

MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT INFORMATION SHEET

Application

1. Please be sure you review the form Candidate's Letter of Request for Member in Discernment Status for a checklist of documentation required in your application.
2. Be sure you have reviewed Section 2 of the Manual on Ministry. However, where there is a conflict between the Manual on Ministry and this Information Sheet, the instructions on this sheet control.
3. Pilgrimage Papers must be no more than 10 single-spaced pages, 12-point TimesNewRoman font, plus a cover sheet that includes the candidate's name, home church, and date. Be sure there are page numbers on each page. Also, it is very important that you carefully proofread and edit your paper for grammar, spelling and punctuation. You might want to get someone else to look over it to proofread it as well. Papers full of technical errors will be returned for a rewrite and this may delay your meeting with the Committee or approval of Member in Discernment status.
4. Documentation typically is required to be submitted to the Chairperson of the Committee on Ministry (CoM) via email 3 weeks before the next CoM meeting. If any documents, such as transcripts, must be sent in hard copy, please contact the CoM Chairperson for the appropriate mailing address. The deadline for email and hard copy documentation is the same. This is a real deadline. If the required documentation is not received by the CoM Chairperson by the deadline, you may not be on the agenda for the next CoM meeting.
5. Documents may be submitted one at a time, and do not need to be sent in one batch. PDF format is preferred.
6. You will receive an email within 1 week after the documentation deadline notifying you whether your application is complete. If it is complete, you will be given an appointment time for the next CoM meeting.

Interview

7. The purpose of this initial meeting is to offer hospitality to the candidate, to listen prayerfully to the movement of the Spirit throughout the meeting, to engage in conversation about the candidate's spiritual journey, their sense of call to ministry and their specific sense of call to ministry in the UCC, to outline expectations of the process, and to ask and respond to questions.

8. Please arrive about 15 minutes early for your appointment and wait outside the room. There may be signs posted directing you where to wait.
9. The CoM works hard to keep to the schedule, but sometimes circumstances and the movement of the Spirit dictate otherwise. Be prepared to wait. The CoM apologizes in advance if the meeting is running behind. Regardless of whether the meeting is running on time or behind, the CoM will spend as much time with each candidate as needed.
10. Your pastor may accompany you to the interview as support.
11. During the interview, please be prepared to make a brief statement (5-10 minutes) to introduce yourself to the CoM and to discuss your application. The members of the CoM will have received your Pilgrimage Paper to read prior to the meeting.
12. After the interview, you (and your pastor/advisor) will be asked to step outside the room so the CoM can discuss your application. Then you will be invited back to hear the results of the CoM's deliberations and to discuss next steps. Later you will receive confirmation in writing by email of the outcome of this meeting.
13. Officially, the date of your acceptance as an MiD is the date on which the CoM approves you as an MiD. The NTA meets twice a year, in Spring and Fall. This date is sometimes needed for scholarship applications and other purposes.

Period of Discernment

14. The period of discernment is an opportunity for the MiD to explore their call to ministry in the United Church of Christ. During this time, the CoM provides support, assessment, and accountability for the MiD's continuing journey of discernment and engages in its own discernment to determine whether the MiD's call is to ordained ministry in the UCC.
15. Members in Discernment (MiD) are assigned an Advisor. This will be a UCC clergy member who is not part of the MiD's church. MiDs must meet with their Advisor at least twice each year, and preferably more often. The Advisor will file semi-annual reports on the MiD with the CoM, and a letter of recommendation from the discernment Advisor is a required part of the application for ordination.
16. Beginning in 2018, each MiD must meet with the CoM each year to check in. The impetus for this comes from the candidate. An email to the CoM chairperson asking to be on the agenda for the next CoM meeting, with a brief annual report of progress within the past year, is required. The purpose of this meeting is support for the MiD, discernment, and assessment. This annual review is an opportunity to discern together if the MiD continues to be called toward ordained ministry in the UCC and what kind of progress they are making in preparation for that particular

ministry. If geographic distance is an obstacle, it may be possible to meet with the CoM via video conferencing arranged through the Chairperson of the CoM.

17. Psychological Evaluation. All those in discernment about authorized ministry in the UCC must have a psychological evaluation. The process is outlined in a separate information sheet on the NTA website. The cost is split 3 ways; a third each to the MiD, the local church which has lifted up the MiD, and the Association. This is part of the discernment process, not the final application for ordination, and should be completed as soon as possible, preferably within the first year as an MiD.

18. If church membership moves during the discernment period, the MiD must restart the process with their new local church. MiD status is not transferable. However, if the new local church is in the NTA, documents currently in the MiD's file (such as transcripts) need not be resubmitted. However, a new, updated Pilgrimage Paper is required.

19. The minimum discernment period for an MiD is 1 year. The year is calculated from Fall to Fall/Spring to Spring based on the NTA meeting schedule, not a strict calendar year. Seminary students are encouraged to enter this process as soon as practical in their seminary training. Individuals may enter the process prior to seminary if they are experiencing a strong call to ministry in the UCC.

20. All are called by God; not all are called to ordained ministry. If during the period of discernment, the MiD discerns that their call is not to ordained ministry in the UCC, that determination should be communicated to the CoM.

21. You are encouraged to attend the Fall and Spring meetings of the NTA, the annual meetings of the South Central Conference, and, if possible, General Synod. However, attendance is not required.