

Dear Member in Discernment Applicant,

Feeling the nudge of the Holy Spirit can be an unsettling experience. The questions then begin to emerge in explosive ways: What does this mean? Who do I talk to? Is God really calling me? Why now? What does this mean for my family? What will be required of me? How long does it *really* take to become a minister in the United Church of Christ?

Friend, discerning God's call for our lives is an essential part of living out our covenantal promises and is a lifelong journey that is continually unfolding in new and sometimes startling ways. It is our hope as the members of the Church and Ministry Committee of the Southern Association to be faithful partners with you and your Local Church Discernment Committee to listen for the Still-speaking voice of God. It is our deepest prayer that you feel supported in love and informed with knowledge.

A great theologian from the early days of the United Church of Christ, H. Richard Niebuhr, identified four aspects of a vocation.

- The call to be a Christian is the beginning of any call to ministry.
- The secret call between an individual and God, when one feels an inward invitation to become a minister.
- The providential call when one recognizes when God has given an individual specific gifts--intellectual, spiritual, psychological, and moral--to use in ministry.
- The ecclesiastical call when the communities affirm the call, help to prepare for ministry, and then ordains or commissions individuals for Christian ministry.

As you prepare to make application to become a Member in Discernment of the Southern Association of the Southern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ, I want to encourage you to spend time both in prayer and conversation with your pastor and your Local Church Discernment Committee, they will serve as an invaluable resource to you in your journey. Many have found the **Discernment Travelogue** a helpful resource as they have sought to gain clarity of their call to Christian Ministry. Second, I want to encourage you to familiarize yourself with Section 2, Article 1 of the **Manual on Ministry**, and the **Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ**.

Discerning a call to ministry in the United Church of Christ is communal work of mutual discernment, and there are a plethora of resources to assist you in this process. Included in this packet you will find links and/or attachments to all of the resources listed above, as well as the **Formal Member in Discernment Application** for the Southern Association. Formal applications, along with all supplemental documentation must be received by the Southern Association office at least 30 days before an initial interview--this is to ensure that members of the Church and Ministry Committee (Section A) have adequate time to review your application and prepare to meet with you.

“The One who calls you is faithful.” 1 Thessalonians 5:24a

On behalf of Section A of the Church and Ministry Committee, thank you.

Godspeed and Blessings,



The Rev. Dr. J. Lee Hill, Jr., Chair Section A
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MEMBER IN DISCERNMENT APPLICATION

This form should be submitted to the Church and Ministry Committee (southernassociation@sascnucucc.com) after a local congregation has recommended that an individual be accepted as a Member in Discernment by the Southern Association, Southern California Nevada Conference.

Full legal name: _____ Date of birth: _____

Preferred name: _____ Pronouns: _____

Full mailing address: _____

Email address(es): _____

Phone number(s)

Home: _____ Mobile: _____ Other: _____

Church of Membership

Name: _____

Address: _____

Association: _____

How long have you been a member? _____

List of activities in which you are engaged (you may attach a separate sheet).

Name of current pastor: _____

Pastor's phone number(s): _____

Pastor's email address: _____

How long have you been a member of the UCC? _____

Please describe your engagement in the wider church (Association, Conference, General Synod, Global Ministries, Justice and Witness Ministries, etc.).

Have you ever applied for Member in Discernment status with this or any other UCC Association? Yes No

If yes, which Association? _____

When? _____

Outcome? _____

Have you ever had a background check through the Southern California Nevada Conference or any other UCC Association? Yes No

If no, contact Virginia Arroyo at the Conference Office (arroyo@scncucc.org) to request a current background check.

If yes, which Association? _____

When? _____

Outcome? _____

Education and Training

Include names and addresses of all institutions attended, years attended, date of graduation or anticipated date of graduation. (You may attach a separate sheet or resume with this information.) Note: You will be asked to submit official transcripts from each of the schools or programs attended, with the exception of high school.

High School: _____

College: _____

Trade or Vocational: _____

Graduate School (other than seminary): _____

Seminary or Theological School: _____

Regional Theological Education Program: _____

Continuing Education: _____

Please write three brief essays (one page each) to share with the Committee on Ministry, referring to the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the UCC:

- Describe your current sense of being called to ordained ministry by God and the Church and your understanding of continuing discernment of God's call in community.
- Describe your most significant experiences of formation for ministry thus far.
- Describe your areas of growth at this point in your process of preparation and formation for ordained ministry in the UCC. What kinds of learning experiences will most help you engage in this growth?

By signing this application, I affirm that the information provided is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Submit to: southernassociation@sascnuccl.com, or Southern Association, 4070 Jackdaw St., San Diego, CA 92103

Resources:

Discernment Travelogue: <https://www.uccresources.com/products/a-discernment-travelogue?s=recomatic&variant=17675334660>

Section 2, Article 1 of the Manual on Ministry: <https://www.uccfiles.com/pdf/ManualonMinistry-2018.pdf>

Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ:

<https://www.uccfiles.com/pdf/MOM-Sect3-Marks-of-Faithful-and-Effective-Ministers.pdf>