

## **2016 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 has also integrated 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. 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 Mount Olivet Retreat Center in Farmington, MN. This retreat allows the COM to team build and to engage ministry issues in depth. The theme, *How the UCC History, Polity, Theology, and Ecclesiology is Relevant to the Committee on Ministry (and the local church)* was an in depth look at the importance of our UCC roots and the impact that has in our work. Our keynote was Rev. Dr. Jeanyne Slettom, who has extensive experience teaching the UCC Course and Process Theology at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities (UTS) and other seminaries across the country.

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 and Marsha Benshoof, Co -Chairs) 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 the minister to reflect and to be supported. During 2015, we completed 44 PSCs with clergy and more are in process! There are approximately 220 authorized, non-retired clergy in Minnesota and the Covenant subcommittee has a goal of completing a PSC with each one every three to five years.

The Discernment and Preparation for Authorized Ministry (DPAM) subcommittee (Lynne Krehbiel-Breneman, 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. DPAM hosted 6 Member in Discernment interviews; 6 Ordination Panels; authorized 5 Ecclesiastical Councils; conducted one Privilege of Call interview; and approved 4 covenants for non-parish ministry. Several services of Ordination are imminent. DPAM strengthened outreach by hosting a meeting for students at United Theological Seminary to learn about the process for becoming members in discernment and the discernment process. In the spring, we invited members in discernment and advisors to a reception in order to strengthen relationships. We deepened seminary student support by weekly meetings with some students and by meetings with seminary administration, and we look forward to working more closely with UTS this upcoming year. We developed a flow chart of the discernment process to ordination to clarify the path for candidates and streamlined some committee procedures. As a look toward the future, DPAM sent a delegate to the national "Reimagining Theological Education" conference to help us keep aware of trends that may impact our work.

The Subcommittee of Authorized Ministry (SAM) (Rev. Desiree Gold, 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.

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.