

How is a person formed for ministry?

When we are called and claimed by God, we are also opened to the action of the Holy Spirit. Formation is God's work within us which is ongoing and creative. We cooperate with God's formation of us as we grow through our participation in the following:

- ◆ Church community
- ◆ Spiritual life and practice
- ◆ Education and study
- ◆ Service and learning in the world



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God Calling

Ministerial Formation in the

**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



But now thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine." (Isaiah 43:1)

What shape does a call from God take?

As Christians we believe all persons are called and claimed by God. We recognize this essential “calling” through the sacrament of baptism. Formation begins with baptism and continues for a lifetime. The United Church of Christ recognizes that God calls the whole Church and every member to participate in and extend the ministry of Jesus Christ by witnessing to the Gospel in church and society.

Some members participate in ministry through involvement in faith-based social justice or social service. Others live out their calling through a variety of secular vocations. Still others are called to serve the institutional church through authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ. These different forms of ministry are often combined in any given person’s life.

“The place God calls you is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”
(Frederick Buechner)

What does it mean to be “authorized” for ministry?

The United Church of Christ recognizes that God calls certain of its members to various forms of ministry in and on behalf of the church for which ecclesiastical authorization is required. Authorization is granted by an Association or Conference of the UCC for three different kinds of ministries:

- ◆ **Ordained:** authorization to preach and teach the gospel, to administer the sacraments and rites of the church and to exercise pastoral care and leadership. Ordination is ongoing.
- ◆ **Licensed:** authorization by an Association to perform specific duties in a designated local congregation, mainly preaching and conducting worship, for a designated time under the guidance and supervision of the Association. A licensed minister may also be authorized to administer the sacraments within a local congregation. Licensure is renewable.
- ◆ **Commissioned:** authorization for a specific church related ministry such as church musician, Christian educator, parish nurse, etc. Commissioning continues for the duration of service.

Formal education for all types of authorization, but especially ordination, may be pursued at a seminary or divinity school. The UCC has seven seminaries (see reverse side).

What are the steps toward authorized ministry in the UCC?

- ◆ **Ask the question:** *Am I being called to ministry?* Listen within for the voice of God. Listen also for the voices of those who know you best who may be raising this question for you.
- ◆ **Explore with your church:** If you are not yet a member of a local UCC church, find a church to join, for the local church is the starting point for authorization in the UCC. Then seek discernment through prayer and conversation with the pastor and lay leaders.
- ◆ **Local church recommendation:** If your church discerns in you a potential call to authorized ministry, they will recommend you to the UCC Association or Conference to which the church belongs.
- ◆ **Member in Discernment:** This is a formal time of discernment and preparation during which the Association/Conference and the local church offer support to you as well as ongoing assessment of your marks for effective ministry.
- ◆ **Authorization:** After a suitable period of education, preparation, mentoring, and assessment, the Association/Conference votes to approve you and grant you authority for one of the forms of ministry in the UCC.