



# **A Member has been called...**

**A UCC Pastor's Guide to  
assisting a Member feeling  
called to Authorized Ministry**

# How do I help them discern?

- When a member contacts you about a call to the ministry, celebrate with them.
- Listen to their call narrative. To what ministry are they articulating a call? Work through the questions at <http://www.ucc.org/ask-the-question/> with them.
- If it is a ministry that does not require ecclesiastical authorization or endorsement, celebrate their call within your congregation and use them in the ministry of your church.
- If you feel that it is a ministry that requires this authorization, assist them in forming a discernment committee within the church.

# But what is a discernment committee?

- This is a group that will meet regularly with the candidate and discuss the UCC's Marks for Faithful and Effective Ministry (available from Conference office or [www.ucc.org/ministers\\_marks](http://www.ucc.org/ministers_marks)) with the candidate.\* (see note on last page)
- They will talk about the call narrative with the candidate and the ministry to which the candidate feels called.
- They will discuss the educational needs of the candidate. (The Marks document helps here, too.)
- They will read Numbers 8 (*The Message*) and affirm that this candidate is called and set aside for authorized ministry that needs training, preparation and authorization from beyond the local church.

<sup>5</sup> The LORD said to Moses: <sup>6</sup> "Take the Levites from among all the Israelites and make them ceremonially clean. (Num 8)

<sup>9</sup> Bring the Levites to the front of the tent of meeting and assemble the whole Israelite community. (Num 8)

# Yes, Authorization

- The church will be an integral partner on this journey of discernment.
  - There are spiritual covenants: prayer support, encouragement, space to work through challenges
  - There are Human Resource covenants: a small discernment committee to sojourn with the candidate, opportunities to preach and teach
  - There are financial covenants: psychological evaluation, criminal background checks, education assistance

<sup>13</sup> Have the Levites stand in front of Aaron and his sons and then present them as a wave offering to the LORD.<sup>14</sup> In this way you are to set the Levites apart from the other Israelites, and the Levites will be mine. (Num 8)

## If authorization is needed...

- You and the candidate should contact your Association Committee on Ministry (COM) Chair to discuss the requirements for applying as a Member in Discernment (MID).
- You and the discernment committee will be asked to write letters of recommendation.
- You and a member of the discernment committee should plan to attend the Committee on Ministry Interview with the candidate.

# No, Authorization

- It is entirely possible that after this initial period of discernment with the candidate that you or the committee may recognize that the candidate's call is to ministry within your congregation and does not need further authorization from the wider church.
- If this is the case, celebrate their call with them and affirm their call, gifts and graces through use in the ministry of your church.

# Remember Baptism

- In the UCC, we believe that all members, by virtue of baptism, are called to be ministers in the **priesthood of all believers**.
- Some however, are called out and set aside for authorized ministry: ordained, licensed and commissioned.
- Scripturally, these require something beyond what the local church can give (Numbers 8, *The Message*).

# Questions

- If you, the candidate or their discernment committee have questions along this journey, contact your association COM chair for guidance.



# **\*Marks for Faithful and Effective Ministry**

- This is not a checklist. No candidate will have all of these marks. They are simply meant to be used in the discernment process with the Discernment Committee to help both the candidate and the committee better understand if the ministry to which this person is called needs authorization. Your work with this candidate will continue after they become a MID.
- If authorization is needed, the Committee on Ministry will discuss these marks and an assigned Advisor will continue that discussion.

**Notes...**

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# Contact Information

- All Association Committee on Ministry Chairs are listed on the Leadership Tab of the Penn Central Conference website ([www.pccucc.org](http://www.pccucc.org))
- Rev. Nora Foust, Association Conference Minister for Ministerial and Congregational Excellence, staff to all Committees on Ministry – [nfoust@pccucc.org](mailto:nfoust@pccucc.org)



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