

Ordination Paper

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The Journey Begins.....

It would be very nice to state that on such and such a date the skies opened up and a tablet fell down through those skies telling me of my beliefs, my calling and my own theological perspective. It would also make the writing of this paper much easier. However, there is no one moment or experience, instead it is a life time of moments and experiences that have formed my understandings and those understandings have changed and evolved through the years and continue to do so. My understanding of my faith has been formed through a life long journey. Also, as I began to put these words to paper I realized that I cannot adequately discuss my pilgrimage of faith without looking deeply at my life and the relationships that existed throughout this journey, including my family of origin, my chosen spouse and the children I have parented. Sometimes these relationships last for many years and sometimes only for a brief time. This is my journey, or at least a part of it, that has brought me to the seeking of ordination with the United Church of Christ.

I grew up in the Midwest during the 50's and 60's in a middle class home. My father was a blue collar worker when I was little and my mother was a stay at home mom. She would later become a secretary at an elementary school. My parents were very involved in my life and the lives of my three brothers and sister. We went to church every week. We were admired by the neighborhood. We were a family that had four children born within three years with a fifth one coming 10 years later. We were a big family in which the children were raised to be good and obedient.

When I was 15 an event took place which would change my whole life and the lives of every family member. At the age of 42 my father suffered an unexpected and fatal heart

attack. It was after my father's death that I realized the tremendous role he played in my life. I came to understand how my father was the balance in my mother's life; how he was the strength and center of the family and how he gave me that unconditional love that one hopes to receive from one's parents. Throughout our lives my mother experienced seasonal and sometimes situational depression. Even though she worked hard to take care of us and maintain the home, she could also be very harsh, judgmental and emotionally distant.

As I reflect upon my years growing up I realize that there had never been a time when God and Jesus were not a part of that life or a part of my family's life. From early childhood I accepted, without hesitation, the power, love and presence of God. Perhaps my favorite Bible verse, while growing up, could be found in Matthew 17: 20 KJV, "And Jesus said unto them, because of your unbelief; for verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto the mountain, remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." As a child I believed that I had a great deal more faith than the size of a grain of mustard seed, so as the scripture stated: "nothing could be impossible". That was my faith as a child.

That faith would be shaken to its foundation by the death of my father. It would lead me to greatly doubt and question my relationship with God. How could this God that I loved and who I thought loved me, how could this supreme power allow this to happen? I would spend many years doubting. Outwardly I would live the life of a Christian, I would be active in my church, but inwardly I would continue to doubt. Being raised as a Christian Scientist I was taught that all things were possible through prayer, to me that should include the healing of my father. With his death, I began to feel abandoned by God and abandoned by my faith.

I would continue forward in my life. I went to college, got married and had two daughters, while still always being the obedient daughter to my mother and helping her get through her life. My husband was not a Christian Scientist, so when it became time for our daughters to attend Sunday School it was decided that we would attend a United Methodist Church in the area. This was the faith my husband had grown up in.

What was not known to my family was my battle with clinical depression. This battle began after my father's death. This battle would lead me into years of darkness and years of living in the wilderness. It was also unknown, to others, that my husband was very emotionally and verbally abusive to me throughout our 19-year marriage. The depression, the abuse I experienced and the feelings of abandonment by God drove me deeper into the wilderness.

My two motivations in my life, for many years, were my two daughters. They were an unexpected gift and if there was ever any sense of being loved, I felt it through them. Clinical depression manifests differently in different people. For me, part of what I experienced was extreme feelings of worthlessness and a suicidal ideation. Even with the presence of my daughters in my life and even though I finally began to see a Pastoral Counselor, after years of not treating my depression, in 1997 I attempted suicide. I was discovered and taken to the hospital and placed into the Intensive Care Unit. My hospital stay was followed by some time in a mental health facility. I went into the deepest part of the wilderness and then began the journey forward.

I found the courage to obtain a divorce. With the help of two pastoral counselors and extensive counseling I began to acquire the necessary skills needed to recognize and manage my depression. I found value in who I was and who I am and I worked diligently to discover,

embrace and cultivate my gifts. This growing awareness of God's presence also led me to understand and accept God's grace and the realization that terrible events do not take place to challenge us or punish us. Instead, through God, we are given the strength to face and confront our challenges. We can even be transformed by our response to them. My conversion or leap of faith and the beginning of my call to ministry began in the form of a mental breakdown, followed by a divorce, loss of my business, loss of assets and loss of home. I had to completely journey into the deepest depth of my darkness before I could begin to see and embrace God's light and acknowledge my longing for God.

I also realized that my faith was not to be about blind obedience, but instead it was about building an authentic relationship with God. *We believe that the persistent search for God produces an authentic relationship with God, engendering love, strengthening faith, dissolving guilt, and giving life purpose and direction.*¹

I began to realize and accept that my life depended on that relationship. I became more active in my church, not just to do what I thought was required of me, but to begin a lifelong spiritual journey; a journey of self-discovery and discernment and a journey of deepening faith. I was beginning to experience a peace and contentment that I had never known before. I also became aware that I wanted something beyond that and began to understand that I was being called to more. This realization led me back to school. I enrolled at Indiana University in Gary, IN to pursue an MPA (Masters in Public Administration). While working on that degree I began to feel an inner calling that I was just beginning to understand would further demand a great deal from me, but more importantly would deepen my relationship with God.

¹ United Church of Christ. What We Believe. September 12, 2015. http://www.ucc.org/about-us_what-we-believe

During this time, I had the opportunity to become involved in the Great Banquet experience.

The Great Banquet is a 72-hour experience, beginning on Thursday evening and ending Sunday evening. For three days, guests live and study together in a worshipful time of singing, prayer and discussion. During each of the fifteen talks given by laity and clergy, the theme of God's grace is presented. Although the weekend lasts only three days, guests are invited to use its lessons for the rest of their lives. After attending the Great Banquet, they are challenged to: 1. Strengthen their own spiritual life through study and active congregational participation; and 2. Strive to become active disciples of Jesus Christ in the world through their church.²

It was through this experience and my subsequent involvement that I began to feel the grace and love of God. In the beginning it was difficult to feel that love. For me, something tangible was needed. The Great Banquet provided me with something I could respond to, something I could see taking place. It was a group of people that offered to me a great deal of affirmation and encouragement. They helped me to see that I was a child of God with unique and wonderful gifts. It was a growing experience for me to be able to serve on many weekend teams, first as a speaker, then as a Weekend Spiritual Director and finally as the Community Spiritual Director for over 1200 members.

Besides the beliefs presented in the UCC faith that I was beginning to learn and understand, my journey and the many paths it has taken me down also have helped me to find words and expression to my beliefs.

Throughout this new part of my journey I continued to feel a persistent and powerful call to serve God. This led to my application to Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary. I was accepted into its Master of Divinity program. It was my original intention to serve as a pastor in

² Lampstand Ministries, January 12, 2015. <https://lampstand.net/great-banquet/> March 4, 2015

a church. However, through my time at Garrett, through continued discernment, through an internship at the Presbyterian Homes and through my first unit of CPE I began to clarify my calling as that of a chaplain. I felt called to walk with people on their journeys and to provide to them a Ministry of Presence. The challenges I faced in my own life showed me the power of empathy, affirmation, grace, unconditional love and the possibilities for transformation. I could use my own experience and journey, my training and my education to guide and inform my ministry of chaplaincy.

Although I began my spiritual journey as a member of the Methodist Church I found myself disappointed with its lack of openness to all people. This led me to look for something different. I started attending a UCC church and felt a connection to its openness, its beliefs and its extravagant welcome. I became a member of the Church of the Three Crosses, located in the Lincoln Park area of Chicago.

I stated earlier that I believed my calling was that of a chaplain and after completing my CPE Residency at Howard Community Hospital in Kokomo, IN I began serving as a part-time Staff Chaplain at the Rehabilitation Hospital of Indiana in Indianapolis. I am currently still serving there. The financial realities of having only a part time position required the necessity of becoming bi-vocational. This additional call, for me, points to our still speaking God and how we should be continually open to that voice. I responded to a need for a half-time pastor at a church in the area I lived. I have discovered that my training in both the secular and non-secular worlds and my experiences and gifts as a chaplain are enabling me to more fully serve as a pastor to the congregation.

I am aware of the differences in the two callings, but also understand that I can use the gifts I have for chaplaincy at the church when offering pastoral care to the members, while still understanding the distinction. It is important to be continually aware that as a chaplain in a hospital I am serving a much broader group of people with a more diverse set of beliefs, as they come from all types of faiths and spiritualities.

Even now as I serve at a hospital and church, I believe that God is still speaking and I will continue to discern and develop my gifts so that I might best serve in those two callings or where and to whatever God may call me to in the future. I will remain committed to be a presence in my local ministries but also to be committed to the nurture and the building up of the United Church of Christ; to be committed to the mission of the church and to do service on behalf of the whole UCC. This is a process and call that is ever evolving and I understand the need to remain open to the presence of the Holy Spirit.

In this I Believe.....

As a Christian, as a pastor, as a chaplain and as a member of the United Church of Christ I believe God to be our creator and this creation continues. God, exists as three persons, the Father/Mother, the Son and the Holy Spirit. God the Son (Jesus Christ) is fully, completely God, God the Father/Mother is fully, completely God and God the Holy Spirit is fully, completely God. The three persons are distinct, yet are one substance, essence or nature. As a Christian I believe Jesus is the begotten Son of God. God the Father/Mother, became incarnate in the flesh of humankind, through the birth of Jesus Christ the Son, from Mary the wife of Joseph of Nazareth.

Jesus is unique in that he was both fully human and fully divine. As a human he experienced much that every individual does, including pain and joy. His life, death and resurrection serve as our means of salvation, the way in which humanity can be reconciled with God. As I reflect upon my own sense and understanding of sinning and salvation and that of others I have come to view sinning not just as a simple statement of a breach of God's commandments that can be listed as certain things we do which are then ranked in order of intensity of wrongdoing, but instead it is that which separates us from God. Our salvation comes in the authentic relationship we build with God. Jesus came to show us that it was possible to have that relationship. It was not only possible but life giving and empowering.

The followers of Jesus Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, live collectively in this world as the church and become the physical presence of Jesus Christ in the world today and as such represent the living Body of Christ, left in this world to continue his ministry to all people. A ministry that calls all of us to be intentionally inclusive to all, including the marginalized, and to offer God's message of justice, grace and love; to serve as an advocate for others, when needed and to help in assuring that all voices are heard. Believing the UCC is a church of extravagant welcome I feel very blessed to be able to play a role of leadership in the church I now serve as they discern the possibility of becoming Open and Affirming.

I welcome and encourage new ideas while also understanding my core beliefs. These beliefs include justice for all people, value in all people, the value in diversity of thought, ideas, people and traditions and that God's love is for all people. As a chaplain and as a pastor serving in a church I respect, accept, embrace and bring into my ministry the views held and demonstrated by the United Church of Christ as stated in its Statement of Mission, which

includes the “embodiment of God’s love for all people; to hear and give voice to creation’s cry for justice and peace; to preach and teach with the power of the living Word; to join oppressed and troubled people in the struggle for liberation; to work for justice, healing, and wholeness of life.”³

I believe in the foundational theological traditions of the United Church of Christ. I accept these beliefs as part of my faith and calling. Yet my understanding, my beliefs also embrace the mystery of the Trinity, the mystery of God and God’s creation, the meaning of the presence of Jesus in our lives and the mystery of God the Father/Mother and God the Son. One of the few things that I have become certain of is that, for me, there will always be great mystery and in the mystery I find comfort. The mystery that is God, prompts me to seek out a deeper understanding, knowing that a complete understanding will never be mine, but also knowing that in the seeking my relationships with God and with Jesus deepen. These deepening relationships empower me to clarify and understand my call and they affirm my belief in a God of love, grace and forgiveness. For me this affirms my belief that Jesus came to us and gave his life for us, so that we may have a new way of living and that includes a call to service and to live into the example set by Jesus. The presence of this mystery is a motivation and my faith in the mystery of God reinforces to me the importance in knowing that God is still speaking and continually revealing Godself to me. This has been very important in allowing my understanding to evolve, mature and deepen. In accepting the mystery, I find that I remain open to God’s words and to the experiences of others. The mystery of the Trinity, the mystery of Jesus being human yet fully divine will continue to be that, mysteries. God’s creation is a

³ United Church of Christ. Statement of Mission. http://www.ucc.org/beliefs_statement-of-mission . March 4, 2015

part of that mystery. In the mystery there is wonderment. A mystery that is always unfolding in God's presence in that creation including the people around us, in their laughter, their pain, their strength and even their weaknesses. I see the wonderment of creation in a flower, a sunset, a rainbow and also in the cries of the hungry, the marginalized, the abused, the sick and in the mystery and the wonderment I hear God's call.

The Sacraments

As stated earlier, often it is important to have something tangible to hold on to as we contemplate our faith and the mysteries involved. Through the sacraments we are offered something concrete, we are able to hear, taste and touch that which seems to be untouchable. We are also reminded to who (and whose) we are. They help bring clarity to things that might seem beyond comprehension and they help us to gain a better understanding of who God is.

Baptism

From the moment I knew there was life growing in me to this very day I feel an overwhelming sense of wonderment and awe in being a part of God's creation. I remember holding each of my two daughters for the first time and saying, "wow this is unbelievable" and there will always remain an element of mystery surrounding these two amazing events. As I looked down at each of my beloved daughters I felt such a connection, though them, to God's creation. I offered them unconditional love and welcomed them in to my community, into my heart. They belonged to me and I to them, not as possessions, but by love. Even though in time they would seek out independent lives, the connection would remain. For a person who had felt alone all her life this was amazing indeed.

When we are baptized, we are welcomed into a community and named as God's beloved children, receiving the unconditional love and grace from God. As witnesses to another's baptism we are reminded of the gift that we received during our own.

I was not baptized until I was 42. In the Christian Science Church one is baptized by the word of God. There was no ceremony, there was no physical presence of water or liturgy of words, nor was there a sense of being brought into a community. This mystery of God's community and being a part of God's family became a tangible experience for me by the act of my Baptism. Also for me it gained even more meaning as my two daughters stood on each side of me and we were baptized together. We were welcomed into a community together.

Communion

Our other Sacrament, Holy Communion, which is also known as the Lord's Supper or Eucharist, is a sacred meal based on the action of Jesus at the Last Supper. Through communion we receive the grace of God and we remember. We are invited to reflect upon the past, present and future. As we look to the past we remember the death of Christ and the new covenant that has been offered. Not only are we reminded of his death but it is also a time to remember his life. We are reminded of what took place at the crucifixion and the resurrection. We are given an opportunity to continually examine our own lives, our relationship with God, Jesus and others and how we are to answer the call to serve. During communion we also look to the future, a future of hope and love offered to all because of the life being remembered in the taking of the bread and the wine.

For the most part we take communion in a community. During this time, we make public our belief in the future of God's promises and how we are to live out our beliefs. This

community can be one of hope in which all are called to the table, to be a part of an extravagant banquet for all creation. There is no kids' table, there is only one table. There are not to be some people who are to sit near the table or to serve the others at the table, but all are united as God's creations receiving God's extravagant welcome.

The Bible

I believe the Bible to be the book or the book of books, of the church that provides us our history, guidance, understanding and is a resource for deepening our relationship with God. The Bible serves as an incredible guidebook through our past, the challenges presented to us in our lives today and a resource for the future. Even though it was written by human hands, I believe, by my faith and both my own and the witnessing of others, that the Bible was inspired by God. It offers a unique witness of God to all people.

It is my belief however, that the Bible should be read with the understanding of the social and historical context in which it was written. As a guide for our present day the Bible offers us relevant insight into the current political and social issues. The Bible, which points to the Still Speaking God, then is not the final expression written years ago. It instead is our ongoing understanding and study of God, God's creation and our role in it.

As valuable a resource as the Bible is and for all the comfort and guidance it offers and has offered to people, it is not to be used as a weapon of dominance or judgment of others. Nor should the Bible be the focus of our praise and worship. It is God that is and should remain the focus.

The UCC.....

As stated earlier in the paper I did not grow up in the UCC. I came to it in my search for a deepening relationship with God. During this search I also came to realize that I felt and continue to feel a strong connection to the United Church of Christ. I feel a connection to its Statement of Faith, its Mission Statement, its statement of “What We Believe”, its theology and its polity.

Founded on June 25, 1957, the United Church of Christ is relatively new. Although the church itself is young, it is founded on a rich history. The UCC brings together four groups or as they are called, Four Streams. These Four Streams bring together a great diversity of ideas and people. The Four Streams were the Congregational Churches, the Christian Church, the Evangelical Synod of North America and the Reformed Church. In time, The Four Streams would merge into two new churches and finally these two would join together on June 25, 1957 as the United Church of Christ.

Although the Four Streams brought together a diversity of ideas there were some beliefs held in common, including: a strong belief in the ministry of the laity, a belief in education as a process of lifelong learning, a Priesthood of all Believers, Christ is the head of the church, God’s sovereignty and the possibility for transformed life.

There are four settings for ministry in the United Church of Christ: the local churches, Associations, Conferences and the General Synod. From the Constitution of the United Church of Christ we read, “The basic unit of the life and organization of the United Church of Christ is the local church.” The Associations hold standing of local churches and authorized ministers.

Conferences enable the cooperative ministry of the UCC in a geographical area and the General Synod oversees the national and international ministry of the church.

The organization of the United Church of Christ represents a covenant between all the members, churches, Associations, Conferences and the General Synod. This covenant has the purpose of carrying out the mission of the church; offering support and guidance to one another and assisting in the accountability of all. The polity of the UCC offers something unique to the local church in that it recognizes its autonomy. This autonomy appears to offer a kind of freedom from the rule of others. However, it should be noted, that this does not include a freedom to ignore the other settings. It does offer a freedom to understand what is best and most timely for the church. These decisions need to be derived at through prayerful discernment; remembering that our authority comes from the sole Head of the church, Jesus Christ. Autonomy allows each church to speak for him or herself, but it also calls for each church and each member to listen to the other, including the other settings, offering a safe environment for every member to speak freely and seek a relationship.

United and Uniting

We believe the UCC is called to be a united and uniting church. "That they may all be one." (John 17:21) "In essentials—unity, in nonessentials—diversity, in all things—charity," These UCC mottos survive because they touch core values deep within us. The UCC has no rigid formulation of doctrine or attachment to creeds or structures. Its overarching creed is love. UCC pastors and teachers are known for their commitment to excellence in theological preparation, interpretation of the scripture and justice advocacy. Even so, love and unity in the midst of our

diversity are our greatest assets. ⁴ Throughout its history the church has sought to be united and uniting, bringing together a diverse heritage including many different racial, ethnic and national groups. This diversity continues to this day. It cannot be ignored, however, there have been times throughout the history of the UCC and there are still times that unity has not and does not exist, including today in regards to marriage equality and the possibility of each church becoming Open and Affirming. The tension between the United Church of Christ and each church which maintains its autonomy can become great.

Currently I serve a church that is actively discerning the possibility of becoming Open and Affirming. It is through this process that I am receiving hands on, very real lessons, concerning the topic of covenant, autonomy and the church being united and uniting.

With the awareness of not always achieving the desired unity it is still important to work towards that unity. It is a call to be in open conversation to seek ways to honor each other and to work together to help the individual and the church to discern the call that has been placed on them and it. As a pastor it is important to affirm each member, recognize their values and celebrate each individual as a child of God while working to create ways by which we can build and maintain relationships. It is a call to continue the work of Jesus Christ in an imperfect world with sometimes imperfect results, but with a commitment to serve and move forward. We are called to be a united and uniting church. We are called to remember and honor our covenant.

At this point in time I do not know what will happen at the church I serve. There currently is a great deal of conflict. The conflict though has strengthened my understanding in what it means to live out our covenant. A covenant which is not the function or task of one

⁴ United Church of Christ http://www.ucc.org/about-us_what-we-believe March 4, 2015

group but the relationship between all. Finally, despite any differences, we are all united by our common relationship to Jesus Christ, we are united as Christians.

Finding God and the UCC in the Muir Woods.....

A few years ago my youngest daughter and I traveled to California to visit my oldest daughter. It was a wonderful trip with several day trips that my oldest daughter had planned for us. We visited Lake Tahoe, Napa Valley, San Francisco and the Muir Woods National Park. It is the Muir Woods that I have been thinking of as I reflect upon the United Church of Christ, its beliefs, mission and ministry.

I remember standing in the woods amongst the giant redwood trees and feeling the overwhelming presence and mystery of God. The trees offer an extravagant welcome to all those who enter. No words needed to be spoken and yet volumes could be heard. The trees seem to echo the words of the UCC, “No matter who you are or where you are in life’s journey, you are welcome.”⁵ You, me, everyone is welcome in God’s creation.

Within that forest one could feel the diversity that is a part of all that surrounded me. There had been thousands of people from all types of backgrounds, from all over the world that stood there before I had entered and that would come after me to witness the beauty, grace and love that God offers the world. When standing there, one joins a community that celebrates and supports the mission of the national park; a place that honors and protects the great red woods. In remembering that day, I remember some words that I had read that speak to what the UCC is.

⁵ Ibid.

1. To proclaim the gospel in all the world.
2. To gather and support communities of faith in their celebration and mission.
3. To labor for the creation and increase of God's reach of justice and love in the world.
4. To manifest more fully the unity of the church, all humankind, and the whole creation.⁶

That visit to the Redwoods will forever remind me of our journey as individuals and what we declare as a church. The wonderful and mighty Redwoods offer protection to the younger, smaller trees, trees of different kinds, allowing them to grow and thrive, just as we are called to support our sisters and brothers. In that park there is a stream that provides water to the area, besides the rain that takes place. There is also enough space between the towering trees to allow the sunshine to reach the vegetation below. The church is a place that reaches out to offer the nourishment of the love and grace of God to all and it is to be a beacon of light to all as was modeled to us by Jesus Christ.

In some of the areas of the park one can choose different paths but the destination is the same, to return to the gate of the park. Diversity is so much a part of the church. We can walk different paths through God's creation but we are all led by Jesus.

When walking on the paths one can't help but notice that there are fallen trees which are left there to feed the ground and nourish the soil, trees and plants. There is room for the old and the new in the forest just as there is room for tradition to be joined with new ways. The history of the church and the traditions of the church are a strong foundation on which we can build an ever evolving future.

⁶ United Church of Christ http://www.ucc.org/beliefs_statement-of-mission March 4, 2015

I have to think that if I return to the park I will find changes. There will be trees and plants that have grown, some will have died, some would have come down, and the stream that ran through the park may have cut a different path. Changes, the Muir Woods National Park speaks to a still living, still active creation, just as God is still speaking to the church and we are called to listen, be ready and then respond. “We are a people of possibility. In the UCC, members, congregations and structures have the breathing room to explore and to hear ... for after all, God is still speaking.”⁷

Upon Reflection.....

In those woods, through my studies, through discernment, through prayer, through the events of each day and through the help of others I have worked to understand my beliefs and calling. Also through these past years there have been different theologians that have influenced me, such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, John Wesley and Henri Nouwen. As a chaplain, the works of Anton Boisen, Ann Weems and Elizabeth Kubler-Ross have helped formed that calling. In this past year, serving as a pastor, I have turned to the writings of Barbara Brown Taylor and Philip Gulley. Since I have started pastoring a church I turn to the UCC website and in particular the Samuel/Sermon Seeds and Worship Seeds when beginning to prepare a weekly worship service.

There are others too that have influenced me. I cannot ignore the many people I have served and continue to serve. Through them I have witnessed the presence of God and I have received daily lessons about service, faith, strength, patience, courage, wisdom, grace, justice

⁷ United Church of Christ. What we believe http://www.ucc.org/about-us_what-we-believe March 4, 2015

and love. As I serve people I am continually aware of the amazing blessings that I have been given. In them I have seen the messages of Jesus and God, messages of empowerment and transformation. For me however, the greatest lesson, my greatest understanding, my most empowering epiphany has been to learn and accept that God loves me. God loves me in my humanness, in my weakness, when I make mistakes and when I'm doing amazing things. God loves me!

The Journey Continues.....

We are Called

We are all called into the ministry of God, to follow Jesus fully and faithfully. Some though, are called to be "ordained to preach and teach the gospel, to administer the sacraments and the rites of the Church, and to exercise pastoral care and leadership." (United Church of Christ Constitution, Article V). Through prayer and the laying on of hands these people are set apart. I believe that God has called me to be ordained in the United Church of Christ; to be authorized to perform the duties of that calling within my local church and in the hospital I now work. But that calling goes beyond my local community, as an ordained minister I am called to the whole church. This call as an ordained minister in a local setting establishes a covenantal relationship between that person, the local ministry and the broader United Church of Christ. It is a calling that requires constant and continuous discernment and understanding. The ordained minister has the continued responsibility to listen intentionally, with an open mind and heart, to the still speaking God so that he/she may understand how to serve in the local community, the United Church of Christ and the world.

Boundaries and Ethics

Serving as an ordained minister is a great responsibility and also a sacred trust between the people being served, the ordained minister and the church. Every time I walk into a hospital room or into the church or serve in the community or am in connection with an association or conference I become very aware of that sacred trust and responsibility. The Ordained Minister's Code provides the expectations of that position. These are words that should not be read once for comment in a paper but instead to become a part of the life of the one called. These words, this code when accepted, when lived out, speak to the necessary boundaries, ethics and self-care needed to be in trusted, effective and safe covenantal relationships that are a part of ordained ministry. This code is necessary to carry out the mission of the UCC and to lead a life worthy of the calling.

The Vows

⁸ *Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!"* (Isaiah 6: 8 NRSV) My faith has deepened and matured through my journey and I have found a strong connection to the United Church of Christ, its beliefs, Statement of Faith and mission. I have found profound meaning in the belief of a still speaking God after spending many years thinking God had become silent where I was concerned. I have heard the call and I humbly request to be ordained as a UCC Minister. In that request I accept all the responsibility that is involved and the task to seek to live the life that is presented in the Ordained Minister's Code. "Whom shall I send....? Through God grace and love I will answer, 'Here am I; send me!'" As a Member in Discernment seeking ordination I look to that day when I can say, "I do and I will, relying on God's grace." (Ordination Vows, UCC Book of Worship)

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