

A Pathway to Ordained Ministry in the Potomac Association of the United Church of Christ

The United Church of Christ recognizes that God calls individuals to ministry in and on behalf of the church. Once a call to ministry is affirmed, authorization for ministry is granted by the Association through the rite of ordination. It is also the Association which affirms and supports candidates for ministry. What follows here are the steps for seeking ordination through the Potomac Association of the United Church of Christ.

To begin, persons seeking to become ordained ministers in the United Church of Christ must be a member in good standing in a local congregation in the Potomac Association.

Step one: The **governing board or a designated committee** in your local church should be named to meet with you to explore your intent to prepare for ordained ministry. If it concurs, the designated board should send a letter to the Church and Ministry Committee recommending that you be accepted as a Member in Discernment (MID). Correspondence for Members in Discernment should be addressed to:

Rev. Audrey C. Price, Coordinator
Members in Discernment
audrey@cccsilverspring.org (preferred)
xtremejoy@gmail.com (secondary)

This process should begin soon after discerning a call to ministry, preferably in the first year of seminary. Once granted, the member in discernment relationship must exist for at least one year.

Step two: Your **pastor** also sends a letter to the Church and Ministry Committee indicating you are considering applying to become a Member in Discernment. In addition to his/her affirmation of your intent, the letter should verify your membership in the congregation and the length of time you have been a member of the United Church of Christ.

Exception: When a prospective candidate lives outside the geographic boundaries of the Potomac Association but maintains his/her church membership in a Potomac Association congregation, the Church and Ministry Committee requests that the member and the church draft a letter (signed by MID, Pastor, Deacons) stating the mutual expectations of how they will maintain the relationship. This letter should be submitted to the MID coordinator for the Church and Ministry Committee within three months of the MID moving out of the association. (Adopted December 21, 2011)

Step three: Complete an application to become a Member in Discernment. Included in that application are the following:

- **A personal letter** expressing your desire to become a member in discernment
- Two **letters of reference**
- **A faith pilgrimage paper** of 5-8 pages, double spaced, which introduces yourself, summarizes your spiritual journey, describes your call to ministry, names your gifts and talents and states why you desire to be considered as a candidate for ordination in the United Church of Christ. Please e-mail the paper to the coordinator for members in discernment.
- Official copies of all academic **transcripts** of all previous post-secondary educational degree programs. If you have already completed seminary education, that transcript should also be included; if not, it should be provided upon graduation.

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MID Coordinator
Christ Congregational Church UCC
9525 Colesville Road
Silver Spring, MD 20901

Email: audrey@cccsilverspring.org

Step four: Once the application is complete, a time will be arranged for an **interview with the Church and Ministry Committee**. In preparation for your interview, your **faith pilgrimage paper** will be distributed to each member of the Church & Ministry committee.

Step five: **Interview with the Committee on Church and Ministry**. Your pastor must accompany you on this interview.

Step six: **Members of the Church and Ministry committee will vote** on your request to become a Member in Discernment. Their decision will be relayed to you and your pastor following the meeting.

Once voted 'Member in Discernment' by the Potomac Association Church and Ministry Committee, the following requirements apply:

Step seven: Schedule a **Career counseling/assessment** with a service approved by the Church and Ministry Committee of the Potomac Association within the **first six months** of discernment. Note that a release form allowing the report to be sent to the Church and Ministry Committee is required. Payment for the service is equally divided among your home church, the Association and you.

Listed below are approved services:

- The Ministry Assessment Program (MAP) Samaritan Counseling Center 1803 Oregon Pike, Lancaster, Pa. 17603; (717-560-9969)
- VIP Care Inc., located at 2000 Bremono Road Suite 105, Richmond, VA 23226. (804.282.8332) www.vipcare.org
- Molock and Associates, Beloved Community Church, 17500 Indianhead Highway, Accokeek, MD, 20607 (202 994 6314) FAX 240 407 4400; smolock@gwu.edu

Required Training prior to Ordination

Step Eight: Complete an approved course about the United Church of Christ which includes the following components: UCC history, UCC theology, UCC polity and UCC ministry.

Options include, but are not limited to:

- a Seminary UCC Polity course;
- UCC Institutes conducted by the Central Atlantic Conference (<http://www.potomacucc.org/ucc-institutes/>); or
- online course run by the Center for Progressive Renewal.

Step Nine: Complete the first unit of **Boundary Awareness Training** offered or approved by the Potomac Association.

Step Ten: Complete as a minimum one unit of **Clinical Pastoral Education**

Step Eleven: Participate in an annual review with the Church and Ministry Committee. You will be asked to prepare a one page summary of the year's activities and must be accompanied by his/her pastor and association advisor.

Expectations During Discernment Period

Throughout this period of discernment, you are expected to:

- **Maintain affiliation, participation, endorsement and support in your local congregation.**
- **Be in relationship with an Association Adviser** assigned by the Church and Ministry Committee. The ideal is for monthly meetings, but if that frequency is not feasible, the expectation is for quarterly face to face meetings with e-mail or phone contact in the interim months. Initially the focus of the meetings is discernment. Later in the process your adviser will have an active role in reviewing your ordination paper and accompanying you to your ordination interview.
- **Meet with your pastor and the board or committee which sponsors** at least annually.

Moving Towards Ordination

Step twelve: When anticipating fulfillment of all requirements, contact the coordinator for Members in Discernment to **verify that all requirements are indeed satisfied.**

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Step thirteen: Submit an **ordination paper** to your Association Adviser who will either approve the paper or recommend modifications.

The ordination paper needs to be in three parts: (1) personal journey, (2) explanation of one's systematic theology and (3) United Church of Christ history and polity. Each section should be 8 pages, double spaced, in 12 point "Times New Roman" font. Sections may be woven together using one's personal style and creativity.

Step fourteen: Once your ordination paper is approved by your **Association Adviser**, meet with your sponsoring body to present and discuss your paper. After they have approved the ordination paper, the church **submits a letter to the Church and Ministry Committee to request an ordination interview.**

Step fifteen: **E-mail your ordination paper** to the coordinator for members in discernment. It will be distributed to members of the Church and Ministry committee member prior to your interview. If a call has already been obtained, the "Terms of Call" should be submitted to the MID Coordinator review of Church & Ministry Committee.

Step sixteen: **Accompanied by your pastor and association adviser, meet with the Committee on Church and Ministry for an ordination interview.** If it is the committee's conclusion that "you are prepared for and can faithfully and effectively carry out the responsibilities of ordained ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ," you will be recommended for an **Ecclesiastical Council.**" (United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry, Section 3, pg7)

Step seventeen: **To be approved for ordination – or ordination pending a call by an Ecclesiastical Council.** Ecclesiastical Councils are gatherings of representatives from congregations across the Association called together to examine and vote on each candidate's fitness and preparedness for ministry. The councils are scheduled quarterly and may examine up to three candidates on any given date.

REGARDING A UCC PROFILE: While a profile is not required for ordination, it is the process through which ordained ministers in the United Church of Christ seek a call. Once you are a

Member in Discernment, you may prepare a profile. However, it may **not** be circulated until you have completed one year in discernment and a career assessment. It must also be reviewed and approved by the Church and Ministry Committee.