

1 *This draft is a product of the General Commission on Ministry of the Christian Church*
2 *(Disciples of Christ). It is for discussion and review purposes only and not to be published or*
3 *regarded as church policy.*

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6 **Proposed Amendments**
7
8 **Theological Foundations and**
9 **Policies and Criteria**
10 **for the**
11 **Ordering of Ministry**
12 **of the**
13 **Christian Church**
14 **(Disciples of Christ)**

15
16 *Preamble* “Within the universal Body of Christ, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is
17 identifiable by its testimony, tradition, name, institutions, and relationships. Across national
18 boundaries, this church expresses itself in covenantal relationships in congregations,
19 Regions, and general ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), bound by
20 God’s covenant of love. Each expression is characterized by its integrity, self-governance,
21 authority, rights, and responsibilities, yet they relate to each other in a covenantal manner, to
22 the end that all expressions will seek God’s will and be faithful to God’s mission.”

23 *from paragraph 2 of The Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), revised 2005*
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Preface

This document, *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry, 2009*, becomes the policy document for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada once the General Assembly adopts the document. It will then immediately replace the current document, *Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry, 2003*.

Therefore, it will be advantageous and necessary that a reasonable time frame be adopted. The General Commission on Ministry is offering the following:

Time Frame

2008

Fall

GCOM circulates Draft 9.5 to General Ministries Presidents, Commissions/Committees on Ministry through Regional Ministers, Council on Theological Education and the Standing Committee on Renewal and Structural Reform for comment by January 30, 2009.

2009

February

GCOM considers changes, modifications to Draft 9.5 and prepares Draft 10 to present to the General Board.

April

General Board reviews and takes action on Draft 10.

July

General Assembly considers resolution.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

74		
75		
76		
77	I.	Theological Foundations For The Ordering of Ministry In The Christian
78		Church (Disciples of Christ)
79		
80	A.	The Ministry of the Whole People of God 4
81	B.	Historical Survey of Disciples Ministry 5
82	C.	Ministry in the Congregations 9
83	D.	Order of Ministry 10
84		1. Commissioned Ministry 11
85		2. Ordained Ministry 11
86		
87		
88	II.	Policies and Criteria For The Ordering of Ministry
89		
90	A.	Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) 16
91	B.	The Commissioned Ministry 16
92	C.	The Ordained Ministry 18
93	D.	Candidacy for Ordination 20
94	E.	The Act of Ordination 21
95	F.	Ministerial Standing 22
96	G.	Recognition and Reconciliation of Ordained Ministries 26
97	H.	Ministerial Search and Call 30
98	I.	Ministerial Code of Ethics 33
99	J.	Misconduct 34
100	K.	Right of Appeal 35
101	L.	Amendment Process 35
102		
103		

104 **I. Theological Foundations**
105 **for the Ordering of Ministry**
106 **in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**

107
108 PREFACE

109
110 *Theological Foundations for the Ordering of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples*
111 *of Christ)* functions interdependently with *Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of*
112 *Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* to clarify evolving patterns of
113 ministry as we seek to respond in faithful ways to ever changing contexts of service and
114 witness. It is not a comprehensive theology of ministry nor does it attempt to offer the
115 final word on Disciples' understanding of ministry.

116
117 **A. The Ministry of the Whole People of God**

118
119 God calls all persons to receive the good news of the Gospel and accept their call to be
120 God's people. In a divided and unbelieving world, those who accept this good news are
121 drawn into the fellowship (*koinonia*) of a new community, the church. In this body, the
122 Holy Spirit unites those who follow Jesus Christ and sends them as witnesses into the
123 world [ref: I Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 4:4-5; Matthew 28:16-20]. The church's
124 mission is to proclaim and prefigure the justice and joy of the Realm of God. In order to
125 fulfill this mission faithfully, the members of the Body of Christ are given ministries of
126 witness, service and reconciliation.

127
128 The ministry of Christ is entrusted to all the people of God. Through baptism they are
129 called to servant ministry lived out in covenant community. Implicit in the confession of
130 faith and the act of baptism is an acceptance of the vocation of the baptized—the special
131 calling shared by all followers of Christ to witness to the sovereign love of God, the grace
132 of Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit in all of life. The gifts (*charisms*)
133 of the Holy Spirit are different and diverse, but in tremendous and simple ways they
134 proclaim the mighty acts of God and mediate God's loving and reconciling work to and
135 in the world. Every baptized person is called to witness to Christ in whatever situation he
136 or she lives—to express in their daily lives the ministry of Christ.

137
138 In Christ the individual becomes a member of “a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people
139 of God's own possession” (1Peter 2:9). Thus it has been common to speak of the

140 “priesthood of all believers”¹—the persons who live as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ
141 in the church and in the world. This language highlights the sacramentality of the work of
142 the laity through whose witness and service the grace of God is made manifest.

143

144 The ministry of God’s people (the *laos* – the Greek term used in the New Testament for
145 “people,” which is the source of our English words “laity, laywomen, laymen”), taken as
146 a whole and in its diverse individual expressions, is to manifest and so continue the
147 saving ministry of Jesus Christ. This ministry includes all who join together in witness to
148 God’s justice and reconciliation through worship, daily work, sharing the Gospel,
149 pastoral care, relief of human suffering, engagement in the struggle for peace and justice,
150 and realization of the unity of the Church Universal. It is within this context of a shared
151 ministry of the people of God that commissioned ministry and ordained ministry is to be
152 understood.

153

154 Within the ministry of the whole people of God there is, and has been since the early
155 church, representative ministry called by God and set apart by the Church for distinctive
156 functions. The commissioned and the ordained are both of the *laos*, but in recognizing
157 God’s call to particular individuals, the Church designates persons “to re-present to the
158 Church its own identity and calling in Jesus Christ” (*The Nature of the Church, A Word
159 to the Church on Ministry*). Authority and blessing to perform this ministry are celebrated
160 in ordination and commissioning.

161

162 **B. Historical Survey of Disciples Ministry**

163

164 Alexander Campbell and Barton Warren Stone relied on the Bible, especially the New
165 Testament, as the only rule of faith and practice. This premise shaped their
166 understandings of ministry in its many expressions.

167

168 Campbell’s attitudes on ministry progressed as the movement grew and the changing
169 circumstances of the church demanded new approaches to and appropriations of
170 leadership. Conversely, Stone’s attitudes on ministry remained relatively consistent.
171 While he promoted freedom from ecclesiastical control, he retained a sense of order in

¹ The “priesthood of all believers” refers to the persons who have entered into a covenanted relationship through confession and baptism. It ought not be confused with the role of congregational elders in the administration of the Lord’s Supper. Although in extraordinary circumstances anyone can administer the Sacraments/Ordinances of the Church, in Disciples practice the norm has been for duly appointed congregational leaders to administer baptism and the Lord’s Supper. This practice derives not from the “priesthood of all believers” but from early distinctions between the roles of elder and evangelist/preacher. The evangelist, called from outside the congregation, was restricted to ministries of preaching/teaching. The elder(s), called from within the congregation, bore responsibility for congregational governance, including the administration of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. The right and responsibility to preside at the Table is increasingly a role shared by Elders and ministers.

172 ministry and structure. One notable point of agreement between the two is that both
173 regarded ministry as servanthood even though the forms and functions of that ministry
174 were expressed and authorized in different ways.

175
176
177

Alexander Campbell

178 Although Alexander Campbell was staunchly anti-clerical, he was clearly pro-ministry.
179 This position was elaborated throughout various pages of the *Christian Baptist* in the
180 1820s to 1830. The clergy of the day represented for Campbell a class that he could only
181 term self-serving and pompous, promoting a specific set of sectarian or denominational
182 tenets in place of the gospel. His opposition was to a professional clergy—independent
183 of the local congregation, and accountable only to itself—not to the exercise of ministry
184 which he considered essential to the life of the Church:

185

186 Campbell developed a specific formula for the church's ministry, quite apart from what
187 others might consider the roles of the clergy:

- 188 1. Establish necessary offices for perpetuity and growth
- 189 2. Select the best qualified persons for those offices
- 190 3. Consecrate or set apart those persons for those offices
- 191 4. Give oneself completely to the work and continue growing so that everyone can
192 see the growth.

193 In *The Christian System* he outlined:

194 The standing and immutable ministry of the Christian community is composed of
195 Bishops [Elders],² Deacons, and Evangelists. Of each of these there is but one
196 order, though possessing great diversities of gifts. There have been bishops,
197 deacons, and evangelists, with both ordinary and extraordinary gifts. (CS, 82-3)

198 Campbell argued from Ephesians 4.12, “the work of ministry [is] for the edifying
199 of the body of Christ.” Bishops, deacons and evangelists each had a distinctive role or
200 function on behalf of the Body: *Bishops* engaged in ministries of oversight; *Deacons* in
201 ministries of service; and, *Evangelists* in ministries of proclamation.

202

203 From Campbell's perspective in this early period, the movement of ministers from church
204 to church was unacceptable. Appointed from a particular congregation, the leader stayed
205 and served in that congregation or lost credentials.³

² Bishop and Elder are alternate translations of the Greek word *episkopos*.

³ In an 1835 edition of the *Millennial Harbinger*, Campbell wrote: “The jurisdiction of such bishops [elders] is always circumscribed by the congregation which ordained them. A single church is the largest dioceses (sic) known in the New Testament. Neither does his election and ordination give him a perpetual office. Should he leave the church, which under the direction of the Holy Spirit, created him, and become a member of another church, he enters it as a private member, and so continues until that church elect and ordain him, should they call for his services. The bishops [elders] and deacons of the church in Philippi were the bishops [elders] and deacons of the church in Philippi and of no other church; and so of Ephesus, Antioch, Rome, and Jerusalem.”(MH, VIII:10/35, 503)

206

207 As the church grew after the union of the Disciples and Christians in 1832, Campbell was
208 compelled to distinguish between elders of oversight in local congregations and
209 preaching elders who moved from congregation to congregation.

210

211

Barton Warren Stone

212

213 In an 1831 issue of the *Christian Messenger*, Barton Stone wrote that the pastoral office
214 included “bishops, elders, pastors, and evangelists” (*CM*, 5:7/31, 162). For Stone, the
215 pastoral office was one office with multiple functions, such as: to preach and teach,
216 administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and, according to his
217 Presbyterian heritage, provide moral oversight within the congregation, but not from
218 outside it.

219

220 Not unlike Campbell, the bishops/elders and pastors, were internal to the congregation
221 while the evangelists were traveling preachers/planters. Although Stone did not
222 specifically identify deacons, a description in the *Christian Messenger* is helpful: “The
223 word *Diakonos* translated *deacon* but commonly, *minister* is frequently applied to all
224 those who minister in the word as well as in other matters” (*CM*, IX:2/35, 45).

225

226 As early as the *Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery* (1804), it was
227 willed that: “the church of Christ resume her native right of internal government – try her
228 candidates for ministry, as to their soundness of faith, acquaintance with experimental
229 religion, gravity and aptness to teach; and admit no other proof of their authority but
230 Christ speaking in them.” In an 1827 issue of the *Christian Messenger*, Stone spoke again
231 of candidates for ministry implying that those individuals must have had some sort of
232 standing or recognition in the church. This reaffirmed his position in the *Last Will and
233 Testament* that the church try its candidates. He further argued that only licensed
234 preachers and ordained elders were empowered to preach, giving rise to his notion of
235 “pastor.” He evoked a strong Pauline tendency here in that preachers should not wander
236 about the countryside in a freelance manner, but be sent from the churches with letters of
237 commendation (*CM*, 1:2/27, 80).

238

239 Stone lifted up the pastoral office by identifying not only the functions but the
240 authorization. He makes a distinction between choosing or appointing to an office and
241 ordaining to an office. (*CM*, IX: 2/35, 45) Through Acts and the Pastoral Epistles, he
242 contends “...that ordination to the work of ministry was performed by the [imposition] of
243 the hands of the elders in the New Testament church. – Therefore it appears that no
244 person can be legally inducted into the ministry without this act” (Ibid, 46).

245

246 When queried on the form of ordination, Campbell, like Stone, responded “Imposition of
247 hands, accompanied with fasting and prayer. Thus have persons been consecrated to
248 sacred offices in the Christian church from the beginning.” And then the question, “*Who
249 may, or who ought to lay hands on the bishops, or deacons, or messengers elect? I
250 answer, without dubiety, and in a few words, The community, the whole community as
251 may be approved in behalf of the congregation.*” (*MH*, VIII:10/35,498)

252

253 A significant departure from Campbell's position, however, was the authority to ordain.
254 While Campbell had the congregation appoint and ordain, Stone had the congregation
255 appoint to the pastoral office but a conference or college of ministers, already ordained,
256 was the ordaining body.

257

258

Later Views

259

260 The search for ordained ministers from outside the congregational membership addressed
261 some of the leadership problems created by the rapid growth of the churches in the 1840s
262 and 50s. There were times when it was determined that qualified persons simply were not
263 available from within the churches. Young men educated in colleges and even seminaries
264 were beginning to be called to settled ministries. The evangelists, too, were well known
265 and seen as a ready and important pool for resident preachers.

266

267 The turn of the 20th century saw a variety of new issues for the Disciples that began to
268 shape understandings of the ordering of ministry. At the 1935 San Antonio
269 International Convention, a Commission on Ordination was appointed. In 1939, the
270 Richmond International Convention approved a new system which called for ordination
271 councils comprising ministers and elders representing three or more congregations to, in
272 Stone's words, "try her candidates." Announced still as a local church matter, this new
273 approach more fully satisfied Stone's system of ordinations being conducted by a
274 conference or college of ministers. Such a system began to afford broader church
275 ownership and accountability as ministers moved from congregation to congregation. In
276 effect, the convention was following the example of Black Disciples in North Carolina
277 who had already determined in 1886 that ordination should not be authorized by a local
278 congregation acting alone and had adopted standards for evaluating candidates for
279 ministry. Some local congregations continued to ordain their candidates without
280 consultation of supporting churches or state societies, but those were becoming more rare
281 in light of emerging covenantal relationships. At the 1964 Detroit International
282 Convention, the church formally recommended a seminary degree prior to ordination,
283 even though some state societies and congregations had been enforcing that educational
284 requirement for many years.

285

286

Origins of Licensed Ministry

287

288 The 1939 Richmond report commended three criteria for ordination:

289

1. Good moral character and personal fitness for ministry

290

2. A full college course, and if possible, graduate training in religion

291

3. Experience in Christian work which shows real leadership, vision, pastoral
292 qualities, and preaching ability

293

Persons who fulfilled points 1 and 3 but not point 2 were accorded licenses - a new
294 category of ministry created from the ordination report.

295

296

Licensed ministry, as we conceive it today, is fairly recent in Disciples history. Barton
297 Stone was licensed by the Orange Presbytery of North Carolina as a missionary to the

298 lower North Carolina area. Alexander Campbell was licensed to preach at the Brush Run
299 Meeting House in 1811. During the Stone-Campbell era, “licensing to preach” was a trial
300 period prior to ordination to see if the candidate had the disposition for ministry and the
301 qualities for preaching the true gospel without any mixture of human philosophy, deceit,
302 or rudiments of the world (*cf Last Will and Testament*).
303

304 In 1948 the church recognized a licensing process which defined certification for a
305 limited period of time, primarily for college students in preparation or candidacy and for
306 “those laymen who desire to serve as part-time ministers” (“License and Ordination of
307 the Christian Minister,” 1948, para.16). Among the primary beneficiaries were small
308 churches that were unable to attract or support full-time ministers. This established a
309 standard of a two-fold office that was incorporated into *The Design for the Christian*
310 *Church (Disciples of Christ)* in 1968 and the *Policies and Criteria for the Order of*
311 *Ministry* in 1971.
312

313 Emerging Practice at the Turn of the Millennium

314

315 Toward the end of the 20th century, the trend toward higher educational standards for
316 ordained ministry reached its peak and patterns of preparation began to diversify. Some
317 Regions determined that a single model of ministerial formation was too restrictive to
318 serve faithfully the changing contexts of ministry. A few began to utilize criteria that
319 allowed for the ordination of ministers without a Master of Divinity degree from an
320 *Association of Theological Schools (ATS)* accredited seminary. The emergence of these
321 *de facto* alternate educational tracks led to calls for a review of expectations with an eye
322 toward developing a new consensus.
323

324 **C. Ministry in the Congregation**

325 It is the usual practice among congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
326 to nominate, elect, and install or in other ways recognize for service deacons and elders.
327 Women and men serving in these offices manifest various spiritual gifts, including
328 maturity, prayer, insight, and leadership.
329

330 The offices of elder and deacon are ordered by the congregations, through
331 election and recognition with appropriate ceremony, for the performance of
332 certain functions of ministry appropriate to the offices.

- 333 a. a person elected elder is authorized to exercise within the congregation
334 which elects her or him to the ministerial functions it assigns for periods
335 of time which it specifies, such as sharing in the ministration of baptism
336 and the Lord’s Supper and the conduct of worship, and sharing in the
337 pastoral care and spiritual leadership of the congregation. The eldership is
338 a voluntary ministry, each congregation having a plurality of elders [more
339 than one elder].
- 340 b. a person elected deacon is authorized to serve in the congregation which
341 elects her or him for periods of time which it specifies by assisting in the
342 ministration of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, in the conduct of worship,

343 and in the pastoral care and spiritual leadership of the congregation. The
344 diaconate is a voluntary ministry (paragraph 87, *The Design of the*
345 *Christian Church*).
346

347 The role of elders and deacons is most evident in the ways these ministries represent the
348 congregation in their communities of faith and in the larger community. For example,
349 elders and deacons are seen visiting persons in hospitals, nursing homes, or with the
350 home-centered. They may also lead congregations in ministries of outreach and social
351 justice.

352
353 It is, however, at the Table that the ministry of the congregation comes into view for the
354 gathered community. The pastor and elders as they preside and pray and the deacons as
355 they serve, re-present the whole ministry of the church.
356

357 **D. Order of Ministry**

358
359 “The church recognizes an order of ministry, set apart under God, to equip the whole
360 people to fulfill their corporate ministry” (Paragraph 86, *Design of the Christian Church*).
361

362 In its ordering of ministry, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) recognizes a
363 commissioned ministry and an ordained ministry. The church expects the women and
364 men it commissions and ordains to demonstrate educational qualifications and
365 competencies in several areas of personal integrity and pastoral practice, as well as a
366 clear call to and passion for ministry. The church is called to provide significant
367 congregational and regional support for those seeking to serve in ministry, whether
368 ordained or commissioned.
369

370 The church gives grateful acknowledgment to God who in every age grants to women
371 and men the spiritual gifts necessary for such ministry. In making decisions about whom
372 to commission or ordain, the church looks to candidates for:

- 373 ❖ the personal, inward call from God, which leads persons to seek such ministry,
- 374 ❖ the God-given gifts and graces,
- 375 ❖ the personal characteristics and aptitudes, and
- 376 ❖ the preparation and promise (e.g., education, skills, etc.) that they have for
377 effective ministry.

378 By these criteria the church discerns whom it will commission and/or ordain.⁴
379

380 It bears reiteration that throughout history, Disciples have recognized various methods of
381 preparation for ministry. Over the course of the 20th century, Disciples placed increasing
382 emphasis on a graduate seminary degree as a credential for ordination, even while
383 recognizing that for some individuals other methods of preparation might be more
384 appropriate in consideration of certain circumstances such as life situation, community,
385 ministry setting, and cultural and ethnic context.

⁴ Adapted from *A Word to the Church on Ministry* (1985), Commission on Theology, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), p 3.

386

387 **1. Commissioned Ministry**

388

389 In the development of Disciples understanding of ministry, “commissioned” ministry is
390 replacing some forms of “licensed” ministry. Men and women are authorized and
391 commissioned by their Regions to offer ministry in a particular place for a specified
392 period of time. “The word ‘commissioned’ means one who is appointed to a position
393 entrusted with a task, or one who is authorized or sent on behalf of another for a task or
394 proclamation” (*The Nazareth Consensus*, page 8, para.1).⁵

395

396 The term “commissioned” contains the word “mission,” which sets the stage for a
397 spiritual expectation. Paul describes himself as one commissioned to preach the gospel as
398 in Col. 1:25: “I became [the church’s] servant according to God’s *commission* that was
399 given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known...” (NRSV). In II Corinthians
400 Paul writes, “But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has *commissioned*
401 us;...” (II Cor. 1:21, RSV) and again, “For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God’s
402 word; but as men [and women] of sincerity, as *commissioned* by God, in the sight of God
403 we speak in Christ” (II Cor. 2:17, RSV).

404

405 The word “commissioned” has been used by the church throughout the centuries for
406 people appointed to various positions or sent forth to carry God’s message. Thus, the
407 term has ecclesiastical connotations of being entrusted with the tasks of ministry.

408

409 Commissioning is an acknowledgment by the Church of the gifts of the Spirit in the one
410 commissioned, and a commitment by both the Church and the commissioned to the new
411 relationship. Those commissioned offer their gifts to the Church and commit themselves
412 to the burden and opportunity of new authority and responsibility. At the same time, they
413 enter into a collegial relationship with all ministers. By receiving the Commissioned
414 minister in the act of installation, the Church acknowledges the minister’s call and
415 commits itself to be open to it. This liturgical service occurs in the context of
416 congregational worship in partnership with the Region.

417

418 **2. Ordained Ministry**

419

420 **a. The meaning of ordination**

421

422 In ordination — through prayers invoking the Holy Spirit and the laying on of
423 hands — the Church confirms in women and men the call of God, acknowledges
424 their gifts and graces, and authorizes this ministry in and for the Church.

425

426 The act of ordination by those who are appointed for this ministry attests the bond
of the church with Jesus Christ and the apostolic witness, recalling that it is the
risen Lord who is the true ordainer and bestows the gift. In ordaining, the church,

⁵ A proposal for transformative action by the Dialogue on Licensed Ministry Action Team, July 2004, growing out of the gathering at Barton College in May 2003.

427 under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, provides for the faithful proclamation of
428 the Gospel and humble service in the name of Christ. The laying on of hands is
429 the sign of the gift of the Spirit, rendering visible the fact that the ministry was
430 instituted in the revelation accomplished in Christ, and reminding the church to
431 look to him as the source of its commission. ("Ministry," *Baptism Eucharist and*
432 *Ministry*, WCC, para. 40.)
433

434 Disciples understand the meaning of ordination as an action of God and the
435 community during which the ordained are strengthened by the Spirit for their task
436 and are upheld by the acknowledgment and prayers of the congregation.
437

438 Ordination sets one apart for leadership in the life and witness of the church.
439 While the ordained ministry cannot be reduced to any mere listing of tasks, it may
440 be identified by leadership with regard to three fundamental aspects of the
441 church's life and witness:

- 442 (1) acting in servant obedience to God's commandment of love in self-sacrifice
443 on behalf of others and in a servant life in the world;
- 444 (2) proclaiming the gospel in faithfulness to Jesus Christ by word (teaching and
445 preaching), by sacrament (Baptism and the Lord's Supper), and by deed
446 (mission and service);
- 447 (3) overseeing the life of the community in its worship, education, witness,
448 mission, fellowship, and pastoral nurture through the leading of the Holy
449 Spirit.

450
451 In selecting men and women for ordination, the church thus seeks to insure that its
452 ministry of service, proclamation, and oversight shall be constantly upheld by its
453 members.

454 **b. The character of ordained ministry**

455 Disciples accept ordination as a gift of the Holy Spirit at work in the community
456 of faith. In every service of ordination we, therefore, seek to witness to at least
457 four aspects of this ordering of ministry:

- 458 1) *Apostolic Ministry*: The ordained enter the *apostolic ministry*. By this we
459 mean they receive their authority and commission from the risen Christ. The
460 first Christian ministers were the apostles in the New Testament, to whom the
461 living Lord revealed himself and sent "to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)
462 Ministers in every generation preach, celebrate, witness, and gather disciples
463 in continuity with those early apostles.
- 464 2) *Representative Ministry*: Ordination witnesses to a *representative ministry*.
465 Those who accept the ministry of the Word, sacrament, and mission are
466 responsible for re-presenting (showing forth) to the world and to all baptized
467 Christians the character of Christ's ministry and witness. A central task of
468 such representative ministry is personally and publicly to point the church to

469 its dependence on Jesus Christ, who is the source of its faith, mission, and
470 unity.

471 3) *Collegial Ministry*: Those who receive ordination enter a *collegial ministry*.
472 Ministry is inherently a shared responsibility. No minister is independent or
473 autonomous, all seek to teach and work together to express fellowship
474 (*koinonia*) in support and care for each other. This collegiality relates ordained
475 and lay persons in common ministry. The ministries of all members of the
476 believing community are complementary, given to one to be supportive of the
477 other. All are to build up the Body of Christ in love. No differences of
478 vocation, function or education should obscure the fact that the one ministry
479 of Christ is shared by the whole people of God. Lay and ordained are partners
480 together in governance and witness; together they empower the church for
481 effective participation in discovering God's will for all humanity.

482 4) *Universal Ministry*: Most appropriately, ordination is a *rite of the Church*
483 *Universal*. While ordination is normally done by a particular denomination,
484 and Standing is limited to a particular communion, the intention is that no one
485 is ever ordained into a particular denomination or tradition, certainly not into
486 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Those ordained are representative
487 ministers of the Church Universal: one, holy and catholic. While we serve
488 with the vision of universality, the Church lives with the pain of a divided
489 ministry. Nevertheless, all ministers are called to point out the community of
490 Jesus Christ, to work to bring new expressions of the one universal Church
491 into being, and to search for forms of unity which the divided churches cannot
492 yet express.⁶

493 **c. Offices of the ordained ministry**

494
495 The New Testament does not describe a single pattern of ministry which might
496 serve as a blueprint or continuing norm for all future ministry in the Church. In
497 the New Testament there appears rather a variety of forms which existed at
498 different places and times. As the Holy Spirit continued to lead the Church in life,
499 worship and mission, certain elements from this early variety were further
500 developed and became settled into a more universal pattern of ministry (*BEM*,
501 para. 19).
502

⁶ Adapted from "Theological and Historical Foundations," Ordination Service and Guidelines for Ordination for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Division of Homeland Ministries and Council on Christian Unity, 1990, pp. 1-2.

503 In 1985, the Commission on Theology commended to the whole Church a single
504 order of ordained ministry which would include three offices.⁷

505

506 This pattern of ministerial leadership corresponds to the three aspects of the
507 church's life identified as fundamental:

508

509 (a) the *ministry of service* to church and world (the *diaconate* or deacons), where
510 the active witness and mission of the church as servant is assisted and
511 advanced;

512 (b) the *ministry of proclamation* by Word and Sacrament (the *presbyterate*, or
513 pastors), where preaching, teaching, and the sacramental dimensions
514 (presiding at the Table and administering Baptism) of the church are lifted up;
515 and,

516 (c) the *ministry of oversight* (the *episcopate*, or bishops), where the oversight of
517 the life of the community comes into focus.

518

519 Thus, within a single order of ordained ministry, there can be three distinct offices
520 that are at the same time mutually supportive and interrelated. The three-fold
521 ordained ministry, taken as a whole, thus re-presents the fundamental
522 characteristics of ministry shared by all baptized believers. (*A Word to the Church*
523 *on Ministry*, pp. 3- 4.)

524

525 Persons are not ordained into a particular office, but rather into the order of
526 ministry. The church may call them to a role that emphasizes one of the three
527 offices. These offices are not located exclusively in any particular ministerial role.

528 **d. The act of ordination**

529 A long and early Christian tradition places ordination in the context of worship
530 and especially of the Lord's Supper. Such a place for the service of ordination
531 preserves the understanding of ordination as an act of the whole community. The
532 act of ordination by the laying on of hands of those appointed to do so is at one
533 and the same time the invocation of the Holy Spirit, a sacramental sign, and an
534 acknowledgment of gifts and commitment.⁸

535

536 In the act of ordination, the Church ordains in confidence that God, being faithful
537 to the promise in Christ, enters sacramentally into historical forms of human
538 relationship and uses them for God's purpose. Ordination is thus a sign performed

⁷ This ordering of ministry appears to be in line with the emerging consensus within the ecumenical movement and is the current pattern accepted by many churches throughout the world, e.g., Anglican, Methodist, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, and United Churches, and thus appears to offer a strong possibility for wider ecumenical relationships in the future.

⁸ Adapted from *BEM*, Ministry para. 41.

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in faith that the spiritual relationship signified is present in, with, and through the words spoken, the gestures made and the forms employed.⁹

Finally, ordination is an acknowledgment by the Church of the gifts of the Spirit in the one ordained, and a commitment by both the Church and the ordinand to the new relationship. By receiving the new minister in the act of ordination, the Church acknowledges the minister's gifts and commits itself to be open to these gifts. Likewise those ordained offer their gifts to the Church and commit themselves to the burden and opportunity of new authority and responsibility; at the same time, they enter into a collegial relationship with all ministers.¹⁰

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⁹ Adapted from *BEM*, Ministry para. 43.

¹⁰ Adapted from *BEM*, Ministry para. 44.

II. Policies and Criteria For The Ordering Of Ministry

A. Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

1. *The Order of Ministry.* The Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) comprises Commissioned Ministers and Ordained Ministers.
2. *Personal Qualifications for the Order of Ministry.* The church deserves and should expect to find within the women and men it receives into the order of ministry:
 - a. Faith in Jesus Christ and spiritual depth within a nurturing spiritual life;
 - b. Deep sense of call to the ministry affirmed by the church and a sense of pastoral identity;
 - c. Capacity and training to engage in theological reflection;
 - d. Strong moral character, personal integrity, and physical and psychological well-being;
 - e. Characteristics of care and compassion for all people with demonstrable appropriate, interpersonal relationship skills;
 - f. Well-formed practices of stewardship and the use of God's gifts;
 - g. Skills and abilities necessary for the rigorous, pastoral tasks of ministry.

B. The Commissioned Ministry

1. Description: Commissioned ministry provides the Region latitude for creativity and imagination in acknowledging the fresh work of the Holy Spirit. These ministries may include congregational pastor, evangelist, Christian education, music, youth, parish nursing, chaplaincy, bi-vocational ministries, congregationally-based or non-congregationally-based community ministries of justice and reconciliation, and General and Regional ministries, among others, where Regional nurture and certification are deemed appropriate.
2. Common criteria of Commissioned ministry:

In order to be Commissioned ministers persons must:

 - ❖ Be baptized members of a Disciples congregation in the certifying Region and serving in a Congregationally or Regionally authorized call;

- 596 ❖ Be recommended for commissioning by a Region or a recognized
597 congregation or congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ),
598 including the one in which his/her membership is held;
599 ❖ Meet with the Regional Commission on Ministry; and
600 ❖ Comply with any other expectations of the Region.
601

602 In accepting commissioning, the minister covenants to obey God by caring for the
603 church, offering gifts of mind and body to that service, agreeing to fulfill the
604 functions of a minister, and adhering to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics of the*
605 *Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*.
606

607 Persons are commissioned by the Region for ministry in a specific context.
608 Change of ministry context requires Regional approval for continuation of
609 certification.
610

611 3. Tracks of Commissioned Ministry:

612 a. Commissioned Minister NT (Non-ordination Track): These are men and
613 women who offer ministry in a particular place for a specified period of time.
614 They discern their call to be context specific and their call has been affirmed
615 by the Region.
616

617 b. Commissioned Minister AT (Apprentice Track): These are women and men
618 serving in a Congregationally or Regionally authorized call who are preparing
619 for ordination utilizing the alternative educational track. This track consists of
620 a Regionally approved program of study that may take place in a variety of
621 venues and will include a minimum of 250 contact hours and cover all 15
622 areas of ministerial practice (See II.C.3.).
623

624 c. Commissioned Minister ST (Seminary Track): These are men and women
625 serving in a Congregationally or Regionally authorized call and preparing for
626 ordination. They are enrolled in a Master of Divinity Degree program
627 accredited by the Association of Theological Schools. It is expected that the
628 seminary course of study will cover all 15 areas of ministerial practice (See
629 II.C.3.).
630

631 4. Regional Responsibilities: Specifically assigned to Regions are the
632 responsibilities to:

- 633 a. establish procedures to evaluate applicants for commissioned minister;
634 b. bring them “under care”;
635 c. provide for their nurture;
636 d. deliver programs of study such as intensive weekend seminars, guided
637 research under the care of a mentor/teacher, and distance learning, etc.;
638 e. certify the designation of Commissioned Minister;
639 f. offer resources and presence of the Regional minister or the Regional
640 minister’s designee for services of installation;
641 g. oversee formation processes for candidates for ordination; and

642 h. establish additional requirements as desired.

643

644 C. The Ordained Ministry

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646 1. *Description.* By ordination the church recognizes that such persons, in fulfilling
647 their calling as servants of Christ, possess the abilities, qualities, and preparation
648 needed for the performance of their assigned functions, accepts their ministry in
649 and for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and for the whole body of
650 Christ, covenants to undergird the ministry, and grants authority to perform that
651 ministry as a representative of the church. Ordained ministers are baptized
652 members of a Disciples congregation.

653

654 In accepting ordination, the minister covenants to obey God by caring for the
655 church, offering gifts of mind and body to that service, agreeing to fulfill the
656 functions of a minister, and adhering to the Ministerial Code of Ethics of the
657 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

658

659 Historically called a ministry of word and sacrament, among others, this ministry
660 may include preachers, teachers, ecumenical leadership, community ministries of
661 justice and reconciliation, chaplains, and General and Regional ministries.

662

663 2. *Educational Requirements.* There are two educational tracks in preparation for
664 ordination: an apprentice track and a seminary track. Candidates for ordination are
665 encouraged to follow the seminary track and earn a Master of Divinity degree
666 from an Association of Theological Schools (ATS) accredited seminary or
667 divinity school, unless they determine, in consultation with their Region, that their
668 economic, vocational, or familial circumstances make the apprentice track more
669 appropriate. Regardless of the educational track chosen, the church expects the
670 women and men it ordains to demonstrate competency in the following areas of
671 ministerial practice:

672

673 ***Biblical Knowledge:*** To be so rooted and grounded in scripture that
674 competency in interpreting and applying the scriptures is demonstrated in all
675 pastoral contexts.

676

677 ***Worship:*** Know the purpose and elements of good worship. Have the ability
678 to plan and lead meaningful worship by working with the worship team,
679 musicians, and congregational members.

680

681 ***Proclamation of the Word:*** Know the practice and theory of Christian
682 preaching. Be able to proclaim the Word of God, share the Good News of
683 Jesus Christ, and help congregational members apply their faith to daily life.

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685 ***Spiritual Development:*** Learn personal spiritual disciplines that lead to
686 growth. Have the skills to help persons develop a rich spiritual life and a deep
687 faith.

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Pastoral Care: Exhibit compassion and competency in making hospital calls, visiting nursing homes and the home centered, and standing with people in life's crises.

Planning Congregational Life: Be able to work with teams or committees to plan and implement short-range and long-range goals that will enhance congregational life.

Communication: Be an effective communicator and be able to facilitate effective communication within and on behalf of the church.

Stewardship: Have the ability to develop and share stewardship educational programs which challenge the members to a deeper commitment to share in the many facets of the church's work.

Understanding of Heritage: Have knowledge of and appreciation for the history and thought of Christianity and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) history, structure, practices, and ethos.

Education and Leader Development: Know the foundations of Christian education and the principles of leader development. Show competency in teaching children, youth, and adults, including lay leaders and staff.

Moral Encouragement: Be able to help parishioners think critically about the relationship of their faith to justice, ethical, and moral issues

Evangelism: Be able to motivate congregational members in sharing their faith through word and action.

Administration: Be able to practice the principles of good administration in the carrying out of Christian ministry.

Cross Cultural and Anti-Racism Experience: Be able to understand the different manifestations of racism and prejudice in the culture and how to combat and overcome them.

Ecumenism: Exhibit a commitment to working with other Christians and denominations in programs of common witness and service, and to articulating the vision of the ecumenical and global church as a starting place for mission.

Those in the apprentice track will demonstrate competency in the 15 areas of ministerial practice by completing a program of study of at least 250 contact hours approved by the Region in which they reside.

734 Those in the seminary track will demonstrate competency in the 15 areas of
735 ministerial practice by securing a Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent from
736 a theological school accredited by the Association of Theological Schools in the
737 United States and Canada or its equivalent.

- 738
739 3. Regional Responsibilities: Specifically assigned to Regions are the
740 responsibilities to:
- 741 a. establish procedures to evaluate applicants for ordination;
 - 742 b. bring them “under care”;
 - 743 c. provide for their nurture;
 - 744 d. authorize and supervise the act of ordination; and
 - 745 e. oversee continuing education.

746 **D. Candidacy for Ordination**

747
748 1. *Definition:* Candidacy is that period of time in which the individual is under the
749 care of a Regional Commission on Ministry and involved in a specified program
750 of study and formation in preparation for ordination.

751
752 2. *Application for Candidacy.* Application for candidacy is entered into when a man
753 or woman declares the intention to seek ordination through the Christian Church
754 (Disciples of Christ), and their congregation affirms that intention.

755
756 3. *The Criteria for Candidacy.* The applicant shall be a member of a Christian
757 Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation and shall make application for
758 candidacy to the Region of the candidate's membership or to the Region where
759 she or he is a student. The applicant shall have a letter of recommendation from a
760 recognized congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the
761 candidate's Region of membership.

762
763 Upon receipt of the application, the Region will begin the process of assessing
764 (through avenues such as personal interviews, letters of reference, background
765 checks, psychological testing, consultation with congregations, coordination of
766 Regions in reciprocal relationships, and communications with educational
767 institutions), the spiritual, emotional, moral, intellectual, and educational
768 capacities of the applicant for the practice of ministry. Upon approval of the
769 application, the Region shall admit the applicant to candidacy. Once accepted as a
770 candidate, the individual comes under the care and direction of the Regional
771 Commission or Committee on Ministry (or that process which serves to function
772 as a Commission on Ministry regardless of the name assigned Regionally).

773
774 4. *The Procedures During Candidacy.* The candidate shall seek ordination through a
775 discernment process established by the Region. That preparation may include
776 certification as a Commissioned Minister AT or a Commissioned Minister ST.
777 The candidate may complete the educational requirements for either track without
778 serving as a Commissioned Minister.

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Separate from candidacy, Commissioned Minister status authorizes one to perform ministry on behalf of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The granting of certification for candidacy may or may not meet all legal requirements for the performance of marriages.

5. *Preparation for Ordination.* A candidate for ordination is to prepare himself or herself spiritually, intellectually, emotionally and physically for her/his ministry. The following areas support and enhance the performance of an applicant's chosen ministry:

- a. Participation in the life and work of a congregation of Christians;
- b. Breadth of theological study so that the candidate shows an understanding of the Christian faith, the Bible, the church universal, the history and polity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and the formation and function of Christian mission;
- c. Professional and ecclesiological study plus supervised experience in the work of ministry, exhibiting competencies in that form of ministry in which the candidate hopes to serve;
- d. Formation of responsible relations with and concern for the church, both as communities of faith and as institution;
- e. Growth in personal character, Christian insight, spiritual formation, wellness and disciplined commitment to ministry;
- f. Formation of and adherence to ethical principles to guide professional relationships and personal conduct as outlined in the *Ministerial Code of Ethics of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*.

6. *Conclusion of Candidacy.* While an essential criterion for ordination, completion of a prescribed program of study (apprentice track) or the receipt of a Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent from an institution of higher education accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (seminary track) does not guarantee ordination.

Candidacy is concluded by ordination, voluntary withdrawal by the candidate, or decision of the Region to terminate candidacy. Completion of candidacy within seven years is recommended, but may be extended at the discretion of the Region.

E. The Act of Ordination

Ordination is a process of the Congregational and Regional Church on behalf of the whole church to commend to Christians everywhere individuals who meet the

825 qualifications and have fulfilled the requirements established by the Christian Church
826 (Disciples of Christ) for ordination.

- 827
- 828 1. The candidate shall be recommended for ordination by a recognized congregation
829 or congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), including the one
830 in which membership is held.
 - 831
 - 832 2. The act of ordination shall be under the authorization and guidance of the Region,
833 with the Regional minister, or the Regional minister's designee, presiding.
 - 834
 - 835 3. The service ordinarily shall be held in a sponsoring congregation.
 - 836
 - 837 4. Representatives of the recommending congregation or congregations, the
838 Regional church, the ecumenical church and, where possible, the General church
839 shall participate in the service.
 - 840
 - 841 5. After the Ministerial Code of Ethics is signed, the signed ordination document
842 shall be issued by the Region.
 - 843

844 **F. Ministerial Standing**

- 845
- 846 1. *Definition.* Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is credentialing
847 for ministry within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), a call to
848 accountability to the church, and collegiality with other ministers both
849 denominationally and ecumenically.
850
 - 851 a. Standing affirms that the commissioned or ordained minister is currently
852 engaged in the practice of ministry, whether on an occasional part-time or
853 full-time basis, with continuous accountability maintained with a
854 congregation, related organization or institution, Region, or General
855 ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Such ministers are
856 listed in the *Year Book and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of*
857 *Christ)* and may call upon the church for services and support such as
858 Search and Call, pastoral care, ecclesiastical endorsement, and scholarship
859 aid. In addition they have voting privileges in the General Assembly of the
860 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
 - 861
 - 862 b. Responsibility for certification of Standing of ministers and for annual
863 review of that standing within the Order of Ministry is lodged with the
864 Region where the minister is currently engaged in the practice of ministry.
865 Nothing in the Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry is intended to
866 preclude a Region from developing additional appropriate statements or
867 procedures pertaining to standing within that Region as long as such
868 statements are consistent with the Order of Ministry.
 - 869

- 870 c. In the Order of Ministry, for those engaged in non-Regional ministries these
871 responsibilities concerning standing are lodged with the General
872 Commission on Ministry. For purposes of this document, non-Regional
873 ministries are defined as all ministries outside the United States and Canada,
874 those ministries engaged by and accountable to one of the General ministries
875 of the church, ministries of the ecumenical church and with interfaith
876 organizations whose responsibilities extend beyond one Region, whether in
877 North America or abroad, and fulltime military, VA and Federal
878 Correctional chaplaincies. All other ministries are hereby defined as
879 Regional as determined by the primary ministry site. The General
880 Commission on Ministry has a credentialing function but is not an ordaining
881 body; that is the province of Regions in cooperation with congregations.
882
- 883 d. Since Regional Ministers “serve as a sign of the ministry of the church in
884 sacrament and service” and lead Regions in promoting “the concept of
885 whole church, and have a primary role in advocating and supporting the
886 denomination’s mission and vision” (*Marks of a Faithful Regional Church*,
887 August, 2006), the responsibility for certification of standing is jointly
888 lodged with the Region where the Regional Minister serves and with the
889 General Commission on Ministry. Annually, the Regional Minister will
890 complete standing forms required by both the Region and the General
891 Commission on Ministry.
892
- 893 2. *Certification of Standing of those Commissioned and Ordained by the Christian*
894 *Church (Disciples of Christ)*
895
- 896 a. By virtue of commissioning or ordination according to the Order of Ministry
897 of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the minister becomes eligible
898 for standing.
899
- 900 b. Standing for ministers in active service continues so long as the minister
901 does and reports the following:
902
- 903 i. Performs faithfully the duties of a minister as authorized by
904 commissioning or ordination, either in an occupation recognized by the
905 church as ministerial in purpose or in a service recognized by the church
906 as ministerial in purpose.
907
- 908 ii. Participates regularly in programs of study, growth, and renewal.
909
- 910 iii. Maintains relations with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
911 including participating membership in a recognized congregation in the
912 community of residence or active ministry where feasible.
913
- 914 iv. Continues to meet the personal qualification for admission to the Order
915 of Ministry (II.A.2.)

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v. Seeks annual certification as requested by the Region where the ministry site is located or by the General Commission on Ministry, as appropriate. (See II.F.1.c.)

c. Standing may be continued at the discretion of the Region or the General Commission on Ministry in cases of disability so long as other criteria for standing are met.

d. The Region or the General Commission on Ministry will provide means by which the standing of all ministers in its care will be reviewed annually.

e. When an Ordained Minister moves from a ministry position in one Region to a ministry position in another Region, standing in the Order of Ministry is retained. Commissioned Ministers who move to another Region must contact that Regional Minister to establish Standing in the new ministry position. Responsibility for review and subsequent certification is assigned to the Region in which the minister functions or to the General Commission on Ministry. The minister shall notify the Regional Minister upon relocation.

f. When an Ordained Minister who is not actively seeking relocation moves from a ministry position in one Region to another Region and is no longer engaged in ministry, ministerial Standing will be provisionally retained for up to one year, except in the case of retirement, until review and subsequent certification is granted by the Region into which the minister has moved. The Ordained Minister is required to initiate contact with the new Region regarding his or her status.

g. Ordained Ministers with Standing retain this Standing at the time of retirement. Standing of inactive retired ministers is certified annually by the Region in which the minister resides during retirement and holds participating membership in a recognized Disciples congregation in the community of residence where feasible.

h. When a retired minister becomes actively engaged in the practice of another ministry, Standing is certified by the Region where the minister is so engaged or by the General Commission on Ministry.

3. *Suspension or Termination of Ministerial Standing.*

a. Procedures leading to a review of standing may be initiated by the minister, the Region, or the General Commission on Ministry when one or more of the following conditions are present:

- 961 i. The minister desires to be released from the practice of ministry, either
962 temporarily or permanently.
963
964 ii. The minister requests transfer of credentials from the Christian Church
965 (Disciples of Christ) to another denomination or non-Disciples
966 congregation.
967
968 iii. The minister enters into a full-time occupation not recognized by the
969 church as ministerial in purpose and/or no longer performs the functions
970 of the office of a minister.
971
972 iv. The minister no longer meets the personal qualifications for admission
973 to the Order of Ministry (II.A.2.) or fails to adhere to the *Ministerial*
974 *Code of Ethics*.
975
976 v. The retired minister fails to adhere to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics*.
977
978 b. When the Region or the General Commission on Ministry takes the
979 initiative in the review of standing, the procedures shall include:
980
981 i. Written notice to the minister that standing is to be reviewed with the
982 possibility of suspension or termination.
983
984 ii. A hearing by a committee appointed by the Region or the General
985 Commission on Ministry.
986
987 c. When the minister takes the initiative in the review, the procedures shall
988 include:
989
990 i. Written notice to the Region or the General Commission on Ministry
991 requesting that standing be reviewed with the possibility of
992 termination.
993
994 ii. A consultation with a committee appointed by the Region or the
995 General Commission on Ministry.
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997 d. Standing may be granted to a minister whose standing has been terminated
998 or suspended by another Region or the General Commission on Ministry
999 only upon the recommendation of the terminating or suspending Region or
1000 the General Commission on Ministry.

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4. *Surrender of Standing*

When a minister surrenders standing, standing can be granted again only upon the recommendation of the Region, or the General Commission on Ministry, to whom standing was surrendered.

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5. *Lapsed Standing*

When a minister's standing has lapsed, standing may only be granted after consultation with the body where the standing was previously held, either the Region or the General Commission on Ministry.

G. Recognition and Reconciliation of Ordained Ministries

1. *Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing with the United Church of Christ*

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ recognize the ordained ministries of the other church to be efficacious ministries of grace within that church and these ministries to be valid and full ministries of the one Church of Jesus Christ.

The ordained ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ are reconciled. An ordained minister with ordained ministerial standing in one church may function, whenever invited, and as established procedures permit, as an ordained minister of the other.

The designations "Ordained Ministerial Partner" and "Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing" manifest the corporate and individual nature of the recognition and reconciliation of the ordained ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ.

a. Each member of the United Church of Christ who holds ordained ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ is an Ordained Ministerial Partner of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

b. Each member of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who holds ordained ministerial standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is an Ordained Ministerial Partner of the United Church of Christ.

c. When a person no longer has ordained ministerial standing in either the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or the United Church of Christ, that person is no longer an Ordained Ministerial Partner and Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing is nullified.

d. *United Church of Christ ministers with Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*

Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing is recognition granted to an ordained minister with standing in the United Church of Christ who has been called to an ordained ministry setting in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing provides ongoing ecclesiastical

- 1048 authorization to exercise the rights and responsibilities of ordained ministry in
1049 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
1050
- 1051 i. Once a United Church of Christ ordained minister has demonstrated
1052 knowledge of and appreciation for the history, polity, and practices of
1053 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to the Regional Commission
1054 on Ministry where the minister resides, that Ordained Ministerial Partner
1055 may be granted access to the Search and Call process in the Christian
1056 Church (Disciples of Christ). Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in
1057 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is not given at this point in the
1058 process.
1059
 - 1060 ii. A United Church of Christ Ordained Ministerial Partner who secures a
1061 call in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) applies for Ordained
1062 Ministerial Partner Standing to the Region in which the ordained
1063 minister's calling body is located. Once granted, Ordained Ministerial
1064 Partner Standing is reviewed by the Region for certification annually.
1065
 - 1066 iii. A United Church of Christ ordained minister has Ordained Ministerial
1067 Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) only when
1068 serving a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) calling body.
1069
 - 1070 iv. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial
1071 Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall
1072 maintain ordained ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ.
1073
 - 1074 v. Ordained ministerial standing shall be held in the association in which
1075 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) calling body is located.
1076
 - 1077 vi. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial
1078 Partner Standing shall maintain relations with the Christian Church
1079 (Disciples of Christ) including (where feasible) holding associate
1080 membership in a recognized Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
1081 congregation in the community.
1082
 - 1083 vii. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial
1084 Partner Standing in a Region has voting privileges in the General
1085 Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
1086
 - 1087 viii. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial
1088 Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall
1089 relate to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for his/her primary
1090 support in ordained ministry.
1091
 - 1092 ix. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial
1093 Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall be

1094 accountable to the Region for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing and
1095 to the United Church of Christ for ordained ministerial standing.

1096
1097 x. When a disciplinary review is instituted in relation to the United Church
1098 of Christ minister holding Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the
1099 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the association of the United
1100 Church of Christ in which the United Church of Christ minister's
1101 ordained ministerial standing is maintained, shall be informed and
1102 invited to participate in the procedures.

1103
1104 xi. When a United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained
1105 Ministerial Partner Standing with the Christian Church (Disciples of
1106 Christ) accepts a call in another Region, he/she shall be subject to review
1107 and subsequent annual certification of Ordained Ministerial Partner
1108 Standing by the new Region.

1109
1110 e. *Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) ministers with Ordained Ministerial*
1111 *Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ.*

1112
1113 Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing is recognition granted to an ordained
1114 minister with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who has
1115 been called to an ordained ministry setting in the United Church of Christ.
1116 Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing provides ongoing ecclesiastical
1117 authorization to exercise the rights and responsibilities of ordained ministry in
1118 the United Church of Christ.

1119
1120 i. Once a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) ordained minister has
1121 demonstrated knowledge of and appreciation for the history, polity, and
1122 practices of the United Church of Christ to the Association Committee
1123 where the minister resides, that ordained ministerial partner may be
1124 granted access to the Search and Call process in the United Church of
1125 Christ. Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of
1126 Christ is not given at this point in the process.

1127
1128 ii. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Ordained Ministerial Partner who
1129 secures a call in the United Church of Christ applies for Ordained
1130 Ministerial Partner Standing to the Association in which the ordained
1131 minister's calling body is located. Once granted, Ordained Ministerial
1132 Partner Standing is reviewed by the Association annually.

1133
1134 iii. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) ordained minister has Ordained
1135 Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ only when
1136 serving a United Church of Christ calling body.

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- iv. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ shall maintain ordained ministerial standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
 - v. Ordained ministerial standing shall be held in the Region in which the United Church of Christ calling body is located.
 - vi. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing shall maintain relations with the United Church of Christ including (where feasible) holding associate membership in a recognized United Church of Christ congregation in the community.
 - vii. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in an Association has voting privileges in the Association and Conference and is eligible for election as a delegate to General Synod or election as a member of any Covenanted Ministry Board in the United Church of Christ.
 - viii. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ shall relate to the United Church of Christ for his/her primary support in ordained ministry.
 - ix. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ shall be accountable to the Association for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing and to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for ordained ministerial standing.
 - x. When a disciplinary review is instituted in relation to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister holding Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ, the Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in which the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister's ordained ministerial standing is maintained, shall be informed and invited to participate in the procedures.
 - xi. When a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing with the United Church of Christ accepts a call in another Association, he/she shall be subject to review and transfer of the Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing to the new Association.
2. *Persons Ordained in Other Churches.* Ministers ordained by other denominations or non-Disciples congregations may be considered for recognition of ordination and the granting of standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Provisional or temporary Standing may be granted to individuals applying for

- 1184 recognition of ordination by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
1185 Responsibility for this process is lodged in the Region except in the case of
1186 Military Chaplains stationed overseas.
- 1187
- 1188 a. Provisional or temporary Standing of applicants may be granted upon the
1189 fulfillment of the following requirements:
- 1190
- 1191 i. Consultation with appropriate officials of the denomination or
1192 congregation from which the candidate transfers.
- 1193
- 1194 ii. Satisfactory investigation of personal and ministerial references and a
1195 criminal background check.
- 1196
- 1197 iii. Filing of appropriate forms with the Region to which the applicant is
1198 applying or with the General Commission on Ministry.
- 1199
- 1200 iv. Provisional or temporary Standing shall be reviewed annually by either the
1201 granting Region or the General Commission on Ministry.
- 1202
- 1203 b. Removal of the provisional or temporary conditions for Standing may be
1204 granted by the Region or the General Commission on Ministry upon
1205 fulfillment of the following requirements:
- 1206
- 1207 i. Membership in a recognized congregation of the Christian Church
1208 (Disciples of Christ).
- 1209
- 1210 ii. Demonstrated knowledge and appreciation for the history, polity, and
1211 practices of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- 1212
- 1213 iii. Fulfillment of the prerequisites and preparation, including educational
1214 attainment, for the Order of Ministry.
- 1215
- 1216 iv. One year minimum service under the supervision or mentoring of a
1217 Disciples of Christ minister with Standing.
- 1218
- 1219 v. Manifesting the personal qualifications for the order of ministry as
1220 listed in item II.A.2.
- 1221

1222 **H. Ministerial Search and Call**

- 1223
- 1224 1. *The General Principle.* Ministerial Search and Call is the term applied to the
1225 process developed to facilitate the calling of Ordained ministers who hold
1226 standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). It provides a covenantal
1227 framework within which ministers and the Congregational, Regional, and General
1228 Ministries of the church can serve to build up the whole church of Jesus Christ.
1229 The Order of Ministry identifies general principles for search and call. Specific

1230 policies and procedures are contained in the Office of Search and Call, Disciples
1231 Home Missions.

1232
1233 Freedom and responsibility are inherent in the tradition of the Christian Church
1234 (Disciples of Christ). Congregational, Regional, and General ministries of the
1235 church are accorded full freedom to issue ministerial calls within their own
1236 established or constitutional provisions. Ministers, likewise, are accorded full
1237 freedom to accept or reject a call to any particular service. All, however, covenant
1238 to work within the Order of Ministry in the interest of assuring an orderly and
1239 responsible system of ministerial search and call.

1240
1241 2. *Operating Principles.*

- 1242
- 1243 a. Ordained ministers with Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of
1244 Christ) will have complete and unhindered access to the ministerial search
1245 and call process of the church.
- 1246
- 1247 b. Ordained Ministerial Partners with Standing in the United Church of Christ
1248 will have complete and unhindered access to the ministerial search and call
1249 process of the church once they have been qualified by a Region to seek a
1250 call.
- 1251
- 1252 c. Congregations, Regions, institutions, and general ministries of the church
1253 will be provided assistance in their searches for ministerial leadership.
- 1254
- 1255 d. Any minister's personnel file in the Office of Search and Call, Disciples
1256 Home Missions, will be open to the minister concerned except for
1257 confidential references for which a waiver has been signed.
- 1258
- 1259 e. Confidentiality, when assured to the persons completing the reference
1260 forms, will not be violated.
- 1261
- 1262 f. Commissioned Ministers Apprentice Track (AT) and Seminary Track (ST)
1263 will have access to the Search and Call process at the discretion of the
1264 Region of care.
- 1265
- 1266 g. All Commissioned Ministers AT and ST with authorized access to the
1267 ministerial Search and Call process or Ordained Ministers with Standing
1268 may have their names considered for any ministerial position for which they
1269 are qualified, following the selection processes used for the position.
- 1270
- 1271 h. All Commissioned Ministers AT and ST with authorized access to the
1272 ministerial Search and Call process or Ordained Ministers with Standing
1273 shall have access to information regarding available ministerial openings in
1274 the church.
- 1275

- 1276 i. Every congregation, Region, educational or related institution, and General
1277 ministry will strive to be open to the ministry of all persons putting aside
1278 prejudice and considering candidates based on gifts and skills for ministry
1279 rather than such characteristics as race, ethnicity, gender, age, physical
1280 disability, marital status, or family circumstance.
1281
- 1282 3. *Responsibilities.* It is expected that all parties using the Search and Call process
1283 will abide by the policies and procedures established by the Office of Search
1284 and Call, Disciples Home Missions or their successors.
1285
- 1286 a. Congregations. Within the tradition of the Christian Church (Disciples of
1287 Christ) and according to *The Design*, congregations have the right and
1288 responsibility to seek and call their own leadership, to establish the terms of
1289 call, to undergird the ministry, and to effect terminations within their own
1290 procedures. In the ministerial Search and Call process, congregations will
1291 function within the covenantal relationship of the whole church.
1292
- 1293 b. Regions. Regions bear the primary responsibility for providing advice and
1294 counsel to both congregations and ministers in matters of ministerial search
1295 and call. Regions may delegate or share this responsibility with their
1296 subdivisions, e.g., areas or districts. In the ministerial Search and Call
1297 process, Regions will function within the covenantal relationship of the
1298 whole church.
1299
- 1300 c. General ministries. Except for those ministries with assigned
1301 responsibilities, General ministries and their staffs will not engage in
1302 programs or practices related to ministerial search and call. In the ministerial
1303 Search and Call process, General ministries will function within the
1304 covenantal relationship of the whole church.
1305
- 1306 d. Disciples Home Missions. The Office of Search and Call at Disciples Home
1307 Missions is the primary locus of the ministerial records of the Christian
1308 Church (Disciples of Christ) and is responsible for coordinating the Search
1309 and Call process of the church. In the ministerial Search and Call process
1310 Disciples Home Missions will function within the covenantal relationship of
1311 the whole church.
1312
- 1313 e. Ministers. Commissioned and ordained ministers with standing in the
1314 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) have both freedom and responsibility
1315 within the Order of Ministry. They have the freedom to accept or reject any
1316 call offered to them, and to negotiate whatever terms of call or service seem
1317 appropriate. In the ministerial Search and Call process, the ministers will
1318 function within the covenantal relationship of the whole church.
1319

1320 **I. Ministerial Code of Ethics**
1321

1322 Believing that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God, and proclaiming him Lord
1323 and Savior of the world, I reaffirm my vows as a minister. Through dedication and
1324 discipline I will lead and serve with integrity. Relying on the grace of God, I commit
1325 myself to the following:

1326

1327 *Personal Conduct*

- 1328 • Witnessing to the ministry of Jesus Christ
- 1329 • Dedicating time, strength, vitality, and energy for effective ministry
- 1330 • Growing in faith, knowledge, and the practice of ministry through the spiritual
- 1331 disciplines, study, continuing education, and service
- 1332 • Living a life that honors my commitments to my family, including the need for
- 1333 privacy and time together
- 1334 • Taking time for physical and spiritual renewal, recreation, and vacation
- 1335 • Being a faithful steward of God's gifts to me by managing time, talents, and
- 1336 financial resources responsibly and generously
- 1337 • Accepting responsibility for all debts that I incur
- 1338 • Keeping physically and emotionally fit and refraining from substance abuse and
- 1339 other abusive behaviors
- 1340 • Using my position, power, and authority in non-exploitive ways
- 1341 • Maintaining high moral standards in my sexual behavior
- 1342 • Regarding all persons with equal respect and concern and undertaking to minister
- 1343 impartially

1344

1345 *Relationships to the Church which I Serve*

- 1346 • Nurturing and offering my gifts for ministry to the church
- 1347 • Calling forth and nurturing the gifts of others in the church and joining their gifts
- 1348 with mine for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ and the health of the church
- 1349 • Preaching and teaching the gospel without fear or favor and speaking the truth in
- 1350 love
- 1351 • Administering the sacraments and services of the church with integrity and not for
- 1352 financial gain
- 1353 • Working cooperatively and collegially with those whom I serve in the particular
- 1354 ministry to which I have been called
- 1355 • Administering the corporate finances of the church with personal integrity
- 1356 • Refraining from accepting any gift which would compromise the church's
- 1357 ministry
- 1358 • Protecting confidences
- 1359 • Reporting known or suspected cases of physical or sexual abuse and neglect
- 1360 • Encouraging and participating in the regular evaluation of my ministry and
- 1361 cooperating with the Region in the annual review of my ministerial standing
- 1362 • Seeking the counsel of the Regional minister should divisive tensions threaten my
- 1363 relationship with those I serve

1364

1365 *Relationships to Ministry Colleagues*

- 1366 • Engaging in covenantal relationships with colleagues which involve nurture,
1367 discipline, family support, vigorous dialogue, mutual teaching/learning, and
1368 spiritual formation
- 1369 • Supporting colleagues in ministry and their families while not exploiting their
1370 problems or crises
- 1371 • Performing pastoral services within another congregation or for a member of
1372 another congregation only at the request of that congregation's elders and current
1373 pastor
- 1374 • Supporting and at no time speaking maliciously of the ministry of my
1375 predecessors or another minister
- 1376 • Encouraging the ministry of my successor upon my retirement or other departure
1377 from a ministry position, without interfering or intruding and by making it clear to
1378 former parishioners that I am no longer their pastor, nor will I perform any
1379 pastoral services unless requested by the congregation's elders and current pastor
1380

1381 *Relationships to the Community and the Wider Church*

- 1382 • Participating responsibly in the life and work of my community, bearing prophetic
1383 witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and working towards a just and morally
1384 responsible society
- 1385 • Participating faithfully in the life and work of all expressions of the Christian
1386 Church (Disciples of Christ)
- 1387 • Seeking to know, understand, and respect the diversity of opinions and people
1388 within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- 1389 • Being a responsible representative of the one church of Jesus Christ and
1390 participating in activities which strengthen its ministry, witness, and mission
1391

1392 **J. Misconduct**

1393
1394 The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) understands ministerial misconduct to be
1395 activity which violates the covenantal character of the ministerial office as expressed in
1396 the Ministerial Code of Ethics. Investigation and adjudication of violations of the
1397 Ministerial Code of Ethics shall be the responsibility of the Region through the
1398 committee or commission on ministry or the General Commission on Ministry.
1399

1400 1. *Reporting*

1401
1402 Regions or the General Commission on Ministry will report formal actions and
1403 decisions to remove standing for misconduct to the Office of Search and Call,
1404 Disciples Home Missions, and these actions will be communicated to all Regions.
1405

1406 2. *Suspension of Standing*

1407
1408 In extreme situations of alleged misconduct, ministerial standing may be
1409 temporarily suspended by the Region or the General Commission on Ministry
1410 during the period of investigation and adjudication.
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3. *Sexual Misconduct*

- a. It is the responsibility of each Region to have specific definitions of sexual misconduct and procedures for receiving, investigating, and adjudicating sexual misconduct charges of ministers with standing in the Region. Each Region will periodically and systematically review its definitions and procedures. It is the responsibility of the Region to communicate such definitions and procedures to ministers and congregations within the Region.
- b. It is the responsibility of the General Commission on Ministry to have specific definitions of sexual misconduct and procedures for receiving, investigating, and adjudicating sexual misconduct charges of ministers engaged in non-Regional ministries. The General Commission on Ministry will periodically and systematically review its definitions and procedures. It is the responsibility of the General Commission on the Ministry to communicate such definitions and procedures to ministers, ministries, and other organizations in the general and ecumenical church.

K. Right of Appeal

The General Commission on Ministry understands that the Right to Appeal extends to persons who, at the time of their appeal are subject to a decision with adverse effect regarding ordination, commissioning, transfer of credentials, and/or standing. The General Commission on Ministry will not consider any appeal if legal proceedings are pending or in process.

L. Amendment Process

The Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) may be amended two ways:

- 1. By a two-thirds vote of the voting members of the General Assembly present and voting, providing such amendments shall have been regularly filed 180 days in advance of the meeting of the General Assembly and circulated among the congregations and Regions 60 days in advance of the General Assembly.
- 2. By a two-thirds vote of the members of the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) present and voting, providing such amendments shall have been mailed to the members of the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) at least 30 days prior to the time of the vote.

Basic Policy Approved Louisville General Assembly 1971
Section II on Candidacy approved Kansas City General Assembly 1977
Section V on Ministerial Standing amended Anaheim General Assembly 1981

1458 Section VI on Ministerial Relocation amended Des Moines General Assembly 1985
1459 Section VII on Amendment Process amended Louisville General Assembly 1987
1460 Section V.C. on Recognition and Reconciliation of the Ordained Ministries of the
1461 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ amended
1462 Pittsburgh General Assembly 1995
1463 Section VIII on Sexual Misconduct amended Pittsburgh General Assembly 1995
1464 New Theological Foundations and Revised Policies and Criteria recommended to the
1465 Indianapolis General Assembly 2009 by the General Commission on Ministry

1467 Policies and Criteria for The Order of Ministry, 2003
1468 is an operating document of the General Commission on Ministry

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