

# JOURNALING THE JOURNEY

Engaging the *Marks*  
*of Faithful and Effective*  
*Authorized Ministers of the*  
*United Church of Christ*  
for Personal Discernment  
and Professional Growth

**UNITED CHURCH**  
OF CHRIST



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## INTRODUCTION

*The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ* is a discernment and evaluation tool for reflecting upon foundations, competencies, and areas for growth in authorized ministry.

Authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ is never a solo endeavor but is discerned, overseen and supported by covenantal partners: Local Churches, Conferences, Associations, Committees on Ministry, authorized ministers and Members in Discernment, as well as networks of teachers, mentors and colleagues. The *Marks* is appropriately used as a shared tool for reflection in these vital relationships, in addition to its use for personal reflection by individuals.

Developed in the context of General Synod’s 2005 Ministry Issues Pronouncement and revised in the 2014-2017 work of the Habakkuk Group with the Manual on Ministry, the *Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers* focuses on one’s understandings and strengths for ministry in eight categories:

- Exhibiting a Spiritual Foundation and Ongoing Spiritual Practice
- Nurturing UCC Identity
- Building Transformational Leadership Skills
- Engaging Sacred Stories and Traditions
- Caring for All Creation
- Participating in Theological Praxis
- Working Together for Justice and Mercy
- Strengthening Inter- and Intra-Personal Assets.

The lists of marks within these eight categories are descriptive more than prescriptive and dynamically integrative, serving to highlight a holistic picture of one’s formation for and growth in authorized ministry.

The *Marks* might be compared to the intricate art forms of a mosaic and a mandala: both hold in creative tension an attention to detail and an appreciation of the whole. At times we “zoom in” to study the details of mosaic tile pattern or a mandala rose window; at other times we “zoom out” to consider the big picture that is formed by the details.



The *Marks* might also be compared to a kaleidoscope. Taken individually, each mark is a distinct piece of colorful glass. As the kaleidoscope turns, as the pieces interact and overlap with shifting lenses in the light, patterns emerge that are beautiful and endlessly creative. Likewise, individual marks are understood to integrate with and influence each other, collectively shaping and illuminating faithful and effective ministry.



The list of marks in the *Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministers* is not a complete or closed canon. Those who engage the *Marks* may identify – through reflection and conversation – additional marks within the eight categories that acknowledge cultural manifestations of excellence, diverse learning edges and styles, additional talents and aptitudes. While the *Marks* intend to reflect what is common and essential in core habits of servant leadership, providing consistency across our denomination, they are also meant to be adaptive and contextual. Feel welcome to extend the list of marks given and to share these additions with covenantal partners in discernment; blank space is provided in this journal for such extensions.

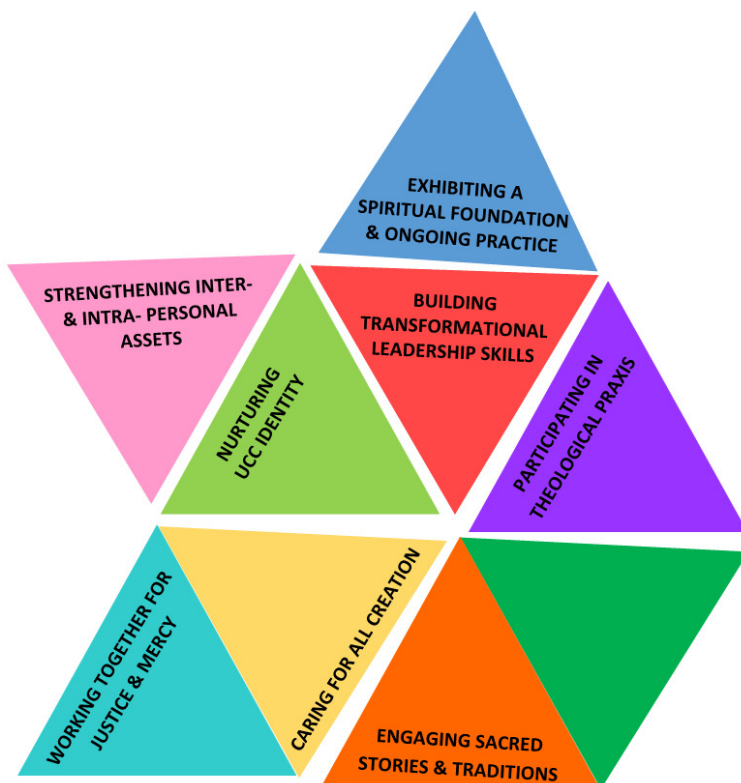
*Journaling the Journey* strives to support Local Churches, Members in Discernment (MIDs), authorized ministers, and Committees on Ministry (COMs) in unpacking and utilizing the *Marks*. To do so, *Journaling the Journey* provides reflective space and directed questions based on the eight *Marks* categories and the individual marks. These questions and prompts, like the *Marks*, are not exhaustive or exclusive. Use this journal to gain fresh perspective and to provoke new insights.

Each person, each partner in the covenants of authorized ministry, may develop a different habit for using *Journaling the Journey*:

- A Member in Discernment might use this journal when first becoming a MID in order to develop a formation plan in partnership with their local church and Committee on Ministry; then as the discernment journey nears a decision about ministry authorization, the MID might return to the journal to reflect upon upcoming professional steps (e.g. writing a ministerial profile or charting goals for a non-ministry path).
- A Committee on Ministry member might maintain a separate journal for each MID in the discernment process, as a place to keep a continuous set of notes and as a resource for developing questions for the MID.
- An authorized minister might approach *Journaling the Journey* as a tool for planning one's sabbatical or reflecting on a ministerial transition (e.g. a new call or retirement), or as a community-building resource with colleagues.

Remember that *discernment* is not synonymous with *decision*. Discernment is the process of sifting through, of praying and examining and testing. The extensive work of discernment then informs a decision: at some point in the processes of discernment regarding authorized ministry, at some point during discussions on the *Marks* (including the work of assessment using the tool in the *Marks* booklet), at some point in the time spent reflecting with *Journaling the Journey*, a decision will become clear.

For all who use *Journaling the Journey* and the *Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers*, be mindful in balancing your study of the details and your reflection upon the whole. Remember that the goal is ongoing formation and the integration of competencies for a more excellent ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ.



EXHIBITING A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION AND ONGOING SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

- Loving God, following Jesus Christ, and being guided by the Holy Spirit; living a life of discipleship.

*Write three brief stories: one story that demonstrates an occasion when you embodied the love of God, another story that describes your trust in Jesus, and one that testifies to your openness to the Spirit.*

I say to God, "You are my Creator;  
I have no good apart from you."  
Therefore my heart is glad,  
and my soul rejoices;  
my body also rests secure.

- Psalm 16:2 and 9

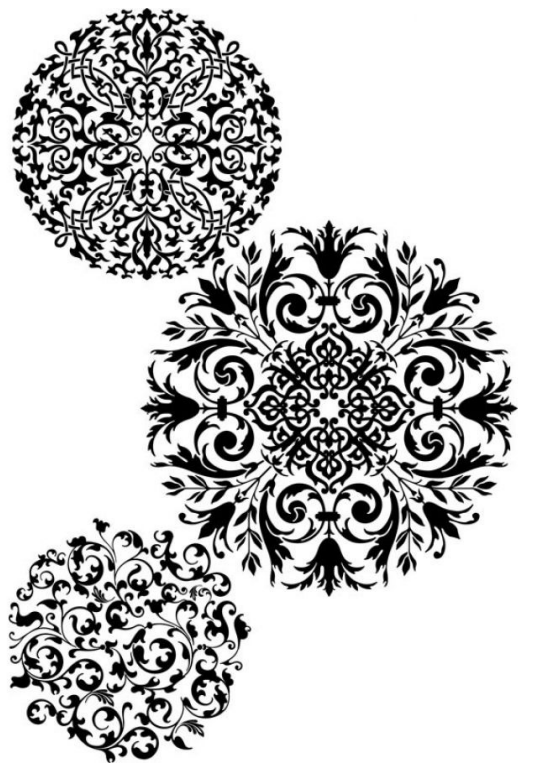
EXHIBITING A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION AND ONGOING SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

- Praying actively and nurturing spiritual practices.

*Describe a spiritual practice that you have seen work well for a community.  
What recognizable growth was experienced by the community as a result?*

*What seeds are being sown in you – by God, by  
others, by you – for future spiritual growth?*





EXHIBITING A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION AND ONGOING SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

- Being called to ordained ministry by God and the Church.

*What song best describes your sense of call at this time?*

Rocks and the firm roots of trees.  
The rising shafts of mountains.  
Something strong to put my hands on.

Sing, O Lord Jesus!  
Song is a strong thing.  
I heard my mother singing  
When life hurt her:

Gonna ride in my chariot some day!

- Langston Hughes, "Spirituals"

*What is your favorite “call story” in Christian scripture?*

EXHIBITING A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION AND ONGOING SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

- Continuing discernment of one's call in community.

*Share a story of an occasion when a community testified to your call by God.*



## EXHIBITING A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION AND ONGOING SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

- Understanding the power of the Holy Spirit at work through the elements of Christian worship to nurture faith.

*Where do you experience the beauty of God?*

*How do you assess worship's spiritual and multisensory impact?*



## EXHIBITING A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION AND ONGOING SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

- Exhibiting a commitment to lifelong spiritual development and faithful personal stewardship.

*Share a scripture passage that resonates with your current position and direction on the faith journey. How is this passage speaking the word of God to you for tomorrow?*

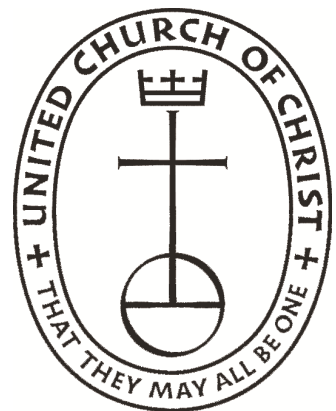
*Complete this sentence:*

*The way I budget my time and money is shaped by my spiritual value of \_\_\_\_\_.*

## NURTURING UCC IDENTITY

- Acknowledging Jesus Christ as the sole Head of the Church.

*How do you demonstrate an acknowledgement of  
Jesus Christ as the sole Head of the Church?*





*In your experience, who (or what) are we tempted to substitute  
as the Head of the Church instead of Christ?*

## NURTURING UCC IDENTITY

- Communicating passion for the oneness of the Body of Christ (John 17:21).

*What is your vision for the oneness of the body of Christ?*

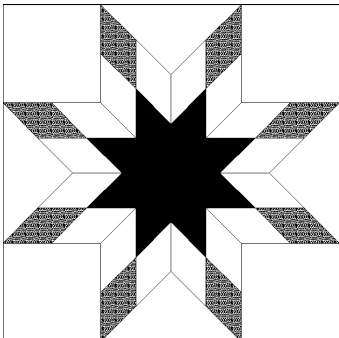


*How do you understand God's vision for oneness as expressed in scripture?*

## NURTURING UCC IDENTITY

- Holding active membership in a Local Church of the United Church of Christ.

*Share a story of appreciation for the impact  
your local church has on your faith journey.*



## NURTURING UCC IDENTITY

- Participating in the various settings of the United Church of Christ, including Local Churches, Associations, Conferences, General Synod, and global ministries.
- Knowing and appreciating UCC history, polity, and theology.

*What does a covenant look like? Sketch the modes and methods of UCC covenantal relationships. Place yourself as an authorized minister within your sketch of covenant.*

A large rectangular area defined by a dashed border, intended for sketching UCC covenantal relationships. The area is empty and occupies most of the page below the text.

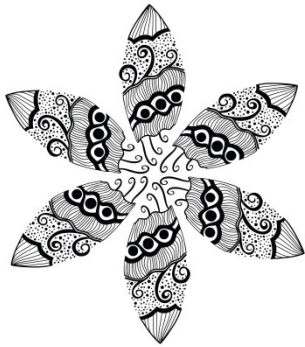
## NURTURING UCC IDENTITY

- Exhibiting a commitment to the core values of the United Church of Christ: continuing testament, extravagant welcome, and changing lives.

*What stories of scripture and faith  
inform your understanding of  
continuing testament,  
extravagant welcome,  
and changing lives?*



## TAKE A BREAK.



Remembering that the *Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers* is not a closed canon, what marks would you add as necessary for faithful and effective authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ? What tiles would you add to the mosaic to create a more complete picture of your passions, skills and growing edges? What needs of the Church – in your local context, in the world – would you identify as important details in the mosaic of authorized ministry?





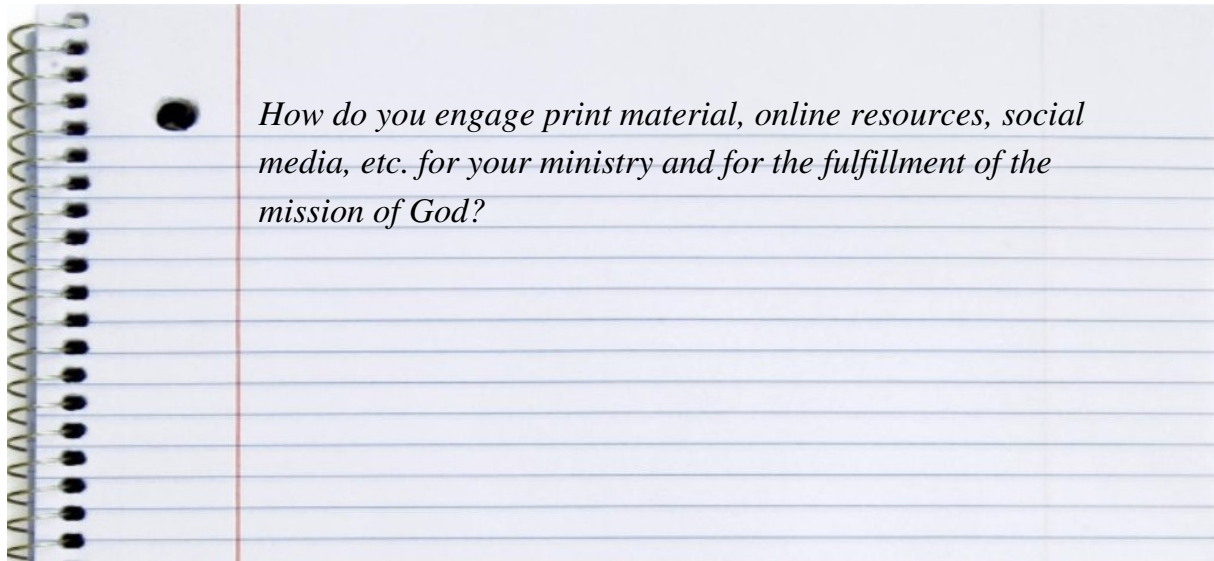
## BUILDING TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS

- Strategically creating the future of God's Church.

*Identify, from your perspective, critical issues that will impact our denominational life in the upcoming decade.*

## BUILDING TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS

- Witnessing in the public square to God's redeeming power.



## BUILDING TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS

- Performing necessary and appropriate administrative tasks.

*How do you deal with conflict within an organization?*

## BUILDING TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS

- Working collaboratively with intercultural awareness and sensitivity.

*What if God calls you to a ministry setting, to a community or to a person that is outside of your expectations and experience? What is the ministry setting, community and/or person that would most disrupt your comfort and challenge your skill set?*

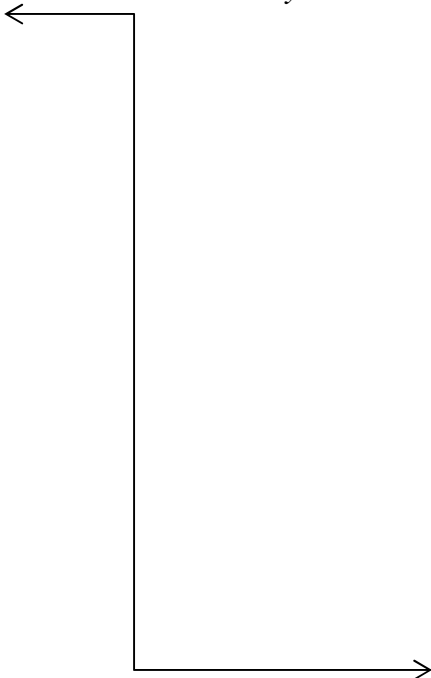


## BUILDING TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS

- Encouraging leadership development of self and others through continuing education and lifelong learning.

*What would you like to be when you grow up?*

*How do you describe your leadership style? What skills and perspectives do you bring to leadership? What styles of leadership are you less comfortable with, and how do you lean on others for diverse leadership approaches?*



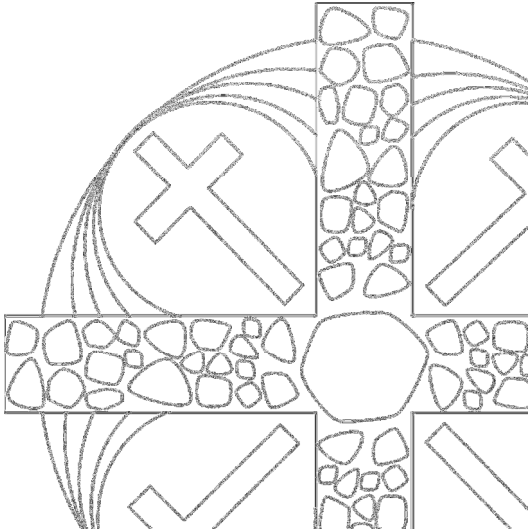
## ENGAGING SACRED STORIES AND TRADITIONS

- Exhibiting knowledge, understanding, and continuing study of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament.

*How do you practice scriptural study for the work of ministry?*



*How do you practice prayer with scripture for spiritual growth?*



## ENGAGING SACRED STORIES AND TRADITIONS

- Maturing in effective proclamation and preaching.

*What is the good news for today?*



## ENGAGING SACRED STORIES AND TRADITIONS

- Understanding the history of the Christian Church, from biblical times forward.

*What Christian tradition(s) would you like to explore further? Identify 2 – 3 resources that could be useful for your study.*

Leader: ¿De quien somos?

All: ¡De Cristo!

Leader: ¿Con quien vamos?

All: ¡Con Cristo!

- Gifts of Many Cultures

## ENGAGING SACRED STORIES AND TRADITIONS

- Bringing life to sacred stories and traditions in worship, proclamation, and witness.

*What borrowed spiritual practices do you notice being used in your local church?*

*What are the blessings and dangers of liturgical “borrowing”?*

*What are your preaching styles and habits?*

*How do you write a church newsletter article?*

## ENGAGING SACRED STORIES AND TRADITIONS

- Leading faith formation effectively across generations.

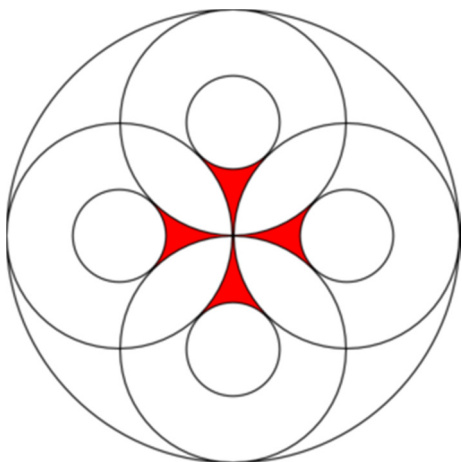
*What are the fruits of  
faith formation across  
generations?*

## ENGAGING SACRED STORIES AND TRADITIONS

- Holding the Holy with integrity especially as represented in the Sacraments.

*Where do you experience  
font, table and pulpit?*

*To whom do the Sacraments belong?*



Theologians spend a lot of time, ink, and breath talking about God.

The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein said, "Concerning that which cannot be talked about, we should not say anything." We cannot talk about it, but we can experience it.

Take, for instance, a glass of apple juice. You cannot talk about apple juice to someone who has never tasted it. No matter what you say, the other person will not have the true experience of apple juice. The only way is to drink it.

- Thich Nhat Hanh  
Living Buddha, Living Christ

## CARING FOR ALL CREATION

- Nurturing care and compassion for God's creation.

*Whose ministry has been a model for you of effective pastoral care?*





## CARING FOR ALL CREATION

- Maintaining a basic understanding of mental health and wellness.

*What are the resources in your community  
and in the United Church of Christ to  
support mental health and wellness?*

## CARING FOR ALL CREATION

- Practicing self-care and life balance.

*Map out your primary relationships. How would you describe the health of those relationships at this time?*

O Lord, who hast given us these treasures of the spirit in earthen vessels that we might learn the need of trust in Thee, help us so to use and cherish our frail bodies that they may be most effective for the work which Thou hast given us to do.

- Book of Worship, Schwenkfelder Church

## CARING FOR ALL CREATION

- Providing hope and healing to a hurting world.

“ God puzzled her and she was too ashamed of Him to say so. ”  
(Toni Morrison, *Beloved*)

How do you sit with someone as they wrestle with God?

## CARING FOR ALL CREATION

- Attending to one's own spiritual and pastoral care, including engagement in supervision as appropriate.

*How do you ask for help?*

You see, it's our woundedness that allows us to trust each other. I can trust another person only if I can sense that they, too, have woundedness, have pain, have fear.

- Rachel Naomi Remen in an interview with Bill Moyers

## CARING FOR ALL CREATION

- Stewarding the resources of the Church.

*If you were to characterize your time, talents and finances agriculturally, would you say that you are in a season of harvest or of planting or of drought? What season best describes the time, talent and finances of your current ministry setting or of your home church? Reflect on the interplay between these two seasons.*

## PARTICIPATING IN THEOLOGICAL PRAXIS

- Practicing theological reflection and engagement as part of one's sense of ministerial identity.

*Whose contemporary work in or embodiment of  
theology intrigues and inspires you?*

## PARTICIPATING IN THEOLOGICAL PRAXIS

- Integrating theological reflection in teaching, preaching, and ecclesial and community leadership.

*Identify a past Christian theologian (such as a scholar, activist, minister, or mystic) or historic Christian event that reflects the word of God to you in a way that is relevant for current world events.*



## PARTICIPATING IN THEOLOGICAL PRAXIS

- Articulating a theology and practice of ministry consistent with the UCC Manual on Ministry.

*What biblical character(s) informs  
your understanding of  
authorized ministry?*



## PARTICIPATING IN THEOLOGICAL PRAXIS

- Demonstrating an appreciation for and participation in the ecumenical and interfaith partnerships of the UCC.

*What creed from the ecumenical Christian body  
resonates with your own theology?*

## PARTICIPATING IN THEOLOGICAL PRAXIS

- Experiencing and appreciating a variety of theological perspectives.

*How are you committing time, energy and humility  
to continued growth in understanding diverse  
walks of life, perspectives and theologies?*

## PARTICIPATING IN THEOLOGICAL PRAXIS

- Embodying the UCC Ministerial Code.

*What was insightful from your most recent participation in a boundary training program? What boundaries shape your life and ministry daily?*



## WORKING TOGETHER FOR JUSTICE AND MERCY

- Drawing on the ministry of Jesus Christ to confront injustice and oppression.

*What does the story of the cross mean to you?*

*How would you rewrite the Beatitudes for your context?*

Any resistance to injustice, be it in America, Egypt, Cuba, or Saudi Arabia, is a God-driven activity because righteous indignation against the cruel treatment of any group of people is an echo of the voice of God for those of us who take the cross seriously.

- Cornel West, Hope on a Tightrope

## WORKING TOGETHER FOR JUSTICE AND MERCY

- Practicing the radical hospitality of God.

*Where do you see the UCC's commitment to inclusion and justice being modeled well? How do you strive to embody these commitments in your own life and ministry?*



## WORKING TOGETHER FOR JUSTICE AND MERCY

- Identifying and working to overcome explicit and implicit bias in the life of the Church.

*Where do you see covenant working well  
in our UCC polity and structures?*

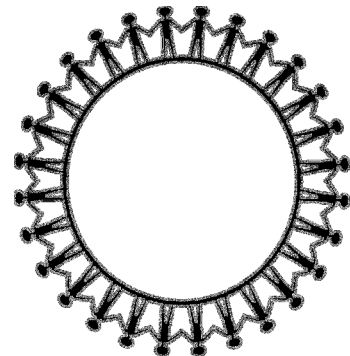
*Where do you dream for a more faithful  
demonstration of covenant in the UCC?*

## WORKING TOGETHER FOR JUSTICE AND MERCY

- Understanding community context and navigating change with a community.

*How do you practice  
leadership initiative and  
community empowerment?*

*What hymn or song resonates with  
your understanding of community?*





## WORKING TOGETHER FOR JUSTICE AND MERCY

- Engaging in mission and outreach.

*How do you foster enthusiasm for the work of evangelism and stewardship?*

## WORKING TOGETHER FOR JUSTICE AND MERCY

- Building relationships of mutual trust and interdependence.

*What are the signs of community transformation? How do you measure the health of such transformation?*

Each one of us needs others. Any single one of us, alone, cannot be the image of God; discovering that image within us is not a do-it-yourself activity. Before I can be an icon of the image of God, I must be with someone else, hand in hand.

- Madeleine L'Engle  
*And It Was Good*

## **TAKE A BREAK.**

Remembering that the *Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers* is not all-inclusive, what marks would you add as necessary for faithful and effective authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ? What tiles would you add to the mosaic to create a more complete picture of your competencies for ministry? What needs of the Church shape the mosaic of authorized ministry?



## STRENGTHENING INTER- AND INTRA- PERSONAL ASSETS

- Developing and maintaining a healthy sense of self as shaped by God, community, and life experiences.

*What factors and relationships currently inform  
your sense of self, your sense of authority,  
and your goals for growth?*

I'm dropping these bags,  
I'm making room for my joy.

I choose to be  
the best that I can be.  
I choose to be authentic  
in everything I do.

- India.Arie "I Choose"

## STRENGTHENING INTER- AND INTRA- PERSONAL ASSETS

- Living in relationships of covenantal accountability with God and the Church.



*What metaphor would you use to describe the relationship between an authorized minister and their ministry setting (e.g. congregation or organization)?*

*What metaphor describes the relationship of an authorized minister with the wider church body (denomination and global Christian body)?*

STRENGTHENING INTER- AND INTRA- PERSONAL ASSETS

- Exhibiting strong moral character and personal integrity.



*Who have you seen modeling integrity well?*

STRENGTHENING INTER- AND INTRA- PERSONAL ASSETS

- Respecting the dignity of all God's people.

*R – E – S – P – E – C – T*

*What does it mean to thee?*

## STRENGTHENING INTER- AND INTRA- PERSONAL ASSETS

- Understanding and ministering to stages of human development across the life span.

“ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. ”

(1 Corinthians 13:11-12, NRSV)

*Tell a personal life story in response to this passage.*



## STRENGTHENING INTER- AND INTRA- PERSONAL ASSETS

- Demonstrating excellent communication skills.

*Draft a letter to the editor on a topic about which you are passionate.*



**Endnotes:**

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