

# ***Northeast Association Guidelines for the Discernment & Formation Process***

Revised: February 2017

## ***INTRODUCTION***

This document outlines the process and the responsibilities of a person seeking authorization for ministry in the Northeast Association (NEA) of the United Church of Christ (UCC); the local NEA church (also referred to as the “sponsoring church”) where the candidate for authorized ministry (hereafter referred to as “the candidate”) is a member; the pastor of that church; and the Committee on Formation (COF) of NEA. This document will also explain the roles of other people and organizations that contribute to the process of discerning whether or not a person is called, qualified and prepared to be ordained in the NEA on behalf of the entire UCC. This process is consistent with guidelines found in the Manual on Ministry, published by Ministry Excellence Support and Authorization (MESA), and available on the national UCC website at <http://www.ucc.org/ministers/manual>. Sections 1, 2, and 3 are pertinent to this process.

## ***DEFINITION***

Since General Synod 2005, the term “Discernment & Formation” is used to describe the period of preparation, assessment and discernment that precedes a decision by an Association to permit a person to seek an Ordainable call in the United Church of Christ. The Committee on Formation of the NEA acts on behalf of the entire UCC and is called to counsel, evaluate and discern each candidate’s call, gifts and preparation for ordained ministry within the UCC. The local NEA church where the candidate is a member sponsors the candidate through the process, and is responsible for providing nurture and support, opportunities to grow in the Marks of Readiness and candid feedback. Many other entities contribute to ministerial formation. Becoming familiar with and following the NEA requirements is the responsibility of the candidate seeking ordination. Additionally, it is the candidate’s responsibility to convey expectations to others who contribute on their behalf throughout the process. The COF greatly appreciates the roles each play in the discernment decision the COF makes on behalf of the entire UCC.

## ***GENERAL TIME LINE AND OVERVIEW OF REQUIREMENTS***

The Committee on Formation accepts people into the Discernment & Formation Process from many faith backgrounds. It feels deep experience with, understanding of and love for the UCC is crucial in people who would lead its local churches. Therefore, the COF will be especially attentive to the depth and breadth of each applicant’s experience of church life and their discernment and decision-making process if they are coming from another or no faith tradition. Plans to gain leadership experience in the UCC should be formulated as soon as a call to authorized ministry is perceived.

We estimate this process will take three years to complete. In some circumstances, people with significant ministerial, seminary and life experiences and the ability to demonstrate Ministerial Readiness may move more quickly through the process. You must be an active member of an NEA church for one year before being recommended by that local church to the COF. You must remain an active member of this sponsoring church for the entire time you are in the process. The NEA recommends that candidates prepare to be received into the Discernment & Formation Process during their first year in seminary. Some candidates may seek to begin this process even before their seminary education begins. Candidates who move to the NEA and seek to be admitted into the process here are expected to develop a Marks of Readiness Roadmap

with the pastor of their new local church and to take steps toward preparation for ordination that conform with these guidelines in advance of completing the required one year of membership in an NEA church.

To be recommended to an Ecclesiastical Council, a candidate must have completed the preparation steps outlined below in Phase III and Phase IV, including the:

- M. Div degree from an Association of Theological Schools (ATS) accredited seminary;
- UCC polity course, paper, and subsequent meeting with sponsoring church and Committee Advisor (CA);
- one year of Field Ed in a UCC church
- one unit of CPE;
- theology paper and interview;
- worship leadership and preaching demonstration and reflection; and
- Marks of Readiness Demonstration.

The sequence, general outline and details of these requirements are described below and in the appendices of this document.

***NOTE: A candidate for authorized ministry with the NEA may not circulate a UCC Ministerial Profile until they have had a successful Ecclesiastical Council.***

### ***PHASE I: INITIAL DISCERNMENT***

When you are considering whether you are called to ordained ministry in the UCC, you will discuss your sense of calling with the pastor of the local NEA church where you are a member. The pastor will discuss your possible candidacy with the Diaconate or other appropriate body within your local church. (Henceforth, this document will refer to the “sponsoring church committee”, acknowledging local church variances in how this committee is titled and constituted.) No subsequent step may be taken unless both your local church pastor and the sponsoring church committee agree to consider your potential candidacy for ordination in the UCC.

### ***PHASE II: INITIAL DISCERNMENT & FORMATION PROCESS***

#### ***PHASE IIA: PRELIMINARY QUALIFICATION BY THE SPONSORING CHURCH***

- A. The Pastor notifies the COF that a member of the local church is considering applying to the Discernment & Formation Process, and requests a copy of the **Guidelines for the Discernment & Formation Process**. This may be done through the Northeast Association office: (781) 369-1396 or [MBA-NE@macucc.org](mailto:MBA-NE@macucc.org)
- B. The pastor of your local church will arrange for the Associate Conference Minister to meet with them, the sponsoring church support committee and you to discuss the process, the responsibilities of the sponsoring church, and the roles and responsibilities of other entities helping the COF to make its decision about this request for candidacy in the NEA. If the person is accepted as a candidate, the sponsoring church committee will continue in relationship with the candidate throughout the process. If agreed upon between the candidate and the pastor, the local church pastor may serve as the Ministerial Advisor (MA), or they may request that another clergy advisor be appointed by the COF, or the COF may choose to assign a clergy advisor. Both the sponsoring church committee and the MA play key roles in the process. Along with seminary faculty, field ed and CPE supervisors and others, they are partners assisting the candidate to develop the gifts and experiences that support the COF’s discernment process throughout the Discernment & Formation period.
- C. A meeting is scheduled for you to meet with the pastor and sponsoring church committee. The purpose of the meeting is to review your request to be received into the Discernment & Formation Process of the NEA, to determine if this sponsoring church committee preliminarily affirms your emerging sense of call to authorized ministry in the UCC, and to ascertain whether it is willing to recommend that you be received as a candidate in the NEA. This meeting also contains a discussion of the covenantal responsibilities of this church, the pastor and the candidate throughout the process for regular communication, opportunities for growth in Marks of Readiness and feedback.
- D. In preparation for your meeting with the sponsoring church committee, you provide them with the following material two weeks in advance of your meeting:
  1. A Spiritual Journey & Call Paper, approximately five pages, double-spaced (*see Appendix 1 for details*).
  2. All academic transcripts from undergraduate and graduate schools, including seminary. A Bachelor’s degree is required, or at least a plan and timeline for the Bachelor’s degree;
  3. Current educational plans;

4. Professional resume: state (with dates) work, education, civic, church and other pertinent experience. Be sure to explain gaps.

E. You meet with the sponsoring church committee and pastor. The following issues are explored:

1. Your history with the UCC and this local church. How have your experiences contributed to your sense of call? How have these experiences given evidence that you have gifts and maturity necessary for ordained ministry, gifts distinct from those of committed lay leaders?
2. To what extent have you gained experience in each of the Marks of Readiness and what opportunities for further growth might take place in this local church?  
*We ask that the MA, the sponsoring church committee and the applicant specifically discuss how the applicant might gain experience in leadership in administration of the sacraments of Holy Communion and Baptism, as well as pastoral leadership for weddings, funerals and memorial services, liturgical holidays, etc. We recognize especially that presiding at Holy Communion prior to ordination is governed by local church practices, and that Baptisms involve seeking the agreement of participants and / or parents. Nonetheless, we regard the local church where the candidate has membership as one of the primary formation sites for ministry, and believe that thorough preparation in leadership of the rites and sacraments of our church is essential for those who would lead our local churches.*
3. Your understanding of ordained ministry. What is your view of the role of ordained ministry, of the church's expectations of its ministers, and of the variety of tasks entailed in ordained ministry? How do you understand authorized ministry within the UCC?
4. The requirements and procedures for the preparation for ordination, including the roles played by the Ministerial Advisor and the committee of the sponsoring church.

The sponsoring church committee and pastor then decide whether or not to recommend you to be received into the Discernment & Formation Process of the NEA. If the decision is affirmative, the following action shall be taken:

<p><b>VOTED:</b> That our pastor communicate to the Committee on Formation of the Northeast Association the desire of the _____ Church that one of its members, (name) _____ be examined and, if found acceptable, be received as a candidate for authorized ministry in the UCC.</p>
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If the pastor and sponsoring church committee cannot affirm their support of your request to be a candidate for authorized ministry, they will discuss their reasons with you and will work with you to determine subsequent steps to support your vocational discernment process.

- F. If the vote is affirmative, the chair of sponsoring church committee and / or the pastor sends a letter to the COF asking that you be received as a candidate for authorized ministry. This letter shall incorporate the following:
1. The record of the above vote;
  2. Verification of your membership in the sponsoring church;
  3. Length of time you have been a member of the UCC, including the sponsoring church (minimum one year), and other UCC congregations, if applicable;
  4. A description of the process used by the church to evaluate you and recommend you to the Association;

5. A statement regarding how the church and pastor will continue to relate to and support you, including financial support and opportunities to develop ministerial readiness and experience leading rites and sacraments of the church;
6. The name, address, phone and email of the person chairing the sponsoring church committee.

This material must be in the NEA office one month ahead of a scheduled interview with the COF.

**G. Concurrently, you must make arrangements to participate in the Pastoral Formation Program.**

This is a participative process of ministerial formation that strengthens your personal insights and helps to prepare you for the challenges and personal growth that every healthy pastor experiences in ministry. Before your Initial Interview with the COF, you must complete the psychological testing and initial interview along with a follow-up appointment to review the test findings. To do so,

1. Submit a completed application for the Pastoral Formation Program. Please plan to get your paperwork in early enough so that your testing can be scheduled at least seven weeks prior to your meeting date with the COF. See Appendix 2 for more information. Your application including completed essay questions, a signed copy of the Authorization and Release Form, and resume (if applicable) should be sent via email to the NEA office ([MBA-NE@macucc.org](mailto:MBA-NE@macucc.org)), with copies to The Rev. Dr. Cal Genzel, Supervisor, PFP ([crg@pcs-nh.org](mailto:crg@pcs-nh.org)), and Katherine Mills Myers, M.S. ED. ([millsmyers@comcast.net](mailto:millsmyers@comcast.net)).
2. After your paperwork has been received by the PFP Administrator you will be contacted by Katherine Mills Myers, M.S. ED., Pastoral Formation Program Psychometrician, to complete psychological testing and an initial interview.
3. After completing the testing and interview with Ms. Myers, you will schedule a follow-up appointment with her to review the test findings. At this meeting Ms. Myers will review the Psychological Report with you and you will be given a copy of the report. Copies of the Psychological Report will be mailed to the NEA office and then to the COF chairs following this second appointment.
4. After being received into the NEA Discernment and Formation Process, you will be assigned a Pastoral Formation Guide (PFG). You will make 6-8 appointments with this person at your mutual convenience to complete the Pastoral Formation Program. Readings and reflection papers, as well as other assignments, will be required. The program is conducted over the course of 8-9 months, and must be completed within one year of being taken into the Discernment and Formation Process. Your Ministerial Advisor and Committee Advisor will participate in this process with you. Your PFG will be in contact with the advisors during the course of the Program, and a meeting mid-way through the program will be scheduled with your COF Advisor, you, and your Guide.

Your Psychological Report, application essays, and the final evaluation completed and reviewed with your PFG, will be a part of your NEA Discernment and Formation records.

The cost of this program is \$3,000 split equally among you, your local church, and the Association. Please be prepared to present your \$1,000 check at the time of your testing. Please note that this fee is non-refundable.

- H. Following the sponsoring church committee's recommendation to the COF that it receive you into the NEA Discernment & Formation Process, you and your local church pastor will meet to discuss and come to agreement on your current abilities and experience in each of the Marks of Readiness. This preliminary Marks of Readiness Roadmap is part of your application package to the COF, and it is your responsibility to update and distribute it regularly throughout the time you are in the

process. Failure to do so is one reason for dismissal from the process. *The Marks of Readiness Roadmap is Appendix 3.*

## **PHASE IIB: INITIAL INTERVIEW**

### **A. PREPARATION FOR THE INITIAL INTERVIEW WITH THE COMMITTEE ON FORMATION**

1. You will consult with the NEA office (781) 369-1396 to arrange for an Initial Interview with the COF. The NEA office will send you electronic versions of three items: The Discernment & Formation Guidelines, the Pastoral Formation Program Guidelines, and the Background Self Disclosure form (*Appendix 4*). *Please fill out, sign, and return the Background Self Disclosure form to the NEA office as soon as possible. At this point in time, the NEA office will also conduct a routine inquiry with the National Sex Offender Registry Database.*
2. You must be accompanied to the Initial Interview by a pastor of the sponsoring church who may serve as your Ministerial Advisor, and by the chair of the sponsoring church committee assuming responsibility for oversight and nurture within your local church. It is your responsibility to communicate with these people well in advance to ensure their availability for this appointment. In multi-staff churches, discuss who among the pastoral team may be best suited to the Ministerial Advisor responsibility.
3. In preparation for this interview, you will arrange for electronic elements and a complete hard copy of all elements of the applicant package to be sent to the NEA office. This package must be received *one month* in advance of your Initial Interview.
  - a. The applicant package (sent both electronically and via paper mail to the NEA office) includes: a current resume; your Spiritual Journey and Call paper, revised incorporating the sponsoring church committee's and MA's recommendations; the preliminary Marks of Readiness Roadmap created with your Ministerial Advisor. The NEA office will forward these materials along *electronically* to the Committee members two weeks prior to your initial meeting.
  - b. Please contact the NEA office with the date of your psychological assessment and the expected date of receipt of the psychological assessment report in the NEA office.
  - c. Four reference letters must also be received by the deadline date. The reference letters should come from
    - i. Your Pastor;
    - ii. a seminary professor;
    - iii. two people who have worked with you in the past two years.The COF is interested in a critical evaluation of your fitness for the ministry. References should describe their experiences of your capabilities in the ministerial proficiency areas. Specific instructions are on the reference form. Please note: these references should be mailed directly to the NEA by the person writing the reference. *The reference form is Appendix 5.*
  - d. Arrange for **all** undergraduate and graduate schools you have attended to send official transcripts directly to the NEA office.

## **B. THE INITIAL INTERVIEW**

The purpose of this interview is to determine whether or not to grant you candidate status in the NEA. Your Ministerial Advisor will be invited to meet with the COF as it plans the interview with you. Additionally, the Co-Chairs of the COF, your Ministerial Advisor and the ACM will have reviewed the psychological assessment and will appraise the COF of any concerns. During the interview you will be asked to respond to questions about the content of your Spiritual Journey and Call Paper, your resume, church and other life experiences, your current sense of call, your Roadmap and possibly the results of your psychological assessment.

*Note: You will have signed a release form for the Psychological Evaluation to be distributed to those mentioned above. In this way, the confidentiality of the evaluation is maintained. Should the COF deem it helpful, the report could be shared with the whole COF.*

You and the chair of your sponsoring church committee will be asked to leave the room as the COF deliberates and votes on whether to receive you into the Discernment & Formation Process. Your Ministerial Advisor will remain with the COF to observe its deliberations. Your MA will have no vote in the COF's decision at this meeting, or at subsequent meetings with the COF. You will be invited back into the committee meeting room to be informed of the COF's decision.

Recognizing that preparation for ordination is incomplete at this point, nonetheless the COF will be discerning in this Initial Interview and throughout the process, if you are accepted, the viability of your candidacy for authorized ministry in the UCC. Sometimes this means the COF will decide *not* to receive an applicant into the process. This is a difficult, but ultimately faithful and compassionate decision to make. It is in the best interest of all concerned that this process be stopped at the earliest possible stage, before seminary debt and other life choices constrain your future vocational possibilities. If the COF declines to accept your application, the pastor who accompanies you to this meeting will work with you to understand the reasons why this is so, and to explore other vocational options to fulfill your call to ministry.

When the decision of the COF is to grant Member in Discernment (MID) status, a Committee Advisor (CA), a member of the COF, will be appointed to work with you and your MA. The COF may have requirements or recommendations regarding how you proceed with Phase III, gaining additional experience in the Marks of Readiness areas, and it may have suggestions about the plans you described in your Marks of Readiness Roadmap. After this meeting, ask your Ministerial Advisor and Committee Advisor to help you understand these expectations.

*Note: MID status does not insure ordination/authorization.*

## **C. COMMUNICATION WITH THE COF FOLLOWING THE INITIAL INTERVIEW**

*It is your responsibility to establish and maintain contact with your Committee Advisor and your Ministerial Advisor, updating them on your progress meeting the Ministerial Proficiency areas throughout the Discernment & Formation period. You are required to be in contact with your Committee Advisor at least every six months. You must provide your CA, MA, the chair of your sponsoring church committee and the NEA office with an updated Marks of Readiness Roadmap every 6 months. To each section of the Roadmap, add information about how you did or did not follow your plan for proficiency development and what you believe your current proficiency level to be. Revise your plans for the next 6-month interval. Failure to comply with this is one of the grounds for dismissal from the process.*

### **PHASE III: MARKS OF READINESS DEVELOPMENT**

*The Marks of Readiness for Ordination, see Appendix 6.*

There are a variety of ways in which MID's prepare for local church leadership in the UCC. Some are well-established practices, for instance, the expectation that each candidate will have earned a Master of Divinity degree. Yet, there are skills, experience and wisdom to be gained in other settings, and these are important sources of information for the COF's and candidate's discernment process.

The COF wishes to emphasize again the important role the MID's Ministerial Advisor and sponsoring church committee play in the readiness development, skill assessment and call discernment process. This is made evident in prayer support, opportunities to stretch and grow in pastoral authority and leadership competence, financial support whenever possible, and candid and timely feedback to the MID. The COF hopes this clear articulation of expectations will pave the way for a full and rich formation process for the MID and the sponsoring church. The COF appreciates the local churches that accept the important role of sponsoring someone through the process, forming people who are called for leadership in the UCC.

The following elements of Phase III must be reflected on transcripts and in the MID's Marks of Readiness Roadmap. Again, some of these elements are familiar; in each case, the COF has made its expectations more explicit, so it is important to become familiar with these revised or new expectations.

#### **A. UCC Polity Course**

You will successfully complete a course in UCC polity at Andover Newton, Harvard Divinity School or another UCC or UCC-affiliated seminary. Acceptable equivalents are also the Summer Polity Courses in New Hampshire and Vermont and the course which precedes General Synod. Please share your final paper for said Polity Course with your Committee Advisor and Ministerial Advisor, and submit a graded copy to the NEA office for your COF file. However, regardless of your specific course requirements, as part of your NEA Discernment & Formation Process, you are required to write a paper reflecting on Polity, as detailed below.

This paper should be submitted to your Ministerial Advisor and to your sponsoring church committee after you complete your polity course and (if at all possible) no later than six months before your Phase IV meetings. Schedule a meeting of your Committee Advisor, your Ministerial Advisor, and your sponsoring church committee to review this paper. Your Committee Advisor will submit notes from this meeting to the COF. You may be asked questions regarding this paper at your Phase IV Theology meeting. *See Appendix 7 for more details on this Polity Paper.*

#### **B. Field Education Guidelines**

*Please see Appendix 8 for details. Please note: employment of 20 hours or more for a UCC entity triggers the 90 day window for entry into the UCC Health & Dental Insurance plans. See Appendix 9 for more information.*

#### **C. Clinical Pastoral Education Guidelines**

The MID's CPE learning agreement must be shared with the MA and CA as soon as it is developed, preferably before it is finalized. The final CPE evaluation must be sent to the MA, the CA, the NEA office and the sponsoring church committee.

#### **D. Wider Church Involvement**

The NEA wishes its MID's to be familiar with the various settings of the UCC, and to experience the covenantal dimensions that define each setting of the church. It strongly recommends that you make opportunities to participate in Association meetings and the Massachusetts Conference of the UCC Annual

Meeting. Additionally, since we live in an area that generates frequent visits, workshops, worship leadership and presentations from members of the national staff, you are encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities for learning, networking and fellowship. Events like the East Coast Seminarian's Conference, Pastoral Excellence Program offerings, other Association, Conference, General Synod or regional activities of the UCC are worth your time. You will be asked to describe and write about your experiences and to wrestle with case studies that present dilemmas frequently faced across the synapses of our covenantal life together. Familiarity with the functions, services and resources offered by the UCC at the Association, Conference and national settings is essential.

***It is the MID's responsibility to know all of these expectations and to construct each element of their plan to develop the Marks of Readiness so they meet the COF's guidelines. Additionally, it is the MID's responsibility to distribute the Marks of Readiness Roadmap and other documents to all persons indicated in these guidelines on a timely basis.***

#### **PHASE IV: EVALUATION OF MARKS OF READINESS**

##### **PREPARING FOR PHASE IV:**

When the sponsoring church committee, the Ministerial Advisor and Committee Advisor concur with the MID, based on examination and documentation, that the MID's development of the Marks of Readiness is sufficiently deep and other elements of the Discernment & Formation Process are complete, they will help the MID prepare to demonstrate this readiness to the COF. Phase IV starts with the local church committee examining your academic record, fulfillment of the COF requirements in Phase III, and the Marks of Readiness. It also reads your paper for interview IVa: Spiritual Journey and Call; Why UCC, and Theology. It then considers the following motion:

**VOTED:** That the sponsoring committee (or appropriate name) of name of church convey to the NEA Committee on Formation its decision, (with supporting reasons), to recommend name of candidate for ordination, and request that the Committee on Formation examine them as to fitness in character and training to be ordained to the Christian ministry. Further, if the examination be found satisfactory, it requests that the Association be summoned to meet as an ecclesiastical council to review the committee's findings, and to hear the MID's statement of faith, knowledge and experience. Upon satisfactory completion of an ecclesiastical council, it requests that the Northeast Association allow this MID to search for a Call within the UCC Search and Call process leading to ordination by the Association on behalf of the UCC if the call they receive is deemed ordainable by the NEA Committee on Formation.

If the sponsoring church committee vote is not positive, your Ministerial Advisor and the sponsoring church committee chair will discuss with you what steps might be taken for the sponsoring church to re-consider your readiness to move to Phase IV or to continue in the process.

Anticipating a positive action by the sponsoring church committee, you may contact the NEA office to schedule interview IVa. A tentative schedule of interviews IVb and IVc may also be developed at this time. However, there must be at least two months between each of these three interviews; i.e. they could happen in January, March and May, but not in three consecutive months. Interview IVa must be completed successfully in order to proceed with the subsequent steps. Interviews IVb and IVc may be done in either order. The COF strongly recommends that you plan to complete Interviews IVa, IVb and IVc within the 12-month period starting in May and ending the following April. This will be

advantageous to you as it coincides with COF members' terms of service, and will help assure that you have the benefit of COF consistency through these elements of the process.

In all of the Phase IV interviews, your MA is expected to be in attendance. Discuss with your CA who, if anyone might also accompany you to these interviews, especially Interview IVc, the Marks of Readiness Assessment. The chair of the sponsoring church committee is generally the person most appropriate to accompany you to interview IVa.

The following documents must be sent to the NEA office one month in advance of interview IVa:

1. A copy of the action of your sponsoring church committee as outlined above. This is a letter from your Ministerial Advisor and the chair person of the committee written on church stationary;
2. A complete copy of your seminary transcript showing Field Ed, a polity course and CPE. If you are not finished with the M. Div degree, please outline how the requirements that remain will be fulfilled within the next year;
3. Letters of reference from your CA, Field Ed Supervisor and MA assessing participation in the process and factors that indicate suitability and readiness for ordination. *The outline for these letters is found in Appendix 10.* These letters are confidential, and will be sent directly to the NEA office. The writer(s) may provide you with a copy if they wish;
4. An updated Marks of Readiness Roadmap;
5. A copy of the paper you wrote to fulfill the polity requirement;
6. A copy of your Field Education Evaluation;
7. Your Spiritual Journey & Call paper that summarizes your faith journey and call, and demonstrates your theological literacy, articulation and depth, as well as your understanding of and call to authorized ministry in the UCC. The paper should be revised following discussions with your sponsoring church committee and your advisors. Your revised paper should be both emailed and mailed to the NEA office. *See Appendix 11 for more information about this paper.*
8. An updated resume;
9. A copy of your CPE supervisor's evaluation.

#### ***INTERVIEW IVA: RE-INTRODUCTION TO THE COF AND WORSHIP LEADERSHIP AND PREACHING INTERVIEW***

Our local churches put a priority on a pastoral leader's ability to conduct worship and to preach. The COF would like to have direct experience of your capabilities in these critical functions. Therefore, this interview focuses on experiencing your worship leadership and then discussing this experience with you. You need to prepare a short worship service (18-20 minutes total) for the Committee on Formation, providing worship materials, if necessary, to aid the COF's participation. Include in this service a sermon 10-12 minutes in length. At the conclusion of the service, the COF will share their reactions and discuss with you the choices you made preparing for and leading this worship service, as well as your experiences leading other worship services.

Within 10 days after this meeting, you must send an electronic copy of your sermon and worship materials, if any, to the NEA office, along with a 2-page reflection paper on the experience of preparation, delivery and receiving the COF's feedback. If you prefer to preach extemporaneously, please bring a tape recorder to this interview so you will be able to prepare a transcript of your sermon from the recording. (It isn't necessary to transcribe the whole worship service.) These documents will be distributed to all COF members, allowing each to understand your post-sermon reflection process.

#### ***INTERVIEW IVB: THEOLOGY INTERVIEW***

The COF will prepare for its conversation with you by first meeting separately with your Ministerial Advisor. In that meeting, it will receive a recap of your psychological assessment report from a Co-Chair of the COF or the ACM, input from your Ministerial Advisor and Committee Advisor, review notes from your Initial Interview and prioritize topics it wishes to explore with you.

It is highly likely that there will have been turnover on the COF since you were received into the process. Therefore the committee will want to spend some time getting to know you and your spiritual journey.

The COF will discuss your theology paper and other topics of interest to the COF. The chair of your sponsoring church committee will also be offered the opportunity to share briefly how they have experienced your theological grounding in ministry. Following that, you and your support committee chairperson will be asked to wait while the COF and your Ministerial Advisor deliberate; you will then be recalled and the COF's discernment will be discussed with you. In this, as in all meetings with the COF, there may be expectations for additional development or demonstration of readiness. Your MA and CA will help you understand the COF's intent as you construct a plan to meet these expectations

#### ***INTERVIEW IVC: MARKS OF READINESS DEMONSTRATION INTERVIEW***

The COF's attention in this interview will turn to the other five Marks of Readiness areas: Theological, Spiritual, Professional, Psychological and UCC Covenantal readiness. Discuss well in advance with your MA and CA who might be best able to attest to your capabilities in these areas. Make sure it is someone who can speak from personal experience and observation about your pastoral skills, authority and judgment applied in the real time exercise of ministry. The CA and MA may have specific guidance about the COF's interest in a particular area, or may guide you to choose someone with more general knowledge of your readiness levels.

Again, to plan for this assessment the COF will meet in closed session with your Ministerial Advisor reviewing your Marks of Readiness Roadmap and earlier papers and documents associated with the process. When you and the person who accompanies you join the committee, you will be asked to describe your approach to various situations and dilemmas found in local church leadership. Some of these may be drawn from what you have written or preached about; others will spring from brief case situations that will be presented to you. *Appendix 12 contains some cases that resemble the sort of situations to which you will be asked to respond.*

#### ***CONCLUDING PHASE IV: THE COF'S DISCERNMENT***

Following completion of interviews IV a, b and c, the COF will synthesize and discuss all of the information, impressions and facts about your call to ordained ministry in the UCC and your preparation to fulfill these responsibilities. Sometimes, this discernment decision will come easily: you clearly are or are not ready to proceed to an Ecclesiastical Council; the COF believes you can or cannot do additional things to demonstrate readiness, pastoral judgment, or other key attributes essential for pastoral leadership. Other times, this discernment process will be protracted and will involve more people, steps and, yes, perhaps additional papers and interviews.

***IT IS AT THIS POINT THE NEA COMMITTEE ON FORMATION WOULD LIKE TO RESTATE ITS DISCERNMENT AND DECISION MAKING ROLE. THE PARAGRAPHS THAT FOLLOW ARE ADAPTED FROM THE MANUAL ON MINISTRY, AND GUIDE THE COF'S DELIBERATIONS.***

## *Saying "YES" and Saying "NO"*

The task of the Committee on Formation is to discern appropriate gifts for ordained/authorized ministry in the UCC within MIDs who apply for and are received into the Discernment & Formation Process. As a MID proceeds through the process toward ordination, the COF continues its work of discernment regarding the development of their gifts (spiritual, intellectual, emotional, personal, interpersonal, theological). Finally the COF must decide if these gifts are developed to a point that the MID may be authorized to provide pastoral leadership in the Church.

In this act of discernment the COF uses a number of criteria to reach a decision, including: academic records, psychological assessment testing, papers submitted by the candidate, Clinical Pastoral Education and Field Education evaluations, personal interviews with the candidate, letters of reference, and last, but not least, the assessment of the sponsoring local NEA church.

The sponsoring church plays a crucial role throughout the entire process. The Committee on Formation anticipates that the sponsoring church will be a strong advocate for any candidate it presents to the Association. We hope it will also be a critical advocate working with the candidate throughout the process to build on their strengths and confront their weaknesses with corrective action. The Committee on Formation will also join the sponsoring church in this type of constructive, critical advocacy. In doing so, it will make one of the following decisions at each interview with a candidate:

- A. "Yes": The Committee approves and authorizes the MID to take the next steps in the ordination/authorization process.
- B. "Yes, but": The Committee approves and authorizes the MID to take the next steps toward ordination/authorization, subject to taking specific action in reference to reservations/concerns enumerated by the Committee.
- C. "No, but": The Committee does not authorize the MID to take the next step. However, the MID may remain in the process and return to the Committee at a later date with evidence that they have addressed the identified deficiencies.
- D. "No": Occasionally the Committee decides not to proceed further with a MID. This is not a decision that is made lightly or without considerable deliberation. But in cases where it is clear that the candidate does not appear to have the potential for ordained/authorized ministry, or is not authentic in their intentions, exhibits obvious immaturity or emotional problems, or fails to follow the expectations for MIDs, the Committee can express its caring for the MID and for the Church by removing the person from the process. As mentioned above, failure to comply with expectations for meetings with Committee Advisors and revisions to the Marks of Readiness Roadmap are grounds for potential removal from the Discernment & Formation Process. There are other reasons why this action might be taken, among them ethical difficulties, failure to complete the M. Div degree and problematic evaluations on the psychological assessment, Field Ed, or CPE requirements. This is not an exhaustive list. The COF's discernment will also include an assessment of the authenticity of the candidate's call and preparation for ordained ministry in the UCC.

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

**Voted:** That name, member of local church, be approved for ordination/authorization in the United Church of Christ pending successful completion of an Ecclesiastical Council and participation in the UCC Search and Call process that results in receipt of an ordainable call.

### **Continuing “MID” Status**

A MID who has been approved for ordination by an Ecclesiastical Council is still considered a “MID” of the Association until an ordainable call has been received and the ordination has taken place. The MID’s approval for ordination is reviewed and re-affirmed by the Committee on Formation each year. During this time, the MID has access to the support and counsel of the Committee on Formation, the Committee Advisor and the Ministerial Advisor. Every year, near the anniversary of the MID’s initial approval for ordination, the MID is required to send a letter to the Committee on Formation documenting their pastoral work during the past year, any search committee interviews, or other progress toward ordination. After review of the letter, the COF will communicate its decision about the continuation of “MID” status.

## ***PHASE V: ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCIL AND SEARCH AND CALL***

### ***PREPARING FOR AN ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCIL***

The general steps to prepare for an Ecclesiastical Council are:

1. Reserve the date on your local church and the NEA office calendars;
2. Work with your Ministerial Advisor and sponsoring church committee to ensure attendance of sufficient representatives from NEA churches to meet a quorum;
3. Solicit advice from your Ministerial Advisor and others about revisions to paper IVb;
4. Prepare to present paper IVb at your Ecclesiastical Council.

*The “Letter Missive”, a formal letter sent to churches in the NEA inviting them to send representation to an Ecclesiastical Council is found in Appendix 13.*

### ***PREPARING FOR SEARCH AND CALL:***

The Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ, through its Pastoral Excellence program and support of Our Churches Wider Mission has developed extensive programs and other support for people entering the UCC Search and Call process for the first time. The exact schedule of these programs varies from year to year. You are encouraged to start attending these sessions starting one year before you expect to enter the UCC Search and Call process. See the MACUCC web site, [www.macucc.org](http://www.macucc.org) for more information.

### ***MARKS OF AN ORDAINABLE CALL:***

*Please see Appendix 14.*

## ***PHASE VI: ORDINATION***

### ***PRE ORDINATION AGREEMENT***

There is a very narrow window of opportunity in which to enroll in UCC insurance and pension plans without onerous qualification requirements and the possibility of rejection. The MACUCC and NEA leadership believes that it is important to notify you of these important decisions and to document the fact that you have been provided with this information. *Please see Appendix 9 for more details.*

### ***GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION OF A SERVICE OF ORDINATION***

The order for the ordination service is found in the UCC Book of Worship. The Northeast Association follow this order, with freedom to adapt it as needed.

A date and time for the service may be reserved on the Association calendar in advance.

You should present an outline of your proposed ordination service to the NEA office, and indicate who will be participating in the leadership of the service. You should also indicate for what purpose the offering will be designated. The Association recommends that offerings be designated in whole or in part for the NEA Scholarship Fund.

Ordination is a service of the Association in cooperation with the ordinand and the sponsoring church. The ordinand and sponsoring church take the initiative in planning the service in consultation with the Associate Conference Minister and/or a representative of the Committee on Formation. An Association representative will preside over the ordination rite itself. Usually this is the Associate Conference Minister or the Moderator or their designee. You will select all other participants in the service.

Four problem areas need your attention:

**Clergy Triumphalism:** In a clear and explicit manner the service needs to affirm the ministry of all the baptized, lay and ordained. While the focus of the ordination rite itself is on the ordinand, the ministry of the whole church can be emphasized in a variety of places such as the sermon, litanies and prayers. The ordination rite may be preceded by the congregation reaffirming it's baptismal/confirmation vows.

**Length:** Ideally the service should not exceed 1 1/4 hours. This will take some discipline on your part, particularly if the order includes word and sacrament. If the service includes the Sacrament of Communion, optional aspects of the ordination rite, such as the "Charges" should be eliminated. Do not try to pack everything you know and believe into this one occasion. The liturgy will also flow more smoothly and expeditiously with fewer rather than many liturgists.

**Wordiness:** Our reformed heritage is a tradition of the Word, which does not necessarily imply many words. When there are several leaders for the liturgy, you need to emphasize verbal restraint to them. The service is enriched by ample music and other artistic expressions of faith.

**Prayers of the Church:** The prayer of ordination comes during the ordination rite itself and asks for God's blessings and gifts for the ordinand. The content of other prayers should be comparable to those in a regular Sunday worship service. They should not be prayers about or for the ordinand. More than one "ordination prayer" violates the integrity of the liturgy. You will need to call this to the attention of those whom you have asked to lead prayers.

Usually the ordination rite will follow the sermon or offering in the order of service used in your sponsoring church.

It is the practice of the NEA to use inclusive language in all Association gatherings for worship. The NEA COF encourages the use of inclusive language in all ordination worship services.

The following are attached to these guidelines: (1) a form to be completed and sent to the NEA office, (2) a sample service of the Word incorporating the Order for Ordination to Ministry, (3) a sample Service of Word and Sacrament incorporating the Order for Ordination to Ministry.

As you prepare your Service in consultation with your sponsoring church, feel free to call the NEA office, 21 Church St., Winchester, MA 01890, phone: (781) 369-1396, email: [MBA-NE@macucc.org](mailto:MBA-NE@macucc.org) for any additional help you may need.

## **Appendix 1: Spiritual Journey & Call Paper**

The Discernment & Formation Process begins at the local church with consideration of your spiritual journey and call. The guidelines below provide an outline of the paper that you will write to prepare you to meet with the local church committee. Should the process proceed from there, this paper will also be the basis for your initial meeting with the COF. As noted, there may be recommended revisions of the paper for your meeting with the COF as suggested by the MA and the sponsoring church committee.

Guidelines for your Spiritual Journey & Call Paper:

- General faith pilgrimage: Christian experience, insights and encounters that have shaped your faith through home, local church, education, community and other settings.
- Call to ministry: a theological statement reflecting on personal faith and life experience that leads you to believe you are called by God to ordained ministry. This should include, but not be limited to, reasons for seeking to be a candidate and your vocational plans, in so far as you currently understand them.
- An explanation of why you believe the UCC is the denomination in which you are called to authorized ministry.

## Appendix 2: Pastoral Formation Program Guidelines and Forms

The Pastoral Formation Program is administered by a group of specifically trained pastoral professionals functioning on behalf of the Committees on Ministry (NEA COF) . The purpose of the program is to provide insight and guidance to the COF regarding the personal strengths and challenges of candidates for authorized ministry that may impact the effective exercise of ministry on the part of the candidate. It is also meant to encourage insight awareness and psychological development for the benefit of the candidate and whatever future ministry the candidate pursues.

**The first phase of this process is the submission of a completed application for the Pastoral Formation Program.** Your application including completed essay questions, a signed copy of the Authorization and Release Form, and resume (if applicable), should be sent via email to the Northeast Association office ([MBA-NE@macucc.org](mailto:MBA-NE@macucc.org)), with copies to The Rev. Dr. Cal Genzel, Supervisor, PFP ([crg@pcs-nh.org](mailto:crg@pcs-nh.org)), and Katherine Mills Myers, M.S. ED. ([millsmyers@comcast.net](mailto:millsmyers@comcast.net)).

**Next, after your paperwork has been received by the PFP Administrator** you will be contacted by Katherine Mills Myers, M.S.ED, Pastoral Formation Program Psychometrician to complete psychological testing and an initial interview. In the event she is unavailable for testing, the Administrator will direct you to an alternate testing site. Please note that this Psychological Report must be received by the NEA office at least one month prior to your initial Discernment and Formation Process Interview with the COF. Therefore you should plan to get your paperwork in so that your testing can be scheduled at least seven weeks prior to your meeting date with the COF. Should your COF meeting date fall in Sep or Oct or early in the new calendar year, additional lead time for testing is necessary due to vacation and holidays.

Next steps include:

1. After completing the testing and interview with Ms. Myers, you will schedule a follow-up appointment with her to review the test findings. At this meeting Ms. Myers will review the Psychological Report with you and you will be given a copy of the report. Copies of the Psychological Report will be mailed to the Association COF following this second appointment.
2. After being received into the NEA Discernment and Formation process, you will be assigned a Pastoral Formation Guide (PFG). You will make 6-8 appointments with this person at your mutual convenience to complete the Pastoral Formation Program. Readings and reflection papers, as well as other assignments, will be required. The program is conducted over the course of 8-9 months, and must be completed within one year of being taken into the Discernment and Formation Process. Your Ministerial Advisor and Committee Advisor will participate in this process with you. Your PFG will be in contact with the advisors during the course of the Program, and a meeting mid-way through the program will be scheduled with your COF Advisor, you, and your Guide.
3. Your Psychological Report, application essays, and the final evaluation completed and reviewed with your PFG, will be a part of your Discernment and Formation records.

The cost of this program is \$3,000 split equally among you, your local church, and the Association. Please be prepared to present your \$1,000 check at the time of your testing.

*Please note that this fee is non-refundable.*

**AUTHORIZATION AND RELEASE**

Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I acknowledge that I participate in this Pastoral Formation Program to provide the Northeast Association of the United Church of Christ with insights into my fitness for ordained or otherwise authorized ministry on behalf of the United Church of Christ. I authorize the release of this evaluation to the Northeast Association, its staff, officers, committee members, attorneys, and consultants. I further authorize the Pastoral Formation Guide, Committee Advisor, Ministerial Advisor, and others with direct need to know, to be in conversation with the Rev. Dr. Cal Genzel and members of the Pastoral Formation Program to answer questions and provide further information related to my participation in this Pastoral Formation Program. I authorize the Northeast Association, its staff, or officers to share this evaluation with ecclesiastical officers of other Association or denominations, where I may apply for employment, standing, or authorized ministry status.

I release, indemnify, and agree to hold harmless Northeast Association, its staff, officers, committee members, attorneys, consultants and Pastoral Formation Program affiliates from any action or cause of action, arising from any action taken under the above authorization, or from any use of the evaluation and further information in reviewing my fitness for ordained ministry, or from the dissemination of the evaluation or further information to other persons.

I understand that any documents provided to the Northeast Association in accordance with the Authorization and Release shall become its sole property and may be retained by the Association, notwithstanding any subsequent withdrawal of my application for, or resignation from, authorized ministry status. This Authorization and Release may not be rescinded or modified, except with the express written agreement of the Northeast Association.

Executed as a sealed instrument.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**I have reviewed my Psychological Testing Report for the Pastoral Formation Program with Katherine Mills Myers, M.S.ED. on this date: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Signed: \_\_\_\_\_**

## **Application for the Pastoral Formation Program (PFP)**

*Please complete the following in approximately 8 double-spaced pages.*

Send your application, including responses to the questions below, a signed Authorization and Release form, and your resume (if applicable), to the NEA office at [MBA-NE@macucc.org](mailto:MBA-NE@macucc.org), with copies to both The Rev. Dr. Cal Genzel, Supervisor, PFP at [crg@pcs-nh.org](mailto:crg@pcs-nh.org) and Katherine Mills Myers, M.S. ED. at [millsmyers@comcast.net](mailto:millsmyers@comcast.net).

### **PERSONAL INFORMATION:**

- Full name
  - Date of birth
  - Full mailing address
  - Preferred telephone numbers
  - Email address
  - Name, address, telephone number of the UCC congregation in which you are, or expect to be sponsored by while in the discernment and formation process
  - Name, address (if different), telephone number and email address of your Ministerial Advisor
  - Please provide information regarding transportation – public only, or have access to auto
- PROVIDE AN OUTLINE OF YOUR CHURCH MEMBERSHIP, specifying tenure of membership in the UCC and in your current church, partnering with you in discernment and formation
  - DESCRIBE THE NATURE OF YOUR CHURCH INVOLVEMENT, including leadership roles past and present
    - OTHER WORK HISTORY; attach a resume if applicable
    - INDICATE ANY FIELD EDUCATION/SUPERVISED MINISTRY EXPERIENCES
    - RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:
      1. How do you understand the purpose of this program? What do you hope to gain by participating?
      2. Describe 2-3 life/ministry events which have significantly challenged you. How did you manage these difficult issues?
      3. Identify and describe the dominant authority figures in your life. What is their impact on you?
      4. Please share what nurtures and sustains you in your personal life and any ministry experiences to date.
      5. Briefly describe your history of developing and sustaining significant intimate relationships in your adult life. Discuss relationship challenges.
      6. What is the reaction of family members and friends to your decision to enter into pastoral ministry?
      7. To whom will you look for encouragement and support as you go through seminary and the discernment and formation process?
      8. What literature and or world events have been stimulating your thinking in recent months, and why?

## Appendix 3: Marks of Readiness Roadmap

Name

Ministerial Advisor

Date

For each of the following Marks of Readiness areas describe your experience and plans. Readiness means competency derived from training, practice and knowledge. You may write a brief paragraph, or list concisely experiences that have given you competency in an area. *For example: in the area of teaching it might be the competency of developing a lesson plan that meets the needs of adult learners; in worship leadership it might be the competency of designing a worship service that is cohesive.* Please describe succinctly what *particular competencies* need further development and how you plan to address them. *For example: in the area of pastoral care, it might be to learn how to make a pastoral visit in hospital setting which would be addressed through Clinical Pastoral Education. If you list courses you plan to take or other experiences you will seek, please indicate what competencies they will help to develop.*

*Under current Marks of Readiness it is not necessary to list every experience you have had in these areas. We are interested primarily in the skills that have been developed and the experiences that have primarily shaped your skills.*

1. THEOLOGICAL READINESS:

*Some ways in which this is demonstrated are seminary courses; adult bible study and book groups;*

*Description of readiness...*

*Plans for further development...*

2. SPIRITUAL READINESS:

*Please describe your personal prayer life and spiritual practices, retreats or other experiences that have bolstered your faith, occasions in which you have assisted others in examining their spiritual life and developing Christian devotional practices.*

*Description of current readiness...*

*Plans for further development...*

3. PROFESSIONAL READINESS (INCLUDING WORSHIP LEADERSHIP AND PREACHING, ADMINISTRATION, TEACHING, PASTORAL CARE):

*a. Worship Leadership and Preaching:*

*This might be demonstrated by participating in worship planning for liturgical seasons or special services; serving as liturgist or preacher; leading devotions in small groups;*

*Description of current readiness...*

*Plans for further development...*

*b. Leadership and Administration:*

*The NEA Committee on Formation is most interested in leadership activities and responsibilities that have taken place in your church life, although you may include other experiences. Describe being a prophetic leader, building teams, motivating volunteers, clarifying an organization's vision or mission and dealing with conflict.*

*Description of current readiness...*

*Plans for further development...*

*c. Pastoral Care and Counseling:*

*Describe experiences of giving and receiving pastoral care and counseling. How would you describe your style or model of pastoral care and counseling?*

*Description of current readiness...*

*Plans for further development...*

*d. Teaching:*

*Share an example or two of when you taught about the Christian faith. Describe the group, your approach or teaching design, and the impact or results of this program on you, participants and the local church or other setting where this teaching took place.*

*Description of current readiness...*

*Plans for further development...*

**4. UCC AND COVENANTAL CONNECTIONS (INCLUDING FAITH IN THE WORLD):**

*Describe your experiences of the UCC beyond your local church, and the distinctive markers of the UCC as you have experienced them. What about these have most enriched your faith life and current or future ministry? What failings, blind spots or limitations have you experienced, and what actions might you as a local church pastor take to compensate for these difficulties?*

*Description of current readiness...*

*Plans for further development...*

**5. FAITH IN THE WORLD:**

*Describe experiences you have working towards social justice, and ecumenical understanding. It is the expectation of the Committee on Formation that the candidate will, from those experiences, know the difference between justice and charity and have formulated how we do justice from a faith perspective. In addition we hope the candidate will have had experiences working in ecumenical and interfaith settings, and be able to articulate the importance of the ecumenical and interfaith enterprise today.*

*Description of current readiness...*

*Plans for further development...*

***Psychological Readiness- Will be addressed through the Pastoral Formation Process***

## Appendix 4: Background Self Disclosure

*“The United Church of Christ recognizes that God calls the whole Church and every member to participate in and extend the ministry of Jesus Christ by witnessing to the Gospel in church and society.”*

Have you ever been a Member in Discernment/Candidate for Authorized Ministry, or been licensed or ordained, in any other association/conference/denomination?

Yes  No

*Commentary:*

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

Yes  No

*Commentary:*

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

Yes  No

*Commentary:*

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

Yes  No

*Commentary:*

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

Yes  No

*Commentary:*

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

Yes  No

*Commentary:*

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

Sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct

Yes  No

Physical abuse

Yes  No

Child abuse

Yes  No

Financial misconduct

Yes  No

*Commentary:*

Have you ever terminated your employment, a volunteer position, or professional credentials in order to avoid facing or to avoid being terminated because of charges of actual or attempted:

Sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct

Yes  No

Physical abuse

Yes  No

Child abuse

Yes  No

Financial misconduct

Yes  No

*Commentary:*

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

Yes  No

*Commentary:*

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

Signature

Date

## Appendix 5: Initial Letter of Reference

CONFIDENTIAL

Applicant's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Reference for person to be taken into the Discernment & Formation Process:

This person is seeking to be a Member in Discernment (MID) of the Northeast Association. You have been asked to be a reference. Please address the following questions with regard to the applicant.

- How long and in what capacity have you known the applicant?
- Consider specifically the following Marks of Readiness areas: Theological Depth and Articulation; Worship Leadership and Preaching; Spiritual Strength; Leadership and Administration; Pastoral Care and Counseling; Teaching; Faith in the World; and UCC and Covenantal Connections. Where do you see this person's strengths? Give examples. Select one area in which you think this person needs further development and explain.
- What comments do you have regarding: the candidate's emotional maturity, attitude toward self and toward others?

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**This material is confidential. If you would like to share it with the applicant you may do so by sending them a copy. This reference must be mailed by the person giving the reference to: The Northeast Association, 21 Church St., Winchester, MA 01890.**

## Appendix 6: The Marks of Readiness for Ordination

These Marks of Readiness for Ordination will be most helpful to all who are involved in the process of Discernment if they use them throughout their relationship with the candidate for authorized ministry rather than saving their consideration for the end of the process. When used throughout the relationship, the Marks become an effective tool for helping to identify areas where growth is needed. Moreover, when used this way, the process of assessing a person's readiness for Ordination becomes more manageable, since the assessment process can then be broken down into a series of smaller steps.

All parties involved with discerning a candidate's readiness for ministry are encouraged to apply the Marks dynamically in their work with the persons who they accompany. No single individual will exhibit all of these Marks equally well. No single minister who is currently ordained exhibits all of these Marks equally well. Instead, committees should expect individuals to show different profiles of strength and weakness in relation to the Marks, and should use the Marks in ways that promote realistic assessment and encourage continuing development.

It will probably be most useful to think of the Marks of Readiness for Ordination as characteristics that a candidate might be expected to display with varying degrees of consistency, rather than as things that a person displays either entirely or not at all. So for each Mark or set of Marks, a committee will find it more helpful to ask "How consistently does this person display this characteristic?" rather than, "Does this person display this characteristic – yes or no?"

Before discussing specific ways of assessing readiness it might be useful to reflect on the overall approach that will serve committees best. So here are some basic principles to keep in mind.

- **Assess the readiness of persons in discernment at every step along your journey with them rather than saving it for some big "event" at the end.** This will allow you to engage the assessment task in manageable portions, and will promote candidates' development more effectively because you and they will be in conversation about their gifts and growing edges all along the way.
- **Assess a person only in relation to those Marks where it is timely to do so.** For example, assessment of some Marks of Readiness under spiritual and personal formation might happen effectively at most any point in your journey with a candidate in the Discernment & Formation Process. On the other hand, it makes no sense to assess a person in relation to Marks having to do with knowledge and skill in biblical studies until they have done the necessary study to gain that knowledge and skill.
- **Assess how a person manifests the Marks of Readiness in relation to actual ministry.** The Marks have been written with an eye to what out of the various areas they cover is actually important to ministry. You are encouraged to look for their manifestation in ways that have to do with actual ministry. For example, assess a person's abilities in biblical studies by asking to hear a sermon or see them teach a Bible study class. If you take this approach, you will be assessing their readiness based on what the future recipients of their ministry will experience. Committees will also find that every member of the committee is able to engage in effective evaluation because it will be based on the experience of good ministry, not technical expertise.
- **Gather knowledge and judgment from other persons and communities who have knowledge of the candidate.** You are not alone in this ministry, so you need not rely only on your own knowledge and experience. However, when seeking the knowledge and judgment of others, you will always want to share the Marks of Readiness for Ordination with them. By doing so you will equip them to share with you the information they have that you need because they will know the questions you are asking.
- **Apply the Marks dynamically.** No single individual will exhibit all of these Marks equally well. No single minister who is currently ordained exhibits all of these Marks equally well. Instead, you should expect

candidates to show different profiles of strength and weakness in relation to the Marks, and should use the Marks in ways that promote realistic assessment and encourage continuing development.

- **Make your aim the promotion of growth.** Your goal should be to have the candidate ready for ordination, but do not ordain the person until they are truly ready. This means applying the Marks developmentally, as a set of standards by which to measure where growth is needed.
- **Let the decision when someone is ready for ordination emerge out of a process of mutual discernment of degrees of readiness and need for growth that is fed by these assessments.** This process will serve the church equally by promoting greatest growth among those whom God calls to lead it and greatest clarity about when they are truly ready to take up that ministry.

### **The Marks of Readiness:**

Below is a composite of the Marks of Readiness being used by the Pilgrim and Northeast Association of the Massachusetts Conference, UCC. A more extensive description from the national church is available on-line at <http://www.ucc.org/ministers/pdfs/Marks-of-Faithful-and-Effective-Authorized-Ministers.pdf>

1. Theological Readiness: the ability to understand and articulate theology within the broad spectrum of UCC. In our tradition this theology is grounded in Scripture, tradition and the experience of our still speaking God. Capability to articulate God's call in the candidate's life and how this call will be realized in a ministry setting.
2. Professional Readiness: the ability to function within the various roles and responsibilities of ministry. These include teaching proficiency and skills in Christian Education and curriculum and faith formation for all ages, leadership and administration proficiency, systems theory of group and church dynamics, worship leadership and preaching proficiency, pastoral care and counseling proficiency, stewardship skills, faith in the world proficiency through mission, justice and evangelism skills.
3. Emotional awareness/ Psychological Readiness: The ability to understand what motivates and triggers our behavior such that we can consciously intentionally respond and not react or act from unconscious motives, drives, fears.
4. Faith Formation/Spiritual Readiness: the intentional development of a relationship with God that is nourishing and challenging (transforming). Some of the practices that open clergy to deeper connections with God include honoring Sabbath time, intentional devotional life, spiritual practices (individual and communal), spiritual direction, prayer partnerships, balancing life...
5. United Church of Christ Covenantal Readiness: We submit that the practice and identity of our denomination is constantly evolving. Further, we understand that ministry in and on behalf of the UCC means staying current with the UCC, its polity and personality. This includes strengthening the relationships that sustain the pastor's and their church's connections to it and remaining current with new insights and understandings.

## **Appendix 7: Polity Reflection Paper**

Polity is the form of governance and structure that guide the operations of a denomination, and the operations of local congregations. Polity is experienced differently on the denominational and local level. In 7-10 pages, reflect on the following:

- Describe how UCC principles of covenant and autonomy, local church governance practices that you have experienced, and our denominational polity shape your understanding of and practice of pastoral authority.
- Describe your understanding of lay and ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ.
- Describe how the constituent traditions of the UCC are experienced in contemporary polity.
- What are the sources of authority recognized in the UCC? What are the sources of authority upon which ordained pastors draw?
- How have you experienced the difference between local and denominational polity?

*Nota Bene:* This paper is not a history paper nor an encyclopedia article. Rather this paper should describe your theology of the nature of the church and the pastorate in the Reformed tradition.

## Appendix 8: Field Ed Guidelines

The assumption of the NEA Committee on Formation is that candidates for authorized ministry are preparing for pastoral ministry in a local UCC church. The NEA Committee on Formation holds the opinion that *all* people it authorizes for ministry on behalf of the entire United Church of Christ need to demonstrate readiness in local church pastoral ministry whether or not they perceive a call to local church leadership at this point in time.

1. If the local church is not where you understand your call to ministry to be, you must nonetheless complete one academic year (two semesters) of field education in a local church setting. You may, if you wish, complete additional semesters of field ed in social service organizations or other settings approved by your M. Div. program.
2. Field education may NOT take place in your home church, irrespective of whether this is acceptable to your M. Div program.

We highly recommend that you consider the following suggestions as you select a field ed site:

1. Select a site that differs in two or more significant ways from your sponsoring church, ie: average worship attendance is double or half that of your sponsoring church; it has socioeconomic, ethnic or educational demographics that are distinctively different; the liturgical style varies from that with which you are accustomed; it has a distinctive theology and practice of covenantal and / or ecumenical relationships.
2. Choose a UCC church.

Verify that the person who will serve as your supervisor is ordained or licensed by the UCC and is present at your field ed site. Some field ed sites have lay people, supervisory committees or off-site supervisors. This must be explained and approved in advance by your CA and the Associate Conference Minister.

Develop learning goals that address the five Marks of Readiness areas, paying attention to areas where the need for development is noted on your Marks of Readiness Roadmap.

1. Preaching and worship leadership is an area of preeminent importance to the COF. Preaching in a field ed site is significantly different from leading worship in your local church. Take advantage of this opportunity to expand your skills and experience.
  - a. As the schedule of preaching and worship leadership is developed for your field ed site, inform your MA and CA, that they might observe you as their schedules allow.
  - b. Video tapes, CDs or DVDs of preaching and worship leadership experiences are highly preferred over text copies of sermon(s), so assume responsibility for having these recordings made when you preach;
  - c. Define the worship leadership / preaching evaluation or feedback process that will be used in your field ed site and be prepared to discuss this with your CA and / or MA.
2. Administration of sacraments and rites of the church
  - a. Each candidate must participate in the administration of Communion multiple times in field ed site and / or home church or other site of ministry
    - i. Discuss with your MA and field ed supervisor the practices and polity of these churches. Come to agreement on the circumstances in which you will be granted permission to preside or exercise pastoral leadership at the communion table.
  - b. Baptism

- i. Candidate must be involved in preparation of parents or baptismal candidates for baptism
- ii. Candidate must be involved in a worship service that includes baptism, taking a significant role as permitted.
- iii. Again, local polity and practice, schedules and circumstances will govern how this experience is gained. Work well in advance with your MA and your field ed supervisor to figure out how this will be accomplished.
- c. Describe how you will gain experience counseling and / or leading worship at weddings, funerals, memorial services, etc.

#### Participation in Wider Church

- a. Pay attention to the polity paper requirement that you gain experience assessing, influencing, discussing and reflecting upon a local church's understanding and practice of UCC polity.

Your field ed site selection, supervisor agreement and learning agreement **must be approved in advance** of the seminary filing deadline by your CA

- a. You must provide a copy of your mid-year field ed evaluation to your CA and MA
  - i. Your self assessment as well as your supervisor's assessment
- b. You must provide a copy of your and your supervisor's final field ed evaluation to your CA, MA, sponsoring church committee, the NEA office and to all Committee members of the Committee on Formation in advance of your first Phase IV interview.

## Appendix 9: Pre-Ordination Agreement

### 02-12-BD-17 PRE-ORDINATION AGREEMENT

You are eligible for the following benefits when you are employed by a UCC church or UCC-related entity. This document: (1) serves as a reminder of those benefits and (2) provides them to you in writing. To receive applications or additional information on any UCC plan, contact:

**The Pension Boards – UCC**

**(212) 729-2700**

**475 Riverside Drive  
New York, NY 10115**

**(800) 642-6543  
[www.pbucc.org](http://www.pbucc.org)**

#### ***I. THE ANNUITY PLAN – UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST***

As a member of this national plan, it is recommended that your employer contribute a minimum of 14% of 130% of your cash salary if you live in a parsonage – or 14% of cash salary plus housing allowance – as annuity dues toward your account in a fund invested in accordance with your directions by the Pension Boards. At the time of retirement (age 55 or later), you receive a monthly benefit for your lifetime based upon the value of your account and a number of other factors, such as your age and the benefit option you select. If you leave ministry or choose to stop contributing to the Annuity Plan, the amount in your account remains vested and will provide a benefit to you on a monthly basis at the time of retirement. At retirement, you may elect to receive up to 20% of the account in a lump sum, but you must convert to an annuity at least 80% of the employer contributions (including earnings) to your account. You may also make tax-sheltered contributions from your salary to your account. Tax-sheltered contributions are always fully vested, may be withdrawn if you leave church employment, and are not required to be annuitized at retirement.

You can enroll as a lay person in this plan prior to ordination if you are employed in a UCC church or entity – then change your status in the plan to “clergy” following ordination. While there is no deadline for joining this UCC plan, it is advisable to become a part of it as early in your career as possible in order to realize the greatest benefits at the time of retirement.

Seniors in seminary who are in-care or licensed by a UCC Conference or Association should apply for a Herring and Stark Memorial Fund grant. These are grants that help to fund your annuity account. If you become ordained within 5 years of the grant, receive standing as a UCC minister and have contributions made to the Annuity Plan at the 14% level for at least two years, the Herring and Stark grant will remain in your pension account and contribute to your income in retirement.

The Annuity Plan - UCC has an excellent record of investment growth and clergy members receive special tax benefits after retirement. Some of the cost of managing the Annuity Fund is borne by endowment income.

## ***II. UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST MEDICAL AND DENTAL BENEFITS PLANS***

These national plans allow clergy to enroll without a physical exam or other proof of good health within a period of 90 days of initial eligibility ( usually the first full-time (20 hours/week or more) employment by a UCC entity). After that 90-day period, enrollment in the Medical Plan will depend upon evidence of good health by the member and each eligible dependent. Subsequent enrollment in the Dental Plan can only occur during an open enrollment conducted periodically by the Pension Boards.

It is not necessary to belong to the Annuity Plan-United Church of Christ to participate in the UCC Medical Plan, nor is it necessary to participate in the Medical Plan in order to participate in the Dental Plan. They are “stand-alone” plans.

Clergy who elect to have the United Church of Christ Medical and Dental Benefits coverages may at any time leave the programs to be covered by another major carrier or Health Maintenance Organization (HMO), but re-admission into the UCC Medical Plan at a future date will only be allowed if the applicant and dependents provide proof of good health satisfactory to the underwriter employed to make such determinations. In these cases, enrollment in the UCC Dental Plan must await an open enrollment period.

While some other programs – especially HMOs – may offer health services for a lower premium, it should be remembered that if you belong to an HMO and move to another area or state, you may not be able to join either the UCC Plan or another HMO if you have a pre-existing medical condition, whereas if you belong to the UCC plan, your coverage will be transferred to a new place of employment.

## ***III. FLEXIBLE BENEFIT PLAN FOR UCC MINISTRIES***

This plan, commonly known as a “Flexible Savings Account” plan, allows members to pay for eligible medical and dependent care expenses on a pre-tax basis. Before each calendar year, members elect how much they want to contribute to the medical account and the dependent care account. These contributions are deducted throughout the year from their paycheck and taxes are not withheld and are not payable on these amounts. Members then submit claims for reimbursement of eligible claims directly to the plan administrator.

Individual churches and UCC-related entities must pay a one-time administrative fee of \$100 in order to participate in this plan. Members who do not participate in the UCC Medical Plan must pay a \$12 per month administrative fee. There is no administrative fee for members who participate in the UCC Medical Plan.

## ***IV. UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST GROUP LIFE INSURANCE AND DISABILITY INCOME PLAN***

The yearly contribution for this plan is 1½% of the salary basis (cash salary plus housing) used in the determination of the Annuity Plan dues. This plan includes short and long-term disability income and term life insurance components for the member and a small life insurance benefit for a spouse or same-gender domestic partner. There is a reduced life-time life insurance benefit for retirees at age 65 at no additional member cost. If the member becomes disabled before retirement, the plan provides, after a 30-day waiting period, that short-term disability benefits are payable weekly for 5 months, or the cessation of disability, if earlier. If the disability continues, long-term disability benefits are payable monthly until age 65, or

cessation of disability, if earlier. While on long-term disability, the plan also makes annuity contributions at 7% of the pre-disability salary basis until retirement (usually age 65) and pays the medical and dental premiums if the member was a participant in the UCC plans. Contact the Pension Boards for more information because the terms of the plan control in all situations.

You can join this plan **within 90 days of initial eligibility (usually the first full-time employment (20 hours/week or more) by a UCC entity)** without a physical exam and proof of insurability. After that 90-day period, you may not be eligible for coverage if you have a pre-existing medical condition or if you are not insurable.

## ***V. SOCIAL SECURITY***

According to the Social Security Act, all ordained ministers are required to belong to the Social Security system and make regular contributions through the Internal Revenue Service. The only exception is that an ordained minister can apply to be exempted from Social Security on the grounds of being conscientiously opposed to the acceptance of public insurance – **“by filing for an exemption on or before the due date of the 2<sup>nd</sup> tax year for which you have had church related earnings.”** After that time, it is not possible to be exempted from the system or cease payments.

You should review your social security account every year to make sure you’re being properly credited with your payments. The Social Security Administration will send you a statement of earnings and a benefit estimate each year, about 3 months before your birthday.

While some investors suggest that there are other ways to invest a sum equal to Social Security payments that would yield greater earnings, one should know that your participation in Social Security is assumed in the design of the Annuity Plan – UCC and other UCC benefit plans. The benefits provided by the Annuity Plan – UCC (where contributions were made at 14% of salary basis over a full career) **plus** Social Security are estimated to provide a retirement income that will be sufficient to maintain your standard of living in retirement. ***For further information about Social Security, contact the nearest Social Security Administration Office, listed in your phone book or their website at [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov).***

## ***VI. WORKER'S COMPENSATION***

Each church should carry Worker’s Compensation for all employees – full and part-time. As you begin to search for your first pastorate, please keep in mind that this insurance is carried by the church for its – and your – protection. Health insurance and the church’s property/liability insurance will not cover any church employee who is injured on church property. A word to the wise – make sure any church to which you are called carries this insurance!

**PRE-ORDINATION AGREEMENT**  
**Massachusetts Conference, United Church of Christ**

I have read the information regarding the Annuity Plan-United Church of Christ, UCC Medical and Dental Benefits Plans, UCC Life Insurance and Disability Income Plan, Social Security and Worker's Compensation.

I understand that it is my responsibility to contact the appropriate agencies and make arrangements for applying or opting out of membership in the above programs within the timelines stated for each.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ordinand

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Committee on Formation Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Associate Conference Minister

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**NOTE:**     ***1 copy is retained by the Ordinand***  
              ***1 copy is kept in the NEA Office***

## Appendix 10: Phase IV Recommendation Letter

CONFIDENTIAL

Candidate \_\_\_\_\_

Reference for candidate to proceed to Phase IV: Evaluation of Readiness:

Please address the following questions with regard to this person, sharing your assessment of this candidate's gifts for ordained ministry in the UCC:

1. What has the Discernment & Formation / Field Ed process been like with this person? Address things like
  - How engaged with the Discernment & Formation Process were they?
  - Did the candidate demonstrate initiative? Openness to learning, feedback and coaching?
  - In which of the Marks of Readiness areas is this candidate particularly gifted? How has this candidate shared their gifts with others with whom they are in covenantal relationship?
  - Which Marks of Readiness area(s) are not strong points of this candidate? Do they share your assessment? How does the candidate plan to bolster their capabilities in this area? In your opinion, are these plans adequate and realistic for the setting to which they are likely to be called?
2. Address this candidate's leadership capabilities, drawing upon their psychological assessment, your observations of them before and during the process and Field Ed period, and evaluations from all other sources in the process (if they are available to you). Specifically address the health of their relationships with colleagues and congregants, their trustworthiness, ability to accept responsibility and keep confidences appropriately, and ability to work constructively towards restoration in problematic relationships.
3. What hesitations or reservations do you have regarding this person competently serving as pastoral leader in a local church or any other setting of authorized ministry in the UCC. Be sure to remark on authenticity of call, love of the UCC, propensity to be a life-long learner and ability to serve in covenantal relationships with others.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**This material is confidential. If you would like to share it with the candidate, you may do so by sending them a copy. This reference must be mailed by the person giving the reference to the Northeast Association, 21 Church St., Winchester, MA 01890.**

## **Appendix 11: Theology Paper Guidelines**

**Process Phase IVb:** Summary of your spiritual journey and call; assessment of theological literacy, articulation and depth, and understanding of the UCC.

A draft of this paper must be discussed with your Ministerial Advisor and your sponsoring church. Soliciting input from your Committee Advisor is also very strongly recommended. The paper should be revised following discussions with the sponsoring church committee and your advisors.

Outline:

1. Your spiritual journey and call to authorized ministry – summarize this to reintroduce yourself to members who have joined the COF since your IIB interview (3 pages).
2. Theology: Select five topics from the list below. In no more than 3 pages per topic,
  - a. Provide a summary of your own theology in each area you choose;
  - b. Describe a situation in your local church, Field Ed, CPE site or other UCC local church setting where this aspect of theology has been the basis for the ministerial actions you took or services you provided.

The COF suggests that you pay special attention to the theological coherence and pastoral implications among the five topics you address. Furthermore, the COF advises you that interviews IVa and IVc may contain questions or cases that call upon your theological understanding and pastoral experience in any of these areas.

### **Theological Literacy, Articulation and Depth**

Baptism and the Lord's Supper (required)

Area One - God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit (choose two topics)

- The Trinity
- Creation and Providence
- Judgment and Grace
- The Person of Christ; Incarnation; Atonement; Salvation and Resurrection
- Revelation and Holy Scriptures

Area Two - Humanity (choose one topic)

- Sin, Repentance, Forgiveness
- Prayer
- Eternal Life

Area Three - The Church and God's New Era (choose one topic)

- Doctrine of history and eschatology
- Church and the world (including evangelism, social action, mission)
- Ecumenism and Interfaith Dialogue

*Word to the Wise:* Focus your practical and analytical skills on this paper. Show your scriptural and theological grounding in this paper and in this interview. Consider topic headings, a table of contents, and footnotes. In this paper and interview, perhaps more than at any other point in your process, the Committee anticipates experiencing your "learned clergy" side. Some blending of head and heart that can communicate your theology to lay and clergy alike is helpful. Your creative side, we hope, will be on display at the worship meeting. Your pastoral side will be on display during the Case Study meeting. In this meeting, please show us your authentic theological voice.

## Appendix 12: Sample Case Situations

(This material is adapted from Parish Life and Leadership guidelines for Pastor / Parish Relations Committees, written by the Rev. Martha Ann Baumer.)

### Sample Case #1:

“Pastor, we want our new baby baptized. We’ve invited the whole family and some of our friends. They’ll all be at the house next Sunday, so come at three o’clock and we’ll be ready. You can do the baptism in the living room.”

Formulate your initial response:

Then, this is said, “But we have the arrangements all made. What’s to talk about? Our other kids were done that way. Former Pastor didn’t complain. In fact, he and his wife will be there, so forget it – we’ll just ask him to do it.”

Talking with the chair of the diaconate, you learn that this family has withheld pledges in the past when decisions didn’t go their way. Given the financial straits of this church, she counsels you to be more flexible. How do you respond to her?

What’s your plan for dealing with this situation – identify people or committees you’ll work with, and what your approach will be. What is the theological basis for your actions?

### Sample Case #2:

“Did you see the newspaper? Our pastor had a letter to the editor in the paper about the school bond issue. And I hear she’s thinking about running for the school board.”

“Really?! I didn’t think a pastor could do that! After all, they don’t pay taxes, do they?”

“I don’t know. I think they pay state taxes, and I know they pay sales tax. I never thought about it. It just seems funny to have the pastor messing around in town politics.”

“You know, she preaches about politics sometimes. Says we’re supposed to vote. And she talks about civil rights a lot. I always thought religion and politics don’t mix.”

What is your approach preaching and teaching on political issues?

Have you participated in discussions with congregants where different political opinions were voiced?

Describe what you said and did, or what you would say or do.

What is the scriptural or theological basis for your actions?

Sample Case #3:

“Pastor, why don’t we say the creed anymore? I miss it. We always used to say it. We had to memorize it when I was a kid, and it doesn’t seem right not to use it.”

“What creed do you mean?”

“The Apostles’ Creed, of course.”

“Well, I think the language is difficult for lots of people today, including me. And I struggle with the line about the virgin birth since I have questions about that. So I just avoid it and use other things.”

“What? You have questions? I thought they taught you what to believe in seminary! Didn’t they? And I certainly believe Jesus was ‘born of the Virgin Mary’! Why, I’m shocked at what you said. I always thought you and I believed the same things.”

What is your response to this person? What steps might you take after this conversation ends?

## Appendix 13: Call to Ecclesiastical Council & Ecclesiastical Council Agenda

### Call to Ecclesiastical Council Northeast Association, MACUCC

To the Ministers, Officers, and Delegates of the Northeast Association, Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ, greetings:

You are hereby notified and called to gather as an Ecclesiastical Council at \_\_\_\_\_ Church in \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ at 7:00 PM for the purpose of examining the candidacy of \_\_\_\_\_ for ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ.

Quorum shall consist of lay delegates representing twenty percent of the member churches plus fifteen clergy with standing. For the purposes of determining a quorum, any layperson entitled to a vote shall count toward the representation of that person's home church. Members in Discernment, clergy without standing serving association churches, local church Moderators, and UCC staff and officers shall have voice without vote. Deliberations will occur in executive session, but all are welcome to observe the presentations.

So Ordered,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Association Moderator

Attest,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Association Scribe

## **Ecclesiastical Council Agenda Northeast Association**

CALL TO ORDER AND QUORUM (Moderator)

WELCOME (Host Pastor)

INVOCATION (Wendy, or host pastor if she's not present)

EXPLAIN PROCESS AND MARKS OF READINESS (COF rep.)

EXPLAIN PROCEDURE FOR THE EVENING (Moderator)

ADDRESS VOICE WITHOUT VOTE PREROGATIVES (Moderator)

INTRODUCTION OF CANDIDATE (Mentor)

CANDIDATE PRESENTATION

QUESTIONS FOR THE CANDIDATE (Moderator and Candidate)

MOTION AND STATEMENT OF SUPPORT (COF rep, executive session)

DELIBERATION AND VOTE (Moderator, executive session)

SUMMON THE CANDIDATE

ANNOUNCE THE RESULT (Moderator)

BENEDICTION (Candidate)

RECONVENING AND ADJOURNMENT (Moderator)

## **Appendix 14: Marks of an Ordainable Call**

1. **AUTHENTICITY.** All parties in the proposed covenant discern that the candidate is called by God to the ministry in question.
2. **DISTINCTIVENESS.** The ministry requires the sacramental and pastoral responsibilities of an ordained minister.
3. **CALLING BODY.** The calling body requests that the candidate be ordained to the position. In the case of a 4-way covenant, the calling body agrees to be a full and active partner in the covenant.
4. **DURATION.** The ministry is at least half-time. The contractual duration is at least two years.
5. **COMPENSATION.** The Call Agreement reflects compensation at or exceeding the conference guidelines for the conference in which the calling body is situated. (If a congregation is not able to meet the guidelines, the Call Agreement should include a plan and commitment to achieve them within a certain time frame.)

## Appendix 15: Ordination Planning Documents

Northeast Association  
Massachusetts Conference, United Church of Christ  
Ordination Service Information

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Requested date and time of service reserved on the Association calendar

Outline order of service:

People leading worship:

Recipient(s) of the offering (if shared with the Scholarship Fund):

\_\_\_\_\_ Signed

A Service of Word and Sacrament - Incorporating the Order for Ordination to Ministry

PRELUDE

INTROIT

CALL TO WORSHIP

HYMN

THE LORD'S PRAYER

THE WORD OF GOD AS FOUND IN

SPECIAL MUSIC

SERMON

THE PASSING OF THE PEACE

One: May the peace of Christ be with you.

ALL: AND ALSO WITH YOU.

One: Let us greet one another with a sign of God's peace.

ORDER FOR THE ORDINATION TO MINISTRY

GREETING

PRESENTATION

EXHORTATION

EXAMINATION

ACCLAMATION

Leader: People of God, you have heard the promises \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_ has made. What is you will?

PEOPLE: BY THE GRACE OF GOD, THEY ARE WORTHY! LET US ORDAIN HIM/HER. COME HOLY SPIRIT.

Leader: Will you support \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_ in the ministry of Christ?

PEOPLE: WE WILL

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS AND ORDINATION PRAYER

DECLARATION

PRESENTATIONS (IF ANY)

OFFERING

This offering is being received as a gifts to the scholarship fund of the Northeast Association for the benefit of women and men attending seminaries in preparation for ordained ministry.

OFFERTORY MUSIC

HYMN, sung during presentation of offering, bread and wine

THE HOLY EUCHARIST

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

INVITATION

THE SURSUM CORDA

EUCARISTIC PRAYER

CHORAL SANCTUS AND BENEDICTUS

ACCLAMATIONS

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

THE POURING OF THE CUP

RESURRECTION ACCLAMATION

SHARING OF THE ELEMENTS

UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

RECESSIONAL HYMN

COMMISSION AND BLESSING

POSTLUDE

A Service of the Word  
Incorporating the Order for Ordination to Ministry

PRELUDE

CHORAL INTROIT

CALL TO WORSHIP

HYMN

INVOCATION AND WELCOFE

CONFESSION OF SIN

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

GLORIA PATRI (or other choral act of praise)

THE PASSING OF THE PEACE

One: May the peace of Christ be with you.

ALL: AND ALSO WITH YOU

One: Let us greet one another with a sign of God's peace.

SPECIAL MUSIC

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

SERMON

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH - -UCC STATEMENT OF FAITH

HYMN

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

OFFERING

The offering is being received as a gift to the Scholarship Fund of the Northeast Association for the benefit of women and men attending seminaries in preparation for ordained ministry.

OFFERTORY MUSIC

OFFERTORY RESPONSE

ORDER FOR ORDINATION TO MINISTRY

GREETING

PRESENTATION

EXHORTATION

EXAMINATION

ACCLAMATION

Leader: People of God, you have heard the promises NAME has made. What is you will?

PEOPLE: BY THE GRACE OF GOD, THEY ARE WORTHY! LET US NAME ORDAIN HIM/HER. COME  
HOLY SPIRIT.

Leader: Will you support name in the ministry of Christ?

PEOPLE: WE WILL.

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS AND ORDINATION PRAYER

DECLARATION

PRESENTATIONS (IF ANY)

HYMN

BENEDICTION

RESPONSE

POSTLUDE

## **Appendix 16: The Format of Your Paperwork**

In order to prevent us from confusing your paperwork from that of another student, please be so kind as to following the following format for every document you write for the Committee. (Documents written by others such as field education supervisors, CPE supervisors, etc, do not have to follow this format.)

*A) Please include a dated cover letter indicating what meeting you are preparing for, who your Ministerial Committee Advisors are, and which documents are included. (See Example)*

Example:

August 26, 2007

Dear Committee on Formation Member,

Attached please find the materials for my Phase IVA interview, to take place September 16, 2007:

X

Y

Z

I look forward to meeting with you.

Peace,

Jose Jones

CC: Rev. Jane Doe, Ministerial Advisor; Ms. Sally Smith, Committee Advisor

*B) Your name and date should appear at the top of every page of every document. This is easy to do using headers. Pages should also be numbered.*

*C) When emailing paperwork, your name or initials should appear in every file name. For instance it should be JohnDoeResume.doc (not Resume.doc) or JohnDoePaper.doc (not Paper.doc). The most preferred file name would probably be JohnDoeMay2006Paper.doc*

*D) When emailing paperwork, please send documents in.doc (MS Word) format to avoid file format problems.*

*E) When sending paperwork by postal mail, if possible, please be so kind as to print on both sides of the page, and staple individual documents.*

## **Appendix 17: Leave of Absence Policy**

Adopted April 17, 2012

A candidate may apply for a leave of absence at any time during the Discernment & Formation Process. This application must be in writing and addressed to the Chair(s) of the Committee on Formation and the NORTHEAST ASSOCIATION office, and describe the reason(s) for the request. Authority for granting or denying a leave of absence rests with the Committee on Formation. If a leave of absence exceeds two years, the candidate shall re-enter the process under the guidelines current at the time of re-entry. At the time of re-entry, the Committee on Formation may require the candidate to repeat any previously-completed requirements that the Committee deems to be out-of-date.

## Appendix 18: Licensed Ministry

In the United Church of Christ, licensed ministry is one of three forms of ministries requiring authorization by the church. The others are ordained and commissioned ministry.

A licensed minister is authorized by an Association “to perform specified duties in a designated local church or within that Association, mainly preaching and conducting services of worship for a designated time” (UCC Bylaws). Licensed ministry has primarily been created by the denomination for those situations when local churches within an Association need the leadership and services of authorized persons but ordained ministers are not available. At the request of the local church, the Association may grant the licensed minister the right to administer the sacraments and rites of the church for this local church.

Persons start the process toward licensing with leaders of their local church who discern with them a call to ministry. They are then licensed by the Association of the United Church of Christ when the Association has examined their "Christian faith, character, ability to do the work expected and preparation to meet the responsibilities of the office and knowledge of the history, polity, and practices of the United Church of Christ" (UCC Bylaws) and has determined that they possess the marks of faithful and effective licensed ministry. The Association determines the specific duties for which the license is granted in consultation with the local church served. The license is granted for a period of one year and must be renewed. Licensed ministers have standing in the Association where the local church is located.

A license is not transferable to another Association and licensed ministers do not participate in the national Search and Call process of the United Church of Christ. If a licensed minister is called to serve in a new setting, they must apply for a new license authorizing them to serve there.

The qualifications generally required of a licensed minister include:

- membership in a Local Church of the United Church of Christ;
- demonstrated knowledge and affirmation of the history, polity, and practices of the UCC.

Licensed ministers are also expected to pursue a course of study to prepare them for their roles. Generally, renewal of a license requires continuing education. The specifics are determined by the Association that grants the license.

For more information about licensed ministry in the United Church of Christ, persons should contact the Conference or Association where they hold UCC membership or obtain the section of the *Manual on Ministry (MOM)* describing licensed ministry in detail. *MOM* is available on the UCC website [www.ucc.org/ministers](http://www.ucc.org/ministers) or in print for a modest charge from United Church of Christ Resources at 1-800-537-3394. The complete *MOM* describing all forms of ministry in the UCC is also available both online and in print.

In addition, persons might find it useful to become familiar with the ongoing work of the denomination regarding formation for ministry (the “Ministry Issues Project”) by consulting the web page [www.ucc.org/ministers/ministry-issues](http://www.ucc.org/ministers/ministry-issues).

## Appendix 19: Commissioned Ministry Formation & Discernment

Our framework and foundation for this guide to Commissioned Ministry is the UCC Manual on Ministry. Our fundamental understanding is that Commissioning is a Calling, a Vocation, to a specialized ministry that does not require ordination. As such it is not a generalized pastoral and leadership role (preaching and teaching), nor is it primarily a worship role (Word and Sacrament) as these are the marks of an Ordination Call. Based on the concept that Commissioned Ministry is an authorization to a specialized ministry applicable in any setting of the UCC we developed these guidelines (draft for consideration). These guidelines presume formation and discernment towards readiness (see NORTHEAST ASSOCIATION COF Guidelines, Appendices 3 & 7) in the areas of 1) Theological/intellectual proficiency 2) Appropriate Professional abilities and skills 3) Emotional self awareness 4) Spiritual Grounding in a relationship with God and 5) a love for the church and the UCC as a particular expression.

These guidelines are meant to be kept simple so that each person sensing a Call to Commissioning can meet with the Committee on Formation to develop an individualized plan of Formation and Discernment.

The process is clearly outlined in the UCC Manual on Ministry. These guidelines offer standardized frameworks for growth and development towards those Marks of Readiness.

Formation will include the following elements:

1. Ability to articulate a vocational sense of Call to this Commissioned Ministry
2. A degree (or equivalency) within the field of specialty
3. Psychological evaluation
4. Continuation Education Units in the following areas. (Note: One unit equals one contact hour of education. These can come through seminars, workshops, course (classroom or online) at college or seminary. Equivalencies will be considered.
  - a. Course work either completed in the past or completed as part of the plan:
    - i. Familiarity with Hebrew Scripture (10 units)
    - ii. Familiarity with Christian Scripture (Gospel and Epistles) (10 units)
    - iii. An understanding of church dynamics and family systems) (5 units)
    - iv. Understanding and development of Worship (10 units)
    - v. Electives (10 units)
    - vi. Systematic or integrated Theology (10 units)
  - b. Skills that can be documented by references
    - i. Administration in a church setting (10 units)
    - ii. Leadership skills necessary for the specialty (5 units)
    - iii. Proficiency skills necessary for the specialty (10 units)
  - c. Mission and Justice issues and methodologies (10 units)
5. Readings from agreed upon bibliography with a written summary or conversational reflection on the content of 5 – 10 books. These will be determined individually according to the needs of the specialized Call.
6. UCC Polity including and understanding of OCWM support (10 units) Preferably this will be a classroom experience with the opportunity for dialogue.
7. Membership and/or Certification in a Professional Organization if possible
8. Local Church Support: The whole process begins with a vote by a local church leadership body (see NORTHEAST ASSOCIATION COF Guidelines). Local church support includes the development of a

Local Church Support Committee to partner with the Association in the work of Formation and Discernment. It is hoped that the local church will also offer financial support (including the expectation to pay one third of the Psychological Evaluation

9. Local Church Pastor: This includes the initial letter of reference and ongoing mentoring support
10. Oversight, supervision and coaching to be individualized to the need of the candidate:
  - a. A Mentor who oversees and integrates learnings, formation and discernment
  - b. A Spiritual Director to help integrate learnings with faith relationship and Call discernment
11. Boundary Awareness Training and familiarity with Ethics of the specialty profession
12. Some form of supervised field education type experience. Given that the candidate may already have a position, this will be creatively tailored to the needs of the Call.
13. CPE or equivalent if needed for the specialized Call
14. Engagement in a facilitated peer group (i.e. community of practice)