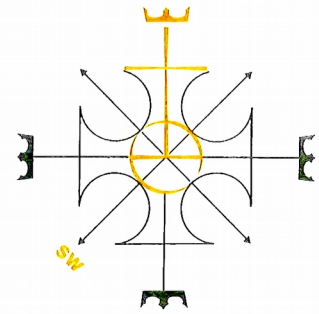




SOUTHWEST ASSOCIATION  
*Michigan Conference*  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



Dear Member-In-Discernment Candidate,

We are thrilled and delighted that your faith journey has brought you to the point where you wish to become a “Member-In-Discernment” of the Southwest Association of the Michigan Conference, United Church of Christ. The Church and Ministry Committee of the Association is a group of caring individuals who wish to prayerfully celebrate your intention to work toward ordination or whatever form your ministry ultimately takes. We will want to get to know you and help you discern the call that God has for you and your life. This is a special time for you and we sincerely wish to share it with you.

We want to help you through the process of “Member-In-Discernment,” which may lead to ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ. Once you are formally accepted into this process, an advisor will be appointed for you. This person will meet with you to go over the expectations for “Members In Discernment” and will continue to act as your guide throughout the process.

The Member-In-Discernment Application and an Information Request Form are included in this document. You should complete both and return them, along with your statement describing your faith pilgrimage, biography, and educational and vocational goals, to the Member-In-Discernment Coordinator (i.e. the person who sent this letter). These documents will be shared with the entire Church and Ministry Committee prior to their meeting with you. A timeline and a checklist are also included with below to help you understand the Member-In-Discernment Process and all of the necessary requirements. Once accepted into the process, the Church and Ministry Committee will also work with you on a covenant to define the ministerial formation part of the process.

Once all of the application materials are received, the Chairperson of the Church and Ministry Committee will contact you to schedule the day and time for your interview. Your home-church pastor is required to come with you to this initial interview. A representative from the governing body of the congregation is encouraged to attend as well. Plan to allow an hour for this interview.

We want to support you and encourage you as you journey toward your growing understanding of God’s call for your life. Don’t hesitate to contact the Member-In-Discernment Coordinator if you need further assistance.

Peace,

The Southwest Association Church and Ministry Committee

Aug 1, 2019

# Application to Member-In-Discernment Process

Southwest Association  
Michigan Conference, United Church of Christ

This application is to be signed by both the candidate and their home church, which must be a member of the Southwest Association of the Michigan Conference United Church of Christ.

Name and City of Church recommending candidate: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_ Candidate's Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Responding to this person's desire to prepare for ordained Christian Ministry in the United Church of Christ, this congregation hereby applies to the Church and Ministry Committee of Southwest Association for acceptance of this candidate as a "Member-In-Discernment". We affirm that the attached application form is accurate and complete.

1. The following completed documents are enclosed with this application:
  - o The candidate's information request form
  - o Statement of Consent and Background Disclosure
  - o Three letters of reference, including one from pastor of this church
  - o A statement from the candidate describing his/her faith pilgrimage, biography, educational and vocational plans.
  - o Documentation of the candidate's formal education and ministerial formation experiences to date
2. The candidate has met with the local church governing board and this body hereby recommends that the candidate be considered for acceptance as a Member In Discernment. Attached is our written recommendation, describing the process used to make our decision.
3. We verify that the candidate became a member of this congregation according to our congregational by-laws on: \_\_\_\_\_ .

Signature of Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Church Leader: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Leader's name printed: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this completed form and accompanying documentation to the Member-In-Discernment Coordinator.

# Information Request Form

Southwest Association  
Michigan Conference, United Church of Christ

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Middle Initial: \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Other Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe your history of involvement in your local church as a leader and as a member:

Describe interests and service in the wider community:

List past and current Association and Conference experiences and responsibilities:

# **Information Request Form**

Southwest Association  
Michigan Conference, United Church of Christ

Describe other leadership abilities and experiences:

In what ways do you think the church should be involved in addressing social issues?

Describe any tentative educational plans to prepare for ministry (past education should be documented in a separate attachment):

Provide a brief description of how you understand your call to ordained ministry at this time:

In a separate document, provide a narrative account of your faith pilgrimage with a description of the people and experiences which have contributed to your sense of call to ministry and growth as a person of faith.

# Statement Of Consent And Background Disclosure

Southwest Association  
Michigan Conference, United Church of Christ

The United Church of Christ Constitution recognizes that God calls the whole church and every member to participate in and extend the ministry of Jesus Christ [paragraph 17]. God also calls certain of the church's members to various forms of ministry in and on behalf of the church [paragraph 18].

Persons completing a Member In Discernment application bring unique gifts, skill, and experiences. The Southwest Association understands the integrity of the Member-In-Discernment process to depend upon supportive cooperation and considerate and appropriate sharing of information among the Church and Ministry Committee, Michigan Conference staff, Member-In-Discernment advisors, and others involved in providing nurture or making decisions.

We are called to speak the truth in love. Our primary goal is, in all circumstances, to build up the body of Christ. Relationships between the Southwest Association and persons seeking Member-In-Discernment status require honesty, integrity, and truthfulness for the health of the church. In that spirit:

I attest that the information contained in my application is true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of consideration for Member In Discernment status.

An open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for continuing healthy relationships between Southwest Association Church and Ministry Committee and persons seeking Member In Discernment status. In that spirit:

I authorize the persons or entities to whom I have submitted this application and/or their agents to make inquiries regarding all statements contained in my application. I also authorize all persons, entities, former employees, committees on the ministry and their agents, courts, law enforcement and other public agencies to respond to inquiries concerning me, and to supply verification of the information contained in my application. I understand that such persons may comment on and state their opinions regarding my background and character to agents of the Southwest Association Church and Ministry Committee. To encourage such persons to speak openly and responsibly, I hereby release them from all liability arising from their responses and comments made in good faith and without malice.

The Member-In-Discernment process of the Southwest Association further rests on the sharing of the application and relevant information in considerate and appropriate ways with those involved in the Member-In-Discernment process. In that spirit:

I authorize the Southwest Association Church and Ministry Committee to share information gathered in connection with the Member In Discernment process with the Michigan Conference staff, my Member-In-Discernment advisor, Southwest Association Council, and Southwest Association. I understand that those gathering information about me concerning my Member-In-Discernment application are encouraged to share such information with me if requested by me to do so.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name Printed: \_\_\_\_\_

\* I affirm that the position, power and authority associated with a ministry authorized by the United Church of Christ extends and participates in the ministry of Jesus and is intended to be of benefit to all served by this ministry.  True  False

\* Include only matters subject to official disciplinary review by a conference or association of the United Church of Christ:

- I have not been the subject of official disciplinary review that resulted in a growth program and/or counseling.
- I have not been the subject of official disciplinary review that resulted in censure.
- I have not been the subject of official disciplinary review that resulted in suspension of standing.
- I have not been the subject of official disciplinary review that resulted in termination of standing.
- Official disciplinary review is not pending regarding me at the present time.

\* Include only matters subject to official disciplinary review within the United Church of Christ:

- I have not been the subject of official disciplinary proceedings that result in disciplinary action.
- Official disciplinary proceedings are not pending regarding me at the present time.

\* Include only matters subject to official disciplinary proceedings by a professional organization, credentialing body or guild:

- I have not been the subject of official disciplinary proceedings that result in disciplinary action.
- Official disciplinary proceedings are not pending regarding me at the present time.

\* No civil law suit alleging that I attempted or actually engaged in sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct has ever resulted in a judgment being entered against me, settled out of court, or dismissed because the statute of limitations had expired.  True  False

\* With respect to driving record include matters of reckless driving, driving while intoxicated and/or under the influence of a controlled substance; with respect to criminal charges, DO NOT include acts of civil disobedience:

- I have not had my driving license suspended or revoked within the law
- I have not been found guilty or plead guilty or no contest to criminal charges

\* My employment has not been terminated because I attempted or actually engaged in:

- sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct
- physical abuse  child abuse  financial misconduct

\* I have not terminated my employment or professional credentials in order to avoid facing or to avoid being terminated because or charges of actual or attempted:

- sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct
- physical abuse  child abuse  financial misconduct

\* In my judgment, there are no facts or circumstances involving me or my background that would warrant further review before my being entrusted with the responsibility of ministry on behalf of a calling body of the United Church of Christ.

True  False

If you wish to provide comment for any of the above statements you may do so.

# Member-In-Discernment Checklist

Southwest Association, Michigan Conference United Church of Christ

Name of Member-In-Discernment:

## Application

Date

1. Application to become a Member-In-Discernment received: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Information Request form received: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Statement of Consent and Background Disclosure received: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Verification of church membership received: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Letter of reference from home-church pastor received: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Additional reference #1 received: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Additional reference #2 received: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Documentation of education and ministerial formation received: \_\_\_\_\_

Accepted as a Member-In-Discernment: \_\_\_\_\_

## Ministerial Formation

Date

Covenant for Formation approved: \_\_\_\_\_

For initial Annual Review:

1. Career Assessment Report received: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Boundary Training Certification received: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Background Check received: \_\_\_\_\_

For every Annual Review (to be submitted 30 days prior to meeting):

1. Candidate Report received: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Updated Portfolio received: \_\_\_\_\_
3. MID Advisor Report received: \_\_\_\_\_
4. MID Status renewed: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved for Ordination Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

# Member-In-Discernment Checklist

Southwest Association, Michigan Conference United Church of Christ

## Ecclesiastical Approval

Date

1. Ecclesiastical Council Application received from local church: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Verification of local church membership and participation received: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Sermon by candidate received: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Final Portfolio received: \_\_\_\_\_
5. MID's (draft) ministerial profile received: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Ordination paper received: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Letter of reference addressing educational qualifications received: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Letter of reference from MID advisor received: \_\_\_\_\_
9. Letter of reference from an ordained UCC minister received: \_\_\_\_\_
10. Additional general letter of reference received: \_\_\_\_\_

Ordination Interview Approval: \_\_\_\_\_

Ecclesiastical Council Approval: \_\_\_\_\_

Call approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Ordination Service: \_\_\_\_\_



# **Called From This Community**

## **A Summary of the Member-In-Discernment Process for the Local Church**

Southwest Association  
Michigan Conference, United Church of Christ

### **Introduction**

We know how excited you must surely be that an individual from your faith community has decided to pursue the possibility of ordained ministry. The Church & Ministry Committee of the Southwest Association shares your hopes and dreams for this member of your congregation and we offer our prayerful support to both you and your parishioner.

A Member-In-Discernment of the Association is a member of the United Church of Christ who has sensed a call by God and now seeks to test that call as she or he prepares for ordained ministry. The call of an individual to discern ordained ministry is also an important ministry of the local church. The church's role during the Member-In-Discernment process not only benefits the candidate but can greatly enrich the life of the congregation as well.

Member-In-Discernment is a covenant relationship between the candidate, you as his or her local church, and the Association. It is our hope that this relationship will provide support, counsel, and assistance to the Member-In-Discernment during the time the person is in this process of discernment and formation. This Association requires that a person be Member-In-Discernment at least two years prior to his or her final interview with the Church & Ministry Committee as a candidate for Ecclesiastical Council, and that they be a member of their local church for at least one year prior to their application to be a Member-In-Discernment.

Preparation for ordination means completing a program of formation in covenant with the Association. In addition to scholarly study, there are other understandings and skills that will require growth and development of the candidate. Members-In-Discernment and those guiding them should be familiar with the requirements in the Southwest Association's MID Manual as well as the United Church of Christ's Manual on Ministry. These documents can be found on the respective organization's web sites.

The Church & Ministry Committee takes seriously its responsibility to care for the Member-In-Discernment and to act as role models, advisors and mentors. We find it exciting to be a part of the formation process for future leaders of the church and help them prepare for their role of leading the church into the future.

### **Steps And Procedures**

1. A person desiring to explore and prepare for the ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ will want to talk with his or her pastor about expectations and procedures. The Southwest Association requires that a person be a Member-In-Discernment at least two years prior to his or her final interview with the Church & Ministry Committee as a candidate for Ecclesiastical Council, and the pastor can be very helpful by urging the candidate to begin the Member-In-Discernment earlier rather than later. Local pastors and lay leaders play a crucial role in helping members identify and claim their gifts for ministry. Please be sure to challenge people to listen for the call of God to ministry.

2. The candidate can begin the Member-In-Discernment process by contacting any representative of the Association Church & Ministry Committee. The Member-In-Discernment Coordinator will then contact the candidate to explain the process and offer prayerful support.
3. The individual should present to the pastor and governing board of their local church the following:
  - Paper on his or her Christian journey
  - An autobiography
  - Documentation of their formal education and experiences that relate to ministerial formation.
4. The pastor and governing board review the materials and interview the person. During the interview, the local church committee should explore some or all of the following:
  - The individual's participation in the local church and how that may contribute to their sense of call.
  - Does the person have a realistic view of ordained ministry and the Church's expectations of its ministers?
  - Is another form of ministry better suited to the person's gifts? How will ordained ministry fulfill the sense of call that is emerging?

The governing board needs to be clear that the decision to enter into the Member-In-Discernment relationship does not automatically lead to ordination. There will be many points along the way when the person, the local church, and the Church & Ministry Committee must decide if ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ is the right path for this person's sense of call.

In recommending that a person be received Member-In-Discernment of the Association, the local church is committing itself to offer prayerful support to this person during the years of preparation for ordination. The church needs to remain in close touch with the person so that it will be prepared to make a recommendation regarding ordination when the person has completed his or her preparation.

5. The local church sends the following materials to the Church & Ministry Committee:
  - A request (Member In Discernment Application) that the member be received as a Member-In-Discernment of the Association.
  - Candidate's completed Information Request Form
  - Candidate's completed Statement of Consent & Background Disclosure
  - A letter of reference from the pastor.
  - Two additional letters of support from members.
  - Copies of the papers and documentation provided to the governing board (see #3 above).
6. When the application and all necessary materials are received by the Church & Ministry Committee, an interview with the candidate will be scheduled. The local pastor is required to

attend this meeting with the candidate. A representative of the church is encouraged to attend as well. The Church & Ministry Committee will visit with the candidate and will vote on receiving the person a Member In Discernment. Notification of the committee's decision will be sent to the candidate and the local church.

7. The Member-In-Discernment is strongly urged to attend Association and Conference meetings and General Synod when possible, in order to experience and celebrate the wider church.
8. While a person is a Member-In-Discernment their home church should remain in relationship with the person in supportive ways and provide opportunities for participation and leadership whenever possible. Perhaps she or he could occasionally act as a worship leader or preacher. It is important to send all church mailings to the candidate and print regular progress reports in your newsletter. This relationship between the candidate and the home church is a crucial part of the Member-In-Discernment process. Therefore, it would be very helpful to establish a Member-In-Discernment support committee whose task it would be to nurture the candidate and encourage the congregation's support and affirmation. In addition, the candidate may undertake academic work that can be costly. Anything your congregation can do to assist your Member-In-Discernment with the costs of their formation process will be deeply appreciated by them.
9. If the candidate is accepted by the Church & Ministry Committee as a Member In Discernment, the candidate must make arrangements for a career assessment. A portion of the cost of this evaluation is covered by the Association, however the candidate will be responsible for a significant share. The congregation is urged to contribute to help with the cost. However, the candidate should make some investment in this helpful experience.

Because many Members in Discernment have found this evaluation so helpful in determining their suitability for ordained ministry, in some cases it might be helpful for the pastor to suggest that the person go through this program before making the decision to prepare for ordained ministry. In any case, the candidate must complete this assessment before his or her Member-In-Discernment status will be renewed for a second year. If the candidate is attending seminary, the assessment can be delayed until after the completion of one year of seminary.

10. If the candidate is accepted, they must also undergo a background check via the service used by the Michigan Conference for clergy background checks. Although the candidate is ultimately responsible for the cost of this requirement, the congregation is urged to contribute to help with the cost as possible.
11. Candidates are required to be a Member-In-Discernment for two years prior to their final interview with the Church & Ministry Committee as a candidate for Ecclesiastical Council. However, the Church & Ministry Committee only grants Member-In-Discernment status for one year at a time. Therefore, a Member-In-Discernment must renew his or her Member-In-Discernment status every year. The Member-In-Discernment's advisor or the Member-In-Discernment Coordinator may be in touch with you prior to the renewal interview for your comments on the student's progress.
12. When the Member-In-Discernment is approved by the Church & Ministry Committee for an Ordination Interview, they will request that the governing board of their home church

recommend to the Association that he or she be examined for ordination. If the governing board approves the request, the local church sends a request (Ecclesiastical Council Application) that the person be interviewed. The Church & Ministry Committee will examine the candidate (in the "Ordination Interview") and vote on approving them for an Ecclesiastical Council. The Ecclesiastical Council is an official meeting of the entire Association. The Ecclesiastical Council will be planned by the Church & Ministry Committee.

13. If the person is approved for ordination pending a call at the Ecclesiastical Council, members of the home church will want to participate in planning the ordination service once the candidate has received an approved call to serve. The Member-In-Discernment may request that members of the local church participate in the ordination service. Ordination is dependent on a call of the one to be ordained to service in a ministry approved by the Church & Ministry Committee and cannot be held sooner than five weeks after the Ecclesiastical Council. This is a major celebration in a service of worship usually held in the afternoon or evening at the candidate's home church. The offering at the Ordination service is designated for the Southwest Association Fund for Members-In-Discernment candidates. You will probably want to serve a meal and present gifts to the new ordained pastor.

Once again, we celebrate with you and the person who has sensed a call to ordained ministry. This is a great time in the life of the local church and we on the Church & Ministry Committee are excited along with you. Please let us know if there is any way we can be of help to you.

# **Narrative of the Member-In-Discernment Process**

Southwest Association  
Michigan Conference, United Church of Christ

Please note that is the sole responsibility of the Member-In-Discernment to make sure all goals, requirements, and deadlines are met. If you are unsure or need additional information at any point during the process, please contact your Member-In-Discernment advisor or the Member-In-Discernment Coordinator for clarification. Members-In-Discernment and those guiding them should be familiar with the requirements in the Southwest Association's MID Manual as well as the United Church of Christ's Manual on Ministry. These documents can be found on the respective organization's web sites.

## **First Year**

A Member-In-Discernment of this Association is a member of a Southwest Association church who has sensed a call by God to ordained ministry and who, under the care of the Association, is preparing for ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ.

Member-In-Discernment is the relationship that exists between a candidate preparing for ordination, their local church, and their Association. The purpose of the Member-In-Discernment relationship is to provide support, counsel and assistance to the candidate during the time of the student's formational process for the ordained ministry. The Southwest Association requires that a person be a Member-In-Discernment for at least two years prior to their final interview with the Church & Ministry Committee as a candidate for Ecclesiastical Council.

To be a Member-In-Discernment is to be in a covenantal relationship – one that involves the individual with the local church and the Association. The individual may benefit from peer relationships, one-to-one counsel and instruction, and financial assistance; the Association benefits by being involved in the formation process of the leaders of the future and by ensuring their preparedness and competency. Pastors and lay leaders help individuals to identify and claim their gifts for ordained ministry; and then nurture, encourage, challenge and guide these persons. The Church & Ministry Committee will appoint an advisor to walk with you through the Member-In-Discernment process.

In deciding to accept a Member-In-Discernment, the Church & Ministry Committee is entering into a formation and preparation process with the person. It is not deciding at this point to ordain the person. This means that its concern is not with the present fitness of the person, but the potential fitness of the person for ordained ministry. It is committing itself to provide responsible guidance and support during the period of preparation so that the person has every opportunity to develop the potential that is there. While we believe that all are called to ministry, not all are called to ordained ministry. It is our intent to discern together if there is a call and gifts for ordained ministry.

As part of your application materials, the Committee should have already received:

- Application, Information Request Form, Statement of Consent and Background Disclosure
- Three letters of reference, including one from your home-church pastor
- Statement of Christian pilgrimage, autobiography, tentative educational and vocational plans
- Documentation of the candidate's formal education and ministerial formation experiences to date

During your first year as a Member-In-Discernment with the Church & Ministry Committee, you will also need to meet the following requirements:

- Within the first year or, if applicable, after completion of one year of seminary studies (whichever is later), complete a career assessment program as assigned by the Church & Ministry Committee and make the results available to the committee. Your Member In Discernment status will not be renewed until this is complete.
- Complete an approved training class on maintaining healthy clergy boundaries. This is typically a one-day seminar.
- Request a background check as directed by the Church & Ministry Committee and make the results available to the committee.
- Complete and sign a Covenant of Formation with the Church & Ministry Committee.
- Submit a Member-In-Discernment report 30 days prior to your first Annual Review with the Church & Ministry Committee.
- Submit a current copy of your Portfolio 30 days prior to your first Annual Review. The Portfolio, in conjunction with your Member-In-Discernment report, should show your progress of meeting the goals and requirements outlined in your Covenant of Formation.
- Your Member-In-Discernment advisor (assigned by the Church & Ministry Committee) must also submit a report 30 days prior to your first Annual Review.

Another aspect of preparation for the ministry is participation, in as full a sense as possible, in the life of the United Church of Christ – locally, in the Association and Conference, and in denominational structures and activities. Your regular contact with your home church and participation and leadership, when possible, will help to keep church members involved with your pilgrimage. Report to the pastor and official board, and speak or lead workshops with groups from the church when you are home. It is hoped that the home congregation can hear you preach at least once a year. Try to attend the twice-yearly meetings of the Association, the annual meeting of the Michigan Conference, and General Synod.

Near the end of your first year of Member-In-Discernment, you will schedule an Annual Review with the Church & Ministry Committee to review the past year and preview the next. The Church & Ministry Committee will be looking for signs that the initial stirrings of a call to ordained ministry are being confirmed and developed. At that time, the Church & Ministry Committee will make a decision on renewing your Member-In-Discernment status for another year.

### **Middle Years**

Your Covenant of Formation will define the goals and requirements that you must meet before beginning the formal application process for ordination. During your time as a Member-In-Discernment, both in your first year and in succeeding years, you should be working toward meeting those goals and requirements.

For the years following your first Annual Review you will also need to meet the following requirements:

- Submit a Member-In-Discernment report 30 days prior to your Annual Review with the Church & Ministry Committee.

- Submit a current copy of your Portfolio 30 days prior to your Annual Review. The Portfolio, in conjunction with your Member-In-Discernment report, should show your progress of meeting the goals and requirements outlined in your Covenant of Formation.
- Your Member-In-Discernment advisor (assigned by the Church & Ministry Committee) must also submit a report 30 days prior to your Annual Review.

Near the end of each year as a Member-In-Discernment, you will schedule an Annual Review with the Church & Ministry Committee to review the past year and preview the next. At that time, the Church & Ministry Committee will make a decision on renewing your Member-In-Discernment status for another year.

### **Final Year / Phase**

The Southwest Association requires that a person be a Member-In-Discernment for two years prior to their Ordination Interview with the Church & Ministry Committee as a candidate for Ecclesiastical Council. When you and your Member-In-Discernment advisor both believe that you have met the goals and requirements outlined in your Covenant of Formation and exhibit competency in each of the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers, you should request permission from the Church & Ministry Committee to begin the formal application process for ordination. Permission to proceed may be considered at your Annual Review or at some other meeting of the Church & Ministry Committee. The committee may or may not request your presence at that meeting. The following is required before permission to proceed will be considered.

- Submit a Member-In-Discernment report 30 days prior to consideration by the committee.
- Submit what you believe is your final Portfolio 30 days prior to consideration by the committee. The Portfolio, in conjunction with your Member-In-Discernment report, should show your progress toward meeting the goals and requirements outlined in your Covenant of Formation and reflect how you exhibit competency in the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers.
- Your Member-In-Discernment advisor (assigned by the Church & Ministry Committee) must also submit a report 30 days prior to consideration by the committee.

If the Church & Ministry Committee agrees that you have met the goals and requirements of your Covenant of Formation and exhibit competency in the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers, permission will be granted to begin the formal application process for ordination. If the committee does not agree, it will outline where it believes there is still work to be done.

The formal application process for ordination cannot begin any earlier than six months before the end of your second year as a Member-In-Discernment. Even if all other approvals are obtained, the Ecclesiastical Council will not be scheduled until two full years of the Member-In-Discernment process have been completed.

The formal application process for ordination is initiated through the local church. After interviewing you, the governing body of your local church should request in writing that the Association examine you for ordination by submitting an Ecclesiastical Council Application. When the application is received, the Chairperson of the Church & Ministry Committee will schedule an Ordination Interview with you. At least 30 days prior to the Ordination Interview you will need to provide the following to the Church & Ministry Committee:

- Verification of membership and participation in a local church
- The final version of your Portfolio.
- A sermon, if none is included in your Portfolio.
- Four letters of reference including one that addresses your educational formation, one from your Member-In-Discernment advisor, and one from an ordained U.C.C. minister.
- A Professional profile prepared by you in the United Church of Christ Ministerial profile system. A draft version of your profile is acceptable. Note that your profile can't be circulated to churches until you are approved by an Ecclesiastical Council.
- An ordination paper covering:
  1. Your theological perspective and grasp of the historic Christian faith
  2. Your understanding of the history, theological roots, polity and practice of the U.C.C.
  3. Your faith pilgrimage and understanding of ministry, your growth in Christian faith and call to ministry.

You should consult regularly with your Member-In-Discernment advisor as you prepare for the Ordination Interview.

If the Church & Ministry Committee is satisfied that you have met the requirements for ordination, are morally, ethically, and emotionally mature, and are authentic in your intentions then it recommends you to the Association for approval and authorization for ordination. You will then be examined by the Southwest Association at an Ecclesiastical Council (a called meeting of the authorized ministers and official delegates of the Association).

Once you are authorized to participate in the Ecclesiastical Council, it is your responsibility to provide one (1) printed copy of your ordination paper for the Association. The Association will provide the means to electronically disseminate your ordination paper to the Association prior to the Ecclesiastical Council. The Portfolio is not normally distributed or shared publicly. However, if you do wish to share your Portfolio in addition to your ordination paper, it is your sole responsibility to provide the means to do so. At the meeting, you will be asked to make a statement of your pilgrimage and understanding of ministry. Questions will be asked of you. The official delegates from the churches and ordained ministers with standing in the Association vote on whether or not to grant ordination pending a call.

The Service of Ordination is not scheduled until you have received a call, and in no case can it be sooner than five weeks after the Ecclesiastical Council. You, your local church, the calling body, and the Association may all take part in the planning of, and participate in, the service. Members of the churches of the Association are invited to attend. By this rite, ordained ministerial standing is conferred and the covenantal relationship is liturgically celebrated.