

# IN-CARE PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS

## Requirements and Procedures for the Candidate (Page 1 of 4)

### USE CHECK LIST AS YOU COMPLETE THESE ITEMS

#### INITIAL STEPS: ENTERING THE ASSOCIATION'S *IN-CARE* PROCESS

1. Talk to the Associate Conference Minister.
2. If you were recently a member of another denomination you may be asked for letters of recommendation from your former pastor or denominational judicatory (Appendix A).
3. You must be an actively participating UCC member for at least one year before that local church pastor and an authorizing body of that church can recommend you for the in care process.
4. Discuss your calling and your plans with your local church pastor. If he or she agrees that you should pursue ordination with the United Church of Christ, move on to step five.
5. Meet with the appropriate local church body and obtain a letter of recommendation from them. In that meeting, the local church body should explore the following areas with you:
  - a. Your history and experiences with your local church, and any previous churches, and how these experiences contributed to your sense of call to ministry.
  - b. Your understanding of ordained ministry. The local church should explore the possibility of other forms of ministry to which you might be more suited.
  - c. The requirements and procedures for the preparation for ordination.
6. If the local church body endorses you, contact the Chairperson of the Pre-Ordination Commission to schedule an introductory interview with the Commission. At least ten days before this interview you must provide the Association office with a two to three page paper that includes a brief biographical sketch, a faith statement, and reasons for requesting *In-Care* status. Please e-mail this paper to: [newjerseyassociation@email.com](mailto:newjerseyassociation@email.com). You should bring with you to the interview the letter of endorsement, release and verification (Appendix B) from your local church. Your pastor should also accompany you to this meeting.
7. If approved by the Pre-Ordination Commission for *In-Care* status, the Commission will appoint an advisor for you. You will relate to this person, or a replacement, for as long as you are in the *In-Care* process. There will also be a number of forms you will need to sign (see Appendixes C, D, E and F).

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Of note: it is the understanding of the Pre-Ordination Commission that candidates for ordination shall complete the Commission's requirements, including the first draft of the ordination paper, within one year of having received an Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree. If, however, some time has transpired between graduation from seminary and the first application to the Pre-Ordination Commission, then the candidate shall complete the Commission's requirements within one year after acceptance for *In-Care* status. If the candidate fails to complete the requirements within that time frame, then the Commission may decide to terminate the candidate from in-care status without prejudice. The candidate may reapply at a later date as determined by the Commission.

### REQUIREMENTS FOR THOSE *IN-CARE*

- If you are not already a student in seminary, enter a seminary accredited by the Association of Theological Seminaries and approved by the New Jersey Association.
- It is your responsibility to maintain an ongoing relationship with your Advisor, including at least one face-to-face meeting each year.
- Send to the New Jersey Association office:
  - A signed copy of the Ordained Minister's Code.
  - A signed copy of the Sexual Misconduct Statement.
- Arrange to be tested by the Northeast Career Counseling Center, 67 Mapleton Road, Princeton, NJ 08540 (609-520-0220), or another similar body (which must be approved by the Chairperson of the Commission). This should be completed no later than the end of your second year in seminary (preferably by the end of the first year). The Career Center's report must be released to the Association Conference Minister and the Chairperson of the Pre-Ordination Commission. It is strongly recommended that you share your report with your Advisor. You make your own appointment with the career center. Our usual financial arrangement is that the expense for this is shared with one third being paid by the New Jersey Association and the remainder to be divided between you and your local church.
- Your *In-Care* status will be reviewed by the Commission each year in April or May. Renewal depends on a brief report, the form for which will be mailed to you in February. It is due in the New Jersey Association office by March 15.

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- Maintain active membership in a local UCC church throughout the process. Your local church will be required to complete an annual report. Forms will be mailed to the church in February and are due in the New Jersey Association office by March 15.
- Deliver copies of two sermons (one written and one taped) to the New Jersey Association office.
- Take a course in UCC Polity and History approved by the Pre-Ordination Commission.
- Schedule six credits of field education in a UCC setting. At least part of the field education, also known as supervised ministry, should be in a local church other than the church where the candidate is a member. In rare instances, special permission to waive these requirements may be granted by the Pre-Ordination Commission upon written request. Obtain a written evaluation of your work from a supervisor for use by the Pre-Ordination Commission. Send the written evaluation to the New Jersey Association office.
- The Pre-Ordination Commission requires at least one (or basic) unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE).
- Prepare two written case studies for use by the Pre-Ordination Commission in which you reflect theologically on experiences you have already had practicing ministry. Discuss the experiences and situations, what you did, why you did it, and what were the results.
- Send to the New Jersey Association office:
  - Verification of Bachelor's Degree.
  - Verification of a M.Div. degree or its equivalent.
  - Seminary transcript.
  - At least four letters of recommendation, including at least one from the seminary, one from your *In-Care* Advisor and one from your local church pastor.
  - A Professional Profile, as provided by the Office for Parish Life and Leadership.

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### **PREPARATION FOR THE ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCIL**

AFTER THESE DOCUMENTS ARE RECEIVED BY THE PRE-ORDINATION COMMISSION, YOU MAY BEGIN TO PREPARE FOR YOUR ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCIL.

The Pre-Ordination Commission, at this time, will appoint you a sub-committee consisting of your advisor and two or three other people. The task of the sub-committee is to prepare you for review by the full Pre-Ordination Commission and for the ecclesiastical council. The following steps must be followed:

1. Prepare an ordination paper of about ten to twelve pages in length. The paper should contain the following:
  - Your personal, spiritual and theological journey.
  - Your theology.
  - Your demonstration of your familiarity with the polity, history and practices of the United Church of Christ.
  - Your understanding of ordination and, specifically, why you desire to be ordained at this time.
2. Present the ordination paper and your two case studies to your subcommittee. When they are satisfied that you are prepared, they will arrange a full interview with the Pre-Ordination Commission. If the Pre-Ordination Commission votes to approve you, an ecclesiastical council will be called on your behalf no sooner than one month following your approval (usually about six weeks). A copy of your ordination paper will be posted on the New Jersey Association web site and made available, upon request, to delegates. The delegates are expected to have read your paper prior to the ecclesiastical council. At the ecclesiastical council you will have about twenty minutes to make a presentation which may include highlights of your paper. This will be followed by a question and answer period.
3. Before you are ordained you must have a call to an approved ministry. The ecclesiastical council will take one of four actions on your behalf:
  - Recommend for ordination.
  - Not recommend for ordination.
  - Recommend for ordination pending an approved call.
  - Not recommend for ordination at this time.

### **REQUIREMENTS FOR THOSE RECOMMENDED FOR ORDINATION**

1. The terms of your call must be approved by the Pre-Ordination Commission.
2. Your ordination service must be approved by the Pre-Ordination Commission.
3. The date of the ordination service must be approved by the Pre-Ordination Commission.