

2019 Annual Report

St. Louis Association Committee on Ministry: Preparation

The Committee on Ministry, an Association committee granted authority in the United Church of Christ Constitution and Bylaws for authorization and oversight of clergy and churches, has been divided into two entities in the St. Louis Association for practical reasons. With Eden Seminary in our association, the number of student candidates for ministry is much greater than in most associations.

The Committee on Ministry: Preparation (COM:P) has responsibility for the preparation and authorization of Members in Discernment on behalf of the wider United Church of Christ. The COM:P meets monthly. When a candidate feels called to authorized ministry and has the support of their local congregation, they meet with the COM:P and then undergo a professional psychological evaluation.

Upon successful completion of this initial process, they then become a Member in Discernment (MID). They are assigned an advisor from the COM:P, continue their formative relationship with their home church and pastor -- and continue to meet at least annually with COM:P until all the many requirements have been met. They have an ordination interview and are 'approved for ordination pending a call.' They meet at least annually with the COM:P until a call is received. Then we have the privilege and joy of participating in a service of Ordination!

During the past year we welcomed two new members to our COM:P team: Rev. Michael Roth, Co-Pastor at St. Paul's UCC Oakville, in October 2018; and Sandy Stevenson, St. Philips UCC St. Louis, in May 2019. We are grateful to have their insights and energy!

In addition to engaging in our ongoing relationships with our MIDs (see complete list below), during the past twelve months we have:

- Partnered with Care and Counseling (St Louis) and Good Samaritan (Memphis) for psychological evaluation of MID candidates and follow-up counseling as needed
- Maintained ongoing communication with SLA Committee on Ministry: Oversight, and involved a representative from their team in ordination interviews
- Initiated meetings with individuals in the MID pipeline and their pastors to help clarify the MID process and establish earlier, stronger relationships with eventual MIDs
- Explored and discussed possibilities for alternative venues within which MIDs could complete their Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) requirement
- Participated in the Conference-wide Committee on Ministry Covenanted Ministry to better align our practices across all three associations of the MMS Conference
- Represented our committee on the St Louis Association Council
- Attended a two-day retreat in March with colleagues from the other associations' COMs, where we refined our processes and practices, and participated in racial justice and equity training with Crossroads
- Engaged in conversations about the diminishing pool of candidates feeling called to authorized ministry, and how our team might become engaged in helping address the issue

Here is a recap of our St. Louis Association MIDs and Candidates as of September 12, 2019...

MID Candidates - Initial interview complete, MID Status pending (1):

Matthew Helis, St. Paul's UCC St. Louis

Members in Discernment (7):

Phil Barbier, Hope UCC, St Louis

Erick Falconer, First Congregational UCC Webster Groves

Steve Garcia, First Congregational UCC Memphis TN

Tracey Harris, First Congregational UCC Webster Groves

Valerie Jackson, First Congregational UCC, St. Louis

Tanya Jeffcoat, Kirkwood UCC (membership), Little Rock AR (residence)

Cherie Stolze, Parkway UCC, St. Louis

Approved for Ordination Pending a Call (5):

Kelly Archer, Peace UCC, Webster Groves

Doni Driemeier-Showers, Samuel UCC, St. Louis

Chuck Lindsey, First Congregational UCC, Memphis TN

Phyllis Long, First Congregational UCC, Memphis TN

Dr. Bella Winters, Epiphany UCC, St. Louis

Ordained during the last year (4):

Kelly Archer, Peace UCC, Webster Groves

Christopher Czarnecki, Christ Church UCC, Maplewood

Doni Driemeier-Showers, Samuel UCC, St. Louis

Phyllis Long, First Congregational UCC, Memphis TN

Released from the MID process during the past year (1):

Jeff Mignerone, Eden UCC, St. Louis

Respectfully Submitted, Betsy Happel and Jack Nobles, Co-chairs

Committee Members: John Allen, Carole Barner, John Gandy, Betsy Happel, Debby Harness, Sharon Love, Carolyn Mulhall, Jack Nobles, Joe Pfeiffer, Hannah Rice, Michael Roth, Sandy Stevenson... and Douglas Anders and Ginny Brown Daniel. Thank you to Tyler Connoley for assisting us during Douglas Anders' medical leave.