
Windham Association, Southern New England Conference, UCC

Guidelines for the Ministerial Discernment Process

Introduction

This document outlines the process and the responsibilities of a person seeking ordination in the Windham Association of the United Church of Christ (UCC); the local church where the Member In Discernment candidate is a member and the pastor of that church; and the Council of the Windham Association. This document will also explain the roles of other people and organizations that contribute to the process of discerning whether a person is called, qualified, and prepared to be ordained in the Windham Association on behalf of the entire United Church of Christ. This process is consistent with guidelines found in the current Manual on Ministry, available on the national UCC website at <https://www.uccfiles.com/pdf/ManualonMinistry-2018.pdf>.

Definition

Throughout the UCC, the term “Ministerial Discernment Process” is used to describe the period of preparation, assessment and discernment that precedes a decision by an Association to permit a person to seek a call to ordained ministry in the UCC. The Windham Association Council acts on behalf of the entire United Church of Christ and is called to counsel, evaluate and discern each candidate’s call, gifts and preparation for ordained ministry within the UCC. The local UCC church where the candidate is a member sponsors the Member In Discernment through the process, and is responsible for providing nurture and support, opportunities to grow in ministerial proficiencies and candid feedback. Many other entities contribute to ministerial formation. Becoming familiar with and following the Windham Association requirements is the responsibility of the candidate seeking ordination. Additionally, it is the Member In Discernment’s responsibility to convey expectations to others who contribute on his / her behalf throughout the process. The Windham Association Council greatly appreciates the roles each play in the discernment decision the Council makes on behalf of the entire UCC.

General Timeline and Overview of Requirements

The Windham Association Council accepts people into the Member In Discernment process from many faith backgrounds. It feels deep experience with, understanding of and love for the UCC is crucial in people who would lead its local churches. Therefore, the Council will be especially attentive to the depth and breadth of each applicant’s experience of church life and his / her discernment and decision-making process if he / she is coming from another or no faith tradition. Plans to gain leadership experience in the UCC should be formulated as soon as a call to ordained ministry is perceived.

We estimate this process will take three years to complete. In some circumstances, people with significant ministerial, seminary and life experiences and the ability to demonstrate Ministerial Proficiencies may move more quickly through the process. You must be an active member of a Windham Association church so that you may be recommended by that local church to the Windham Association Council for Member In Discernment status. Hereafter this church is referred to as the “sponsoring” church. You must remain an active member of the sponsoring church for the entire time you are In

Discernment. The Windham Association recommends that candidates prepare to be received In Discernment during their first year in seminary. Some candidates may seek to begin this process even before their seminary education begins.

To be recommended to an Ecclesiastical Council, a candidate must have completed the preparation steps outlined below in Phase III and Phase IV, including the:

- M. Div degree from an Association of Theological Schools accredited seminary, or be able to demonstrate to the Council that equivalent preparation for ministry has been achieved;
- polity course;
- one year of Field Ed;
- one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education;
- statement outlining his / her wider church involvement;
- theology paper and interview;
- worship leadership and preaching demonstration and reflection; and
- Ministerial Skills Proficiency Assessment.

The sequence, general outline and details of these requirements are described below and in the appendices of this document.

NOTE: A Member In Discernment with the Windham Association may not circulate a UCC Ministerial Profile until he/she has had a successful Ecclesiastical Council. If you desire professional ministerial employment soon after graduation from seminary, the Member In Discernment process, up to and including the Ecclesiastical Council, should be completed approximately six months prior to graduation. The Member In Discernment who chooses this option will submit a current M. Div transcript and a coursework plan that will complete all M. Div. requirements within this timeline.

Phase I: Initial Discernment

When you are considering whether you are called to ordained ministry in the UCC, you will discuss your sense of calling with the pastor of the local UCC church where you are a member. The pastor will discuss your possible candidacy with the Diaconate or other appropriate body within your local church. (Henceforth, this document will refer to the sponsoring church Discernment committee, acknowledging local church variances in how this committee is titled and constituted.) No subsequent step may be taken unless both your local church pastor and the sponsoring church Discernment committee agree to consider your potential candidacy for ordination in the UCC.

Phase II: Initial Discernment Process

A: Preliminary Qualification by the Sponsoring Church

- 1) The Pastor notifies the Council of the Windham Association that a member of the local church is considering applying for Member In Discernment status, and requests the Guidelines for a Member In Discernment. This is done through the Chairperson of the Windham Association Council.
- 2) The pastor of your local church will arrange for a representative of the Council to meet with him/her and the Discernment committee to discuss the Discernment process, the responsibilities of the sponsoring church, and the roles and responsibilities of other entities helping the Windham Association Council to make its decision about this request for Member in Discernment candidacy in the Windham Association. If the person is accepted as a Member in Discernment, the sponsoring church Discernment Committee will continue in relationship with the candidate throughout the Discernment process. The pastor will serve as the Ministerial Advisor (MA). Both play key roles in the Discernment process. Along with seminary faculty, field ed and CPE supervisors and others, they are partners assisting the Member In Discernment develop the gifts throughout the Discernment period.
- 3) A meeting is scheduled for you to meet with the pastor and Discernment committee. The purpose of the meeting is to review your request to begin the discernment process of the Windham Association, to determine if this Discernment committee preliminarily affirms your emerging sense of call to ordained ministry in the UCC, and to ascertain whether it is willing to recommend that you be welcomed into the discernment process of the Windham Association. This meeting also contains a discussion of the covenantal responsibilities of this church, the pastor and the Member In Discernment throughout the Discernment process for regular communication, opportunities for growth in ministerial proficiencies, and feedback.
- 4) In preparation for your meeting with the sponsoring church's Discernment committee, you provide them with the following material two weeks in advance of your meeting:
 - 1) A brief written statement, approximately five pages, double-spaced, which addresses:
 - i) General faith pilgrimage: Christian experience, insights and encounters that have shaped your faith through home, local church, education, community and other settings;
 - ii) Call to ministry: a theological statement reflecting on personal faith and life experience that leads you to believe you are called by God to ordained ministry. This should include, but not be limited to, reasons for seeking Member in Discernment status and your vocational plans, in so far as you currently understand them;
 - iii) An explanation of why you believe the UCC is the denomination in which you are called to ordained ministry;
 - 2) All academic transcripts from undergraduate and graduate schools, including seminary;
 - 3) Current educational plans;
 - 4) Professional resume that states (with dates) work, education, civic, church and other pertinent experience. Be sure to explain gaps.

- 5) You meet with the Discernment committee and pastor. The following issues are explored:
- 1) Your history with the UCC and this local church. How have your experiences contributed to your sense of call? How have these experiences given evidence that you have gifts and maturity necessary for ordained ministry, gifts distinct from those of committed lay leaders?
 - 2) To what extent have you gained experience in each of the Ministry Proficiency areas and what opportunities for further growth might take place in this local church?
 - i) We ask that the MA, the Discernment committee and the Member in Discernment applicant specifically discuss how the applicant might gain experience in leadership in administration of the sacraments of Holy Communion and Baptism, as well as pastoral leadership for weddings, funerals and memorial services, liturgical holidays, etc. We recognize especially that presiding at Holy Communion prior to ordination is governed by local church practices, and that Baptisms involve seeking the agreement of participants and / or parents. Nonetheless, we regard the local church where the Member In Discernment has membership as one of the primary formation sites for ministry, and believe that thorough preparation in leadership of the rites and sacraments of our church is essential for those who would lead our local churches.
 - 3) Your understanding of ordained ministry. What is your view of the role of ordained ministry, of the church's expectations of its ministers, and of the variety of tasks entailed in ordained ministry? How do you understand ordained ministry within the UCC?
 - 4) The requirements and procedures for the preparation for ordination, including the roles played by the Ministerial Advisor and the Discernment committee of the sponsoring church.

The Discernment committee and pastor then decide whether or not to recommend you to be welcomed into the Discernment process of the Windham Association. If the decision is affirmative, the following action shall be taken:

VOTED: That our pastor communicate to the Windham Association Council the desire of the name of church that one of its members, name of member, be examined and if found acceptable, be welcomed into the discernment process of the Association as a candidate for ordained ministry in the UCC.

If the pastor and Discernment committee cannot affirm their support of your request to be welcomed into the discernment process, they will discuss their reasons with you and will work with you to determine subsequent steps to support your vocational discernment process.

- 6) If the vote is affirmative, the chair of the sponsoring church's Discernment Committee and / or the pastor sends a letter to the Windham Association Council asking that you be welcomed into the discernment process of the Association. This letter shall incorporate the following:
- a. The record of the above vote;
 - b. Verification of your membership in the sponsoring church;
 - c. Length of time you have been a member of the United Church of Christ, including the sponsoring church, and other UCC congregations, if applicable;
 - d. A description of the process used by the church to evaluate you and recommend you to the Association;

- e. A statement regarding how the church and pastor will continue to relate to and support you, including financial support and opportunities to develop ministerial proficiencies and experience leading rites and sacraments of the church;
- f. The name, address, phone and email of the person chairing the Discernment committee.

This material must be delivered to the Chairperson of the Windham Association Council one month ahead of a scheduled interview with the Council.

- 7) Concurrently, you must make arrangements with one of the Windham Association's providers of psychological assessment services to take the assessment instruments and participate in the psychological screening interviews required of all applicants to the Discernment process. Your local church is expected to pay 1/3 of this expense. You are also responsible for 1/3 of the expense. The Windham Association will bill you and your local church for your shares regardless of whether or not you are welcomed into the discernment process by the Council. Information about the assessment providers and the required Windham Association report release form are in Appendix 1. You must return the report release form to the provider; the provider's report will be sent to the Chairperson of the Windham Association Council. This report must be received by the Windham Association at least one month in advance of your initial Discernment interview, so schedule this element accordingly. You may request a copy of the report from the provider, and if you wish you may also schedule an appointment to discuss the report with him/her.
- 8) Following the sponsoring church Discernment committee's recommendation to the Windham Association Council that it welcome you into the discernment process, you and your local church pastor will meet to discuss and come to agreement on your current abilities and experience in each of the Ministerial Proficiencies. This preliminary Ministerial Proficiency Roadmap is part of your application package to the Windham Association Council, and it is your responsibility to update and distribute it regularly throughout the time you are in discernment. Failure to do so is one reason for dismissal from the Discernment process. The Ministerial Proficiency Roadmap is Appendix 2.

B: Initial Discernment Interview

- 1) Preparation for the Initial Discernment Interview
 - a) You will consult with the Chairperson of the Windham Association Council to arrange for an Initial Discernment Interview with the Council. You must be accompanied to the Initial Discernment Interview by a pastor of the sponsoring church who will serve as your Ministerial Advisor, and by the chair of the Discernment committee assuming responsibility for oversight and nurture within your local church. It is your responsibility to communicate with these people well in advance to ensure their availability for this appointment.
 - b) In preparation for this interview, you will arrange for electronic elements and a complete hard copy of all elements of the Minister in Discernment applicant package to be sent to the Chairperson of the Windham Association Council. This package must be received one month in advance of your Initial Discernment Interview.
 - i) The elements of the applicant package that can be sent electronically are: a current resume; your spiritual journey and call paper, revised incorporating the Discernment committee's and MA's recommendations; the date of your psychological assessment and the expected date of receipt of the psychological assessment report by the Chairperson of the Windham

Association Council; the preliminary Ministerial Proficiency Roadmap created with your Ministerial Advisor.

- ii) Four reference letters must also be received by the deadline date. The reference letters should come from
 - (1) Your Ministerial Advisor;
 - (2) a seminary professor or someone who has worked with you in equivalent preparation;
 - (3) two people who have worked with you in the past two years.

The Council is interested in a critical evaluation of your fitness for the ministry. References should describe their experiences of your capabilities in the ministerial proficiency areas. Specific instructions are on the reference form. Please note: these references should be mailed directly to the Chairperson of the Windham Association Council by the person writing the reference. The reference form is Appendix 3.

- c) Arrange for all undergraduate and graduate schools you have attended to send official transcripts directly to the Chairperson of the Windham Association Council.

2) The Initial Discernment Interview

The purpose of this interview is to determine whether or not to grant you Member In Discernment status in the Windham Association. Your Ministerial Advisor will be invited to meet with the Council as it plans the interview with you. Additionally, a member of the Windham Association psychological assessment sub-committee will share a synopsis of your psychological assessment report with the Council. During the interview you will be asked to respond to questions about the content of your Member in Discernment paper, your resume, church and other life experiences, your current sense of call, the results of your psychological assessment and your Ministerial Proficiency Roadmap.

You and the chair of your local church Discernment Committee will be asked to leave the room as the Council deliberates and votes on whether to welcome you into the discernment process. Your Ministerial Advisor will remain with the Council to observe its deliberations. Your MA will have no vote in the Council's decision at this meeting, or at subsequent meetings with the Windham Association Council. You will be invited back into the committee meeting room to be informed of the Council's decision.

Recognizing that preparation for ordination is incomplete at this point, nonetheless the Council will be discerning in this Initial Discernment Interview and throughout the process if you are accepted, the viability of your candidacy for ordained ministry in the UCC. Sometimes this means the Council will decide *not* to welcome an applicant into the discernment process. This is a difficult, but ultimately faithful and compassionate decision to make. It is in the best interest of all concerned that this process be stopped at the earliest possible stage, before seminary debt and other life choices constrain your future vocational possibilities. If the Council declines to accept your application, the pastor who accompanies you to this meeting will work with you to understand the reasons why this is so, and to explore other vocational options to fulfill your call to ministry.

When the decision of the Council is to grant Member In Discernment status, a Committee Advisor (CA), a member of the Council, will be appointed to work with you and your MA. The Council may have requirements or recommendations regarding how you proceed with Phase III, gaining additional experience in the Ministerial Proficiency areas, and it may have suggestions about the plans you described in your Ministerial Proficiency Roadmap. Pay attention. After this meeting, ask your Ministerial Advisor and Committee Advisor to help you understand these expectations. Finally,

you will be verbally asked the questions found on the self-disclosure page of the Ministerial Profile form.

It is your responsibility to establish and maintain contact with your Committee Advisor and your Ministerial Advisor, updating them on your progress meeting the Ministerial Proficiency areas throughout the Discernment period. You are required to meet with your CA at least once a year. It is advisable that you communicate with your CA and MA more frequently. You must provide your CA, MA, the chair of your Discernment committee and the Chairperson of the Windham Association Council with an updated Ministerial Proficiency Roadmap every 6 months. To each section of the Ministerial Proficiency Roadmap, add information about how you did or did not follow your plan for proficiency development and what you believe your current proficiency level to be. Revise your plans for the next 6-month interval. Failure to comply with this is one of the grounds for dismissal from the Windham Association Discernment process.

Phase III: Ministerial Proficiency Development

There are a variety of ways in which candidates for ordination prepare for local church leadership in the UCC. Some are well-established practices, for instance, the expectation that each candidate will have earned a Master of Divinity degree. Yet, there are skills, experience and wisdom to be gained in other settings, and these are important sources of information for the Council's discernment process. The Windham Association Council wishes to emphasize again the important role the Member In Discernment's Ministerial Advisor and sponsoring church Discernment Committee play in the proficiency development, skill assessment and call discernment process. The "care" part of the Discernment process comes from the sponsoring church, and it is made evident in prayer support, opportunities to stretch and grow in pastoral authority and leadership competence, financial support whenever possible, and candid and timely feedback to the Member In Discernment. The Windham Association Council hopes this clear articulation of expectations will pave the way for a full and rich formation process for the Member In Discernment and the sponsoring church. The Windham Association Council appreciates the local churches that accept the important role of sponsoring someone through the Discernment process, forming people who are called for leadership in the UCC.

The following elements of Phase III must be reflected on transcripts and in the Member In Discernment's Ministerial Proficiency Roadmap. Again, some of these elements are familiar; in each case, the Windham Association Council has made its expectations more explicit, so it is important to become familiar with these revised or new expectations.

A: UCC Polity Course

You will successfully complete a course in UCC polity at Bangor Theological School or another UCC or UCC-affiliated seminary. If there is any question about whether the course you wish to take meets the Windham Association standard, you are advised to provide the syllabus to your CA and the Chairperson of the Windham Association Council in advance of enrollment and secure the signoff of your CA and the Associate Conference Minister.

See Appendix 7 for guidelines on your Theology Paper for Phase IVA, which should be drafted and reviewed as part of your polity course.

B: Field Education Guidelines

The Windham Association has adopted new guidelines for Field Ed. Please see Appendix 4 for details.

C: Clinical Pastoral Education Guidelines

The Member In Discernment's CPE learning agreement must be shared with the MA and CA as soon as it is developed, preferably before it is finalized. The final CPE evaluation must be sent to the MA, the CA, the Chairperson of the Windham Association Council and the sponsoring church Discernment committee.

D: Wider Church Involvement

The Windham Association wishes its candidates for ordination to be familiar with the various settings of the UCC, and to experience the covenantal dimensions that define each setting of the church. It strongly recommends that you make opportunities to participate in Association meetings and the Southern New England Conference of the UCC Annual Meeting. Additionally, you are encouraged to take advantage of opportunities for learning, networking and fellowship. Events like the East Coast Seminarian's Conference, General Synod or regional activities of the UCC are worth your time. You will be asked to describe and write about your experiences and to wrestle with case studies that present dilemmas frequently faced across the synapses of our covenantal life together. Familiarity with the functions, services and resources offered by the UCC at the Association, Conference and national settings is essential.

It is the Member In Discernment's responsibility to know all of these expectations and to construct each element of his / her plan to develop Ministerial Proficiencies so they meet the Windham Association Council's guidelines. Additionally, it is the Member In Discernment's responsibility to distribute the Ministerial Proficiency Roadmap and other documents to all persons indicated in these guidelines on a timely basis. It is the Member In Discernment's responsibility to communicate regularly with his / her Ministerial Advisor and Committee Advisor, meeting with the CA at minimum once each year.

Phase IV: Evaluation of Ministerial Proficiencies

Preparing for Phase IV:

When the sponsoring church Discernment committee, the Ministerial Advisor and Committee advisor concur with the Member In Discernment, based on examination and documentation, that the candidate's development of ministerial proficiencies is sufficiently deep and other elements of the Discernment requirements are complete, they will help the candidate prepare to demonstrate these proficiencies to the Council.

Phase IV starts with the local church Discernment Committee examining your academic record, fulfillment of the Windham Association Council requirements in Phase III, and your ministerial proficiencies. It also reads your paper for interview (IVa: Spiritual Journey and Call; Why UCC, and Theology.)

It then considers the following motion:

VOTED: That the Discernment Committee of name of church convey to the Windham Association its decision, (with supporting reasons), to recommend name of candidate for ordination, and request that the Committee on the Ministry examine him/her as to fitness in character and training to be ordained to the Christian ministry. Further, if the examination be found satisfactory, it requests that the Association be summoned to meet as an ecclesiastical council to review the committee's findings, and to hear the candidate's statement of faith, knowledge and experience. Upon satisfactory completion of an ecclesiastical council, it requests that the Windham Association allow this candidate to search for a Call within the UCC Search and Call process leading to ordination by the Association on behalf of the UCC if the call she / he receives is deemed worthy of being ordained by the Windham Association Council.

If the sponsoring church Discernment committee vote is not positive, your Ministerial Advisor and the Discernment committee chair will discuss with you what steps might be taken for the sponsoring church to re-consider your readiness to move to Phase IV or to continue in the discernment process.

Anticipating a positive action by the sponsoring Discernment committee, you may contact the Chairperson of the Windham Association Council to schedule interview IVa. A tentative schedule of interviews IVb and IVc may also be developed at this time. Interview IVa must be completed successfully in order to proceed with the subsequent steps. Interviews IVb and IVc may be done in either order. The Council strongly recommends that you plan to complete Interviews IVa, IVb and IVc within the 12-month period starting in November and ending the following October. This will be advantageous to you as it coincides with Council members' terms of service, and will help assure that you have the benefit of Council consistency through these elements of the Discernment process.

In all of the Phase IV interviews, your MA is expected to be in attendance. Discuss with your CA who, if anyone might also accompany you to these interviews, especially Interview IVc, the Ministerial Proficiency Assessment. The chair of the sponsoring church Discernment committee is generally the person most appropriate to accompany you to interview IVa.

The following documents must be sent to the Chairperson of the Windham Association Council at least one month in advance of interview IVa:

1. A copy of the action of your sponsoring church Discernment committee as outlined above. This is a letter from your Ministerial Advisor and / or the chair person of the Discernment committee written on church stationery;
2. A complete copy of your seminary transcript showing Field Ed, a polity course and CPE. If you are not finished with the M. Div degree, please outline how the requirements that remain will be fulfilled within the next year;
3. Letters of reference from your CA, Field Ed Supervisor and MA assessing participation in the Discernment process and factors that indicate suitability and readiness for ordination. The outline for these letters is found in Appendix 6. These letters are confidential, and will be sent directly to the Chairperson of the Windham Association Council. The writer(s) may provide you with a copy if they wish;
4. An updated Ministerial Proficiency Roadmap (email);
5. A copy of the paper you wrote to fulfill the polity requirement (email);
6. A paper that summarizes your faith journey and call, and demonstrates your theological literacy, articulation and depth, as well as your understanding of and call to ordained ministry in the UCC. The paper should be revised following discussions with your sponsoring church Discernment committee and your advisors. Your revised paper should be emailed to the Windham Association, with one hard copy of the same paper mailed. See Appendix 7 for more information about this paper.

IVa: Re-introduction to the Council and Theological Literacy, Articulation and Depth paper

The Council will prepare for its conversation with you by meeting separately with your Ministerial Advisor. In that meeting, it will receive a recap of your psychological assessment report from a member of the psychological assessment sub-committee, input from your Ministerial Advisor and Committee Advisor, review notes from your Initial Discernment Interview and prioritize topics it wishes to explore with you.

It is highly likely that there will have been turnover on the Council since you were welcomed into the discernment process. Therefore the committee will want to spend some time getting to know you and your spiritual journey. Following this introductory conversation, they will discuss your theology paper and other topics of interest to the Council. The chair of your sponsoring church Discernment committee will also be offered the opportunity to share briefly how s/he has experienced your theological grounding in ministry. Following that, you and the Discernment chairperson will be asked to wait while the Council and your Ministerial Advisor deliberate; you will then be recalled and the Council's decision will be discussed with you. In this, as in all meetings with the Council, there may be expectations for additional development or demonstration of proficiency. Your MA and CA will help you understand the Council's intent as you construct a plan to meet these expectations.

IVb: Worship Leadership and Preaching

Our local churches put a priority on a pastoral leader's ability to conduct worship and to preach. The Council would like to have direct experience of your capabilities in these critical functions. Therefore, this interview focuses on experiencing your worship leadership and then discussing this experience with you. You need to prepare a short worship service (18-20 minutes total) for the Council, providing

worship materials, if necessary, to aid the Council's participation. Include in this service a sermon 10-12 minutes in length. At the conclusion of the service, the Council will share their reactions and discuss with you the choices you made preparing for and leading this worship service, as well as your experiences leading other worship services.

Within 10 days of this meeting, you must send an electronic copy of your sermon and worship materials, if any, to the Chairperson of the Windham Association Council, along with a 2-page reflection paper on the experience of preparation, delivery and receiving the Council's feedback. If you prefer to preach extemporaneously, please bring a tape recorder to this interview so you will be able to prepare a transcript of your sermon from the recording. (It isn't necessary to transcribe the whole worship service.) These documents will be distributed to all Council members, allowing each to understand your post-sermon reflection process.

Interview IVc: Ministerial Proficiency Assessments

The Council's attention in this interview will turn to the other six Ministerial Proficiency areas: Spiritual Strength; Leadership and Administration; Pastoral Care and Counseling; Teaching; Faith in the World; and UCC and Covenantal Behavior. Discuss well in advance with your MA and CA who might be best able to attest to your capabilities in these areas. Make sure it is someone who can speak from personal experience and observation about your pastoral skills, authority and judgment applied in the real time exercise of ministry. The CA and MA may have specific guidance about the Council's interest in a particular area, or may guide you to choose someone with more general knowledge of your proficiency levels.

Again, to plan for this assessment the Council will meet in closed session with your Ministerial Advisor reviewing your Ministerial Proficiency Roadmap and earlier papers and documents associated with the Discernment process. When you and the person who accompanies you join the committee, you will be asked to describe your approach to various situations and dilemmas found in local church leadership. Some of these may be drawn from what you have written or preached about; others will spring from brief case situations that will be presented to you. Appendix 8 contains some cases that resemble the sort of situations to which you will be asked to respond.

Concluding Phase IV: The Council's Discernment

Following completion of interviews IV a, b and c, the Windham Association Council will synthesize and discuss all of the information, impressions and facts about your call to ordained ministry in the UCC and your preparation to fulfill these responsibilities. Sometimes, this discernment decision will come easily: you clearly are or are not ready to proceed to an Ecclesiastical Council; the Windham Association Council believes you can or cannot do additional things to demonstrate ministerial proficiencies, pastoral judgment, or other key attributes essential for pastoral leadership. Other times, this discernment process will be protracted and will involve more people, steps and, yes, perhaps additional papers and interviews.

It is at this point the Windham Association Council would like to restate its discernment and decision making role. The paragraphs that follow are adapted from the Manual on Ministry, and guide the Council's deliberations.

Saying "YES" and Saying "NO"

The task of the Council is to discern appropriate gifts for ordained ministry in the UCC within candidates who apply for and are welcomed into the discernment process. As a candidate proceeds through the Discernment process toward ordination, the Council continues its work of discernment regarding the development of his/her gifts (spiritual, intellectual, emotional, personal, interpersonal, theological). Finally the Council must decide if these gifts are developed to a point that the candidate may be authorized to provide ordained pastoral leadership in the Church.

In this act of discernment the Council uses a number of criteria to reach a decision, including: academic records, psychological assessment testing, papers submitted by the candidate, Clinical Pastoral Education and Field Education evaluations, personal interviews with the candidate, letters of reference, and last, but not least, the assessment of the sponsoring local Windham Association church.

The sponsoring church plays a crucial role throughout the entire Discernment process. The Committee on the Ministry anticipates that the sponsoring church will be a strong advocate for any candidate it presents to the Association. We hope it will also be a critical advocate working with the candidate throughout the Discernment process to build on her/his strengths and confront his/her weaknesses with corrective action. The Council will also join the sponsoring church in this type of constructive, critical advocacy. In doing so, it will make one of the following decisions at each interview with a candidate:

- A. **"Yes"**: The Committee approves and authorizes the candidate to take the next steps in the ordination process.
- B. **"Yes, but"**: The committee approves and authorizes the candidate to take the next steps toward ordination, subject to taking specific action in reference to reservations/concerns enumerated by the Committee.
- C. **"No, but"**: The Committee does not authorize the candidate to take the next step. However, the candidate may remain in the Discernment process and return to the Committee at a later date with evidence that he/she has addressed the identified deficiencies.
- D. **"No"**: Occasionally the Committee decides not to proceed further with a candidate. This is not a decision that is made lightly or without considerable deliberation. But in cases where it is clear that the candidate does not appear to have the potential for ordained ministry, or is not authentic in his/her intentions, exhibits obvious immaturity or emotional problems, or fails to follow the expectations for candidates for ordination, the Committee can express its caring for the candidate and for the Church by removing the person from the Discernment process. As mentioned above, failure to comply with expectations for meetings with Committee Advisors and revisions to the Ministerial Proficiency Roadmap is grounds for potential removal from the Windham Association Discernment process. There are other reasons why this action might be taken, among them ethical difficulties, failure to complete the M. Div degree and problematic evaluations on the psychological assessment, Field Ed, or CPE requirements. This is not an exhaustive list. The Council's discernment will also include an assessment of the authenticity of the candidate's call and preparation for ordained ministry in the UCC.

If the Council's discernment is affirmative, it will pass the following motion:

Voted: That name, member of local church, be approved for ordination in the United Church of Christ pending successful completion of an Ecclesiastical Council and participation in the UCC Search and Call process that results in receipt of a call worthy of being ordained.

Phase V: Ecclesiastical Council and Search and Call

Preparing for an Ecclesiastical Council

The general steps to prepare for an Ecclesiastical Council are:

1. Reserve the date on your local church and the Chairperson of the Windham Association Council calendars;
2. Work with your Ministerial Advisor and Discernment Committee of your local church to ensure attendance of sufficient representatives from Windham Association churches to meet a quorum;
3. Solicit advice from your Ministerial Advisor and others about revisions to paper 4a;
4. Prepare to present paper 4a and a outline of your proposed service of ordination at your Ecclesiastical Council.

The "Letter Missive", a formal letter sent to churches in the Windham Association inviting them to send representation to an Ecclesiastical Council is found in Appendix 9.

Appendix 11 contains importance guidance for planning an ordination service.

Phase VI: Ordination

Pre Ordination Agreement

There is a very narrow window of opportunity in which to enroll in UCC insurance and pension plans without onerous qualification requirements and the possibility of rejection. The MACUCC and Windham Association leadership believes that it is important to notify you of these important decisions and to document the fact that you have been provided with this information. What follows is the MACUCC policy to that effect.

Sign and return the Pre-ordination Agreement before your Ordination Service. This is found in Appendix 10.

Guidelines for the Preparation of a Service of Ordination

The order for the ordination service is found in the U.C.C. Book of Worship. The Windham Association follows this order, with freedom to adapt it as needed. However, any change in the "Examination" questions requires a vote of the Ecclesiastical Council at the time of your ordination exam.

At your ecclesiastical council you should be prepared to present an outline of your proposed ordination service and indicate who will be participating in the leadership of the service. You should also indicate for what purpose the offering will be designated. The Association recommends that offerings be designated in whole or in part for the Windham Association Scholarship Fund.

A date and time for the service may be reserved on the Association calendar in advance of your ecclesiastical council, but this date must finally be approved by the ecclesiastical council. You are encouraged to reserve your ordination date with the Association office at the same time you are setting a date for your ecclesiastical council.

Ordination is a service of the Association in cooperation with the ordinand and the sponsoring church. The ordinand and sponsoring church take the initiative in planning the service in consultation with the Area Minister and/or a representative of the Committee on the Ministry. An Association representative will preside over the ordination rite itself. Usually this is the Area Minister or the Moderator or their designee. You will select all other participants in the service. Finally, the proposed service is subject to the review and approval of your ecclesiastical council.

Four problem areas need your attention:

- 1) **Clergy Triumphalism.** In a clear and explicit manner the service needs to affirm the ministry of all the baptized, lay and ordained. While the focus of the ordination rite itself is on the ordinand, the ministry of the whole church can be emphasized in a variety of places such as the sermon, litanies and prayers. The ordination rite may be preceded by the congregation reaffirming its baptismal/confirmation vows.
- 2) **Length.** Ideally the service should not exceed 1 1/4 hours. This will take some discipline on your part, particularly if the order includes word and sacrament. If the service includes the Sacrament of Communion, optional aspects of the ordination rite, such as the "Charges" should be eliminated. Do not try to pack everything you know and believe into this one occasion. The liturgy will also flow more smoothly and expeditiously with fewer rather than many liturgists.
- 3) **Wordiness.** Our reformed heritage is a tradition of the Word, which does not necessarily imply many words. When there are several leaders for the liturgy, you need to emphasize verbal restraint to them. The service is enriched by ample music and other artistic expressions of faith.
- 4) **Prayers of the Church.** The prayer of ordination comes during the ordination rite itself and asks for God's blessings and gifts for the ordinand. The content of other prayers should be comparable to those in a regular Sunday worship service. They should not be prayers about or for the ordinand. More than one "ordination prayer" violates the integrity of the liturgy. You will need to call this to the attention of those whom you have asked to lead prayers.

Usually the ordination rite will follow the sermon or offering in the order of service used in your sponsoring church.

It is the practice of the Windham Association to use inclusive language in all Association gatherings for worship. We ask you to honor this tradition in your service of ordination.

In Appendix 11:

- (1) a form to be completed and brought to your ecclesiastical council,
- (2) a sample service of the Word incorporating the Order for Ordination to Ministry,
- (3) a sample Service of Word and Sacrament incorporating the Order for Ordination to Ministry.

As you prepare your Service in consultation with your sponsoring church, feel free to call on the Chair of the Council for any additional help you may need.

Conclusion

You may count on our prayers and encouragement as you undertake this process of exploration of and preparation for the vocation of ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ. We also invite your prayers for us as we seek to develop and support strong ordained ministry leadership.

Please call the Chair of the Council, if you have any questions or comments about this process.

We wish you grace, mercy and peace.

The Windham Association Council
Southern New England Conference
United Church of Christ

Revised to change all references to "Connecticut Conference" to "Southern New England Conference" by vote of the Windham Association on 1/27/21 .

Appendix 1

Candidate Evaluation Guidelines and Forms

- A. The Candidate Evaluation Program is administered by _____. Its purpose is to provide insight and guidance to the Council regarding personal strengths and liabilities of Member In Discernment applicants that will impact the effective exercise of ordained ministry. The candidate evaluation process must be completed before the first Discernment renewal interview is scheduled with the Council. The written evaluation must be in the hands of the Council at least one month prior to the Initial Discernment Interview with the Council. This process consists of the following steps.
- 1) Set up an appointment for Candidate Evaluation by contacting the Windham Association Moderator/Council Chair. See <http://windham-ucc.org/wac/>
 - 2) After completing the evaluation, you will release the Candidate Evaluation report to the Windham Association. You may request a copy for yourself at this time.
 - 3) It is optional, but we encourage you to make an appointment with the person who conducts this assessment to discuss his / her report.
 - 4) Your MA meets with you to review the report. It is usually appropriate to take learnings from the report and incorporate them as learning goals into your Spiritual Journey and Call paper and/or your Ministerial Proficiency roadmap.
- B. The cost of the program is \$1,000.00. **The Association pays one third of the Group Rate not the Individual Evaluation.** The sponsoring church and the candidate also pay one third each. When possible we encourage the local church to assume a larger share. Bills will be sent to you and to your local church by the Windham Association treasurer.
- C. The written evaluation will be shared within the psychological assessment sub-committee of the Windham Association Council and with your Ministerial Advisor. A verbal synopsis of this report will be shared with the Council by a member of the sub-committee as it prepares for your Initial Discernment Interview and for Interview IVa.

AUTHORIZATION & RELEASE

Evaluator(s):

Date(s):

I acknowledge that I have undergone this examination to provide the Windham Association of the United Church of Christ with insights into my fitness for ordained or otherwise authorized ministry on behalf of the United Church of Christ. I AUTHORIZE the release of this evaluation to the Windham Association, its staff, officers, committee members, attorneys, and consultants. I further authorize the evaluator(s) to answer questions, give opinions, and provide further information related to this evaluation to the Windham Association, its staff, officers, committee members, and consultants. I authorize the Windham Association, its staff, or officers, to share this evaluation with ecclesiastical officers of other associations or denominations, where I may apply for employment, standing, or ordained ministry status.

I RELEASE, indemnify, and agree to hold harmless Windham Association, its staff, officers, committee members, attorneys, and consultants from any action or cause of action, arising from any action taken under the above authorization, or from any use of the evaluation and further information in reviewing my fitness for ordained ministry, or from the dissemination of the evaluation or further information to or among the persons authorized, or from the unintentional dissemination of the evaluation or further information to other persons.

Any documents provided to the Windham Association in accordance with the Authorization & Release shall become its sole property and may be retained by the Association, notwithstanding any subsequent withdrawal of my application for, or resignation from, ordained ministry status. This Authorization & Release may not be rescinded or modified, except with the express written agreement of the Windham Association.

Executed as a sealed instrument.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Type or Print Name:

The policy of the United Church of Christ is to keep evaluations and similar materials confidential, but not secret. In most cases, only a small committee of both clergy and laypeople will have access to such materials, but occasionally specific issues may require distribution to a broader group, consultation with attorneys, advisors, and experts, or staff review.

Appendix 2

Ministerial Proficiency Roadmap

Name:

Ministerial Advisor:

Date:

For each of the following Ministerial Proficiency areas, write a short paragraph and / or attach documents that describe your experience.

Theological Literacy, Articulation and Depth:

Some ways in which this is demonstrated are seminary courses; adult bible study and book groups...

Description of current proficiency...

Plans for further development...

Worship Leadership and Preaching:

This might be demonstrated by participating in worship planning for liturgical seasons or special services; serving as liturgist or preacher; leading devotions in small groups...

Description of current proficiency...

Plans for further development...

Spiritual Strength:

Please describe your personal prayer life and spiritual practices, retreats or other experiences that have bolstered your faith, occasions in which you have assisted others in examining their spiritual life and developing Christian devotional practices.

Description of current proficiency...

Plans for further development...

Leadership and Administration:

The Windham Association Council is most interested in leadership activities and responsibilities that have taken place in your church life, although you may include other experiences. Describe being a prophetic leader, building teams, motivating volunteers, clarifying an organization's vision or mission and dealing with conflict.

Description of current proficiency...

Plans for further development...

Pastoral Care and Counseling:

Describe experiences of giving and receiving pastoral care and counseling. How would you describe your style or model of pastoral care and counseling?

Description of current proficiency...

Plans for further development...

Teaching:

Share an example or two of when you taught about the Christian faith. Describe the group, your approach or teaching design, and the impact or results of this program on you, participants and the local church or other setting where this teaching took place.

Description of current proficiency...

Plans for further development...

Faith in the World:

Describe experiences you have working towards social justice, ecumenical understanding, evangelism and / or stewardship.

Description of current proficiency...

Plans for further development...

UCC and Covenantal Connections:

Describe your experiences of the UCC beyond your local church, and the distinctive markers of the UCC as you have experienced them. What about these have most enriched your faith life and current or future ministry? What failings, blind spots or limitations have you experienced, and what actions might you as a local church pastor take to compensate for these difficulties?

Description of current proficiency...

Plans for further development...

Appendix 3

CONFIDENTIAL

Reference for person to be welcomed into the discernment process

Applicant's Name _____

This person is seeking Member In Discernment status in the Windham Association. You have been asked to be a reference. Please address the following questions with regard to the applicant.

- How long and in what capacity have you known the applicant?
- Consider specifically the following Ministerial Proficiency areas: Theological Depth and Articulation; Worship Leadership and Preaching; Spiritual Strength; Leadership and Administration; Pastoral Care and Counseling; Teaching; Faith in the World; and UCC and Covenantal Connections. Where do you see this person's strengths? Give examples. Select one area in which you think this person needs further development and explain.
- What comments do you have regarding: the candidate's emotional maturity, attitude toward self and toward others?

Signed _____

Date _____

Printed Name:

This material is confidential. If you would like to share it with the applicant you may do so by sending him/her a copy. This reference must be mailed by the person giving the reference to the Chairperson of the Windham Association Council.

Appendix 4

Field Ed Guidelines for Windham Association Members In Discernment

The assumption of the Windham Association Council is that Members In Discernment are preparing for pastoral ministry in a local UCC church. The Windham Association Council holds the opinion that *all* people it authorizes for ministry on behalf of the entire United Church of Christ need to demonstrate proficiency in local church pastoral ministry whether or not they perceive a call to local church leadership at this point in time.

1. If the local church is not where you understand your call to ministry to be, you must nonetheless complete one academic year (two semesters) of field education in a local church setting. You may, if you wish, complete additional semesters of field ed in social service organizations or other settings approved by your M. Div. program.
2. Field education may NOT take place in your home church, irrespective of whether this is acceptable to your M. Div program.

We highly recommend that you consider the following suggestions as you select a field ed site:

1. Select a site that differs in two or more significant ways from your home church, ie: average worship attendance is double or half that of your home church; it has socioeconomic, ethnic or educational demographics that are distinctively different; the liturgical style varies from that with which you are accustomed; it has a distinctive theology and practice of covenantal and / or ecumenical relationships.
2. Choose a UCC church.

Verify that the person who will serve as your supervisor is ordained or licensed by the UCC and is present at your field ed site. Some field ed sites have lay people, supervisory committees or off-site supervisors. This must be explained and approved in advance by your CA and the ACM.

Develop learning goals that address the eight ministerial proficiency areas, paying attention to ministerial proficiency areas where the need for development is noted on your Ministerial Proficiency Roadmap.

1. NB: Preaching and worship leadership is a proficiency area of preeminent importance to the Windham Association Council. Preaching in a field ed site is significantly different from leading worship in your local church. Take advantage of this opportunity to expand your skills and experience.
 - a. As the schedule of preaching and worship leadership is developed for your field ed site, inform your MA and CA, that they might observe you as their schedules allow.

- b. Video tapes, CDs or DVDs of preaching and worship leadership experiences are highly preferred over text copies of sermon(s), so assume responsibility for having these recordings made when you preach;
- c. Define the worship leadership / preaching evaluation or feedback process that will be used in your field ed site and be prepared to discuss this with your CA and / or MA.

2. Administration of sacraments and rites of the church

- a. Each Member In Discernment must participate in the administration of Communion multiple times in field ed site and / or home church or other site of ministry
 - i. Discuss with your MA and field ed supervisor the practices and polity of these churches. Come to agreement on the circumstances in which you will be granted permission to preside or exercise pastoral leadership at the communion table.
- b. Baptism
 - i. Member In Discernment must be involved in preparation of parents or baptismal candidates for baptism
 - ii. Member In Discernment must be involved in a worship service that includes baptism, taking as significant role as permitted.
 - iii. Again, local polity and practice, schedules and circumstances will govern how this experience is gained. Work well in advance with your MA and your field ed supervisor to figure out how this will be accomplished.
- c. Describe how you will gain experience counseling and / or leading worship at weddings, funerals, memorial services, etc.

Participation in Wider Church

- a. Pay attention to the polity paper requirement that you gain experience assessing, influencing, discussing and reflecting upon a local church's understanding and practice of UCC polity.

Your field ed site selection, supervisor agreement and learning agreement **must be approved in advance** of the seminary filing deadline by your CA

- a. You must provide a copy of your mid-year field ed evaluation to your CA and MA
 - i. Your self assessment as well as your supervisor's assessment
- b. You must provide a copy of your and your supervisor's final field ed evaluation to your CA, MA, local church Discernment committee and to the Chairperson of the Windham Association Council.

Appendix 5

CONFIDENTIAL

Reference for Member In Discernment to proceed to Phase IV: Evaluation of Ministerial Proficiencies

Member In Discernment _____

Please address the following questions with regard to this person, sharing your assessment of this candidate's gifts for ordained ministry in the UCC:

1. What has the Member In Discernment / Field Ed process been like with this person? Address things such as:
 - How engaged with the Member In Discernment and ministerial formation process was s/he?
 - Did s/he demonstrate initiative? Openness to learning, feedback and coaching?
 - In which of the Ministerial Proficiency areas is this candidate particularly gifted? How has this candidate shared his / her gifts with others with whom s/he is in covenantal relationship?
 - Which Ministerial Proficiency area(s) are not strong points of this candidate? Does s/he share your assessment? How does s/he plan to bolster her / his capabilities in this area? In your opinion, are these plans adequate and realistic for the setting to which s/he is likely to be called?
2. Address this candidate's leadership capabilities, drawing upon his / her psychological assessment, your observations of him / her before and during the Member In Discernment process and Field Ed period, and evaluations from all other sources in the Member In Discernment process (if they are available to you). Specifically address the health of his / her relationships with colleagues and congregants, his / her trustworthiness, ability to accept responsibility and keep confidences appropriately, and ability to work constructively towards restoration in problematic relationships.
3. What hesitations or reservations do you have regarding this person competently serving as pastoral leader in a local church or any other setting of ordained ministry in the UCC. Be sure to remark on authenticity of call, love of the UCC, propensity to be a life-long learner and ability to serve in covenantal relationships with others.

Signed _____

Date _____

Printed Name:

This material is confidential. If you would like to share it with the Member In Discernment, you may do so by sending him/her a copy. This reference must be mailed by the person giving the reference to the Chairperson of the Windham Association Council.

Appendix 6

Theology Paper – Guidelines

Process Phase IVa: Summary of your spiritual journey and call; assessment of theological literacy, articulation and depth, and understanding of the UCC.

Opportunity to prepare a draft of this paper is offered in the UCC History, Polity and Theology class. The Windham Association Council strongly suggests that you take advantage of the experience of those professors to the greatest extent possible. A copy of your final graded paper must be forwarded to your CA following Council at the completion of the course. If you have taken UCC History, Polity and Theology before these guidelines were issued, consult your CA and the Associate Conference Minister for the Windham Association for guidance about what to include in this paper.

A draft of this paper must also be discussed with your Ministerial Advisor and the Discernment Committee of your local church. Soliciting input from your Committee Advisor is also very strongly recommended. The paper should be revised following discussions with the local church committee and your advisors.

Outline:

1. Your spiritual journey and call to ordained ministry – summarize this to reintroduce yourself to members who have joined the Council since your 2b interview (3 pages).
2. Describe how UCC principles of covenant and autonomy, local church governance practices that you have experienced, and our denominational polity impact your understanding of and practice of pastoral authority. (5 pages).
3. Theology: Select one topic from each of the three areas listed on the following page.

In no more than 3 pages per topic

- a. Provide a summary of your own theology in each area you choose;
- b. Describe a situation in your local church, Field Ed, CPE site or other UCC local church setting where this aspect of theology has been the basis for the ministerial actions you took or services you provided.

The Council suggests that you pay special attention to the theological coherence and pastoral implications among the three theological frameworks you describe.

Furthermore, the Council advises you that interviews IVa and IVc may contain questions or cases that call upon your theological understanding and pastoral experience in any of these areas.

Theological Literacy, Articulation and Depth

- God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit
- Creation and Providence
- Judgment and Grace
- The Person of Christ; Incarnation; Atonement; Salvation and Resurrection
- Revelation and Holy Scriptures

Humanity

- Sin, Repentance, Forgiveness
- Prayer
- Eternal Life

The Church and God's New Era (Kingdom)

- Doctrine of history and the second coming
- Church and the world (including evangelism, social action, mission)
- The UCC and the ecumenical Church; UCC identity and covenantal behavior
- Baptism and the Lord's Supper
- The Ministry (lay and ordained)

Appendix 7

Sample Case Situations

This material is adapted from Parish Life and Leadership guidelines for Pastor/Parish Relations Committees, written by the Rev. Martha Ann Baumer

Sample Case #1:

“Pastor, we want our baby baptized. We’ve invited the whole family and some of our friends. They’ll all be at the house next Sunday, so come at three o’clock and we’ll be ready. You can do the baptism in the living room.”

Formulate your initial response:

Then, this is said, “But we have the arrangements all made. What’s to talk about? Our other kids were done that way. Former Pastor didn’t complain. In fact, he and his wife will be there, so forget it – we’ll just ask him to do it.”

Talking with the chair of the diaconate, you learn that this family has withheld pledges in the past when decisions didn’t go their way. Given the financial straits of this church, she counsels you to be more flexible. How do you respond to her?

What’s your plan for dealing with this situation – identify people or committees you’ll work with, and what your approach will be. What is the theological basis for your actions?

Sample Case #2:

“Did you see the newspaper? Our pastor had a letter to the editor in the paper about the school bond issue. And I hear she’s thinking about running for the school board.”

“Really?! I didn’t think a pastor could do that! After all, they don’t pay taxes, do they?”

“I don’t know. I think they pay state taxes, and I know they pay sales tax. I never thought about it. It just seems funny to have the pastor messing around in town politics.”

“You know, she preaches about politics sometimes. Says we’re supposed to vote. And she talks about civil rights a lot. I always thought religion and politics don’t mix.”

What has been your approach preaching and teaching on political issues?

Tell about discussions you have led or participated in with congregants where different political opinions were voiced. Describe what you said and did. What was the theological basis for your actions?

Sample Case #3:

“Pastor, why don’t we say the creed anymore? I miss it. We always used to say it. We had to memorize it when I was a kid, and it doesn’t seem right not to use it.”

“What creed do you mean?”

“The Apostles’ Creed, of course.”

“Well, I think the language is difficult for lots of people today, including me. And I struggle with the line about the virgin birth since I have questions about that. So I just avoid it and use other things.”

“What? You have questions? I thought they taught you what to believe in seminary! Didn’t they? And I certainly believe Jesus was ‘born of the Virgin Mary’! Why, I’m shocked at what you said. I always thought you and I believed the same things.”

What is your response to this person? What steps might you take after this conversation ends?

Appendix 8

Letter Missive

To Churches and Ministers of the Windham Association

Greetings:

At the request of _____ (name of church) _____ an Ecclesiastical Council of the Windham Association comprised of the Churches listed on the back of this letter are called to examine _____ (name of candidate) _____ as to his/her fitness to be ordained to the Christian Ministry.

Each Church, represented by pastor(s), lay delegates, and other ministers, are urged to be present at _____ (name of church) _____ on _____ (date) _____ at _____ (time) _____. Churches are entitled to the same representation as that of Association and Conference meetings. Members of the Windham Association Council, together with the Southern New England Conference Eastern Region Minister, the Registrar and the Moderator (or their representatives) shall be members of the Ecclesiastical Council by reason of their office.

If the examination of the candidate is sustained and the ordination approved, the council will recess until a date to be determined for the Service of Ordination.

Representatives from eight of the Windham Association Churches invited shall constitute a quorum.

Wishing you grace, mercy and peace,

Registrar



Appendix 9

Windham Association Ecclesiastical Council for Ordination - Agenda

1. Call to order by the Moderator;
2. The reading of the call to the Council (letter Missive) by the Registrar;
3. The calling of the roll by the Registrar (written enrollment);
4. Establishment of the quorum (a majority of invited churches according to the By Laws, 8);
5. Honorary members elected (await a motion that they be elected as read) Officers of the Windham Association, members of the Council, Area Minister, Voice but no vote;
6. The Constituting Prayer;
7. Records of the church, read by clerk of church, concerning vote to request ordination by the Windham Association;
8. MSVOTE that the records of the church be deemed satisfactory;
9. Presentation of the credentials of the candidate by the Registrar:

Candidate _____ is a member of the _____ local church _____. S/He was taken into the discernment process of the Windham Association in Month Year after X years of membership in this Windham Association local church. S/He is a graduate of College or University Name, Degree, Year; Graduate or Other Professional Training, Degree, When; and Seminary Name, MDIV Year. Polity was completed Where in Year. In Month Year s/he completed her Ministerial Proficiency Demonstrations with Council and at that time was approved for this Ecclesiastical Council. S/He plans to start the UCC Search and Call process _____ start date _____.

10. VOTE to declare the candidate's credentials satisfactory;
11. Presentation by the candidate of his/her spiritual journey, theology and call to the UCC paper;
12. Examination of the candidate by roll call (including honorary members);
13. VOTE that the examination be suspended and that the Council be by itself. All but members of the Council and officers of the Windham Association will leave;
14. MOVED that the examination be sustained, and that the Association proceed in cooperation with the Church, to hold the Service of Ordination pending receipt of a call worthy of being ordained as determined by the Council of the Windham Association. (wait for Second) then ask for discussion, if none then the Registrar will call the roll to ascertain the mind of the Council on the motion;
15. The Moderator will appoint a committee of three to present the candidate and the Moderator will inform him/her of the action of the Council;

16. MSVOTE that after the conclusion of this session and Service of Ordination, the Registrar be ordained and instructed to complete the minutes of the Council and Ordination Service, and with the approval of the Moderator, inform the Registrar of the Southern New England Conference;
17. MSVOTE to adjourn at the conclusion of the Service of Ordination;
18. Closing Prayer by: _____

Moderator _____

Registrar _____

Date _____

Date _____

Appendix 10

Pre-ordination Agreement

The following decisions must be made at the time of ordination. This document: (1) serves as a reminder of those decisions and (2) provides them to you in writing. To receive applications or additional information on any UCC plan, contact:

***The Pension Boards – UCC
475 Riverside Drive
New York, NY 10115
(212) 870-2777***

I. THE ANNUITY FUND – UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

As a member of this national plan, it is recommended that your employer contribute a minimum of 14% of 130% of your cash salary if you live in a parsonage – or 14% of cash salary plus housing allowance – as annuity dues toward your account in a fund invested by the Pension Boards. At the time of retirement, you receive a monthly benefit based upon the value of your account and a number of other factors, such as your age and the benefit option you select. If you leave ministry or choose to stop contributing to the Annuity fund, the amount in your account remains vested and will provide a benefit to you on a monthly basis at the time of retirement.

You can enroll as a lay person in this plan prior to ordination if you are employed in a UCC church or entity – then change your status in the plan to “clergy” following ordination. While there is no deadline for joining this UCC plan, it is advisable to become a part of it as early in your career as possible in order to realize the greatest benefits at the time of retirement.

The Annuity fund-UCC has an excellent record of investment growth and clergy members receive special tax benefits after retirement. Most of the cost of managing the Annuity Fund is borne by endowment income and the denomination.

II. UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST HEALTH AND DENTAL BENEFITS PLANS

These national plans allow clergy to enroll without a physical exam or other proof of good health within a period of 90 days following first employment by a UCC entity. After 90 days, enrollment in the Health Plan will depend upon evidence of good health by the member and each eligible dependent. Subsequent enrollment in the Dental Plan can only occur during an open enrollment conducted periodically by the Pension Boards. Clergy whose first employment by a UCC entity occurred during their full-time seminary education should contact the Pension Boards concerning their eligibility for coverage upon graduation.

It is not necessary to belong to the Annuity Fund-United Church of Christ to participate in the UCC Health Plan, but **you do have to belong to the Health Plan in order to be eligible for the Dental Plan.**

Clergy who elect to have the United Church of Christ Health and Dental Benefits coverages may at any time leave the programs to be covered by another major carrier or Health Maintenance Organization (HMO), but re-admission into the UCC Health Plan at a future date will only be allowed if the applicant and dependents provide proof of good health satisfactory to the outside company employed to make such determinations. In these cases, enrollment in the UCC Dental Plan must await an open enrollment period.

While some other programs – especially HMOs – may offer health services for a lower premium, it should be remembered that:

- A. The United Church of Christ Health Benefits Plan includes provision for catastrophic illness while an HMO may not.
- B. If you belong to an HMO and move to another area or state, you may not be able to join either the UCC Plan or another HMO if you have a pre-existing medical condition, whereas if you belong to the UCC plan, your coverage will be transferred to a new place of employment.

III. UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST GROUP LIFE INSURANCE AND DISABILITY INCOME PLAN

In order to be an active participant in this national plan, you must be an active UCC Annuity Fund member with at least 11% annuity dues being paid for your benefit. The yearly contribution for this plan is 1% of the salary basis (cash salary plus housing) used in the determination of the Annuity Fund dues. This plan includes disability income and term life insurance components for the member and a small life insurance benefit for a spouse. There is a reduced life-time life insurance benefit for retirees at age 65 at no additional member cost. If the member becomes disabled before retirement, the plan provides, after a ninety-day waiting period, monthly income benefits and continues annuity contributions at 14% of the pre-disability salary basis until retirement, usually age 65.

You can join this plan **within 90 days of first employment by a UCC entity (after graduating from seminary)** without a physical exam. After the 90 days, you may not be eligible for coverage if you have a pre-existing medical condition.

IV. UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST GROUP LIFE INSURANCE PLAN

In order to be eligible for this coverage, you must be an active UCC Annuity Fund member with at least 11% annuity dues being paid for your benefit. The yearly contribution is \$50 for this term life insurance coverage. There is a reduced life-time benefit for retirees at age 65 at no additional member cost.

You can join this plan **within 90 days of first employment by a UCC entity (after graduating from seminary)** without a physical exam. After the 90 days, you may not be eligible for coverage if you have a pre-existing medical condition.

V. SOCIAL SECURITY

According to the Social Security Act, all ordained ministers are required to belong to the Social Security system and make regular contributions through the Internal Revenue Service. The only exception is that an ordained minister can apply to be exempted from Social Security on the grounds of being conscientiously opposed to the acceptance of public insurance – **“by filing for an exemption on or before the due date of the 2nd tax year for which you have had church related earnings.”** After that time, it is not possible to be exempted from the system or cease payments.

You should review your social security account at least once every three years to make sure you're being properly credited with your payment. Obtain a Request for Earnings and Benefit Estimate Statement from your local Social Security Office to request this information.

While some investors suggest that there are other ways to invest a sum equal to Social Security payments that would yield greater earnings, one should remember that Social Security provides the following benefits:

For further information regarding this matter, contact the nearest Social Security Administration Office, listed in your phone book.

VI. WORKER'S COMPENSATION

Each church should carry Worker's Compensation for all employees – full and part-time. As you begin to search for your first pastorate, please keep in mind that this insurance is carried by the church for its – and your – protection. Health insurance and the church's property/liability insurance will not cover any church employee who is injured on church property. A word to the wise – make sure any church to which you are called carries this insurance!

PRE-ORDINATION AGREEMENT

Southern New England Conference, United Church of Christ

I have read the information regarding the Annuity Plan-United Church of Christ, UCC Medical and Dental Benefits Plans, UCC Life Insurance and Disability Income Plan, Social Security and Worker's Compensation.

I understand that it is my responsibility to contact the appropriate agencies and make arrangements for applying or opting out of membership in the above programs within the timelines stated for each.

Ordinand

Date

Committee on Formation Chair

Date

Connecticut Eastern Region Minister

Date

**NOTE: 1 copy is retained by the Ordinand
1 copy is kept in the Association Office**

Appendix 11

Ordination Planning Documents

Windham Association
Southern New England Conference, United Church of Christ
Ordination Service Information
for the Ecclesiastical Council

Requested date and time of service reserved on the Association calendar

Outline order of service:

People leading worship:

Recipient(s) of the offering (if shared with the Scholarship Fund):

Signed,
Windham Association Registrar

**A Service of Word and Sacrament
Incorporating the Order for Ordination to Ministry**

PRELUDE

INTROIT

CALL TO WORSHIP

HYMN

THE LORD'S PRAYER

THE WORD OF GOD AS FOUND IN

SPECIAL MUSIC

SERMON

THE PASSING OF THE PEACE

One: May the peace of Christ be with you.

ALL: AND ALSO WITH YOU.

One: Let us greet one another with a sign of God's peace.

ORDER FOR THE ORDINATION TO MINISTRY

GREETING

PRESENTATION

EXHORTATION

EXAMINATION

ACCLAMATION

Leader: People of God, you have heard the promises _____ Name _____ has made.
What is your will?

PEOPLE: BY THE GRACE OF GOD, HE/SHE IS WORTHY! LET US ORDAIN HIM/HER. COME
HOLY SPIRIT.

Leader: Will you support _____ Name _____ in the ministry of Christ?

PEOPLE: WE WILL

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS AND ORDINATION PRAYER

DECLARATION

PRESENTATIONS (IF ANY)

OFFERING

This offering is being received as gifts to the scholarship fund of the Windham Association for
the benefit of women and men attending seminaries in preparation for ordained ministry.

OFFERTORY MUSIC

HYMN, sung during presentation of offering, bread and wine

THE HOLY EUCHARIST

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

INVITATION

THE SURSUM CORDA

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

CHORAL SANCTUS AND BENEDICTUS

ACCLAMATIONS

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

THE POURING OF THE CUP

RESURRECTION ACCLAMATION

SHARING OF THE ELEMENTS

UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

RECESSIONAL HYMN

COMMISSION AND BLESSING

POSTLUDE

**A Service of the Word
Incorporating the Order for Ordination to Ministry**

PRELUDE

CHORAL INTROIT

CALL TO WORSHIP

HYMN

INVOCATION AND WELCOME

CONFESSION OF SIN

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

GLORIA PATRI (or other choral act of praise)

THE PASSING OF THE PEACE

One: May the peace of Christ be with you.

ALL: AND ALSO WITH YOU

One: Let us greet one another with a sign of God's peace.

SPECIAL MUSIC

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

SERMON

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH - -UCC STATEMENT OF FAITH

HYMN

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

OFFERING

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OFFERTORY MUSIC

OFFERTORY RESPONSE

ORDER FOR ORDINATION TO MINISTRY

GREETING

PRESENTATION

EXHORTATION

EXAMINATION

ACCLAMATION

Leader: People of God, you have heard the promises _____NAME_____ has made. What is you will?

PEOPLE: BY THE GRACE OF GOD, HE/SHE IS WORTHY! LET US ORDAIN HIM/HER. COME HOLY SPIRIT.

Leader: Will you support _____ name _____ in the ministry of Christ?

PEOPLE: WE WILL.

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS AND ORDINATION PRAYER

DECLARATION

PRESENTATIONS (IF ANY)

HYMN

BENEDICTION

RESPONSE

POSTLUDE