



FORMAL GUIDE TO THE PRIVILEGE OF CALL PROCESS

SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA NEVADA CONFERENCE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	2
Privilege of Call in the United Church of Christ	2
Theological Grounding: Ordination in the United Church of Christ	2
Overview of the Discernment Process	4
When to Apply.....	4
Length of Relationship	4
Essential Resources.....	4
1. Exploration of Call with Local Church	6
Beginning Discernment with the Local Church’s Pastor	6
Initial Contact with the Conference Staff and COM Chairperson.....	6
Letter from Denomination of Original Authorization	6
Formation of a Local Church Discernment Committee.....	7
Decision Making by the Local Church	9
2. Psychological and Career Assessment	10
3. Initial Meeting with the COM.....	10
Discernment and Decision Making	11
4. Discernment Process and Partners After Granted Seeking Privilege of Call	11
Appointment of a POC Advisor.....	11
Preparation and Formation Plan	12
Ongoing Relationship With the Local Church and Discernment Committee	12
Developing a Marks Portfolio.....	12
Semi-Annual Reviews with the COM	13
5. Concluding the Discernment Process	14
Request for Privilege of Call Interview: Final Review	14
Privilege of Call Final Interview	15
Ecclesiastical Council.....	16
Privilege of Call Status.....	16
6. Transfer of Ministerial Standing to the UCC	16

INTRODUCTION

The process of authorizing candidates for ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ is a covenantal relationship among individuals ordained in other denominations, their UCC Local Churches, their Associations, and the Committee on Ministry (COM). The purpose of these guidelines is to establish procedures for the conduct of this authorization process with the Church and Ministry Committee (a form of a COM) in the Southern Association of the Southern California Nevada Conference. This policy's language and practices are informed and grounded in the UCC Manual on Ministry, 2018.

Hearing the call from General Synod to be a denomination that is Accessible to All (A2A) in every setting of the Church, the COM is committed to embodying those practices. At any time during this process, candidates are invited to contact the COM Chair and the Conference staff to discuss needed accommodations during their discernment process.

PRIVILEGE OF CALL IN THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

At times, ordained ministers from other Christian denominations seek to affiliate their lives and ministries with the United Church of Christ. The process of Privilege of Call is designed for an ordained minister who desires to leave their denomination of original authorization and become an Ordained Minister in the United Church of Christ.

Ordained ministers seeking to relinquish standing in their denomination of origin and to maintain exclusively UCC Ordained Ministerial Standing are generally routed through the Privilege of Call discernment process when they belong to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), The United Church of Canada, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, or other ecclesial organizations whose ministerial formation process is similar to the United Church of Christ. There are times when it is appropriate for a Committee on Ministry to grant Member in Discernment status rather than Privilege of Call status, particularly if the person's previous ordination is granted by a non-denominational entity (e.g. local congregation or online organization) and/or if the person does not yet adequately demonstrate the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers.

The Member in Discernment process is different than the process for Privilege of Call.

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDING: ORDINATION IN THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

The United Church of Christ believes that God calls every Christian to be a servant of God, a minister, living and serving in Christ's name. This call is celebrated sacramentally in baptism as persons are claimed for Christ by the Holy Spirit and the Church; all who are baptized spend the rest of their lives responding to God's call and claim. The particulars of each person's call and ministry vary with time, place, talents, experience, personal situation and responsibilities, and, importantly, the needs of the world. Ministry is lived in every aspect of one's life as God's love is shown in word and deed.

The Church acknowledges that its members have many diverse ministries in the world and in the Church. It also recognizes a specific need for representative servant leaders "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). The United Church of Christ, along with the Church Universal through the ages and throughout the world, affirms God's call to some individuals to be such leaders who help the Church to be what God intends it to be. These persons are set apart through prayer and the laying on of hands in the rite of ordination.

In ordination, the individual makes a lifetime commitment to God in Jesus Christ and to the Church, relying on the Holy Spirit. As Ordained Ministers enter the apostolic ministry, they continue the witness of Christ's followers from New Testament times. They receive authority from the Triune God to serve in Jesus' name. Ordained Ministers have particular responsibilities for the proclamation and practice of the Christian faith and for the life of the Church itself.

Ordained Ministers are authorized to serve and to lead on behalf of the United Church of Christ and the Church Universal, a ministry that encompasses the fullest range of leadership ministries: priestly and prophetic, representative and servant. They are called to embody the love of God for the world and to proclaim the good news on behalf of the Church, personally and publicly pointing the Church to its dependence on Jesus Christ, the source of its faith, mission, and unity.

Ordained ministry of the United Church of Christ is in accord with the Church Universal as this ministry serves the unity of the Church and continues to witness to the Gospel proclaimed by Jesus of Nazareth and his followers across generations. As did prophets and priests of the Hebrew Scriptures and disciples and apostles of Jesus in the New Testament, Ordained Ministers stand with the people before God and carry the Word of God to the people. Ordained Ministers belong to both God and the people. They are nurtured and sustained by both; they are responsible to both. In the United Church of Christ, this relationship and responsibility is called Ordained Ministerial Standing. It is embodied in a covenant under God among the Association, the Ordained Minister, the Local Church of membership, and the ministry setting.

Because both the demands upon Ordained Ministers and the needs of the Church are multiple, no person will have all the needed gifts to offer to all people in all situations. Nevertheless, all Ordained Ministers are servants of God in their ministry on behalf of the Church of Jesus Christ. Ordained ministry is ministry of the Church entrusted to individuals; it is not the ministry of individuals acting independently. Ordained Ministers are persons of faith, claimed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ and committed to the Church and its ministry. They seek to serve God and the world in humility, able and willing to offer and receive wisdom. The Church looks to them to be learned persons and to have a deep knowledge of the Scriptures and of the Church historically and ecumenically.

Manual on Ministry: A Guide to the Authorizing Ministry in the United Church of Christ, Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization Local Church Ministries, A Covenanted Ministry of the United Church of Christ, 2018.

OVERVIEW OF THE DISCERNMENT PROCESS

WHEN TO APPLY

A person seeking to relinquish standing in their denomination of origin and to maintain exclusively UCC Ordained Ministry Standing, should begin the Privilege of Call process at the point when they begin discerning a change in denominations and begin forming a relationship to a UCC congregation.

LENGTH OF RELATIONSHIP

The person seeking Privilege of Call should expect to be in the discernment process with their local church for at least 6 months before their church submits a request to the Committee on Ministry (COM) on their behalf. The person's discernment process then continues with relationship to the COM. The discernment process with the COM is typically 6 months to 2 years, depending upon the person's relationship to a local United Church of Christ congregation, their familiarity with the United Church of Christ, and their educational background, professional experience, and life experience. Because this is a process of intentional discernment as well as assessment, the process may take more time.

A person seeking Privilege of Call may not automatically transfer their process from one Association to another Association in this Conference or other Conferences of the United Church of Christ. Those who have completed their Privilege of Call process and have been approved for authorization continue as approved for Privilege of Call until they receive a suitable call or for the maximum length of time the status allows. Once a person has been granted Privilege of Call, annual reviews occur until they receive a call and are granted Ordained Ministerial Standing in the UCC.

ESSENTIAL RESOURCES

In addition to these Discernment Guidelines, all persons seeking Privilege of Call shall ensure that they become familiar with the following documents:

THE MANUAL ON MINISTRY (THE MOM)

The Manual on Ministry is a resource from the United Church of Christ that outlines a set of processes, guidelines, and best practices recommended to Associations and their Committees on Ministry in carrying out their work.

The COM has adopted and adapted policies from the MOM to fit this ministerial context. The COM's specific policies and procedures herein are what govern their discernment and work in partnership with candidates, local churches, Associations, and other partners.

The Manual on Ministry is available online at www.ucc.org/ministers_manual.

THE MARKS OF FAITHFUL AND EFFECTIVE AUTHORIZED MINISTERS OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST (THE "MARKS")

Those who hold ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ are entrusted with and accountable for the faithfulness and effectiveness of their lives and ministries on its behalf. The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ (the Marks) strive to highlight the complex combination of talents, understandings, and skills needed for ministerial leadership in the United Church of Christ. COMs use the Marks to guide their work of authorizing and overseeing Ordained Ministers.

The Marks are available at www.ucc.org/ministers_marks and in Section 1:1 of the Manual on Ministry.

UCC MINISTERIAL CODE

All persons with ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ are expected to abide by the UCC Ministerial Code.

The Ministerial Code is outlined in Section 2:3 of the Manual on Ministry.

1. EXPLORATION OF CALL WITH LOCAL CHURCH

For those exploring ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ, the first place to engage that call and listen for feedback is in a UCC congregation. A person must be an active, participating member of a UCC Local Church and engaged in discernment with their Local Church pastor and Local Church Discernment Committee for at least 6 months before applying to the COM for Seeking Privilege of Call.

For persons who are a part of denominations that prohibit them from being a member in a UCC congregation until after their credentials are moved, active participation in a UCC Local Church may take the place of membership.

BEGINNING DISCERNMENT WITH THE LOCAL CHURCH'S PASTOR

The process towards Privilege of Call begins when a person seeks out the pastor of the Local Church in which they hold active membership to discuss and explore their sense of call to serve in the United Church of Christ. Meetings between a person considering ordained ministry in the UCC and their Local Church pastor should explore the person's sense of vocation and consider what it means to be called to ordained ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ. The Local Church pastor can also provide general information on the UCC process of Privilege of Call and support the development of a Local Church Discernment Committee if one does not already exist within the Local Church.

From time to time, the person discerning their sense of call to serve in the United Church of Christ is already serving as the pastor of the Local Church in which they have membership (or active participation if they are a part of a denomination that prohibits them from being a member in a UCC congregation until after their credentials are moved). When this is the case, it is necessary for another clergy person ordained by the United Church of Christ to serve in the role of Local Church pastor as outlined in this policy. The Committee on Ministry (COM) will assist connecting the person with another clergy person ordained in the United Church of Christ to serve in this role.

INITIAL CONTACT WITH THE CONFERENCE STAFF AND COM CHAIRPERSON

As the person and the Local Church pastor begin discernment together, the person and Local Church pastor should contact the Conference staff member who supports the Privilege of Call process. The Conference staff member and COM chairperson will provide the person and Local Church pastor information on the UCC process of discernment, support the development of a Local Church Discernment Committee, and provide training and resources for the Discernment Committee to guide their work.

LETTER FROM DENOMINATION OF ORIGINAL AUTHORIZATION

As the person begins to explore and discern Privilege of Call, the person reaches out to the appropriate judicatory leader in their denomination of original authorization and requests a letter be written on their behalf to confirm they are in good standing. The person directs and grants permission for the judicatory leader to write a letter and send a copy to both the Local Church pastor, the chairperson of the COM, and the Conference staff. The letter should include the following:

- Verification of the clergy person's current authorization for active ministry in the denomination as well as good standing
 - If the person does not currently have authorization for active ministry, please indicate the reasons and what is required of the person to obtain authorization again.

- If the person is currently on leave from ministry (ex. an administrative leave, renewal leave, leave of absence, or other type of leave), indicate the type of leave and describe what this kind of leave is used for in the denomination. Include applicable dates, reasons for leave, and any other relevant information.
- A description of the type of the clergy person's ecclesiastical authorization (ex. ordained, licensed, commissioned, lay minister, etc.) as well as a description of what that type of authorization means (ex. authorization for word and sacrament, authorization to serve any setting or limited to a specific setting, etc.)
- An indication of whether or not the clergy person has had formal concerns raised about their ministerial fitness, readiness, and effectiveness at any point in their ministry. If these concerns resulted in a formal review, disciplinary review, or other formal process, please describe the concern, the process of the review in your denomination, the result of the review, and the steps to be followed after the review, if applicable.
- Any other information that should be raised regarding a minister's fitness, readiness, and effectiveness

In some cases, the request for a letter from their judicatory leader is difficult for the person to obtain. If this arises, the person should contact the chair of the COM or a minister on the Conference staff to contact the judicatory leader in the denomination of original authorization on the person's behalf.

On rare occasions, asking for a letter from a judicatory leader puts a candidate who desires Privilege of Call at substantial personal or professional risk. If this is the case, the COM chair should be notified. The COM may choose to delay requiring this letter until later in the Privilege of Call of process but cannot waive this requirement.

If the formal letter from the judicatory leader must be delayed until a time closer to the final review, or if the judicatory leader is unresponsive to the request for a letter, the COM may choose to allow three letters of reference to be substituted in place of the judicatory leader's letter at this point in the process. Of the three letters of recommendation, at least one letter should be written by an ordained minister of the UCC, and at least one letter should be written by a judicatory representative (that can speak accurately of a person's ordination, standing, and reviews) in the denomination in which the person is currently ordained. The third letter should come from someone who knows the minister and their ministry well. The candidate should resource each of the people writing the recommendations with The Marks for Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers and how to use the Marks as an assessment tool so that each of the writers can use them to speak to the minister's strengths as well as areas of growth.

These letters should all be retained and made available to the Local Church Discernment Committee after its formation.

FORMATION OF A LOCAL CHURCH DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE

If, after a period of discernment with the Local Church's pastor, the person is ready to continue discerning their call to ordained ministry in the UCC, and the person's ordination and authorization for ministry is confirmed as being in good standing, a Discernment Committee is formed by the Local Church in which they have membership (or active participation if they are a part of a denomination that prohibits them from being a member in a UCC congregation until after their credentials are moved). The Local Church Discernment Committee may be a standing committee or an ad hoc committee as local circumstances dictate. It should consist of 4-7 members of the church, one of whom should be the Local Church's pastor.

If the person discerning a call to ordained ministry is currently an employee of the Local Church or is serving as the lead or solo pastor of the Local Church, special attention should be given to the formation

of this committee to ensure it can be one truly centered on discernment rather than employment, oversight, or supervision.

The purpose of the Local Church Discernment Committee is to help the person listen to and test their sense of call. The goal of discernment for the Local Church Discernment Committee in reflection with the person is to determine if the person has the inherent gifts, character, and potential to serve faithfully and effectively as an Ordained Minister in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ.

TASKS: WRITE A SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

In the initial stage of discernment, the Local Church Discernment Committee should request that the person write a Spiritual Autobiography¹ and a Statement of Faith by asking the candidate:

Introduce yourself by way of sharing your spiritual autobiography. Conclude by writing your own personal Statement of Faith. You may structure that in any variety of ways but may find it helpful to look at the various versions of the UCC's Statement of Faith.²

What is submitted should inform conversations and discernment in the weeks and months to follow. The person should be encouraged to keep revising both of these pieces of writing as they gain more clarity about their spiritual journey and how they articulate their faith and theological understandings.

TASKS: ENGAGE THE MARKS FOR FAITHFUL AND EFFECTIVE AUTHORIZED MINISTERS AND JOURNALING THE JOURNEY

Additionally, at the beginning of this time of discernment, members of the Local Church Discernment Committee should familiarize themselves with the Marks for Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers³ and its companion discernment resource, Journaling the Journey⁴. Working through Journaling the Journey together as a practice for discernment is highly recommended.

TASKS: ARTICULATING UNDERSTANDING OF ORDINATION, VOCATION, AND CALL

As the person's sense of call to Ordained Ministry in the UCC becomes clearer, as well as their particular potential for faithful and effective ministry in the UCC, the Local Church Discernment Committee should request the person to reflect on following questions:

- Describe your theological understanding of ordination and the role of the Church in discerning a call to the vocation of ministry.
- Describe in particular your call to the vocation of ministry and the setting to which you currently feel most called.
- Expanding on the understanding of ordination, why are you interested in ordination and ministry specifically in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ?

The Discernment Committee should listen deeply to the person's answers and understandings, adding its own prayerful insights as well. Discernment Committees may wish to ask these questions at several different points throughout the process of discernment since the answers will change with time and

¹ A spiritual autobiography is a story of how significant events, relationships, and cultural influences have contributed to the author's spiritual formation, relationship with God, interpretation of scriptures, and understanding of how to live as a disciple of Jesus.

² Versions of the UCC Statement of Faith are accessible online at www.ucc.org/beliefs.

³ The Marks are available online at www.ucc.org/ministers_marks and in Section 1:1 of the Manual on Ministry.

⁴ Journaling the Journey is available through UCC Resources at www.uccresources.com.

experience. The person should be encouraged to keep revising their reflections and statements as they gain more clarity in their sense of call.

TASKS: REQUESTING DOCUMENTATION OF EDUCATION

While engaged in the discernment process, the Discernment Committee also requests the person provide documentation of their educational background and attainments. If the person has already completed college, seminary, and/or a theological education program, the person requests copies of official transcripts be sent from each institution. One copy from each school should be sent directly to the COM, either digitally or by mail. Another copy from each school should be sent to the Local Church Discernment Committee. If the person is currently engaged in seminary or a theological education program, unofficial transcripts may be provided as documentation at this time. If the person has been trained through an apprenticeship model or theological education program that does not issue transcripts, a comprehensive program description and evaluations may be provided as documentation at this time.

TASKS: CONSENT AND RELEASE, BACKGROUND DISCLOSURE, AND BACKGROUND CHECK

Through mutual accountability the witness of the United Church of Christ is strengthened, and the Body of Christ is built up. For the purposes of transparency, discernment, and accountability, while working with their Local Church Discernment Committee, the person completes and submits the Statement of Consent and Release Form (Appendix B), the Background Disclosure (Appendix C), and Background Check Release (Appendix D). With attention to both the Marks for Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers and the UCC Ministerial Code, the Discernment Committee should undertake the process of inquiring, listening, and discerning with respect to new information that may arise. This information should be used by the Discernment Committee as they discern the next steps regarding the person's potential, readiness, or fitness for ministry at this current time.

TASKS: CREATING A FILE FOR DOCUMENTATION

Compile all documents considered or created by the person for use with the Discernment Committee into a file so that these materials can be shared with the COM when the person enters the discernment process with the Wider Church. The Discernment Committee and/or Local Church may also request additional information as it deems necessary for discernment, including statements about the candidate's faith, faith journey, background, and education. Add any additional information requested to the person's file.

DECISION MAKING BY THE LOCAL CHURCH

Following a time of discernment between the person and the Local Church Discernment Committee, and when both the Discernment Committee and the person agree that they have a discernible call to ministry in the UCC, reflect the Marks of Faithful and Effective Ministers, and are ready to enter into the Privilege of Call process with the COM, the Discernment Committee shall notify the Moderator or President (or other appropriate church official). In accordance with its own local church polity, the Local Church's governing body then reviews the candidate's file as well as the process of discernment with the Local Church, and makes a *Yes* or *No* decision to recommend the person to the COM for consideration for Seeking Privilege of Call.

If the decision is *Yes*, the Local Church governing body writes a letter of recommendation to the COM and requests that the person be received as Seeking Privilege of Call. This recommendation does not presume a specified outcome but is an affirmation of continued discernment and ongoing support for the person's process. Accompanying the governing body's recommendation, a representative of the local church's

governing body submits a completed Application for Seeking Privilege of Call (Appendix A) and shall forward the Application, along with a copy of the candidate's local church discernment file and the other materials specified in Appendix A, to the COM.

If, after prayerful discernment with the person, the Local Church Discernment Committee or the local church governing body does not believe that a call to ordained ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ is present, the process towards Privilege of Call ends here. The *No* decision is made known to the person with appropriate pastoral support. The Local Church continues to support the person's vocational exploration and the appropriate exercise of the person's gifts, consistent with its encouragement of all members' gifts in service to God's mission.

In the process of discernment or of making a determination of *Yes* or *No* in recommending a person for Seeking Privilege of Call, the Local Church may request a consultation with representatives of the COM. This consultation may cover any number of areas, as the COM representatives and Local Church shall determine, but should, at a minimum, include discussion of the requirements and expectations of all those in the discernment process.

2. PSYCHOLOGICAL AND CAREER ASSESSMENT

After the completed and properly documented Application for Seeking Privilege of Call (Appendix A) and a letter from the denomination of a person's original authorization are submitted to the COM's registrar, the COM will provide the person in discernment directions on how to move forward in submitting the paperwork and payment required for scheduling a psychological and career assessment. The candidate must undergo a psychological and career assessment by an examiner approved by the COM and the assessment must be completed prior to the initial interview with the COM.

It shall be the responsibility of the candidate to make the necessary arrangements for the assessment and to see that it is completed promptly. The COM recommends that the cost of this assessment be shared among the candidate, their local church and the Association of which the local church is a member. In the absence of any cost-sharing arrangement, however, it shall be the candidate's responsibility to pay for the assessment.

Additional assessments may be required from time to time during the authorization process at such times as the COM determines appropriate. Cost-sharing and financial responsibility for such assessments shall be the same as for the initial assessment.

If the person is invited into the process of Seeking Privilege of Call, acceptance of the invitation shall be deemed to be the person's express permission for the COM to include the report in their permanent records.

3. INITIAL MEETING WITH THE COM

Upon receipt of the letter from the Local Church requesting that a person be received as Seeking Privilege of Call, the Application for Seeking Privilege of Call (accompanied by the application materials from the person), the letter from the denomination of original authorization, and the final report from the psychological and career assessment, the COM schedules an initial meeting with the candidate. Representatives from the Local Church Discernment Committee and the applicant's Local Church Pastor are expected to accompany the person and may be asked to contribute to the meeting. Prior to the meeting, the COM thoroughly reviews the submitted materials, which form the beginning of a file in the COM's records of the person.

The purpose of this initial meeting is to offer hospitality to the person and the Local Church, to listen prayerfully to the movement of the Spirit, to engage in conversation about the person's spiritual journey

and call, to outline expectations of the process, to clarify any questions, and to make a determination, using the Marks as a guide, of the candidate's suitability for entry into the Privilege of Call process with the Wider Church. This interview is a two-way street. The candidate and the local church representatives should feel free to ask questions regarding the discernment relationship and process, as well as any special concerns related to the candidate's particular situation. These questions or others may and should be raised by the candidate at any point in the discernment process if these matters require clarification.

DISCERNMENT AND DECISION MAKING

Following the meeting, the Committee determines whether to accept the person as Seeking Privilege of Call and communicates this decision in a timely manner to the person and the Local Church. Seeking Privilege of Call is an ecclesial status within the UCC. The COM shall document its determination. This document shall become a part of the candidate's permanent record.

IF YES

If the Committee's decision is *Yes*, the person may be received as Seeking Privilege of Call. A Discernment Covenant is written between the person, the Local Church of membership, and the COM, outlining expectations for the discernment process. This Covenant shall be signed by the candidate, appropriate representative(s) of the local church and by the chair of the COM. It shall be the responsibility of the candidate to obtain the signature(s) of their local church. Upon the complete execution of the Covenant and its delivery to the COM, the candidate shall become a minister Seeking Privilege of Call.

IF NO

If the Committee's decision is *No*, the discernment process towards Privilege of Call ends here. The candidate will be informed of the decision in writing. The candidate and, if appropriate, representatives of the candidate's Discernment Committee and/or local church governing body may be invited to meet with and discuss the COM's concerns. Unless the COM decides otherwise, this decision is without prejudice to the candidate's reapplication for Privilege of Call status at a later date.

4. DISCERNMENT PROCESS AND PARTNERS AFTER GRANTED SEEKING PRIVILEGE OF CALL

APPOINTMENT OF A POC ADVISOR

When a candidate is accepted as Seeking Privilege of Call, the COM shall appoint a Privilege of Call (POC Advisor) to work with the candidate throughout the discernment process. The POC Advisor is typically an authorized minister in the UCC but may, on occasion, be a qualified layperson. The primary responsibility of the POC Advisor is to engage the minister Seeking Privilege of Call in theological and spiritual reflection on their evolving sense of call and experience of ministerial formation. The POC Advisor also provides clarity about the process as needed and encourages the minister Seeking Privilege of Call's attentiveness to their progress through (and options for) the preparation and formation plan. Appendix E contains a more detailed discussion of the POC Advisor's responsibilities.

When geographic distance prohibits a minister Seeking Privilege of Call from meeting in person with their POC Advisor, the use of audio-visual technology is appropriate.

Ministers Seeking Privilege of Call should meet with their POC Advisors monthly.

PREPARATION AND FORMATION PLAN

A preparation and formation plan is developed by the COM, based on the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers in relation to the Committee's assessment of the minister Seeking Privilege of Call's application materials and psychological assessments. Preparation and formation plans are individualized and may take multiple paths based on the nature of the call, the available options to develop their competencies, and the needs of the Church. Preparation and formation plans set forth the COM's expectations concerning the education and spiritual growth required of the minister Seeking Privilege of Call as they proceed toward authorization. The plan is a living document and may be revised from time to time as the minister Seeking Privilege of Call proceeds through the authorization process.

The following are included in preparation and formation plans for ministers Seeking Privilege of Call:

- Ongoing self-assessment based on the Marks
- Formation of a Marks Portfolio
- Monthly meetings with the POC Advisor
- Quarterly meetings with the Local Church Discernment Committee
- One unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)
- Successful completion of an approved UCC History, Polity and Theology course
- Successful completion of boundary awareness training
- Engagement with the wider Church, such as participation in Association annual meetings, Conference annual meetings or committees, and/or General Synod

ONGOING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LOCAL CHURCH AND DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE

Ministers Seeking Privilege of Call are expected to remain actively involved in their Local Church of membership (or relationship if membership is not possible because of church polity), turning to the Local Church Discernment Committee for ongoing conversation about vocation and readiness for ministry in the UCC. The geographic residence of a minister Seeking Privilege of Call may change temporarily during the discernment process as a result of employment, education, or life circumstance. When distance keeps a minister Seeking Privilege of Call from participating regularly in their Local Church of membership (or relationship if membership is not possible because of church polity), mutual intentionality and creativity are encouraged to continue the relationship between the minister Seeking Privilege of Call and their Local Church. It may be appropriate for the minister Seeking Privilege of Call to participate in a UCC congregation located geographically closer for additional formation, preparation, and community.

When geographic distance prohibits a minister Seeking Privilege of Call from meeting in person with their Local Church Discernment Committee, the use of technology is encouraged.

While Seeking Privilege of Call, a minister should meet with their Local Church Discernment Committee at least once every three months for the duration of their discernment process.

DEVELOPING A MARKS PORTFOLIO

Beginning as soon as a person is received as a minister Seeking Privilege of Call, they are to begin creating a Marks Portfolio. The Portfolio is a medium for ministers Seeking Privilege of Call to both integrate and demonstrate their personal, professional, and spiritual formation and skills for ministry.

Using the United Church of Christ's Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers as a foundation, the Portfolio is curated and arranged to demonstrate competencies and experiences in each of the eight main categories.

Working alongside and in consultation with the POC Advisor, the Marks Portfolio should be assembled, edited, and amended throughout the duration of the Privilege of Call process. A working draft of the Marks Portfolio must be submitted to the COM one month prior to the person's Semiannual Review. At the conclusion of the Privilege of Call process, the person submits a completed Portfolio. A Portfolio that demonstrates integration of the Marks is a key part of the final assessment of a candidate's readiness for ministerial authorization in the UCC.

The COM will provide specific directions for completing a Marks Portfolio after the person is approved for Seeking Privilege of Call. Work that began in the early stages of discernment with the Local Church Discernment Committee can be incorporated into the beginning portions of the Marks Portfolio.

SEMI-ANNUAL REVIEWS WITH THE COM

While Seeking Privilege of Call, ministers meet semiannually with the COM to continue to listen together to God's call, to review their progress with the preparation and formation plan, to make adjustments or changes to the plan that may be needed, and to determine next steps in the Privilege of Call process. The semiannual meeting is an opportunity for both discernment and assessment based on the Marks. In particular, this is a time for the COM to review and provide feedback on the person's Marks Portfolio. Partners in the discernment process—the Local Church pastor, representatives of the Local Church Discernment Committee, POC Advisors—participate in each Review.

At least one calendar month before each Review, the minister Seeking Privilege of Call shall submit at least one copy of each of the following to the administrator for the COM:

- The current draft of their Marks Portfolio. This should include the following:
 - If the individual is enrolled in a seminary, a copy of the POC's transcript showing grades received for all courses taken since the last Annual Review and all written evaluations received for field or classroom work since the last Annual Review should be included in Section 5 of the Marks Portfolio
 - If the individual is enrolled in any other type of educational program, documentation showing grades or credit received for all courses taken since the last Annual Review and all written evaluations received for field or classroom work since the last Annual Review should be included in the Marks Portfolio
- Any CPE evaluations should be included in Section 5 of the draft Marks Portfolio
- The POC Advisor's Annual Review Sheet (Appendix F)
- The POC's Evaluation of their Advisor and Relationship Sheet (Appendix G)
- The Local Church Discernment Committee Annual Review Sheet (Appendix H)
- Such other documents as the COM shall request.

One copy of all materials shall be placed in the person's permanent file.

DISCERNMENT AND DECISION MAKING

Following the Semiannual Review, the COM prayerfully makes one of the following decisions:

- *Yes*. The Committee affirms the person's continued status as Seeking Privilege of Call and ongoing progress in formation and preparation.
- *Yes, but*. The Committee continues the person's Seeking Privilege of Call status and adds particular learning or behavioral goals within a given time frame as a requirement for the discernment process, with a date set for reassessment.

- *No, but.* The Committee terminates the Seeking Privilege of Call status due to a lack of progress and/or substantial need for growth, with constructive feedback offered that could help the person begin the discernment process again at a future undetermined date.
- *No.* The Committee determines that the person is not called to or suited for ordained ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ.

The COM will notify the minister Seeking Privilege of Call, their POC Advisor, and their Local Church's pastor of the decision. If the COM ends the Seeking Privilege of Call status, the candidate will be informed and invited to discuss this decision with the COM.

5. CONCLUDING THE DISCERNMENT PROCESS

REQUEST FOR PRIVILEGE OF CALL INTERVIEW: FINAL REVIEW

Once the COM assesses that a minister seeking Privilege of Call has completed their preparation and formation plan and has developed their competencies related to the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers satisfactorily, the minister seeking Privilege of Call and Local Church Discernment Committee are notified. The minister seeking Privilege of Call coordinates with each of the covenantal partners to ensure documentation is submitted.

The Local Church submits:

- A written letter from the Local Church Discernment Committee reflecting on the process of discernment, their assessment of the candidate's readiness for ministry based on the Marks
- A written request from the Local Church's leadership body supporting the minister's request for Privilege of Call and asking that they be examined by the COM

The POC Advisor submits:

- A written letter from the POC Advisor reflecting on the process of discernment and the Advisors assessment of the candidate's readiness for ministry based on the Marks

The minister seeking Privilege of Call submits:

- The final draft of their Marks Portfolio. This should be submitted as outlined in the directions provided by the COM. The COM will discuss the Portfolio with the minister seeking Privilege of Call, suggesting revisions to be made before it is to be formally presented for Privilege of Call Final Interview. The final Marks Portfolio must include the following documentation:
 - Final Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) evaluation by your supervisor
 - Final Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) self-evaluation
 - Final educational and theological education transcripts or reports
 - Certificate of Attendance at a Pastoral Boundaries Training within the past five years
 - Documentation of completion of an approved UCC History, Polity and Theology course
- A completed Snapshot. The Snapshot is a tool for every authorized minister's visibility and networking with Conference staff across the United Church of Christ. Whether an individual will be seeking a new call or is settled within a ministry, the Snapshot introduces the person, their skills, and their passions to Conferences. It is best practice for ordained UCC clergy to keep their Snapshot current throughout their ministry as a way to connect and multiply their gifts in the life of the church and Wider Church. Directions and access needed for completing the Snapshot are available at http://www.ucc.org/ministers_profile.
- A completed (draft) of the UCC Ministerial Profile with its completed background check. The UCC Ministerial Profile is the document by which an authorized minister synthesizes their theology,

identity, and sense of call for the purpose of reaching out to local church search committees. Whether entering a search and call process or not, it is a tool that documents eligibility for call in or on behalf of the United Church of Christ. After ordination, it also presents official verification of a minister's authorization, standing, and fitness. Directions and access needed for completing the Profile and the background check are available at http://www.ucc.org/ministers_profile. The candidate will not be able to have the profile officially validated for circulation until after they are approved for the final status of Privilege of Call.

- Such other documents as the COM shall request.
- The letter from a denominational leader in the denomination of original authorization that confirms a person's ministerial authorization and good standing. This pertains to situations wherein this letter was not obtained earlier in the process because of personal or professional risk to the candidate. The letter must follow the guidelines as outlined previously.

One copy of all materials shall be placed in the permanent file for the minister Seeking Privilege of Call.

Once these materials are submitted, the COM shall conduct a Final Review of all the material and determine whether the individual has demonstrated integration of the Marks and readiness for an Privilege of Call Interview. If the COM decides to proceed with the Privilege of Call Final Interview, the COM chair, in consultation with the minister seeking Privilege of Call, shall schedule it.

If the COM decides to deny or postpone the Final Interview, it shall inform the minister Seeking Privilege of Call, in writing, of its decision and invite them to continue conversation with the COM concerning what, if any, work or growth still needs to be accomplished before a favorable recommendation can be made.

PRIVILEGE OF CALL FINAL INTERVIEW

Once the COM assesses that a minister Seeking Privilege of Call has completed their preparation and formation plan, met all requirements, and has developed their competencies related to the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers satisfactorily, the minister Seeking Privilege of Call is scheduled for a Privilege of Call Final Interview.

In preparation for the interview the person is expected to prepare a Portfolio Presentation for part of the time together. Directions for preparing the presentation will be provided.

In an atmosphere of prayer and openness to the Holy Spirit, the COM holds the Privilege of Call interview and discusses with the minister Seeking Privilege of Call their sense of call and journey of preparation, reflecting together on the Portfolio Presentation alongside the Marks. Following the interview, the Committee decides if it is time to move from the discernment process to a final authorization decision.

Options for this decision are:

- *Yes*. The Committee commends the minister to the Association for an Ecclesiastical Council.
- *Yes, but*. The Committee continues the process of discernment and defines certain learning outcomes or skillsets that must be demonstrated and reassessed by a specified time.
- *No*. The Committee does not recommend the minister for Privilege of Call in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ and concludes that its process of discernment is complete with this decision. At this point, Seeking Privilege of Call status is terminated.

All decisions are to be communicated to the minister seeking Privilege of Call in writing and added to their file.

ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCIL

In the United Church of Christ, the authority to ordain ministers and to grant ministerial standing is given to Associations. The Ecclesiastical Council is a gathering of delegates on behalf of an Association to decide, on behalf of the United Church of Christ, for or against the granting of Privilege of Call status following the affirmative recommendation of the COM.

In preparation for the Ecclesiastical Council, the agenda as well as portions of the minister's Portfolio are made available to delegates. During the Ecclesiastical Council, the minister Seeking Privilege of Call is introduced and then given time to present their Portfolio Presentation. Delegates are encouraged to ask questions after the presentation about material in the Portfolio and themes in the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers.

If the COM determines to request the convening of an Ecclesiastical Council, the chair of the COM will notify the Association Moderator, who will coordinate with them and with the minister Seeking Privilege of Call to make the necessary arrangements.

The member churches of the Association shall be notified of the Ecclesiastical Council by the Association. The Ecclesiastical Council shall be conducted and its decision on whether to authorize shall be made in accordance with the established procedures for such matters in the Association. If there is no such established procedure, the chair of the COM, Conference staff, the chair of the Association Committee on Ministry, and the Association Moderator shall consult and determine how to proceed.

PRIVILEGE OF CALL STATUS

In the United Church of Christ, after a person is granted "Privilege of Call" status they may circulate their UCC Ministerial Profile in the search and call process.

Once a minister has Privilege of Call status, their accountability is to their Association's Committee on Ministry or to the COM if their Association has delegated that role of oversight and accountability. If the minister with Privilege of Call is accountable to the COM, they will meet annually with the COM to renew their Privilege of Call Status. Annual renewal of Privilege of Call permits a minister's UCC Ministerial Profile to continue its circulation and to be updated as needed. If a decision is made to decline renewal of Privilege of Call, then minister's status with the UCC is terminated and the UCC Ministerial Profile is withdrawn from circulation. A Committee may terminate Privilege of Call at any time based on lack of an ordainable call and/or unsatisfactory demonstration of the Marks or Ministerial Code.

A minister may be categorized as Privilege of Call for a recommended maximum of four years.

6. TRANSFER OF MINISTERIAL STANDING TO THE UCC

Once the minister is approved for Privilege of Call, and they receive a call that is recognized as an authorizable call by their Association's Committee on Ministry, then the Committee votes to grant Ordained Ministerial Standing. With standing granted, the status of Privilege of Call ends and the person relinquishes their standing in any other denomination. Ordained Ministerial Standing is then held exclusively in the United Church of Christ.

If the calling body (ex. a local church) is located outside of the Association that oversaw the Privilege of Call process and granted Ordained Ministerial Standing, the minister must then apply for a transfer of Ordained Ministerial Standing to the Association where the calling body is located.

TRANSFER OF MINISTERIAL FILES

The COM, other Committees on Ministry, Associations, and Conferences acting as Associations across the denomination maintain ministerial files for ministers holding standing. These files are critical in the work of support and accountability as documentation of the covenantal relationships among an Ordained Minister, their ministry settings, and the wider United Church of Christ.

After a person is granted Ordained Ministerial Standing in the United Church of Christ, the COM makes a request that the person's clergy record and files be transferred from their denomination of original authorization to the United Church of Christ. The files are sent to the person designated as the COM's registrar or the support staff in that role and added to their clergy file.

The information requested of the denomination of original authorization is the same as the information stored in clergy's files in the United Church of Christ. The ministerial file being transferred should include:

- Record of ordination
- Documentation of regular oversight proceedings
- Documentation of disciplinary proceedings (concluded Fitness Review materials are included as a packet in the file, to be accessed only as needed)
- Documentation of boundary awareness training and continuing education
- Leave of Absence, Administrative Leave, or other leave agreements (if any)
- Copy of Ecclesiastical Endorsement for specialized ministries (if applicable)
- Credentials or ministerial standing related to ecumenical bodies (if applicable)

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE POC PROCESS,
CONTACT THE UCC CONFERENCE OFFICE TO BE
CONNECTED WITH THE COM CHAIRPERSON AND THE
ASSOCIATE CONFERENCE MINISTER WHO WORKS WITH
CANDIDATES SEEKING PRIVILEGE OF CALL.

THIS POLICY WAS ADOPTED BY SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION
CHURCH AND MINISTRY ON JUNE 15, 2023.
