

CENTRAL ATLANTIC CONFERENCE – CATOCTIN ASSOCIATION

An Introduction to the process of becoming a MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT (MID)

On behalf of the United Church of Christ, the Church and Ministry Commission of the Association is charged with the responsibility of guiding persons who feel called to the ordained ministry. The process outlined on this website will assist you in discerning whether you are well-suited to ordained ministry and equipped to carry out that function. A variety of requirements and procedures are used to fulfill the Commission's responsibility.

Being accepted as a MID means that you are deemed to have the potential to be ordained to the Christian ministry in the United Church of Christ. If accepted, we will be in covenant together on a journey of discernment as we all seek to ascertain the validity of that first impression. We call on the Holy Spirit to give us the guidance and wisdom to validate your personal call to service. MID status, however, does not mean that one may act, function or feel you are licensed, commissioned or ordained.

This journey will help clarify your call to ordained ministerial status. Most importantly, it will be about identifying, nourishing and validating the covenantal nature of that individual call within the community of the United Church of Christ. This journey will change your life.

Please review the sequential steps required before applying for MID status. We suggest you spend considerable time making notes about questions you may have, prayerfully processing what will be expected of you. This is a crucial step in your spiritual development.

Once you have taken the initial steps 1 and 2 as outlined in the attached MID checkoff list, ask your Pastor to contact the Chair of the Church and Ministry Commission to start the process.

Once you are approved as a MID. You are asked to complete the Ordination Requirement Checklist which follows.

We are excited to join with you on this journey!

Peace and blessings to you.

**CENTRAL ATLANTIC CONFERENCE, CACTOCTIN ASSOCIATION MEMBER
IN DISCERNMENT (MID) ORDINATION REQUIREMENTS CHECKLIST**

Contact Information: (MIDs are asked to complete and forward to the Church and Ministry Commission Chair)

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone: home _____ work _____ cell _____

e-mail _____ fax _____

Local Church (name and location) _____

Pastor _____

Seminary _____ Year of grad _____

Church and Ministry Advisor _____

Cell _____ Email _____

Required Paperwork:

Items are to be sent to the chair of the Church and Ministry Commission who will forward all items to the CAC office for the MID's official records.

- _____ A letter of recommendation from the pastor
- _____ A letter from the appropriate governing body of the endorsing congregation
- _____ A letter from the MID requesting consideration as a MID
- _____ Official transcript from Seminary or most recent educational institution
- _____ Signed Candidate Statement of Agreement
- _____ Approval of MID status (This will be submitted by the Church and Ministry Commission.)
- _____ Proof of completion of Psychological Evaluation (The actual report will be kept in a confidential file.)
- _____ Verification of completion of one unit of CPE
- _____ Verification of approved Boundary Training
- _____ Verification of an approved polity course
- _____ Verification of completion of seminary requirements/graduation (final transcript)
- _____ Ordination Paper
- _____ Verification of approval for ordination after vote taken at an Ecclesiastical Council

Catoctin Association

Member in Discernment (MID) Ordination Process

The decision to pursue ordination is an important one and requires a time of prayer and discernment. Before applying for Member in Discernment status, you should have at least one year of active membership in a local UCC congregation in the Catoctin Association, so that your pastor and church leadership can be assured that you have the gifts needed for ordained ministry. Here is a list of required steps that you should follow during your journey towards ordination:

1. Meet with your local pastor and Consistory and request their support in requesting Member in Discernment status. You will need to request a meeting with the Church and Ministry Commission and submit letters from yourself, your pastor and your Consistory President. **Link 1: Letters of Endorsement**
2. Meet with the Church and Ministry Commission to request Member in Discernment status. Your pastor will accompany you when you meet with the Commission. Please come prepared to discuss your sense of call, educational plans and any questions you may have regarding ordination process. After this meeting, you will be notified of the Commission's decision regarding your designation as a Member in Discernment (MID). You will be assigned a mentor at this time. **Link 2: Guidelines for Your First Meeting with the Church and Ministry Commission**
3. Review and sign the Member in Discernment Candidate Statement of Agreement and Understanding after you have been approved as a MID. Please return a signed copy of this form to the Church and Ministry Commission Chair within two weeks of your approval as a MID. **Link 3: Member in Discernment Candidate Statement of Agreement and Understanding.**
4. Keep the Church and Ministry Commission and your local church informed of your process through:
 - a. An annual meeting with your local church Consistory/Council.
 - b. An annual meeting with the Church and Ministry Commission to update the group on your progress, to seek support, and to ask questions about the ordination process.
 - c. Meeting with or talking to your Church and Ministry Commission mentor quarterly.
5. Complete the following requirements for ordination and provide proof of completion:
 - a. A theological degree, preferably a Masters in Divinity, from an accredited seminary. Coursework must include a class on UCC polity, history, theology and ministries.

- b. A psychological evaluation assessing suitability for ministry. This must be completed within one year of being approved for MID status.
 - c. Boundary Training approved by the Church and Ministry Commission.
Link 4: Psychological Evaluation and Boundary Training
 - d. One unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) at an accredited training site.
Link 5: Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)
6. Write your ordination paper as outlined in the UCC Manual on Ministry. Your mentor will be available to provide support and feedback as you prepare this paper. You will submit this paper to the Church and Ministry Commission and meet with them for final approval. Your pastor and mentor should accompany you to this meeting. **Link 6: Ordination Paper Guidelines and Link 7: Sample Ordination Papers.**
7. Schedule your Ecclesiastical Council in conjunction with the Church and Ministry Commission. Here, you will present your paper to UCC pastors and lay leaders from the Catoctin Association. **Link 8: Ecclesiastical Council Guidelines.**
8. Complete a UCC profile by following the guidelines found at www.ucc.org.

Link 1: Letters of Endorsement

Once you, your pastor and your church leadership decide to move forward, you should submit letters supporting your decision to the Association Church and Ministry Commission. All letters should be sent to the Chair of the Catoctin Association Church and Ministry Commission before your scheduled meeting. Your pastor will supply the mailing address of the chair for your letters.

The letters of support should specify that you are seeking MID status in the United Church of Christ. The letters from the pastor of your congregation and your leadership body should be on the church's letterhead. Samples follow.

1. The letter from your pastor should include an understanding of your sense of call and experience. It must also include the following recommendation and disclaimer statements:

I _____ as pastor of _____ church, recommend _____ to the Church and Ministry Commission of the Catoctin Association of the United Church of Christ as an MID candidate for ordination. I do so without reservations and know of no reason why _____ should not be a candidate for ordination.

2. The letter from your leadership body should include:

Dear Chair of the Catoctin Association Church and Ministry Commission:

On behalf of the congregation of _____ Church, we recommend _____ to the Church and Ministry Commission as a Member in Discernment candidate for ordination. We do so without reservations, and we know of no reason why _____ should not be a candidate for ordination.

_____ has been a member of this congregation since _____ and has participated in the life of the church by _____.

President of the Consistory (or equivalent) Date signed.

Chairperson of the Board of Deacons (or equivalent) Date signed.

3. In addition, you should submit a personal letter seeking consideration for MID status.

Your letter should include the following information:

- Your sense of call
- Your gifts for ministry
- Your academic achievements
- Past and present church and community involvement.
- Request for a meeting with the Commission.

Link 2: Guidelines for Your First Meeting with the Church and Ministry Commission

In a relaxed atmosphere, this meeting provides an opportunity for the commission to get to know your sense of call and the person behind what you have submitted in writing. You will have an opportunity to meet and talk with the Commission members and have a dialog about your plans.

The chair of the commission will contact you regarding the date, time, and location of the meeting. Alert your pastor about the meeting and confirm with the chair that you both are available.

During the meeting, you will be asked to speak for ten minutes, helping the Commission members understand why you are taking this step. Members of the commission will ask questions, and you may ask questions of them as well. As you prepare your 10 minute overview, include your answers to the following questions:

- What triggered your sense of call?
- What does ordained ministry mean to you?
- What are your plans for theological education?
- To what specifically (if you know at this time) are you being called?
(Example: local church ministry, new church start, etc.)

You might ask your pastor to review your presentation with you before the meeting.

The commission may approve your request to enter into the ordination process on the day of the meeting and assign a commission member to mentor you on the journey.

As the meeting draws to a close, the commission will lay hands on you and pray with you as a sign of blessing and as symbol of the beginning of your journey as a MID.

Link 3: Member In Discernment Candidate
Statement of Agreement and Understanding

Please read the following as it outlines the boundaries of your MID status:

- I understand that being approved as a MID of the Catoclin Association of the Central Atlantic Conference of the United Church of Christ does not assure my ordination.
- I understand that being a MID does not constitute permission or authorization to act as an ordained, licensed, or commissioned minister. This includes:
 - o Conducting communion.
 - o Officiating funerals or weddings.
 - o Wearing a clerical stole or clerical collar.
 - o Assuming the title of "Reverend".
- I understand that my MID status will be reviewed annually and that my status may be terminated at any time either by myself or the Church and Ministry Commission.
- I understand that clear boundaries are important in any dealings I have with churches and/or church members. See **LINK 4: Boundary Training**
- I understand that the Church and Ministry Commission may suspend or terminate my MID status without giving cause.
- I understand that the requirements for ordination in the Catoclin Association are determined by the Church and Ministry Commission on behalf of the Catoclin Association and that said Commission has the sole authority to do so.
- I attest that information I give, both written and oral, to the Church and Ministry Commission is true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for the termination of my MID status.

I understand and agree to the conditions stated above.

Member In Discernment Candidate

Date signed.

Chair, Church and Ministry Commission

Date signed.

Link 4: Psychological Evaluation and Boundary Awareness Training

It is recommended that psychological evaluations be complete within one year of beginning the MID process. The purpose of a psychological evaluation is to discern whether an individual is temperamentally suited to deal with the varied stresses and complexities encountered in the work of the ordained ministry. Confidentialities, the rites of the church, maintaining boundaries and the many unknown demands of the work require an individual to possess confidence and maturity. This evaluation may find that some consultations or counseling is needed, a beneficial aspect of the process that may prove salutary for a more fulfilling life and ministry.

The Catoctin Association has arranged with the following provider for psychological evaluations:

Samaritan Counseling Center, Kristine Campion, Administrative Manager

1803 Oregon Pike, Lancaster, PA 17601

Phone: 717 560-9969

Website: <http://scclanc.org/>

Cost: \$1,420

MIDs are responsible for arranging their appointments. The payments are divided equally between the three responsible parties: the local church, the Church and Ministry Commission, and the MID.

The MID is responsible for submitting 1/3 of the payment and contacting the local church to request 1/3 of the payment. All checks are to be made payable to Catoctin Association and sent to the Association Treasurer. The treasurer will issue a check in the required full amount to the service provider. It is recommended that the request for checks be made two months in advance of the appointment (whenever possible).

After the initial session and the feedback session, a final report will be sent to both the Commission Chair and the MID. The report of the evaluation process is held in confidence, with very limited circulation beyond the Chair of the Commission and persons most directly providing guidance and mentoring for the individual under consideration.

Boundary Awareness Training

The Church and Ministry Commission urges all MIDs to enroll in boundary training provided by the Conference and the Association as early in one's journey as possible.

The purpose of boundary training is to make the individual aware of the need for care in dealing with the children, young people and adults that comprise the membership of our churches. Ethics in dealing with individuals are important—your conduct as persons working toward leadership in ministry must be above reproach. A leadership position and the aura of authority that position conveys, must never be misused in personal relationships with people with whom one comes in contact. Sexual harassment in any form is not tolerated. Messages on social media should be considered carefully before being sent to others.

Link 5: Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)

CPE can be one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of the ordination process. You will grow both spiritually and pastorally. You will become familiar with medical care facilities procedures, learn about clergy-patient confidentiality, and the ministry of presence. You will face situations which will prepare you for future pastoral care responsibilities.

Since identifying and applying for a CPE placement is your responsibility, contact the staff member at your seminary knowledgeable about placement options early on in your studies as many programs fill up quickly. Most seminaries offer CPE orientation days when organizations offering accredited CPE programs visit campuses to discuss their programs.

Link 6: Ordination Paper Guidelines

Congratulations! You are coming to the end of what surely has been a long journey!

Writing an ordination paper is the first step toward your Ecclesiastical Council, a setting where clergy and lay members of the Association come together to hear a presentation of your paper and vote on whether or not to ordain you (pending an approved call).

These guidelines will assist you in writing your ordination paper and clarify what is expected of you and of the paper.

As you prepare the ordination paper, keep your audience in mind. This is not an academic paper written for seminary professors. It is written for clergy and lay people who want to know who you are, what you believe, and what you think. If you are accustomed to using theological language and terms, think of this as an exercise in translation. You must be able to share what you know effectively without using excessive professional jargon. The effectiveness of your ministry depends on it.

Papers should be approximately 30 pages long, double-spaced, Arial 12, one-inch margins. One section must be about your faith journey. This section should tell us who you are and how you arrived at this place in your life with regard to your faith. It should highlight the important faith issues you have experienced, including your understanding of your call to ministry and why you think ordination is necessary to that call.

The second portion of your paper should address your theology. This section should have something substantive to say about the following: God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and their interrelationships within the Trinity; the authority of Scripture; the sacraments; sin and evil; and a statement on ministerial ethics. Many people choose to structure this section around the UCC Statement of Faith, but this is not required. Tell us how your theology relates to current events, "real life", ministry, and to you. Finally, your paper should demonstrate your knowledge of the history and polity of the United Church of Christ.

Please refer to **Link 7: Sample Ordination Papers**. There you will find sample papers which you will want to read before you begin to write your paper.

Please keep in mind that all of the above needs to be incorporated into a cohesive paper. This is not to be seen as a "laundry list" to be checked off one item at a time. The issues to be addressed should be integrated within an overall narrative that tells the story of your path to ordained ministry.

Be assured that in preparing the paper, you will be working closely with your mentor and members of the Catoctin Association Church and Ministry Commission. Begin by Informing your mentor when you are about to complete the first draft of the paper. He or she will then work closely with you to determine when the paper is ready for review by the Commission. Once you and your mentor decide the paper is ready for submission, your mentor will e-mail the paper to the Commission members in advance of your meeting with them. The Commission may require you to make minor, or even

major revisions to your paper, and may require you to meet with them more than once before final approval. The commission ultimately determines when you and your paper are ready for an Ecclesiastical Council.

Most importantly, no date will be set for your Ecclesiastical Council until all Pre-Ordination requirements are met and all of your paperwork has been submitted to the Association office. The Commission Chair will then help you schedule your Ecclesiastical Council.

Prior to the Ecclesiastical Council your paper will be e-mailed to the Association office for distribution to all churches and clergy in our Association. This major event in your path to ordination will be set after consultation about an appropriate date, time and place. The Church and Ministry Commission wishes you well as you complete this step in your journey.

Link 7: Sample Ordination Papers

You will find three sample ordination papers under the Members in Discernment heading on the Catoctin Association website (www.catoctinuucc.org).

Link 8: Ecclesiastical Council Guidelines

This information is to help you understand what to expect on the day of your Council.

You will want to prepare and pray before the Ecclesiastical Council.

This is your opportunity to address lay and clergy representatives from Catoclin Association churches that comprise the Council. Those who attend will have had an opportunity to review your paper before the Ecclesiastical Council. Most Ecclesiastical Councils are held at your local/sponsoring UCC church.

A member of the Church and Ministry Commission will moderate the Ecclesiastical Council.

You or a person of your choice (often the pastor of your sponsoring church) will offer a short time of devotion. A prayer, a short scripture, and/or a hymn are typically included in the devotion.

The Moderator will introduce the person you select introduce you. This should be someone who is well acquainted with you, either your pastor, your Church and Ministry Mentor, or a leader from your church. The introduction should last no more than 5 minutes.

After the introduction, you will proceed to present a 10 minute overview of highlights in your paper.

The Council will then ask questions regarding your faith journey, your call, beliefs, statements in your paper, perhaps how you view ordination, and why you are seeking ordination.

After all of the questions have been answered, you will be asked to leave the sanctuary while the Council votes on your readiness for ordination.

You will be called to return to the sanctuary and the vote will be announced.

The host site is invited to host a reception after the Ecclesiastical Council. If they elect to do so, a reception will follow.

Note: To be ordained you must first have a call to a position requiring ordination. Should your ecclesiastical council occur prior to your having received a call, you may be "approved for ordination pending call."