor
3. The local congregation forms a discernment committee. (we recommend that the discernment committee utilize some of the tools available through UCC resources, such as Journaling the Journey, and The Marks, and that the local church have at least a reference copy of the Manual on Ministry available.
4. After a vote of the governing body of the local church, a letter of recommendation from the governing body is sent to the Committee to request the member be received as a Member in Discernment.
5. The potential MID meets with Section A, with a representative of their local church, at which time we explore their reasons for wanting to pursue the path to authorized ministry, and discuss the specifics and requirements. This includes a “Spiritual Journey Statement” from the candidate.
6. If it is determined that they are ready to begin the MID process, we appoint a “mentor” from Section A to with and collaborate with them on a formation and Discernment plan.
7. There are a number of requirements, including (but not limited to) Educational records (transcripts, etc.); Spiritual Journey Statement; Call to the UCC Statement; Three Written references of support; Background checks; Psychological Assessments; Completion of UCC History and Polity course, Boundary training; Anti-racism training; Clinical Pastoral Education; completion of an “ordination Paper”; Marks Portfolio; Call agreement; a drafted UCC Ministerial Profile, and Ecclesiastical Council.
8. We have “checklists” which we use to maintain a record of the candidate’s progress. These were developed as the new Manual on Ministry was released, and have been very helpful.
9. A note – there are some different “categories” of potential Authorized Ministers – Each is unique, and we explore the most appropriate approach with each candidate
 - a. Ordained Ministerial Partner
 - b. Privilege of Call
 - c. Member in Discernment
 - d. Dual Standing

10. Another note – while most candidates follow a traditional path, including Seminary education and an M.Div from an accredited institution, we do have some “alternative path” candidates. (I know – I am one of those!) Alternative path candidate must still demonstrate the theological education and grounding expected of all candidates, and fulfill the Marks .

The Member in Discernment process involves interdependent and covenantal relationships, in support of the member as well as the Committee on Ministry making decisions on behalf of the United Church of Christ. I am including in this report a graphic – a sort of Venn diagram from the Manual on Ministry, which may help provide an understanding of the many components involved:



Inquiries are welcome at any time – we are happy (and excited) to help potential new ministry candidates for our association!

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Dr. Sylvia Lee Mann. Chair.