

## **2017 Annual Report of the Committee on Ministry Submitted by Rev. Sara E. Morse, Chair**

The Committee on Ministry (COM) is authorized by the Conference Bylaws (Article VII, Section: Standing Committees – Committee on Ministry) to exercise nurture and oversight of the authorized ministers of the Conference. Its work is guided by the United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry, the Conference By-laws, and policies developed by the COM and approved by the Conference Board of Directors. The COM continues to integrate the *Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers*, a document created in response to the Ministry Issues Pronouncement of General Synod 25, which sought to expand UCC definitions of learnedness and leadership in authorized ministry and to emphasize excellence in ministerial formation.

The COM meets quarterly to review the work of subcommittees, adopt policies and procedures, and consider various matters pertaining to authorized ministers and members in discernment. The full committee assigns some tasks – notably Ordination Examinations with the Discernment and Preparation of Authorized Ministers (DPAM) subcommittee taking the lead and formal Fitness Reviews – to panels of 7-10 COM members. Representatives of the COM and Conference staff participate in Ecclesiastical Councils, ordinations, installations, and services of farewell throughout the year.

The Executive Committee of the COM, consisting of the Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Subcommittee Chairs, and Board of Directors Liaison, along with our Conference Minister and Associate Conference Ministers, meets monthly when the full COM does not meet. The Executive Committee plans COM meetings and the annual retreat, reviews subcommittee work, and considers policy matters to propose to the full COM.

Our annual retreat was held in July at Christ the King Retreat Center in Buffalo, MN. This retreat allows the COM to team build and to engage ministry issues in depth. This retreat focused on the current realities of the work of COM. Special emphasis was made on the art of conducting interviews with member in discernment candidates and ordination panels. Mock interviews were done to aid in the understanding and balance of providing a focus for the interview as well as hospitality. The retreat also reviewed the work of the occasional COM procedures that may take place at any given time such as a fitness review or a situational consultation.

The Executive Committee has just begun processing the proposed changes of the Manual on Ministry and how these changes will have direct implications to our work and structure.

The Executive Committee also had to convene a Fitness Review Panel that was initiated in August 2016 and concluded on December 18, 2016.

Much of the work of the COM is accomplished through three subcommittees that meet at their discretion, though typically on a monthly basis: Covenant, Discernment and Preparation for Authorized Ministry (DPAM), and Authorized Ministry (SAM). The Covenant Subcommittee (Barry Hanke, chair) conducts Periodic Support Consultations (PSC) with authorized clergy in the Minnesota conference. The PSC is a conversation/discussion between a member of the subcommittee and the minister, which provide an opportunity for reflection and support. As of April 2017, the subcommittee has completed 30 PSCs since July of 2016. There are currently 210 active authorized ministers in the MN Conference who are not

retired. This subcommittee meets quarterly as a group and had productive discussion working on the annual information review for authorized ministers and sharing concerns that ministers wanted us to bring to the Committee on Ministry or to the Conference Ministers. The PSC is a rewarding and special conversation and all subcommittee members are grateful to be able to participate in this process. During the next year, the hope is to continue to accomplish many PSCs in order to provide support to all ministers in the conference.

The Discernment and Preparation for Authorized Ministry (DPAM) subcommittee (Lynne Krehbiel-Brenemann, chair) is responsible for conducting interviews for those who desire to be a “member in discernment” of the Minnesota Conference. DPAM also works with Privilege of Call and Commissioned Ministry. DPAM is responsible for conducting Ordination interviews as well as review annual reports of the status of members in discernment. DPAM is responsible for determining if a call is ordainable. The year brought many strong ministerial candidates. This subcommittee accepted 7 new Members in Discernment, conducted two Ordination Panels, granted one Privilege of Call, represented the Minnesota Conference UCC at three Ordinations, and joined a four-way covenant. Keeping in touch with UCC students at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities and strengthening ties between the MN Conference and the seminary are important to DPAM. Once each semester, DPAM and COM members met with seminary students and with faculty. Over the next year, DPAM intends to increase contact with students, seminary faculty and staff, and with current Members in Discernment.

The Subcommittee of Authorized Ministry (SAM) (Rev. Zoe Kuester, chair) receives transfers of standing into the MN Conference for UCC clergy who have been called to ministries in Minnesota or have chosen to retire here, as well as applications by pastors from other denominations seeking Dual Standing or Ministerial Partner Standing. SAM is also responsible for licensing lay ministers who serve a number of local churches. SAM works with clergy seeking endorsement as hospital, nursing home, or military chaplains, including periodic reviews for accrediting agencies that require updates for these endorsements. This subcommittee also reviews the authorization of all ministers in the MN Conference, with particular attention to individuals who are no longer engaged in ministry requiring ordained ministerial standing or whose whereabouts are not known to the MN Conference. SAM also monitors the boundaries training to ensure that authorized ministers are compliant in taking this course once every three years. SAM is currently reviewing the current boundaries training requirement and course. In particular, SAM is looking at how this boundaries training applies to the different authorized ministries in the conference.

This is my sixth and final year on the COM and my fourth year as chair of the COM. I am grateful for what I have learned and humbled by the individuals I have met. I want to express deep gratitude to all of the members of this committee, our Conference Minister, Shari Prestemon, our Associate Conference Ministers, Rick Wagner and Steve Boorsma, and our Conference Support Staff, Marita Karlisch for their gifts and insights to COM.