

## **Expectations of Members In Discernment**

### *Committee on Ministry: Preparation*

St. Louis Association of the Missouri Mid-South Conference  
United Church of Christ

“In care (Member In Discernment) is the relationship that exists between a student preparing for ordination, his or her local church, and his or her Association. The purpose of the in care relationship is to provide support, counsel, and assistance to the student during the time of the student’s academic preparation for ordained ministry.” (United Church of Christ *Manual on Ministry*) The discernment relationship also provides information to the Committee On Ministry: Preparation (COM:P) that it uses in its decisions about ordination.

[Students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry, especially its sections on “Student in Care of Association” and “Ordained Ministry.”]

The COM:P has established the following expectations that Members in Discernment (MID) must fulfill as a pre-requisite for ordination in the United Church of Christ (UCC).

- Establish and maintain an active relationship with a UCC congregation at all times during the discernment period. A MID’s home church will establish its own support committee to maintain this relationship. The MID is expected to attend their local church when possible and take an active role in that congregation. The MID should seek to preach at least once a year in the home church. When a MID is attending a seminary at a distant location, they should establish a relationship with a local UCC church in that locale, but continue to maintain the relationship with the home church. The MID periodically will provide the discernment committee with copies of educational transcripts and field education reports.
- Successfully complete a Bachelor’s degree, or its equivalent and successfully complete a Master of Divinity degree at a seminary recognized by COM:P.
- Complete a COM:P approved psychological evaluation and follow through on any recommendations. Cost of the evaluation will be divided in the following way: 40% paid by the Conference, 40% paid by the home church, and 20% paid by the candidate.
- Successfully complete one unit of clinical pastoral education (CPE) in a program approved by the COM:P.
- Successfully complete a boundary training program approved by the COM:P every three years.
- Initiate and maintain an active relationship with an advisor appointed by the COM:P through monthly contacts. Setting a regular monthly meeting date with an advisor is a good way to handle this commitment. Phone calls, Skype interchanges, or e-mails may substitute for face-to-face meetings when necessary. An advisee who fails to meet with or contact his/her advisor for two consecutive months will be placed on probation and risks being dropped from MID status. The COM:P meets monthly and expects to hear reports on the progress, needs and concerns of MIDs by way of the advisor.

- Participate in annual update interviews with the COM:P during the discernment period. MIDs should invite a representative from their home church support committee and pastor. A MID shall be in discernment for a minimum of one year and participate in a minimum of one annual update interview before the ordination interview.
- Provide transcripts of grades, field education reports and oral examination reports at the end of each academic year to the Missouri Mid-South Conference office and to the home church support committee. (Educational institutions normally require the student to sign a release in order for these materials to be provided to the COM:P.)
- Successfully complete at least four semesters of field education in a local church of the UCC. Exceptions are to be approved by the COM:P. MIDs are encouraged to do their field education in a variety of settings and discouraged from serving more than one year in a single setting.
- Attend a St. Louis Association meeting to be introduced. Participate in the life of the Association, Conference, and national settings of the UCC and ecumenical and interfaith settings as time permits.
- Inform the COM:P or the advisor of changes of address, e-mail, phone, contextual education placement, CPE experience, etc.
- Refrain from using the title “Reverend” or wearing a clerical collar or stoles until after ordination.

Upon recommendation of their home church, a MID may apply for ordination not more than six months prior to the completion of theological training and not less than one year from the beginning of the discernment relationship. The MID must have all of the items from the Documents for Ordination Checklist completed before a date is set for the Ordination Interview.

If approved for ordination, the person can seek a call to a ministry recognized by the United Church of Christ. Upon receiving a recognized call, the person and their local church cooperates with the Association in planning and conducting a service of ordination (see COM:P template for an ordination worship service).

It should be noted that because discernment is a relationship between the MID, the MID’s home church, and the COM:P on behalf of the Association, discernment is not transferable to another Association.