

***Mission Bite: from Rick Wagner, Associate Conference Minister***

One of the ways in which the Minnesota Conference promotes leadership development and strengthens churches is by partnering with North Central Ministry Development Center (NCMDC) in New Brighton. NCMDC does assessments of candidates for ministry to ensure that they are vocationally ready and emotionally and psychologically healthy. The Center also offers developmental and evaluative programs for clergy, and does coaching and vocational discernment for professionals who may have been in ministry for years. NCMDC's staff includes doctoral-level psychologists with extensive experience in ministry who understand the needs of ministers and the demands placed upon them. Using a mix of autobiographical materials, psychological instruments and vocational assessments, NCMDC works with individuals and where appropriate, their church or denominational body, to strengthen ministry and address concerns such as church conflict, work/life balance, mental health issues, and burnout.

Our Church's Wider Mission funds and other contributions to the Minnesota Conference help pay part of the cost of assessments of candidates for ministry. Candidates also bear some of this cost. Anyone, though, at their own expense, can seek developmental counseling and coaching as a client of NCMDC. Evaluative programs, usually done in response to concerns raised by churches, by the Committee on Ministry, or by ministers themselves, are generally paid for by the Conference, with the reports going to both the minister and the Committee on Ministry. NCMDC also offers workshops, seminars, retreats, and works with various organizations in personnel searches to match the needs of the organization with the gifts of a candidate.

NCMDC is part of the Ministry Development Council that includes accredited centers in Boston, Charlotte, Chicago, Columbus, Dallas, Kansas City, Princeton, and St. Petersburg. The Minnesota Conference has a long history with NCMDC and is one of its founding partners. Its 18-member board includes representatives from the UCC, PCUSA, ELCA, UMC, UUA, Episcopal Church, MN Baptist Convention, United Theological Seminary, and Bethel Seminary. Visit their web site at [www.ncmdc.org](http://www.ncmdc.org).

**Past *Mission Bites* can be found at [www.uccmn.org](http://www.uccmn.org)**