MINISTRY IN THE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

A Background Document Prepared For:

Committee on Ministry Members, Local Church Members,
Persons Discerning a Call to Authorized Ministry in the UCC,
Seminaries of the UCC, Mentors, Learning Programs
The baptism of Jesus by John marked the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry of reconciliation. Named and claimed by God, Jesus emerged from the divine encounter with the profound self-understanding needed to sustain him during the following three years. He experienced the descent of the Holy Spirit and received the affirmation that he was the beloved, with whom God was well pleased. The unique and world-changing ministry to which he had been called was about to begin. But first the call had to be clarified through the agonizing discernment process Jesus experienced while in the wilderness. Power and authority may have been available to him, but only through prayer and discernment did he clarify how he was called by God to exercise those gifts.

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

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release
to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
The words of Hebrew scripture, claimed and proclaimed by Jesus, continue to provide direction for the “work” of the Church today. God calls every follower of Jesus Christ and every Christian community to participate in Christ’s transforming work by carrying out ministries of healing, justice, and reconciliation. In the pursuit of this mission, the United Church of Christ has been blessed with exceptional and dedicated leaders. With profound gratitude for countless faith-filled laity and clergy who guided our once-new denomination, the UCC now focuses on the urgent need to prepare and equip new leaders for the inclusive Church that we are becoming. Within United Church of Christ tradition, that process of equipping new leaders always begins with the affirmation that all are called by virtue of the promises made in baptism. Baptism was central to Jesus’ understanding of his own call from God, and the baptismal sacrament continues to mark, for Christians today, the beginning of growth into “full Christian faith and discipleship.” Throughout its almost 2000 year history, the Christian Church has acknowledged the centrality of the sacrament of baptism. Whether the promises are made by parents on behalf of an infant or by individuals who are mature enough to profess their faith publicly, those who are baptized are in a new relationship with God and the community of Jesus Christ. The baptismal covenant always involves the one being baptized (and parents and sponsors if the baptized one is an infant), the members of the Local Church, and the God who initiated and who continues to sustain the covenant relationship. Promises are prayerfully made, and the newly baptized one is welcomed into the community of faith. The UCC Book of Worship describes that experience with these words, “Baptism is the sacrament through which we are united to Jesus Christ and given part in Christ’s ministry of reconciliation...” The baptized one belongs to Christ and Christ’s Church, marked forever as one called by God for ministry.
THE COVENANTAL RELATIONSHIP: CALL

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

“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. The United Church of Christ seeks to undergird the ministry of its members by nurturing faith, calling forth gifts, and equipping members for Christian service.”

(UCC Constitution, Paragraph 20, emphasis added)

To say that God calls every member is to recognize the mystery and history of such a call; foundational to the Biblical narrative are the many experiences of God intentionally reaching out to the human family with guidance, warning, comfort, direction, and inspiration. Scripture reminds us that God’s call occurs in many ways, many circumstances, and many seasons of life. Jeremiah and Samuel were called by God at an early age; Mary was called as a young girl; Peter and Andrew were busy “casting a net into the sea;” James and John were “mending their nets,” and the early disciple Tabitha (Dorcas) no doubt was “mending dresses.” Call is often experienced as a continuing openness to hearing God’s direction. Long after his conversion and initial call, Paul continued to listen for a new direction; that new direction eventually came to him in a vision (Acts 16:9-10).
Too often the “call to ministry” has been understood narrowly in reference to the Church’s authorized leaders; thus Ordained, Licensed, and Commissioned Ministers have been mistakenly viewed as the only ones to have experienced a special “call.” All are called. And within an exploration of God’s particular call to each member of the baptized community, some individuals will indeed experience the beginnings of a call to authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ. Discerning the nature of that call then becomes the task of those who enter into a covenant of mutual accountability.

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

Within that covenantal understanding of call, the United Church of Christ uses the term “authorization” to describe the designation and consecration of certain individuals called to particular representative leadership in and on behalf of the UCC. The focus of the covenant is always on the leadership needs of the Church. Covenantal relationships are always mutually accountable to one another as well as to Christ. Within the UCC authorization process, covenant always involves at least three parties: the individual who is discerning the call, the Local Church, and the Association through its Committee on Ministry.
The UCC Bylaws identify this mutually accountable authorization exploration with these words,

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

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

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

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1 The wording of this Bylaw was approved by General Synod 27 in 2009. Constitutional amendments related to authorized ministry were also approved by General Synod 27 and subsequently ratified by the Conferences
process are empowered to make those vital decisions because others discerned that they had the
gifts and graces needed for this challenge.

Discernment is a spiritual discipline, a practice of listening, a practice of developing the ability to
perceive the various ways God is at work in individual lives, in communities, and in the world.
Discernment\(^2\) may be understood as “… the intentional practice by which a community or
individual seeks, recognizes, and intentionally takes part in the activity of God in concrete
situations.” To frame the exploration of a call to ministry within a mutual covenant of
discernment means that the Covenantal Partners will approach major decisions by seeking to
understand what God wills for their lives in the context of the emerging leadership needs of
the church….as the church itself responds to God’s call.

A covenant emphasizing discernment and formation is not necessarily sequential or predictable.
The Association does not expect the Member in Discernment to enter the process with a clearly
defined call, and the Covenantal Partners begin the process without any assumptions regarding
the nature of the outcome. The very language used by the authorizing body—“Member in
Discernment”—reflects the reality that the exploration of an individual’s call will include
openness to a variety of outcomes, even ones that are unexpected. **Discernment of call is itself the primary task of the covenant relationship.** Yet certain specific moments or steps can be
identified in what is essentially a nonlinear process. There is a beginning, an entry point for the
development of the covenant among the Member, the Local Church, and the Association; that
beginning assumes that the relationship will extend over a period of at least two years. There is a
Local Church Discernment Committee and one or more discernment advisors from the
Association. The issue for United Church of Christ authorizing bodies is to listen to and discern
with that individual and that individual’s faith community in order to address the question: to what ministry is this person being called at this time? There are then questions that follow:
Does this particular ministry require authorization? If so, what form of authorization?

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

“The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers” is a core document Committees on
Ministry, Local Churches, and Members in Discernment will use throughout the discernment and
formation process. The Marks are the product of the Ministry Issues Implementation
Committee in consultation with the whole church. The Committee’s work grew out of the 2005
General Synod pronouncement titled “Ministry Issues: Forming and Preparing Pastoral Leaders
for God’s Church.” The Marks are designed to be used by the covenantal partners as they
explore the formation and preparation necessary for each of the forms of authorized ministry
(Licensed, Commissioned, Ordained) as well as the expectations for continuing covenantal
bonds on the part of those already authorized. Approaching the Marks within a Covenant of
Discernment and Formation encourages honesty, reciprocity, and a willingness to risk meeting
one another with a spirit of openness. An attitude of hospitality invites a genuine, trusting
presence that enables partners in a conversation to enter into one another’s worlds. Space is then
created where individuals allow themselves to be changed by their experiences together.

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

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

> “We are united in striving to know the will of God as taught in the holy Scriptures, and in our purpose to walk in the ways of the Lord, made known or to be made known to us.”

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3 Kansas City Statement of Faith, 1913, emphasis added.
THE COVENANTAL RELATIONSHIP: AUTHORIZED MINISTRY IN THE UCC

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

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

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

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

Ministry in the United Church of Christ

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

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

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

“The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers” can be used as a retirement planning assessment tool, enabling authorized ministers to reflect on a call to ministry that will be unrelated to specific employment. Such a call always includes a commitment to a Local Church community and an awareness of the ethical responsibilities retirees have in relation to that community and their other clergy colleagues. The call to ministry—which belongs to every
baptized person-- unfolds in new and enriching ways as the newly retired one discerns her/his
own gifts and the new settings in which those gifts might be utilized.

THE COVENANTAL RELATIONSHIP: HOSPITALITY

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

Hospitality is a presence, not a set of guidelines or an object to be easily attained. A pervasive
attitude of hospitality involves willingness to risk, openness to overcoming fear, a sense of
gratitude and reciprocity, and awareness that an encounter with another can indeed be a means of
grace. A sense of hospitality encourages Committee on Ministry members, Local Church
members, and the Member in Discernment all to exhibit the openness to transformation required
of a covenantal process where the outcome is not clearly defined. A commitment to hospitality
will also inform the way the Committee on Ministry members actually relate to one another as
they go about this vital work.
As important as hospitality is in Hebrew and Christian tradition, this essential aspect of our scriptural heritage has seldom been considered as a vital component of ecclesiastical authorization. Yet covenantal relationships and hospitality both require an openness to one another, a willingness to be changed, and a deep trust in the guidance of the Spirit. To affirm that all partners in the ecclesiastical process are embraced by Christ’s welcome is to create a true sense of mutuality. A hospitable process will continue to be rigorous in terms of academic, pastoral, and personal expectations for specific forms of authorization; however, the relationship will be framed less by guidelines and more by an emphasis on genuinely welcoming one another, listening, and learning together.

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

Committees on Ministry, in the past, have focused their efforts on responding to candidates who often came to them with a very specific goal: Ordained Ministry, Commissioned Ministry, or Licensed Ministry. A new way of working requires a shift because it is necessary for the focus to remain—always—on the Church’s ministry. This model of nurturing individuals for possible authorized ministry asks much of Committees on Ministry; the challenge for Committee members will lie in recognizing “the new” and realizing that a focus on Discernment and Formation does not require them to do additional work but rather to go about their work in a very new way.
INTRODUCTION TO THE MARKS OF FAITHFUL AND EFFECTIVE AUTHORIZED MINISTERS OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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

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

Committees will also receive the gift of rich, Spirit-filled experiences; they may have the joy of discerning with a particular candidate—previously and painfully excluded by the church—that the individual is indeed an appropriate candidate for authorization in the United Church of Christ. Committees may also discern—with a particular candidate—that the individual’s call is to a ministry that does not require authorization at this time. Every situation will be different; every situation will require careful attention to the “Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized
Ministers in the UCC;” and certainly every situation will require attentiveness to the God who calls all members of the United Church of Christ to “...to participate in and extend the ministry of Jesus Christ...”

THE MARKS OF FAITHFUL AND EFFECTIVE AUTHORIZED MINISTERS OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST (Revised, April 2009)

SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION FOR MINISTRY

1. A lived faith showing love of God, trust in Jesus, and openness to the Holy Spirit.
2. Devotion to the word of God as revealed through scripture and Christian traditions.
3. Commitment to life-long spiritual growth and practice, individually and in community.
4. A sense of being called by God and the community to authorized ministry in the church.
5. Openness to continuing discernment of one’s call in community.

UCC IDENTITY FOR MINISTRY

1. Acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as sole Head of the Church.
2. A passion for the oneness of the body of Christ as expressed through commitment to ecumenism, justice, and the full embrace of all persons in the radical hospitality of God.
3. Active membership in a local church of the United Church of Christ.
4. An understanding of the concept of covenant and how it informs the nature, purpose, and polity of the United Church of Christ.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

14. to use and promote the informational and educational resources available through UCC publications and websites.
PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL FORMATION FOR MINISTRY

1. A healthy sense of self as shaped by God, community, and personal experience.

2. A sense of theological identity and authority, while being responsive to the opinions and values of others, including those whom the Member will serve.

3. A healthy awareness of strengths, weaknesses and limits, and assumption of responsibility for one’s body, mind and spirit.

4. Knowledge and observance of personal and professional boundaries in interpersonal, congregational, and community settings.

5. A commitment to continuing education, professional development, and life-long learning.

6. Demonstrated moral maturity, including integrity in personal and public life and responsibility to self, family, church, and community.

The ability:

7. to affirm the identities of others, including others very unlike oneself.

8. to engage in self-reflection and to seek and use feedback from others appropriately.

9. to engage productively in public discourse, expecting to grow and be transformed through the exchange of viewpoints.

10. to take initiative in leadership, and to frame and test a vision in community.

11. to listen empathically, communicate appropriately, and keep appropriate confidences.

12. to function as part of a team, to give and receive supervision, and to mutually equip and motivate the community of faith.

13. to be resourceful and adaptable, and know where to locate additional resources and seek consultation when needed.
14. to accept and promote diversity, to inspire others to do so, and to minister in a multicultural and multiracial, open and affirming, just peace, accessible to all, united and uniting church.

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR MINISTRY

General Knowledge and Skills

The Ability:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

11. to communicate clearly and effectively with appropriate media and technologies.
Knowledge and Skills Specific to Authorized Ministry

1. A thorough knowledge of, and personal engagement with, the Bible.

2. Skill with methods of biblical interpretation, including the historic interpretive traditions of the church and contemporary methods, particularly those from historically underrepresented communities.

3. A deepening familiarity with the global history of the Christian churches through the ages and across cultures, including the newest Christian populations, and an understanding of the evolution of Christian communities in the United States.

4. A deepening familiarity with contemporary theological ways of thinking and with the rich and varied theological heritages, creeds, liturgies, and spiritual practices of the Christian churches.

5. An understanding of other religions and their foundational documents.

The ability:

6. to articulate a theological understanding of authorized ministry, and to relate it to the practice of ministry.

7. to analyze, evaluate, and integrate the biblical, historical, theological, and pastoral disciplines and practices in ways that contribute to fruitful and faithful Christian ministry.

8. to understand the nature, use, and misuse of power and authority, and to exercise them appropriately and effectively in authorized ministry.

9. to engage in community leadership that is collaborative and transformative.

10. to engage in respectful ecumenical and interfaith dialogue.

11. to celebrate the unique features of local faith communities while encouraging them to be receptive to perspectives from the broader church and world.
12. to appreciate, practice, and pass on traditions of faith while interpreting them in light of the context of a diverse and changing world.

13. to adapt the practices of ministry to the unique social, cultural, environmental and ecclesiastical aspects of particular settings.

14. to discern God’s mission in the world and, in response, to lead ministries of compassion, nurture, justice, and proclamation that support fullness of life for all people.

15. to preach the good news, lead worship and participate in the sacraments in a manner faithful to the broader Christian heritage and appropriate to the characteristics of a specific culture and setting.

16. to provide effective and appropriate pastoral care and Christian education, and to equip and motivate others to share in these ministries.

17. to organize and implement programs, administer the operations of a complex organization, and initiate change when appropriate.

18. to read the contexts of a community’s ministry and creatively lead that community through change or conflict.

19. to lead and encourage ministries of evangelism, service, stewardship and social transformation.

20. to understand and participate in the financial administration of the church and other religious organizations.
APPENDICES

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

1 Member in Discernment Resources/Documents:

1) Creating a “Culture of Call” in the local church
2) Initial process for the local church
3) Initial process for the person discerning a call
4) Covenant of Discernment and Formation
5) Understanding and Practicing Discernment
6) Discernment Advisor Covenant
7) Local Church Discernment Committee
8) Mentor Covenant
9) Committee on Ministry Formation Committee
10) Initial Assessment: Assessing a Member in Discernment’s Gifts, Needs, and Circumstances and Shaping an Educational and Formation Plan
11) Liturgical resources for celebrating a Member in Discernment
12) Ongoing Assessment of a Member in Discernment while in an Educational Program
13) Authorization and Release of Information Form
14) Assessment for Authorization: Ordination
15) Assessment for Authorization: Licensure
16) Assessment for Authorization: Commissioning
II Ongoing Covenantal Relationships: Authorized Ministry Resources

1) Covenant of Ministerial Standing

2) Continuing Education Covenant

3) Renewal of License

4) Ongoing Covenantal Accountability
   A) Information Reviews
   B) Periodic Support Consultations
   C) Situational Support Consultations (For Occasional Use)
   D) Fitness Review Procedures (For Use When Necessary)
   E) Ecclesiastical Endorsement Resource (for Occasional Use with Military/Institutional Chaplains)

III Ecumenical Partner Resources

1) Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing (Christian Church, Disciples of Christ)

2) Dual Standing (Ordained ministers of another denomination serving a UCC church or institution who desire to retain authorization in their own denomination)

3) Privilege of Call (Ordained Ministers of another denomination who seek authorization to circulate a UCC Profile and, once a position is obtained, become an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ.)

4) Receiving Ministers from Other Denominations (Utilizing the basic components of the Privilege of Call Process to examine ordained ministers from other denominations serving in an institutional, academic, or ecumenical setting and desiring affiliation with the UCC.)

5) Formula of Agreement/Orderly Exchange of Ordained Ministers of Word and Sacrament among the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church, USA, the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ.

(Underlined material is currently found in the Manual on Ministry)
Overall supplemental documents and training materials are also available online; they provide essential background for the Covenantal Partners in their discernment, formation, assessment, and ongoing accountability processes:

- “Using the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the UCC”
- “Christian Hospitality and Authorized Ministry” (including Meeting Communities New to the UCC and Resources for Meeting with Persons with Disabilities)
- “UCC Identity Formation”
- “Manual on Church”
- “Ministry Issues Pronouncement Training Resources”