

ORDINATION PREPARATION POLICY
MINNESOTA CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
December 2015

Introduction: This policy guides the Discernment and Preparation for Authorized Ministry (DPAM) Subcommittee of the Committee on Ministry of the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ, acting as an Association, as it advises and directs Members-in-Discernment of the Minnesota Conference in their preparation for ordination in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ. It is the policy of the Minnesota Conference that the United Church of Christ *Manual on Ministry* guides the Committee on Ministry on all matters regarding preparation for Ordination. Section 3 of the *Manual* provides information on each step of the ordination process. Candidates and advisors are expected to know and use the *Manual* as they enter into the ordination process in the Minnesota Conference. This policy statement does not repeat that information, but is intended to specify how and when the appropriate steps toward ordination are to be taken. When a person has been a Member-in-Discernment with the Minnesota Conference for at least one calendar year, and has completed, or will within six months complete, all requirements for the M.Div. degree at a theological school or seminary accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (or an equivalent formal educational program as specified in a policy statement adopted by the Committee on the Ministry), and is seeking a call to an authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ for which ordination is expected, the following steps are to be taken, leading to an Ecclesiastical Council, a call to an ordained ministry position and ordination.

1.Required documentation: The following items are to be sent to the Conference Office to the attention of the staff person for the Committee on the Ministry:

- Request for ordination from candidate's local church
- Verification of local church membership in the UCC
- Verification of status as a Member in Discernment
- Draft Profile from the UCC Profile Office
- Ordination paper (see number 2 below, pages 4-5 of Section 3 of *Manual on Ministry*)
- Sermon and worship bulletin from the service during which the sermon was preached
- College and seminary transcripts, copies of diplomas
- Evidence of courses taken in UCC history, theology, and polity
- Evaluations from field education or contextual settings, Clinical Pastoral Education, or internships; the Minnesota Conference Committee on Ministry requires that one such setting be in a UCC ministry context.
- Letters of reference from a seminary professor, Discernment advisor, an ordained UCC minister, and one other person
- Completion of a Phase II assessment from North Central Ministry Development Center, with the receipt of its report in the candidate's file. The cost of the assessment is shared, with 50% paid by the candidate and 50% by the Minnesota Conference. An ordination interview cannot be scheduled until the report is received and the bill for the assessment paid in full. This assessment requests that the applicant fill out a medical information form. The Committee on Ministry will not see this information but it is important to the work of the psychologists doing the assessment, therefore we require that the medical information form be filled out and submitted to NCMDC.

2. Ordination Paper: The candidate for ordination writes an ordination paper of no more than 20 pages, double spaced, under the guidance of the advisor. The ordination paper should follow the three-part outline found in Section 3, pages 4 and 5, of the *Manual on Ministry*. In addition to these three parts, the Committee on the Ministry of the Minnesota Conference, acting as an Association, requires a 2 or 3-page discussion of healthy and unhealthy boundaries for ordained ministers, indicating how the candidate understands the importance of maintaining boundaries regarding sexualized behavior in the context of ministry leadership, avoiding inappropriate enmeshment in the lives of those being served in ministry, and maintaining appropriate self-care through friendships and support groups outside the ministry setting.

3. Ordination Examination: When all the documentation listed above has been submitted, and the ordination paper completed and approved by the Discernment Advisor, an ordination examination is scheduled. Examinations are done by an Ordination Panel comprised mostly but not exclusively of members of the Discernment and Preparation subcommittee. Typically these examinations are held on dates of the quarterly meetings of the Committee on Ministry, though occasionally other dates may be scheduled. Candidates for ordination are expected to have no more than two guests accompany them to the ordination examination. Usually these guests will be the candidate's pastor and advisor. If the pastor or advisor is not available, the candidate is encouraged to have someone from their local church's discernment committee attend. Neither guest should be a spouse or family member of the candidate. The Ordination Panel follows the schedule and observes the norms listed on pages 7 and 8 of Section 3 of the *Manual on Ministry*. After the examination the candidate and guests are excused, and the Panel determines its judgment according to the options listed on page 9 of Section of the *Manual on Ministry*. The candidate is then informed of the Panel's decision, and there can be discussion of next steps. If the Panel's decision is not an unqualified "Yes," then next steps to address concerns will be determined. The candidate will receive a written statement of the decision, with a copy going to the Discernment advisor.

4. Authorization to Circulate UCC Ministerial Profile: Members-in-Discernment may have their UCC Ministerial Profile validate by an Associate Conference Minister and released for circulation in the UCC only after receiving a "yes" vote at their Ecclesiastical Council.

5. Ecclesiastical Council: When a candidate for ordination has received a "yes" vote at his/her ordination examination, an Ecclesiastical Council can be called. This next step is covered in detail by a separate policy statement of the Committee on Ministry, which can be obtained from the Conference office. The Ecclesiastical Council is also described on pages 10 and 11 of Section 3 in the *Manual on Ministry*. An ordination service cannot take place until such a call has been issued and accepted, nor sooner than one month after the Ecclesiastical Council. The process of seeking and accepting a call is detailed on pages 11 through 16 of Section 3 of the *Manual*.

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