



Member in Discernment Process

The United Church of Christ in Southern California and Nevada

The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ.

“Those who hold ministerial standing in the UCC are entrusted with and accountable for the faithfulness and effectiveness of their lives and ministries on its behalf. The development and demonstration of such faithfulness and effectiveness are guided by the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the UCC (the Marks), a tool crated to expand UCC definitions of learnedness and leadership in authorized ministry and to emphasize excellence in ministerial formation. The Marks strive to highlight the complex combination of talents, understandings, and skills needed for ministerial leadership in the UCC. The Committee on Ministry (COM) is guided in its work of authorizing and overseeing Ordained Ministers by the Marks.” (Manual on Ministry pg 10.)

The Marks can be found beginning on page 11 of the Manual on Ministry (MOM), and at <https://www.uccfiles.com/pdf/MOM-Sect3-Marks-of-Faithful-and-Effective-Ministers.pdf>

ACRONYMS used in this document:

COM	Committee on Ministry (in Southern Association, the COM is also called the Church and Ministry Committee)
EC	Ecclesiastical Council
LC	Local Church
LCDC	Local Church Discernment Committee
MID	Member in Discernment
MOM	Manual on Ministry
SCNC	Southern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ
UCC	United Church of Christ

Resources available for partners in the discernment process:

- *Manual on Ministry*, available online at <https://www.uccfiles.com/pdf/ManualonMinistry-2018.pdf>
- The UCC Ministerial Code, found beginning on page 62ff of the Manual on Ministry and <https://uccfiles.com/pdf/MOM-Sect3-Mnisterial-Code.pdf>.
- Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers in the United Church of Christ, on pages 10ff of the Manual on Ministry and <https://www.uccfiles.com/pdf/MOM-Sect3-Marks-of-Faithful-and-Effective-Ministers.pdf>.
- *Journaling the Journey*, the *Assessment Rubric for the Marks*, the Marks Mosaic cards, and *The Discernment Travelogue*, all available from UCC Resources <https://www.ucc.org/what-we-do/justice-local-church-ministries/local-church/mesa-ministerial-excellence-support-and-authorization/manual-on-ministry/>.
- *Best Practices for Local Church Discernment Committees*, available from the Church and Ministry Committee or Section 3 of the Manual on Ministry.

This document is intended to be an abbreviated guide to the processes followed by Members in Discernment, Local Churches, and the Association Church and Ministry Committee. The full guide to the MID process is reflected in the Formal Guide to the Member in Discernment Process, a document based on the UCC’s Manual on Ministry (2018).

Candidate	Local Church	Association	Comments
<p>1. A person who is an active member of a local church in the UCC who wishes to explore authorized ministry in the UCC meets with their pastor to begin a discernment process.</p>	<p>2. The pastor facilitates initial contact with the Conference Staff and COM Chairperson, ensures individual has the MID policy document, and helps the Local Church convene a Discernment Committee (LCDC).</p>		<p>See step 1 in the Formal Policy for the MID Process for more detail, “Exploration of Call with Local Church.”</p>
<p>3. The person meets monthly with the Local Church Discernment Committee (LCDC), providing the LCDC with written materials and documents as outlined in “the Formal Guide to the MID Process.”</p> <p>The MID and LCDC begin looking at the MID Application and working on material required for the application, including the steps to complete Appendix B, C, and D.</p> <p>Two (2) copies of official academic transcripts from each institution of higher learning should be requested. One should be sent directly to the Association Administrator. One should be sent to the LCDC and submitted alongside the MID Application (eventually a digital copy is also submitted in the Marks Portfolio).</p>	<p>3. The LCDC receives training and resources from the Conference Staff and COM. The LCDC meets monthly with the individual for discernment and work together.</p> <p>The MID and LCDC begin looking at the MID Application and working on material required for the application, including the steps to complete Appendix B, C, and D.</p> <p>The LCDC reviews academic transcripts, background check, and submitted material.</p>		<p>See step 1 in the Formal Policy for the MID Process for more detail, “Exploration of Call with Local Church.” Resources for Local Church Discernment Committees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best Practices for Local Church Discernment Committees. • The Manual on Ministry • Discernment Travelogue • The Marks of Faithful and Effective Ministers • The Marks Assessment Rubric • Journaling the Journey • The Marks Mosaic Cards

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	<p>4. After a series of regular meetings with the person (approximately one year), the LCDC discerns whether or not the person has the inherent gifts, character and potential to serve faithfully and effectively as a UCC minister. If yes, a recommendation is made to the LC’s governing board.</p>		See step 1 in the Formal Policy for the MID Process for more detail, “Decision Making by the Local Church.”
	<p>5. The governing board makes a decision whether to recommend the person to the Church & Ministry Committee (COM) of the Association.</p>		See step 1 in the Formal Policy for the MID Process for more detail, “Decision Making by the Local Church.”
<p>6. The person completes any remaining parts of the Member in Discernment Application and the essays that are described in the application. The person provides this to the LC Moderator to submit to the COM.</p>	<p>6. The Moderator (or other appointed leader) of the LC submits the MID’s material (application, essays, and required materials) as a single package to COM.*</p>		<p>The Member in Discernment Application is available from the Southern California Nevada Conference office. Please download the form: www.scncucc.org/paths/mid</p> <p>*Official transcripts should be sent directly from each school to the Association Administrator, and additional digital copy of each should be included in the MID application.</p>
<p>7. The person schedules and completes their psychological and career assessment.</p>		<p>7. After receiving the MID’s application materials, details for scheduling a psychological and career assessment are provided.</p>	See step 2 in the Formal Policy for the MID Process for more detail, “Psychological and Career Assessment.”

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		<p>8. Once the psychological and career assessment report is sent to the COM from the testing center, the COM schedules a meeting with the person, their pastor, and representative(s) of the LCDC.</p>	
<p>9. The person meets with COM for their Initial Meeting.</p>	<p>9. A representative of the LCDC and the pastor attend this meeting.</p>	<p>9. COM meets with the person and guests to determine whether to accept the person as an MID.</p>	<p>See step 3 in the Formal Policy for the MID Process for more detail, "Initial Meeting with the COM."</p>
		<p>10. An MID Advisor is assigned to accompany the MID. The MID Advisor receives training and resources from the Conference Staff and COM.</p>	<p>See step 4 in the Formal Policy for the MID Process for more detail, "Appointment of an MID Advisor."</p>
<p>11. A Discernment Covenant is written by the MID, LC, LCDC, COM and Advisor, outlining expectations for the discernment process.</p>	<p>11. A Discernment Covenant is written by the MID, LC, LCDC, COM and Advisor, outlining expectations for the discernment process.</p>	<p>11. A Discernment Covenant is written by the MID, LC, LCDC, COM and Advisor, outlining expectations for the discernment process.</p>	<p>The COM will provide the template for the covenant.</p>
<p>12. A Preparation and Formation Plan is developed by the MID and COM, with input from the LCDC.</p>	<p>12. A Preparation and Formation Plan is developed by the MID and COM, with input from the LCDC.</p>	<p>12. A Preparation and Formation Plan is developed by the MID and COM, with input from the LCDC.</p>	<p>See step 4 in the Formal Policy for the MID Process for more detail, "Preparation and Formation Plan."</p>
<p>13. As an MID, it is the responsibility of the candidate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remain active in their congregation • Continue meeting for discernment with the LCDC 	<p>13. The LCDC remains actively involved and meets at least quarterly with the MID for the duration of their process. Please refer to Best Practices for LCDC.</p>	<p>13. The Advisor remains actively involved and meets monthly with the MID for the duration of their process. Please refer to Best Practices for an Advisor.</p>	<p>See step 4 in the Formal Policy for the MID Process for more detail, "Discernment Process and Partners After Becoming a Member in Discernment"</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with their MID Advisor monthly • Engage their Preparation and Formation Plan • Build a Marks Portfolio in consultation with the MID Advisor 			For specific instructions about the Marks Portfolio, see “Developing a Marks Portfolio”
<p>14. One month before the Annual Review, the MID ensures all needed materials, including working draft Marks Portfolio, are submitted to the COM.</p>	<p>14. One month before the Annual Review, the LC completes the LCDC Annual Review.</p>	<p>14. The COM receives the materials and prepares for the MID’s Annual Review</p>	See step 4 in the Formal Policy for the MID Process for more detail, “Annual Reviews with the COM”
<p>15. The MID meets annually with COM to continue to listen together to God’s call to review their progress with the formation and preparation plan, to make adjustments or changes to the plan that may be needed, and to determine next steps in the discernment process. This is an opportunity for both discernment and assessment.</p>	<p>15. The Local Church Pastor and members of the LCDC attend the MID’s Annual Review and are encouraged to reflect on the MID’s skills, gifts, and readiness for ministry as reflected by the Marks.</p>	<p>15. COM meets annually with the MID and their MID Advisor and members of their LCDC to continue to listen together to God’s call to review their progress with the formation and preparation plan, to make adjustments or changes to the plan that may be needed, and to determine next steps in the discernment process. This is an opportunity for both discernment and assessment.</p>	See step 4 in the Formal Policy for the MID Process for more detail, “Annual Reviews with the COM”
<p>Steps 13-15 continue until the COM, LC, and MID determine the MID is ready for the next step</p>			

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<p>16. MID submits a completed Marks Portfolio and the materials required for a Final Review.</p>	<p>16. LC and LCDC submit completed letters required for a Final Review.</p>	<p>16. When the COM assesses that an MID has completed their preparation and formation plan and has developed their competencies related to the Marks satisfactorily, they communicate with the MID and LCDC and request the materials needed for a Final Review.</p>	<p>See step 5 in the Formal Policy for the MID Process for more detail, “Request for an Ordination Interview: Final Review”</p>
		<p>17. The COM reviews the MID’s Marks portfolio, draft of the ministerial profile, and other materials. If COM believes the candidate is fit and ready for ministry and demonstrates integration of the Marks, the COM schedules an ordination interview with the MID. Alternatively, the COM may request rewrites or additional formation opportunities.</p>	<p>See step 5 in the Formal Policy for the MID Process for more detail, “Request for an Ordination Interview: Final Review”</p>
<p>18. The MID prepares a Portfolio Presentation and the COM engages them in an ordination interview.</p>	<p>18. The LCDC and pastor join the MID for the Ordination Interview.</p>	<p>18. COM meets with the MID, their pastor, their MID Advisor, and the representatives from the LCDC for an ordination interview.</p>	<p>See step 5 in the Formal Policy for the MID Process for more detail, “Ordination Interview”</p> <p>Directions for preparing a Portfolio Presentation are available from www.scncc.org/paths/mid</p>
		<p>19. Following the interview, COM makes a decision about recommending the MID to the Association for an Ecclesiastical Council.</p>	<p>The COM will work with the Association’s Executive Committee and the MID to schedule the EC. The Association will distribute the necessary paperwork to churches and ministers in the Association.</p>

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		<p>20. At the recommendation of COM, the Association schedules an Ecclesiastical Council (EC) and distributes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice of Ecclesiastical Council • The Marks Portfolio presentation • EC delegate training materials, personalized for the MID 	<p>Training materials will be distributed to churches and ministers prior to the EC. https://www.uccfiles.com/pdf/MOM-Sect3-Best-Practices-for-Training-Delegates-for-Ecclesiastical-Councils.pdf</p>
<p>21. At the EC, the MID makes a 10-15-minute presentation, offering their sense of call, theological grounding, and/or readiness for ministry using the Marks, and responds to any questions that members of the Association may pose.</p>		<p>21. Following the MID’s presentation and responses, the COM may respond to any further questions and provides its recommendation to the EC.</p> <p>A vote for or against ordination pending a call is taken.</p>	<p>Sample agenda for EC: https://www.uccfiles.com/pdf/MOM-Sect3-Ecclesiastical-Council-Agenda-POC-or-Ord.pdf</p>

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<p>22. The MID approved for ordination pending a call circulates their profile.</p> <p>If a call is received, the MID submits the call agreement or job description for determination of an ordainable call. If the call is deemed ordainable, preparations for the ordination ceremony may begin, under the guidance of COM. If the call is not deemed ordainable, the MID may decide whether or not to continue the search for an ordainable call.</p> <p>Until a call is received, the MID will continue to meet annually with COM to renew status. Approved for Ordination Pending a Call status can be renewed for up to four years.</p>		<p>22. Upon receipt of a call agreement or job description, the COM determines if this is an ordainable call. If so, preparations for an ordination ceremony may begin.</p> <p>COM will meet annually with the MID approved for ordination pending a call. These meetings must include a vote by COM, acting on behalf of the Association, to renew the status of “Approved for Ordination Pending Call.” Annual renewal of such status permits ongoing updating and circulation of profile. “Approved” status may be renewed for up to four years.</p> <p>COM may terminate “approved for ordination pending call” status at any time, based on lack of an ordainable call and/or unsatisfactory demonstration of the Marks or the Ministerial Code.</p>	