

**So. New England UCC –
Engaging a Season of Discernment For A Future Of Shared Ministry
Participants Guide**

Page | 1
Nov. 18, 2015
Draft 4.0

Led by the Holy Spirit, in September 2015 each of the Boards of the RI, MA and CT UCC Conferences voted unanimously to adopt a resolution committing to join the other two UCC Conferences in Southern New England in using the 2015-2016 program year as a season of discernment as we listen to how God may be calling our three conferences over 2016-2017 calendar years to either federate or merge. **The fundamental question is: Is this collaborative ministry among the three Conferences of Southern New England something God wants us to do? How might it be a sign of faithfulness to God's call?**

TWO APPROACHES TO DISCERNMENT

We invite you to engage in discernment both as part of a group and as an individual:

- In 2016 we expect to provide the opportunity for individuals who are part of the UCC in So. New England to offer feedback over the internet. <http://www.macucc.org/rimact>
- In 2015-2016 various UCC gatherings (small groups at Conference gatherings or Association meetings; Communities of Practice; Church Councils or Committees; Super Saturday; Committees on Ministry; etc.) will use this resource to engage in conversations.

GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNAL DISCERNMENT

- Discernment begins by welcoming the presence of the Holy Spirit as your guide, and others as your companions on the journey
- Discernment seeks to align our life's direction and decisions with our sense and experience of God's call
- Discernment is intentional – it doesn't just happen; and it requires that we be radically open to where the Holy Spirit might lead us
- Discernment is more about generous listening than about expressing our views
- Discernment appreciates the many ways we can hear God together
- Discernment is grounded in prayer and scripture

ENGAGING A STRUCTURED CONVERSATION

Here are the questions we invite you to consider in your conversation today:

- 1) What are the resources, programs, and services that your Conference currently provides for your local church?
- 2) How has your church been enlivened through interdependence and collaboration with other congregations (in your own town or city and within your particular Conference)?
- 3) How might your church's witness be strengthened through a new partnership with the other two Southern New England Conferences?
- 4) How would you imagine your church in five or ten years from now? How might your local church be different if RI, MA, and CT were to become partners?
- 5) What are your concerns and wonders about the possibility of an emerging partnership?

**PLEASE be sure that each person around the room has an opportunity
to contribute before anyone speaks again.**