

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32

# **Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**

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

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

33

34

35

36

## ***Preface***

37

38

This document, *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of*

39

*Ministry, 2009*, became the policy document for the Christian Church (Disciples of

40

Christ) in the United States and Canada once the General Assembly adopted the

41

document. It will replace the current document, *Policies and Criteria for the Order of*

42

*Ministry, 2003* on August 1, 2011.

43

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

44		
45		
46		
47	<b>I.</b>	<b>Theological Foundations For The Ordering of Ministry In The Christian Church</b>
48		<b>(Disciples of Christ)</b>
49		
50	A.	The Ministry of the Whole People of God 4
51	B.	Historical Survey of Disciples Ministry 5
52	C.	Ministry in the Congregations 9
53	D.	Order of Ministry 10
54		1. Commissioned Ministry 11
55		2. Ordained Ministry 12
56		
57		
58	<b>II.</b>	<b>Policies and Criteria For The Ordering of Ministry</b>
59		
60	A.	Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) 16
61	B.	The Commissioned Ministry 16
62	C.	The Ordained Ministry 19
63	D.	Candidacy for Ordination 22
64	E.	The Act of Ordination 24
65	F.	Ministerial Standing 24
66	G.	Recognition and Reconciliation of Ordained Ministries 30
67	H.	Ministerial Search and Call 35
68	I.	Ministerial Code of Ethics 42
69	J.	Misconduct 44
70	K.	Right of Appeal 44
71	L.	Amendment Process 45
72		
73		

74 **I. Theological Foundations**  
75 **for the Ordering of Ministry**  
76 **in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**

77  
78 PREFACE

79  
80 *Theological Foundations for the Ordering of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of*  
81 *Christ)* functions interdependently with *Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry*  
82 *of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* to clarify evolving patterns of ministry as we  
83 seek to respond in faithful ways to ever changing contexts of service and witness. It is  
84 not a comprehensive theology of ministry nor does it attempt to offer the final word on  
85 Disciples' understanding of ministry.

86  
87 **A. The Ministry of the Whole People of God**

88  
89 God calls all persons to receive the good news of the Gospel and accept their call to be  
90 God's people. In a divided and unbelieving world, those who accept this good news are  
91 drawn into the fellowship (*koinonia*) of a new community, the church. In this body, the  
92 Holy Spirit unites those who follow Jesus Christ and sends them as witnesses into the  
93 world [ref: I Corinthians 12.12-13; Ephesians 4.4-5; Matthew 28:16-20]. The church's  
94 mission is to proclaim and prefigure the justice and joy of the Realm of God. In order to  
95 fulfill this mission faithfully, the members of the Body of Christ are given ministries of  
96 witness, service and reconciliation.

97  
98 The ministry of Christ is entrusted to all the people of God. Through baptism they are  
99 called to servant ministry lived out in covenant community. Implicit in the confession of  
100 faith and the act of baptism is an acceptance of the vocation of the baptized—the  
101 special calling shared by all followers of Christ to witness to the sovereign love of God,  
102 the grace of Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit in all of life. The gifts  
103 (*charisms*) of the Holy Spirit are different and diverse, but in tremendous and simple  
104 ways they proclaim the mighty acts of God and mediate God's loving and reconciling  
105 work to and in the world. Every baptized person is called to witness to Christ in  
106 whatever situation he or she lives—to express in their daily lives the ministry of Christ.

107  
108 In Christ the individual becomes a member of "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a  
109 people of God's own possession" (1Peter 2:9). Thus it has been common to speak of the

110 “priesthood of all believers”<sup>1</sup>—the persons who live as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ in  
111 the church and in the world. This language highlights the sacramentality of the work of  
112 the laity through whose witness and service the grace of God is made manifest.

113

114 The ministry of God’s people (the *laos* – the Greek term used in the New Testament for  
115 “people,” which is the source of our English words “laity, laywomen, laymen”), taken as  
116 a whole and in its diverse individual expressions, is to manifest and so continue the  
117 saving ministry of Jesus Christ. This ministry includes all who join together in witness to  
118 God’s justice and reconciliation through worship, daily work, sharing the Gospel,  
119 pastoral care, relief of human suffering, engagement in the struggle for peace and  
120 justice, and realization of the unity of the Church Universal. It is within this context of a  
121 shared ministry of the people of God that Commissioned ministry and Ordained ministry  
122 is to be understood.

123

124 Within the ministry of the whole people of God there is, and has been since the early  
125 church, representative ministry called by God and set apart by the Church for distinctive  
126 functions. The Commissioned and the Ordained are both of the *laos*, but in recognizing  
127 God’s call to particular individuals, the Church designates persons “to re-present to the  
128 Church its own identity and calling in Jesus Christ” (*The Nature of the Church, A Word to  
129 the Church on Ministry*). Authority and blessing to perform this ministry are celebrated  
130 in Ordination and Commissioning.

131

## 132 **B. Historical Survey of Disciples Ministry**

133

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

137

138 Campbell’s attitudes on ministry progressed as the movement grew and the changing  
139 circumstances of the church demanded new approaches to and appropriations of  
140 leadership. Conversely, Stone’s attitudes on ministry remained relatively consistent.

---

<sup>1</sup> 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 some circumstances anyone can administer the Sacraments/Ordinances of the Church, in Disciples practice it has usually been the duly appointed congregational leaders who 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.

141 While he promoted freedom from ecclesiastical control, he retained a sense of order in  
142 ministry and structure. One notable point of agreement between the two is that both  
143 regarded ministry as servanthood even though the forms and functions of that ministry  
144 were expressed and authorized in different ways.

145

146

### Alexander Campbell

147

148 Although Alexander Campbell was staunchly anti-clerical, he was clearly pro-ministry.  
149 This position was elaborated throughout various pages of the *Christian Baptist* in the  
150 1820s to 1830. The clergy of the day represented for Campbell a class that he could only  
151 term self-serving and pompous, promoting a specific set of sectarian or denominational  
152 tenets in place of the gospel. His opposition was to a professional clergy—independent  
153 of the local congregation, and accountable only to itself—not to the exercise of ministry  
154 which he considered essential to the life of the Church:

155

156 Campbell developed a specific formula for the church’s ministry, quite apart from what  
157 others might consider the roles of the clergy:

158

1. Establish necessary offices for perpetuity and growth

159

2. Select the best qualified persons for those offices

160

3. Consecrate or set apart those persons for those offices

161

4. Give oneself completely to the work and continue growing so that everyone can  
162 see the growth.

163

In *The Christian System* he outlined:

164

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

168

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

172

173 From Campbell’s perspective in this early period, the movement of ministers from  
174 church to church was unacceptable. Appointed from a particular congregation, the  
175 leader stayed and served in that congregation or lost credentials.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Bishop and Elder are alternate translations of the Greek word *episkopos*.

<sup>3</sup> 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

176

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

180

181

### Barton Warren Stone

182

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

189

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

195

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

208

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

---

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)

215

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

222

223 A significant departure from Campbell’s position, however, was the authority to Ordain.  
224 While Campbell had the congregation appoint and Ordain, Stone had the congregation  
225 appoint to the pastoral office but a conference or college of ministers, already Ordained,  
226 was the Ordaining body.

227

228

### Later Views

229

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

236

237 The turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a variety of new issues for the Disciples that began to  
238 shape understandings of the ordering of ministry. At the 1935 San Antonio  
239 International Convention, a Commission on Ordination was appointed. In 1939, the  
240 Richmond International Convention approved a new system which called for Ordination  
241 councils comprising ministers and elders representing three or more congregations to,  
242 in Stone’s words, “try her candidates.” Announced still as a local church matter, this  
243 new approach more fully satisfied Stone’s system of Ordinations being conducted by a  
244 conference or college of ministers. Such a system began to afford broader church  
245 ownership and accountability as ministers moved from congregation to congregation. In  
246 effect, the convention was following the example of Black Disciples in North Carolina  
247 who had already determined in 1886 that Ordination should not be authorized by a local  
248 congregation acting alone and had adopted standards for evaluating candidates for  
249 ministry. Some local congregations continued to Ordain their candidates without  
250 consultation of supporting churches or state societies, but those were becoming more  
251 rare in light of emerging covenantal relationships. At the 1964 Detroit International  
252 Convention, the church formally recommended a seminary degree prior to Ordination,  
253 even though some state societies and congregations had been enforcing that  
254 educational requirement for many years.

255

256

### Origins of Licensed Ministry

257

258 The 1939 Richmond report commended three criteria for Ordination:

- 259 1. Good moral character and personal fitness for ministry  
260 2. A full college course, and if possible, graduate training in religion  
261 3. Experience in Christian work which shows real leadership, vision, pastoral  
262 qualities, and preaching ability  
263 Persons who fulfilled points 1 and 3 but not point 2 were accorded Licenses - a new  
264 category of ministry created from the Ordination report.  
265

266 Licensed ministry, as we conceive it today, is fairly recent in Disciples history. Barton  
267 Stone was Licensed by the Orange Presbytery of North Carolina as a missionary to the  
268 lower North Carolina area. Alexander Campbell was Licensed to preach at the Brush Run  
269 Meeting House in 1811. During the Stone-Campbell era, “licensing to preach” was a trial  
270 period prior to Ordination to see if the candidate had the disposition for ministry and  
271 the qualities for preaching the true gospel without any mixture of human philosophy,  
272 deceit, or rudiments of the world (*cf Last Will and Testament*).  
273

274 In 1948 the church recognized a licensing process which defined certification for a  
275 limited period of time, primarily for college students in preparation or candidacy and for  
276 “those laymen who desire to serve as part-time ministers” (“License and Ordination of  
277 the Christian Minister,” 1948, para.16). Among the primary beneficiaries were small  
278 churches that were unable to attract or support full-time ministers. This established a  
279 standard of a two-fold office that was incorporated into *The Design for the Christian*  
280 *Church (Disciples of Christ)* in 1968 and the *Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry*  
281 in 1971.  
282

### 283 Emerging Practice at the Turn of the Millennium

284

285 Toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the trend toward higher educational standards for  
286 Ordained ministry reached its peak and patterns of preparation began to diversify. Some  
287 Regions determined that a single model of ministerial formation was too restrictive to  
288 serve faithfully the changing contexts of ministry. A few began to utilize criteria that  
289 allowed for the Ordination of ministers without a Master of Divinity degree from an  
290 *Association of Theological Schools (ATS)* accredited seminary. The emergence of these  
291 *de facto* alternate educational tracks led to calls for a review of expectations with an eye  
292 toward developing a new consensus on educational standards for Ordained ministry.  
293

### 294 **C. Ministry in the Congregation**

295 It is the usual practice among congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
296 to nominate, elect, and install or in other ways recognize for service deacons and elders.  
297 Women and men serving in these offices manifest various spiritual gifts, including  
298 maturity, prayer, insight, and leadership.  
299

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

303 a. a person elected elder is authorized to exercise within the congregation  
304 which elects her or him to the ministerial functions it assigns for periods  
305 of time which it specifies, such as sharing in the ministration of baptism  
306 and the Lord's Supper and the conduct of worship, and sharing in the  
307 pastoral care and spiritual leadership of the congregation. The eldership  
308 is a voluntary ministry, each congregation having a plurality of elders  
309 [more than one elder].

310 b. a person elected deacon is authorized to serve in the congregation which  
311 elects her or him for periods of time which it specifies by assisting in the  
312 ministration of baptism and the Lord's Supper, in the conduct of worship,  
313 and in the pastoral care and spiritual leadership of the congregation. The  
314 diaconate is a voluntary ministry (paragraph 87, *The Design of the*  
315 *Christian Church*).

316  
317 The role of elders and deacons is most evident in the ways these ministries represent  
318 the congregation in their communities of faith and in the larger community. For  
319 example, elders and deacons are seen visiting persons in hospitals, nursing homes, or  
320 with the home-centered. They may also lead congregations in ministries of outreach and  
321 social justice.

322  
323 It is, however, at the Table that the ministry of the congregation comes into view for the  
324 gathered community. The pastor and elders as they preside and pray and the deacons  
325 as they serve, re-present the whole ministry of the church.

#### 326 327 **D. Order of Ministry**

328  
329 "The church recognizes an order of ministry, set apart under God, to equip the whole  
330 people to fulfill their corporate ministry" (Paragraph 86, *Design of the Christian Church*).

331  
332 In its ordering of ministry, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) recognizes a  
333 Commissioned ministry and an Ordained ministry. The church expects the women and  
334 men it Commissions and Ordains to demonstrate educational qualifications and  
335 competencies in several areas of personal integrity and pastoral practice, as well as a  
336 clear call to and passion for ministry. The church is called to provide significant  
337 Congregational and Regional support for those seeking to serve in ministry, whether  
338 Ordained or Commissioned.

339  
340 The church gives grateful acknowledgment to God who in every age grants to women  
341 and men the spiritual gifts necessary for such ministry. In making decisions about whom  
342 to Commission or Ordain, the church looks to candidates for:

343 ❖ the personal, inward call from God, which leads persons to seek such ministry,

- 344 ❖ the God-given gifts and graces,  
345 ❖ the personal characteristics and aptitudes, and  
346 ❖ the preparation and promise (e.g., education, skills, etc.) that they have for  
347 effective ministry.

348 By these criteria the church discerns whom it will Commission and/or Ordain.<sup>4</sup>

349

350 It bears reiteration that throughout history, Disciples have recognized various methods  
351 of preparation for ministry. Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Disciples placed  
352 increasing emphasis on a graduate seminary degree as a credential for Ordination, even  
353 while recognizing that for some individuals other methods of preparation might be  
354 more appropriate in consideration of certain circumstances such as life situation,  
355 community, ministry setting, and cultural and ethnic context.

356

### 357 **1. Commissioned Ministry**

358

359 In the development of Disciples understanding of ministry, “Commissioned” ministry is  
360 replacing some forms of “Licensed” ministry. Men and women are authorized and  
361 Commissioned by their Regions to offer ministry in a particular place for a specified  
362 period of time. “The word ‘Commissioned’ means one who is appointed to a position  
363 entrusted with a task, or one who is authorized or sent on behalf of another for a task or  
364 proclamation” (*The Nazareth Consensus*, page 8, para.1).<sup>5</sup>

365

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

374

375 The word “Commissioned” has been used and continues to be used by the church for  
376 people appointed to various positions or sent forth to carry God’s message. Thus, the  
377 term has ecclesiastical connotations of being entrusted with the tasks of ministry. The  
378 use of the term “commission” or “commissioned” in English translations of Paul’s letters  
379 has further shaped our understanding of the concept in the contemporary setting.

380

381 Commissioning is an acknowledgment by the Church of the gifts of the Spirit in the one  
382 commissioned, and a commitment by both the Church and the Commissioned to the

---

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

<sup>5</sup> 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.

383 new relationship. Those Commissioned offer their gifts to the Church and commit  
384 themselves to the burden and opportunity of new authority and responsibility. At the  
385 same time, they enter into a collegial relationship with all ministers. By receiving the  
386 Commissioned minister in the act of commissioning, the Church acknowledges the  
387 minister's call and commits itself to be open to it. This liturgical service occurs in the  
388 context of Congregational worship in partnership with the Region.

389

## 390 **2. Ordained Ministry**

391

### 392 **a. The meaning of Ordination**

393 In Ordination — through prayers invoking the Holy Spirit and the laying on of  
394 hands — the Church confirms in women and men the call of God, acknowledges  
395 their gifts and graces, and authorizes this ministry in and for the Church.

396 The act of Ordination by those who are appointed for this ministry attests the  
397 bond of the church with Jesus Christ and the apostolic witness, recalling that it is  
398 the risen Lord who is the true Ordainer and bestows the gift. In Ordaining, the  
399 church, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, provides for the faithful  
400 proclamation of the Gospel and humble service in the name of Christ. The laying  
401 on of hands is the sign of the gift of the Spirit, rendering visible the fact that the  
402 ministry was instituted in the revelation accomplished in Christ, and reminding  
403 the church to look to him as the source of its commission. (*"Ministry," Baptism*  
404 *Eucharist and Ministry*, WCC, para. 40.)

405

406 Disciples understand the meaning of Ordination as an action of God and the  
407 community during which the Ordained are strengthened by the Spirit for their  
408 task and are upheld by the acknowledgment and prayers of the congregation.

409

410 Ordination sets one apart for leadership in the life and witness of the church.  
411 While the Ordained ministry cannot be reduced to any mere listing of tasks, it  
412 may be identified by leadership with regard to three fundamental aspects of the  
413 church's life and witness:

414 (1) acting in servant obedience to God's commandment of love in self-sacrifice  
415 on behalf of others and in a servant life in the world;

416 (2) proclaiming the gospel in faithfulness to Jesus Christ by word (teaching and  
417 preaching), by sacrament (Baptism and the Lord's Supper), and by deed  
418 (mission and service);

419 (3) overseeing the life of the community in its worship, education, witness,  
420 mission, fellowship, and pastoral nurture through the leading of the Holy  
421 Spirit.

422

423 In selecting men and women for Ordination, the church thus seeks to insure that  
424 its ministry of service, proclamation, and oversight shall be constantly upheld by  
425 its members.

426 **b. The character of Ordained ministry**

427 Disciples accept Ordination as a gift of the Holy Spirit at work in the community  
428 of faith. In every service of Ordination we, therefore, seek to witness to at least  
429 four aspects of this ordering of ministry:

430 1) *Apostolic Ministry*: The Ordained enter the *apostolic ministry*. By this we  
431 mean they receive their authority and commission from the risen Christ. The  
432 first Christian ministers were the apostles in the New Testament, to whom  
433 the living Lord revealed himself and sent "to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)  
434 Ministers in every generation preach, celebrate, witness, and gather disciples  
435 in continuity with those early apostles.

436 2) *Representative Ministry*: Ordination witnesses to a *representative ministry*.  
437 Those who accept the ministry of the Word, sacrament, and mission are  
438 responsible for re-presenting (showing forth) to the world and to all baptized  
439 Christians the character of Christ's ministry and witness. A central task of  
440 such representative ministry is personally and publicly to point the church to  
441 its dependence on Jesus Christ, who is the source of its faith, mission, and  
442 unity.

443 3) *Collegial Ministry*: Those who receive Ordination enter a *collegial ministry*.  
444 Ministry is inherently a shared responsibility. No minister is independent or  
445 autonomous, all seek to teach and work together to express fellowship  
446 (*koinonia*) in support and care for each other. This collegiality relates  
447 Ordained and lay persons in common ministry. The ministries of all members  
448 of the believing community are complementary, given to one to be  
449 supportive of the other. All are to build up the Body of Christ in love. No  
450 differences of vocation, function or education should obscure the fact that  
451 the one ministry of Christ is shared by the whole people of God. Lay and  
452 Ordained are partners together in governance and witness; together they  
453 empower the church for effective participation in discovering God's will for  
454 all humanity.

455 4) *Universal Ministry*: Most appropriately, Ordination is a *rite of the Church*  
456 *Universal*. While Ordination is normally done by a particular denomination,  
457 and Standing is limited to a particular communion, the intention is that no  
458 one is ever Ordained into a particular denomination or tradition, certainly  
459 not into the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Those Ordained are  
460 representative ministers of the Church Universal: one, holy, catholic and

461 apostolic. While we serve with the vision of universality, the Church lives  
462 with the pain of a divided ministry. Nevertheless, all ministers are called to  
463 point out the community of Jesus Christ, to work to bring new expressions of  
464 the one universal Church into being, and to search for forms of unity which  
465 the divided churches cannot yet express.<sup>6</sup>

466 **c. Offices of the Ordained ministry**

467  
468 The New Testament does not describe a single pattern of ministry which might  
469 serve as a blueprint or continuing norm for all future ministry in the Church. In  
470 the New Testament there appears rather a variety of forms which existed at  
471 different places and times. As the Holy Spirit continued to lead the Church in life,  
472 worship and mission, certain elements from this early variety were further  
473 developed and became settled into a more universal pattern of ministry (*BEM*,  
474 para. 19).

475  
476 In 1985, the Commission on Theology commended to the whole Church a single  
477 order of Ordained ministry which would include three offices.<sup>7</sup>

478  
479 This pattern of ministerial leadership corresponds to the three aspects of the  
480 church's life identified as fundamental:<sup>8</sup>

- 481
- 482 ❖ the ministry of service to church and world (the *diaconate* or deacons),  
483 where the active witness and mission of the church as servant is advanced;
  - 484 ❖ the ministry of proclamation by Word and Sacrament (the *presbyterate*, or  
485 pastors), where preaching, teaching, and the sacraments/ordinances (Table  
486 and Baptism) of the church are lifted up; and,
  - 487 ❖ the ministry of oversight (the *episcopate*, or bishops), where oversight of the  
488 community's life occurs.

489  
490 Thus, within a single order of Ordained ministry, there can be three distinct  
491 offices that are at the same time mutually supportive and interrelated. The

---

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> The nomenclature of *diakonos*, *presbuteros*, and *episkopos* is drawn from I Timothy, chapters 3 and 5, which is rendered in the NRSV as deacon, elder, and bishop, respectively.

492 recognition of these offices does not carry with it any implications of hierarchical  
493 structure. The three-fold Ordained ministry, taken as a whole, thus re-presents  
494 the fundamental characteristics of ministry shared by all baptized believers. (*A*  
495 *Word to the Church on Ministry*, pp. 3- 4.)  
496

497 Persons are not Ordained into a particular office, but rather into the order of  
498 ministry. The church may call them to a role that emphasizes one of the three  
499 offices. However, these offices are not located exclusively in any particular  
500 ministerial role. Most ministries encompass varying aspects of all three offices.

501 **d. The act of Ordination**

502 A long and early Christian tradition places Ordination in the context of worship  
503 and especially of the Lord's Supper. Such a place for the service of Ordination  
504 preserves the understanding of Ordination as an act of the whole community.  
505 The act of Ordination by the laying on of hands of those appointed to do so is at  
506 one and the same time the invocation of the Holy Spirit, a sacramental sign, and  
507 an acknowledgment of gifts and commitment.<sup>9</sup>  
508

509 In the act of Ordination, the Church Ordains in confidence that God, being  
510 faithful to the promise in Christ, enters sacramentally into historical forms of  
511 human relationship, and draws upon those relationships for God's purpose.  
512 Ordination is thus a sign performed in faith that the spiritual relationship  
513 signified is present in, with, and through the words spoken, the gestures made  
514 and the forms employed.<sup>10</sup>  
515

516 Finally, Ordination is an acknowledgment by the Church of the gifts of the Spirit  
517 in the one Ordained, and a commitment by both the Church and the Ordinand to  
518 the new relationship. By receiving the new minister in the act of Ordination, the  
519 Church acknowledges the minister's gifts and commits itself to be open to these  
520 gifts. Likewise those Ordained offer their gifts to the Church and commit  
521 themselves to the burden and opportunity of new authority and responsibility;  
522 at the same time, they enter into a collegial relationship with all ministers.<sup>11</sup>  
523

524  
525

---

<sup>9</sup> Adapted from *BEM*, Ministry para. 41.

<sup>10</sup> Adapted from *BEM*, Ministry para. 43.

<sup>11</sup> Adapted from *BEM*, Ministry para. 44.

526  
527  
528  
529  
530  
531  
532  
533  
534  
535  
536  
537  
538  
539  
540  
541  
542  
543  
544  
545  
546  
547  
548  
549  
550  
551  
552  
553  
554  
555  
556  
557  
558  
559  
560  
561  
562  
563  
564  
565  
566  
567

## 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 expects to find within the women and men it receives into the order of ministry:
  - a. Faith in Jesus Christ, commitment to a life of Christian discipleship and nurturing spiritual practices;
  - b. A sense of call to the ministry affirmed by the church;
  - c. An understanding of pastoral identity;
  - d. Capacity to engage in theological reflection;
  - e. Strong moral character and personal integrity;
  - f. Commitment to spiritual, physical and emotional wellness sufficient for healthy ministry;
  - g. Care and compassion for all people with appropriate relational skills;
  - h. Responsible personal financial management;
  - i. Wise and generous stewardship in the use of God’s gifts;
  - j. Skills and abilities necessary for the rigorous, pastoral tasks of ministry.

### B. The Commissioned Ministry

1. Description: Commissioned ministry provides the Church opportunity for creativity and imagination in acknowledging the fresh work of the Holy Spirit. These ministries may include: pastors, evangelists, Christian educators, ministers of music, youth ministers, parish nurses, chaplains, bi-vocational ministers, recognized congregationally-based or non-congregationally-based community ministers, or others, where Regional nurture and authorization are deemed appropriate.

568  
569  
570  
571  
572  
573  
574  
575  
576  
577  
578  
579  
580  
581  
582  
583  
584  
585  
586  
587  
588  
589  
590  
591  
592  
593  
594  
595  
596  
597  
598  
599  
600  
601  
602  
603  
604  
605  
606  
607

2. Common criteria of Commissioned ministry:

In order to be Commissioned ministers persons must:

- ❖ Be baptized members of a Disciples congregation in the commissioning Region and serving in a Congregationally, Regionally or Generally recognized call;
- ❖ Be recommended for Commissioning by a recognized congregation or congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), including the one in which his/her membership is held;
- ❖ Meet with the Regional Commission or Committee on Ministry (or that process which serves to function as a Commission on Ministry regardless of the name assigned Regionally) for Commissioning; and
- ❖ Comply with any other expectations of the Region.

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

Commissioned Minister Standing authorizes one to perform ministry on behalf of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The granting of Commissioning may or may not meet all legal requirements for the performance of marriages.

Persons are Commissioned by Regions for ministry in a specific context. Change of ministry context requires Regional re-Commissioning.

3. Categories of Commissioned Ministry:

- a. Commissioned Minister (Not Seeking Ordination): These are men and women who minister in a particular place for a specified period of time. Their call is context specific and is affirmed by the Region. Expectations for formation and education may be established by the Region, and may be accomplished in consultation with the calling congregation.
- b. Commissioned Minister (Seeking Ordination): These are women and men serving in a Congregationally or Regionally authorized call who are under the care of a Region and involved in a specified program of study and formation in preparation for Ordination.

- 608 4. Candidacy for Commissioning  
609  
610 a. *Definition:* Candidacy is that period of time in which the individual who has  
611 received a call to serve a particular ministry is in preparation with the Region  
612 for Commissioning.  
613  
614 b. Candidacy begins when a person who has received a call from a recognized  
615 congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or a recognized  
616 non-congregational ministry applies to the Region for Commissioning.  
617  
618 c. *Steps for Candidacy.* The candidate shall:  
619  
620 1. be a member of a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation;  
621 2. have a letter of recommendation from the congregation of which the  
622 applicant is a member;  
623 3. complete the *Ministerial Profile*; and  
624 4. meet with the Regional Commission on Ministry.  
625  
626 d. The Region shall assess the spiritual, emotional, moral, intellectual, and  
627 educational capacities of the applicant for the practice of ministry. This  
628 assessment will be accomplished through such avenues as personal  
629 interviews, letters of reference, background checks, psychological and  
630 vocational testing, consultation with congregations, and as appropriate,  
631 coordination between Regions in reciprocal relationships, and  
632 communications with educational institutions.  
633  
634 e. Upon approval, the Region brings the candidate under care and Commissions  
635 her/him for a particular ministry.  
636  
637 5. Regional Responsibilities: Specifically assigned to Regions are the responsibilities  
638 to:  
639 a. establish procedures to evaluate applicants for Commissioned minister,  
640 which must include the *Ministerial Profile* and a current denominational  
641 criminal background check;  
642 b. consult with the appropriate National Pastor/Leader of Racial Ethnic  
643 communities whenever considering a person of color;  
644 c. bring applicants “under care”;  
645 d. provide for their nurture;  
646 e. provide opportunities for building collegiality with other ministers;  
647 f. make available appropriate programs of study (such as readings, experiential  
648 learning, intensive weekend seminars, guided reflection on ministerial  
649 practice with a mentor-companion, and distance learning, etc.) in  
650 preparation for ministry;  
651 g. authorize the designation of an applicant as a Commissioned Minister;

- 652 h. offer resources and presence of the Regional Minister or the Regional  
653 Minister’s designee for services of Commissioning;  
654 i. oversee formation processes for candidates for Ordination;  
655 j. encourage lifelong learning through continuing education opportunities  
656 including training in healthy boundaries and anti-racism; and  
657 k. establish additional requirements as desired.  
658

659 **C. The Ordained Ministry**  
660

- 661 1. *Description.* By Ordination the church recognizes the work of the Holy Spirit in  
662 calling particular persons to creative and imaginative servanthood in Christ;  
663 accepts their ministry in and for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and for  
664 the whole body of Christ; covenants to undergird the ministry; and grants  
665 authority to perform that ministry as a representative of the church. Ordained  
666 ministers are baptized members of a Disciples congregation.  
667

668 In accepting Ordination, the minister covenants to obey God by caring for the  
669 church, offering gifts of mind, body and spirit to that service, agreeing to fulfill  
670 the functions of a minister, and adhering to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics* of the  
671 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).  
672

673 Ordained Minister Standing authorizes one to perform ministry on behalf of the  
674 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Ordination may or may not meet all the  
675 legal requirements for the performance of marriages.  
676

677 Historically called a ministry of word and sacrament, among others, this ministry  
678 may include pastors, educators, ecumenical leaders, recognized  
679 congregationally-based or non-congregationally-based community ministers,  
680 chaplains, pastoral counselors, and ministers who serve in the General and  
681 Regional church.  
682

- 683 2. *Educational Requirements.* There are two educational tracks in preparation for  
684 Ordination: an apprentice track (AT) and a seminary track (ST).  
685

686 ❖ Those in the apprentice track will demonstrate competency in the 16 areas  
687 of ministerial practice by completing a program of study of at least 250  
688 contact hours approved by the Region in which they are under care.  
689

690 ❖ Those in the seminary track will demonstrate competency in the 16 areas of  
691 ministerial practice by securing a Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent  
692 from a theological school accredited by the Association of Theological  
693 Schools in the United States and Canada or its equivalent.  
694

695 Candidates for Ordination are expected to follow the seminary track, unless, in  
696 consultation with their Region, the Regional Ministry Commission determines  
697 that their economic, linguistic, vocational, or familial circumstances make the  
698 apprentice track more appropriate. Regardless of the educational track chosen,  
699 the church expects the women and men it ordains to demonstrate competency  
700 in the following areas of ministerial practice, listed alphabetically:

701  
702 ***Biblical Knowledge:*** Be rooted and grounded in scripture and able to  
703 interpret and apply the scriptures in ways that are appropriate to original  
704 and contemporary contexts.

705  
706 ***Church Administration and Planning:*** Be able to practice the principles of  
707 good administration, planning and implementing short- and long-range goals  
708 to enhance Congregational life in collaboration with teams and committees.

709  
710 ***Communication:*** Be an effective communicator and be able to facilitate  
711 effective communication within and on behalf of the church.

712  
713 ***Cross Cultural and Anti-Racism Experience:*** Be sensitive to the different  
714 manifestations of racism and prejudice in the culture and be committed to  
715 confronting and overcoming them.

716  
717 ***Ecumenism:*** Exhibit a commitment to working with other Christians and  
718 denominations and with other faiths in programs of common witness and  
719 service, and to articulating the vision of the ecumenical and global church as  
720 a starting place for mission.

721  
722 ***Education and Leader Development:*** Know the foundations of Christian  
723 education and the principles of leader development. Show competency in  
724 teaching children, youth, and adults, including lay leaders and staff.

725  
726 ***Ethics:*** Be able to help parishioners think critically about the relationship of  
727 their faith to issues of justice, ethics and morality

728  
729 ***Evangelism:*** Be able to motivate Congregational members to share their faith  
730 through word and action.

731  
732 ***Mission of the Church in the World:*** Be able to understand and articulate the  
733 centrality of the call to mission given by Jesus Christ and the prophets. Be  
734 able to empower congregations to engage in mission from our doorsteps to  
735 the ends of the earth.

736

737 **Pastoral Care:** Be able to engage other persons with empathy and assess  
738 situations and relationships with the compassion of Christ, with sensitivity to  
739 culture and context. Be able to convey the healing power of God to those  
740 who suffer.

741  
742 **Proclamation of the Word:** Know the practice and theory of Christian  
743 preaching. Be able to proclaim the Word of God, share the Good News of  
744 Jesus Christ, and help Congregational members apply their faith to daily life.

745  
746 **Spiritual Development:** Establish and maintain spiritual disciplines that lead  
747 to personal growth and help others develop a rich spiritual life.

748  
749 **Stewardship:** Be able to develop and encourage healthy stewards who  
750 recognize and share generously God’s abundant gifts for all creation.

751  
752 **Theology:** Be able to articulate a coherent view of God’s nature and activity  
753 in relation to the Christian tradition, to critically engage human situations  
754 from a perspective of faith, and to help persons recognize theological issues  
755 in their daily lives.

756  
757 **Understanding of Heritage:** Have knowledge of and appreciation for the  
758 history and thought of Christianity and of the history, structure, practices,  
759 and ethos of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

760  
761 **Worship:** Know the purpose and elements of Christian worship. Have the  
762 ability to plan and lead meaningful worship by working with the worship  
763 team, musicians, and Congregational members.

764  
765 3. Regional Responsibilities:

766 Regions are strongly encouraged to offer an apprentice track (AT) program on  
767 their own or in collaboration with Regional Fellowships,<sup>12</sup> theological  
768 institutions, or ecumenical partners. Those offering an AT program will submit  
769 their curriculum to the General Commission on Ministry for evaluation.

770

---

<sup>12</sup> Regional Fellowships (Clusters) are gatherings of Regions in geographical proximity. They include: ROSES (Regions Of the Sun Equipping and Serving: Oklahoma, Southwest, and Great River); WRIM (Western Regions In Ministry: Arizona, Pacific Southwest, Northern California-Nevada, Oregon, Northwest, South Idaho, Montana, Central Rocky Mountain); SERF (SouthEast Regional Fellowship: Florida, Alabama-Northwest Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee); NIRF (Northeast Inter-Regional Fellowship: Canada, Northeast, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Capital Area, West Virginia and Michigan); HEARTLAND (Heartland Regional Fellowship: Nebraska, Kansas, Greater Kansas City, Mid-America, Upper Midwest, Illinois-Wisconsin, and Indiana).

- 771 Specifically assigned to Regions are the responsibilities to:  
772 a. establish procedures to evaluate applicants for Ordination;  
773 b. evaluate the educational experience of candidates for an AT program which  
774 would include a high school diploma or its equivalent and some post  
775 secondary educational experience;  
776 c. consult with the appropriate National Pastor/Leader of Racial Ethnic  
777 communities whenever considering a racial/ethnic applicant;  
778 d. bring applicants “under care” (See II.D.3.);  
779 e. provide for their nurture;  
780 f. be in relationship with the sponsoring congregation and the candidate’s  
781 educational setting;  
782 g. authorize and supervise the act of Ordination; and  
783 h. facilitate continuing education including training in healthy boundaries and  
784 anti-racism .

785 **D. Candidacy for Ordination**

- 786  
787 1. *Definition:* Candidacy is that period of time in which the individual is under the  
788 care of a Regional Commission on Ministry and involved in a specified program  
789 of study and formation in preparation for Ordination.  
790  
791 2. *Application for Candidacy.* Application for candidacy is entered into when a man  
792 or woman declares the intention to seek Ordination through the Christian  
793 Church (Disciples of Christ), and their congregation affirms that intention.  
794  
795 3. *The Criteria for Candidacy.* The applicant shall be a baptized member of a  
796 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation and shall make application for  
797 candidacy to the Region of the candidate's membership or to the Region where  
798 she or he is a student. In special circumstances and subject to agreement  
799 between appropriate Regional Ministers and/or Regional Commissions on  
800 Ministry, persons may apply for candidacy in another Region. The applicant shall  
801 have a letter of recommendation from a recognized congregation of the  
802 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the candidate’s Region of membership.  
803  
804 Upon receipt of the application, the Region will begin the process of assessing  
805 (through avenues such as personal interviews, letters of reference, background  
806 checks, psychological testing, consultation with congregations, coordination of  
807 Regions in reciprocal relationships, and communications with educational  
808 institutions), the spiritual, emotional, moral, intellectual, and educational  
809 capacities of the applicant for the practice of ministry. Upon approval of the  
810 application, the Region shall admit the applicant to candidacy. Once accepted as  
811 a candidate, the individual comes under the care and direction of the Regional  
812 Commission or Committee on Ministry (or that process which serves to function  
813 as a Commission on Ministry regardless of the name assigned Regionally).

814  
815  
816  
817  
818  
819  
820  
821  
822  
823  
824  
825  
826  
827  
828  
829  
830  
831  
832  
833  
834  
835  
836  
837  
838  
839  
840  
841  
842  
843  
844  
845  
846  
847  
848  
849  
850  
851  
852  
853  
854  
855  
856

4. *The Procedures During Candidacy.* The candidate shall seek Ordination through a discernment process established by the Region. That preparation may include authorization as a Commissioned Minister (Seeking Ordination). The candidate may complete the educational requirements for either track without serving as a Commissioned Minister.

Separate from candidacy, Commissioned Minister status authorizes one to perform ministry on behalf of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The granting of 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.* 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.

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

861

## 862 **E. The Act of Ordination**

863

864 Ordination is a process of the Congregational and Regional Church on behalf of the  
865 whole church to commend to Christians everywhere individuals who meet the  
866 qualifications and have fulfilled the requirements established by the Christian Church  
867 (Disciples of Christ) for Ordination.

868

869 1. The candidate shall be recommended for Ordination by a recognized  
870 congregation or congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ),  
871 including the one in which membership is held.

872

873 2. The act of Ordination shall be under the authorization and guidance of the  
874 sponsoring congregation and the Region, with the Regional Minister, or the  
875 Regional Minister's designee, presiding.

876

877 3. The service ordinarily shall be held in a sponsoring congregation.

878

879 4. Representatives of the recommending congregation or congregations, the  
880 Regional church, the ecumenical church and, where possible, the General church  
881 shall participate in the service.

882

883 5. After the Ministerial Code of Ethics is signed, the signed Ordination document  
884 shall be issued by the Region.

885

## 886 **F. Ministerial Standing**

887

888 1. *Definition.* Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is credentialing  
889 for ministry within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), a call to  
890 accountability to the church, and collegiality with other ministers both  
891 denominationally and ecumenically.

892

893 a. Standing affirms that the Commissioned or Ordained minister is currently  
894 engaged in the practice of ministry, whether on an occasional, part-time or  
895 full-time basis, with continuous accountability maintained with a  
896 congregation, related organization or institution, Region, or General  
897 Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Such ministers are  
898 listed in the *Year Book and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of*  
899 *Christ)* and may call upon the church for services and support such as  
900 pastoral care, ecclesiastical endorsement, and scholarship aid. In addition

- 901 they have voting privileges in the General Assembly of the Christian Church  
902 (Disciples of Christ).  
903
- 904 b. Ordained ministers with Standing have access to Search and Call.  
905 Candidates for Ordination may be granted access to Search and Call at the  
906 discretion of the Regional Minister of the Region where they are under care  
907 or the Region of their educational setting.  
908
- 909 c. Responsibility for certification of Standing of ministers and for annual  
910 review of that Standing within the Order of Ministry is lodged with the  
911 Region where the minister is currently engaged in the practice of ministry.  
912 Nothing in the Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry is intended to  
913 preclude a Region from developing additional appropriate statements or  
914 procedures pertaining to Standing within that Region as long as such  
915 statements are consistent with the Order of Ministry.  
916
- 917 d. For those engaged in non-Regional ministries responsibility for certification  
918 of Standing and for annual review of that Standing within the Order of  
919 Ministry is lodged with the General Commission on Ministry. For purposes  
920 of this document, non-Regional ministries are defined as all ministries  
921 outside the United States and Canada, those ministries engaged by and  
922 accountable to one of the General Ministries of the church, ministries of  
923 the ecumenical church and with interfaith organizations whose  
924 responsibilities extend beyond one Region, whether in North America or  
925 abroad, and fulltime military, VA and Federal Correctional chaplaincies. All  
926 other ministries are hereby defined as Regional as determined by the  
927 primary ministry site. The General Commission on Ministry has a  
928 credentialing function but is not an Ordaining body; that is the province of  
929 Regions in cooperation with congregations. In covenant with the Regions,  
930 the General Commission on Ministry will notify Regions about persons who  
931 reside in their Region and hold Standing with the General Commission on  
932 Ministry.  
933
- 934 e. Since Regional Ministers “serve as a sign of the ministry of the church in  
935 sacrament and service” and lead Regions in promoting “the concept of  
936 whole church, and have a primary role in advocating and supporting the  
937 denomination’s mission and vision” (*Marks of a Faithful Regional Church*,  
938 August, 2006), the responsibility for certification of Standing is jointly  
939 lodged with the Region where the Regional Minister serves and with the  
940 General Commission on Ministry. Annually, the Regional Minister will  
941 complete Standing forms required by both the Region and the General  
942 Commission on Ministry.  
943

- 944 2. *Certification of Standing of those Commissioned and Ordained by the Christian*  
945 *Church (Disciples of Christ)*  
946
- 947 a. By virtue of Commissioning or Ordination according to the Order of  
948 Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the minister becomes  
949 eligible for Standing.  
950
- 951 b. Standing for ministers in active service continues so long as the minister  
952 does and reports the following:  
953
- 954 i. Performs faithfully the duties of a minister as authorized by  
955 Commissioning or Ordination, either in an occupation recognized by the  
956 church as ministerial in purpose or in a service recognized by the church  
957 as ministerial in purpose.  
958
- 959 ii. Participates regularly in programs of study, growth, and renewal.  
960
- 961 iii. Maintains relations with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
962 including participating membership in a recognized congregation in the  
963 community of residence or active ministry where feasible.  
964
- 965 iv. Adheres to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics of the Christian Church*  
966 *(Disciples of Christ)*.  
967
- 968 v. Continues to meet the personal qualifications for admission to the  
969 Order of Ministry. (II.A.2.)  
970
- 971 vi. Seeks annual certification as requested by the Region where the  
972 ministry site is located or by the General Commission on Ministry, as  
973 appropriate. (See II.F.1.c.)  
974
- 975 c. Standing may be continued at the discretion of the Region or the General  
976 Commission on Ministry in cases of disability or other special hardships  
977 affecting ministerial service, so long as other criteria for Standing are met.  
978
- 979 d. The Region or the General Commission on Ministry will provide means by  
980 which the Standing of all ministers in its care will be reviewed annually.  
981 Consultation with the appropriate National Pastor/Leader of Racial Ethnic  
982 communities is encouraged regarding the Standing of persons of color.  
983
- 984 e. When an Ordained Minister moves from a ministry position in one Region  
985 to a ministry position in another Region, Standing in the Order of Ministry  
986 is retained. Commissioned Ministers who move to another Region must  
987 contact that Regional Minister to establish Standing in the new ministry

988 position. Responsibility for review and subsequent certification is assigned  
989 to the Region in which the minister functions or to the General Commission  
990 on Ministry. The minister shall notify both the former and new Regional  
991 Ministers upon relocation.  
992  
993 f. When an Ordained Minister who is not actively seeking relocation moves  
994 from a ministry position in one Region to another Region and is no longer  
995 engaged in ministry, ministerial Standing will be provisionally retained for  
996 up to one year, except in the case of retirement, until review and  
997 subsequent certification is granted by the Region into which the minister  
998 has moved. The Ordained Minister is required to initiate contact with both  
999 the former and new Regional Ministers regarding his or her status.  
1000  
1001 3. *Certification of Standing of Retired Ministers, Commissioned or Ordained by the*  
1002 *Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*  
1003  
1004 a. Upon retirement, Commissioned Ministers retain Standing if they continue  
1005 serving in an approved ministry site. Standing of inactive retired Commissioned  
1006 Ministers may be granted at the discretion of the Region.  
1007  
1008 b. Ordained Ministers with Standing retain this Standing at the time of  
1009 retirement.  
1010  
1011 i. A retired minister who intends to continue practice of ministry, whether  
1012 on an occasional, part-time or full time basis must continue to seek annual  
1013 certification of Standing as requested by the Region where the ministry  
1014 site is located or by the General Commission on Ministry, as appropriate.  
1015 (See II.F.1.c.)  
1016  
1017 ii. When Standing is granted, the active retired minister will be listed in the  
1018 *Yearbook of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* as active retired. (R-a)  
1019  
1020 iii. To be eligible for such Standing, the active retired minister  
1021  
1022 a) Performs faithfully the duties of a minister as authorized by  
1023 Commissioning or Ordination, either in an occupation recognized by  
1024 the church as ministerial in purpose or in a service recognized by the  
1025 church as ministerial in purpose.  
1026  
1027 b) Participates regularly in programs of study, growth, and renewal.  
1028  
1029 c) Maintains relations with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
1030 including participating membership in a recognized congregation in the  
1031 community of residence or active ministry where feasible.  
1032

- 1033 d) Continues to meet the personal qualifications for admission to the
- 1034 Order of Ministry (II.A.2) and to adhere to the *Ministerial Code of*
- 1035 *Ethics*
- 1036
- 1037 iv. Retired ministers who are no longer engaging in the practice of ministry on
- 1038 an occasional, part-time or full time basis may seek Standing as inactive
- 1039 retired ministers.
- 1040
- 1041 a) Retired ministers who are granted inactive status will continue to be
- 1042 listed in the *Yearbook of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* as
- 1043 inactive, retired ministers (R-i).
- 1044
- 1045 b) Inactive retired ministers must continue to seek annual certification of
- 1046 Standing as requested by the Region where they reside.
- 1047
- 1048 c) To be eligible for such Standing, the inactive retired minister must
- 1049 continue to adhere to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics* and must hold
- 1050 participating membership in a recognized Disciples congregation in the
- 1051 community of residence where feasible.
- 1052
- 1053 v. If an inactive retired minister decides to once again take up the practice of
- 1054 ministry, that minister must once again seek status as an active retired
- 1055 minister. (See 3.b.iii.a-d)
- 1056

1057 4. *Suspension or Termination of Ministerial Standing.*

- 1058
- 1059 a. Procedures leading to a review of Standing may be initiated by the
- 1060 minister, the Region, or the General Commission on Ministry when one or
- 1061 more of the following conditions are present:
- 1062
- 1063 i. The minister desires to be released from the practice of ministry, either
- 1064 temporarily or permanently.
- 1065
- 1066 ii. The minister requests transfer of credentials from the Christian Church
- 1067 (Disciples of Christ) to another denomination or non-Disciples
- 1068 congregation.
- 1069
- 1070 iii. The minister enters into a full-time occupation not recognized by the
- 1071 church as ministerial in purpose and/or no longer performs the
- 1072 functions of the office of a minister.
- 1073
- 1074 iv. The minister fails to respond to a request for annual certification from
- 1075 the Region or the General Commission on Ministry.
- 1076

- 1077 v. The minister no longer meets the personal qualifications for admission  
1078 to the Order of Ministry (II.A.2.) or fails to adhere to the *Ministerial*  
1079 *Code of Ethics*.  
1080  
1081 vi. The retired minister fails to adhere to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics*.  
1082  
1083 b. When the Region or the General Commission on Ministry takes the  
1084 initiative in the review of Standing, the procedures shall include:  
1085  
1086 i. Written notice to the minister that Standing is to be reviewed with the  
1087 possibility of suspension or termination.  
1088  
1089 ii. Consultation with the appropriate National Pastor/Leader of Racial  
1090 Ethnic communities is encouraged regarding the termination of  
1091 Standing of persons of color.  
1092  
1093 iii. A hearing by a committee appointed by the Region or the General  
1094 Commission on Ministry.  
1095  
1096 c. When the minister takes the initiative in the review, the procedures shall  
1097 include:  
1098  
1099 i. Written notice to the Region or the General Commission on Ministry  
1100 requesting that Standing be reviewed with the possibility of  
1101 termination.  
1102  
1103 ii. A consultation with a committee appointed by the Region or the  
1104 General Commission on Ministry.  
1105  
1106 d. Standing may be granted to a minister whose Standing has been  
1107 terminated or suspended by another Region or the General Commission on  
1108 Ministry only upon the recommendation of the terminating or suspending  
1109 body, whether that is a Region or the General Commission on Ministry.  
1110

##### 1111 5. *Surrender of Standing* 1112

1113 When a minister surrenders Standing, Standing can be granted again only upon  
1114 the recommendation of the body to which Standing was surrendered, whether  
1115 that is a Region or the General Commission on Ministry,. The Region or General  
1116 Commission on Ministry shall address any outstanding allegations of misconduct  
1117 before reinstating Standing.  
1118

1119  
1120  
1121  
1122  
1123  
1124  
1125  
1126  
1127  
1128  
1129  
1130  
1131  
1132  
  
1133  
1134  
1135  
1136  
  
1137  
1138  
1139  
1140  
  
1141  
1142  
1143  
  
1144  
1145  
1146  
  
1147  
1148  
1149  
1150  
1151  
1152  
1153  
1154  
1155  
1156  
1157

6. *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, whether 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).

1158 Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing provides ongoing ecclesiastical  
1159 authorization to exercise the rights and responsibilities of Ordained ministry  
1160 in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).  
1161  
1162 i. Once a United Church of Christ Ordained minister has demonstrated  
1163 knowledge of and appreciation for the history, polity, and practices of  
1164 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to the Regional Commission on  
1165 Ministry where the minister resides, that Ordained Ministerial Partner  
1166 may be granted access to the Search and Call process in the Christian  
1167 Church (Disciples of Christ). Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in  
1168 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is not given at this point in the  
1169 process.  
1170  
1171 ii. A United Church of Christ Ordained Ministerial Partner who secures a  
1172 call in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) applies for Ordained  
1173 Ministerial Partner Standing to the Region in which the Ordained  
1174 minister's calling body is located. Once granted, Ordained Ministerial  
1175 Partner Standing is reviewed by the Region for certification annually.  
1176  
1177 iii. A United Church of Christ Ordained minister has Ordained Ministerial  
1178 Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) only when  
1179 serving a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) calling body.  
1180  
1181 iv. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial  
1182 Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall  
1183 maintain Ordained ministerial Standing in the United Church of Christ.  
1184  
1185 v. Ordained ministerial Standing shall be held in the association in which  
1186 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) calling body is located.  
1187  
1188 vi. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial  
1189 Partner Standing shall maintain relations with the Christian Church  
1190 (Disciples of Christ) including (where feasible) holding associate  
1191 membership in a recognized Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
1192 congregation in the community.  
1193  
1194 vii. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial  
1195 Partner Standing in a Region has voting privileges in the General  
1196 Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).  
1197  
1198 viii. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial  
1199 Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall relate  
1200 to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for his/her primary support  
1201 in Ordained ministry.

1202  
1203  
1204  
1205  
1206  
1207  
1208  
1209  
1210  
1211  
1212  
1213  
1214  
1215  
1216  
1217  
1218  
1219  
1220  
1221  
1222  
1223  
1224  
1225  
1226  
1227  
1228  
1229  
1230  
1231  
1232  
1233  
1234  
1235  
1236  
1237  
1238  
1239  
1240  
1241  
1242  
1243  
1244

- ix. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall be accountable to the Region for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing and to the United Church of Christ for Ordained ministerial Standing.
  - x. When a disciplinary review is instituted in relation to the United Church of Christ minister holding Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the association of the United Church of Christ in which the United Church of Christ minister's Ordained ministerial Standing is maintained, shall be informed and invited to participate in the procedures.
  - xi. When a United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) accepts a call in another Region, he/she shall be subject to review and subsequent annual certification of Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing by the new Region.
- e. *Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) ministers with Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ.*
- Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing is recognition granted to an Ordained minister with Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who has been called to an Ordained ministry setting in the United Church of Christ. Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing provides ongoing ecclesiastical authorization to exercise the rights and responsibilities of Ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ.
- i. Once a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Ordained minister has demonstrated knowledge of and appreciation for the history, polity, and practices of the United Church of Christ to the Association Committee where the minister resides, that Ordained ministerial partner may be granted access to the Search and Call process in the United Church of Christ. Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ is not given at this point in the process.
  - ii. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Ordained Ministerial Partner who secures a call in the United Church of Christ applies for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing to the Association in which the Ordained minister's calling body is located. Once granted, Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing is reviewed by the Association annually.

- 1245  
1246  
1247  
1248  
1249  
1250  
1251  
1252  
1253  
1254  
1255  
1256  
1257  
1258  
1259  
1260  
1261  
1262  
1263  
1264  
1265  
1266  
1267  
1268  
1269  
1270  
1271  
1272  
1273  
1274  
1275  
1276  
1277  
1278  
1279  
1280  
1281  
1282  
1283  
1284  
1285  
1286  
1287
- iii. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Ordained minister has Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ only when serving a United Church of Christ calling body.
  - 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

1288 and transfer of the Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing to the new  
1289 Association.

1290  
1291 2. *Persons Ordained in Other Churches.* Ministers Ordained by other denominations  
1292 or non-Disciples congregations may be considered for recognition of Ordination  
1293 and the granting of Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).  
1294 Provisional or temporary Standing may be granted to individuals applying for  
1295 recognition of Ordination by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).  
1296 Responsibility for this process is lodged in the Region except in the case of  
1297 Military Chaplains stationed overseas.

1298  
1299 a. Provisional or temporary Standing of applicants may be granted upon the  
1300 fulfillment of the following requirements:

1301  
1302 i. Consultation with appropriate officials of the denomination or  
1303 congregation from which the candidate transfers.

1304  
1305 ii. Satisfactory investigation of personal and ministerial references and a  
1306 criminal background check.

1307  
1308 iii. Filing of appropriate forms with the Region to which the applicant is  
1309 applying or with the General Commission on Ministry.

1310  
1311 iv. Provisional or temporary Standing shall be reviewed annually by either  
1312 the granting Region or the General Commission on Ministry.

1313  
1314 b. Removal of the provisional or temporary conditions for Standing may be  
1315 granted by the Region or the General Commission on Ministry upon  
1316 fulfillment of the following requirements:

1317  
1318 i. Membership in a recognized congregation of the Christian Church  
1319 (Disciples of Christ).

1320  
1321 ii. Demonstrated knowledge and appreciation for the history, polity, and  
1322 practices of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

1323  
1324 iii. Fulfillment of the prerequisites and preparation, including educational  
1325 attainment, for the Order of Ministry.

1326  
1327 iv. One year minimum service under the supervision or mentoring of a  
1328 Disciples of Christ minister with Standing.

1329  
1330 v. Manifesting the personal qualifications for the order of ministry as  
1331 listed in item II.A.2.

1332  
1333  
1334  
1335  
1336  
1337  
1338  
1339  
1340  
1341  
1342  
1343  
1344  
1345  
1346  
1347  
1348  
1349  
1350  
1351  
1352  
1353  
1354  
1355  
1356  
1357  
1358  
1359  
1360  
1361  
1362  
1363  
1364  
1365  
1366  
1367  
1368  
1369  
1370  
1371  
1372  
1373  
1374  
1375

- vi. Commitment to adhere to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*.

## H. Ministerial Search and Call

1. *The General Principles.* Ministerial Search and Call is the term applied to the process developed to facilitate the calling of ministers who hold Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
  - a. The covenantal relationship among ministers, Congregations, Regions, and General Ministries of the church serves to build up the whole church of Jesus Christ. This document identifies general principles for ministerial Search and Call. The Office of Search and Call, within Disciples Home Missions, administers these procedures of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
  - b. Freedom and responsibility are inherent in the tradition of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Congregations, Regions, and General Ministries of the church are accorded full freedom to issue ministerial calls within their own established or constitutional provisions. Ministers, likewise, are accorded full freedom to accept or reject a call to any particular service. All, however, covenant to work within the Order of Ministry in the interest of assuring an orderly and responsible system of Search and Call.
  - c. The Church is best served when Regional Ministers and National Pastors/Leaders of Racial Ethnic communities work together covenantally in Search and Call. Primary responsibility for Search and Call is lodged with the Regions. Regions are encouraged to consult the National Pastors/Leaders. National Pastors/Leaders may offer their counsel to the Regional Minister in Search and Call with the understanding that the primary responsibility for Search and Call lies with the Region.
2. *Operating Principles.*
  - a. Ordained ministers with Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will have complete and unhindered access to Search and Call.
  - b. Commissioned ministers with Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will have access to Search and Call. Circulation of their Search and Call forms is normally limited to the Region for which their ministry is commissioned.
  - c. At the discretion of the Region of care, candidates for Ordination may be granted authorized access to Search and Call.

- 1376  
1377  
1378  
1379  
1380  
1381  
1382  
1383  
1384  
1385  
1386  
1387  
1388  
1389  
1390  
1391  
1392  
1393  
1394  
1395  
1396  
1397  
1398  
1399  
1400  
1401  
1402  
1403  
1404  
1405  
1406  
1407  
1408  
1409  
1410  
1411  
1412  
1413  
1414  
1415  
1416  
1417  
1418
- d. Ordained Ministerial Partners in the United Church of Christ will have complete and unhindered access to Search and Call once they have been qualified by a Region to seek a call.
  - e. Congregations, Regions, institutions, and General Ministries of the church will be provided assistance from the Office of Search and Call.
  - f. Any Search and Call forms in the Office of Search and Call will be open to the minister concerned except for confidential references for which a waiver has been signed.
  - g. Confidentiality, when assured to the persons completing the reference forms, will not be violated.
  - h. All candidates for Ordination with authorized access to Search and Call and Ordained Ministers with Standing may be considered for any ministerial position.
  - i. All candidates for Ordination with authorized access to Search and Call and Ordained Ministers with Standing shall have access to information regarding available ministerial openings in the church.
  - j. Every congregation, Region, educational or related institution, and General Ministry will be open to the ministry of all persons putting aside prejudice and considering candidates based on gifts and skills for ministry.
3. *Responsibilities.* It is expected that all parties using Search and Call will abide by the established procedures of the Office of Search and Call.
- a. Ministers. Commissioned and Ordained ministers with Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) have the responsibility to seek the advice and counsel of the Region within which they hold Standing and to avail themselves of the resources of the Office of Search and Call. They have the freedom to accept or reject any call offered to them, and to negotiate whatever terms of call or service seem appropriate. In all matters, ministers will function within the covenantal relationship of the whole church.
    - i. Ministers will provide information for a permanent file to the Office of Search and Call upon entry into the ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and maintain current data in that file.
    - ii. For purposes of Search and Call, the minister will update the *Ministerial Profile* and complete reference requests, the *Ministerial Disclosure*

- 1419 *Form* and criminal background check. The Search and Call forms will be  
1420 circulated as prepared and submitted by the minister.
- 1421 iii. Ordained ministers seeking a call shall utilize the process provided by  
1422 the Office of Search and Call.
- 1423 iv. Commissioned ministers (seeking ordination and not seeking  
1424 ordination) who desire to relocate shall request the assistance of the  
1425 appropriate Regional or Area Ministers.
- 1426 v. Ministers will be as specific and honest as possible about any limiting  
1427 factors in relocation, such as geographical preferences and salary  
1428 requirements.
- 1429 vi. Ministers will instruct the Office of Search and Call to send reference  
1430 forms to the persons whom they have identified as references. It is the  
1431 responsibility of the minister to ensure that these persons complete  
1432 and submit the reference forms. Once received, references will be held  
1433 in confidence from the minister if a waiver has been signed by the  
1434 minister.
- 1435 vii. Ministers will negotiate with only one congregation at a time. A search  
1436 committee and candidate are “in negotiation” when both agree that  
1437 they will not discuss relocation with any other search committee or  
1438 candidate until either party declares negotiations ended. It is the  
1439 obligation of ministers to be specific with congregations about their  
1440 degree of interest.
- 1441 viii. Ministers will stay in communication with search committees who  
1442 have indicated interest, especially informing a congregation  
1443 **immediately** when a decision has been made not to consider accepting  
1444 a call to that particular congregation.
- 1445 ix. Ministers will contact the appropriate Region if they wish to be a  
1446 candidate for a specific congregation in that Region and request that  
1447 their name be submitted to the search committee.
- 1448 x. Ministers will not initiate Search and Call by contacting a congregation  
1449 directly.
- 1450 xi. Ministers will advise the Region, if contacted directly by a congregation,  
1451 should mutual interest in exploring a possible call be determined.
- 1452 xii. Ministers will advise the Region where currently located, the Region  
1453 where moving, the Office of Search and Call, and the Pension Fund, as  
1454 soon as a call has been accepted.
- 1455
- 1456 b. Congregations. Within the tradition of the Christian Church (Disciples of  
1457 Christ) and according to *The Design*, congregations have the right and  
1458 responsibility to seek and call their own leadership, to establish the terms  
1459 of call, to undergird the ministry, and to effect terminations within their  
1460 own procedures. In all matters, congregations will function within the  
1461 covenantal relationship of the whole church and are encouraged to seek  
1462 the advice and counsel of the Region/Area.

- 1463  
1464  
1465  
1466  
1467  
1468  
1469  
1470  
1471  
1472  
1473  
1474  
1475  
1476  
1477  
1478  
1479  
1480  
1481  
1482  
1483  
1484  
1485  
1486  
1487  
1488  
1489  
1490  
1491  
1492  
1493  
1494  
1495  
1496  
1497  
1498  
1499  
1500  
1501  
1502  
1503  
1504  
1505  
1506
- i. Congregations will advise Regions of impending vacancies and work within Regional procedures to receive advice and counsel in seeking ministerial leadership.
  - ii. Congregations will have freedom to consider any minister with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or any Ordained Ministerial Partner who has been qualified by a Region to seek a call. The congregation should inform the Region and request biographical and reference material on all ministers it wishes to consider.
  - iii. Congregations will keep the Region informed of all names being considered, including persons who apply directly to the congregation and persons whose names are suggested by members of the congregation.
  - iv. Congregations will be fair and open in the consideration of all candidates putting aside prejudice and considering candidates based on gifts and skills for ministry.
  - v. The congregational search committee will treat with confidentiality all information including personal biographical information and reference material, taking care to ensure that the information does not go beyond the search committee. When the call has been issued and accepted, all records relating to the minister called to serve, including any minutes of the search committee regarding that minister, shall be given to the Region for reasons of safekeeping and confidentiality. All records relating to other candidates in the search process shall be destroyed.
  - vi. The congregational search committee will stay in communication with candidates whom the search committee has contacted.
  - vii. The search committee will inform, in a timely manner, candidates who are no longer being considered for the position.
  - viii. The congregational search committee may talk with a number of candidates concurrently but will negotiate with only one at a time. A search committee and candidate are “in negotiation” when both agree that they will not discuss relocation with any other candidate or search committee until either party declares negotiations ended. It is the obligation of the search committee to be specific with the minister about its degree of interest.
  - ix. Congregations will issue a Letter of Call providing copies of the call for the congregation, the minister, the Region, and the Office of Search and Call.
  - x. Congregations will reimburse the called candidate for the Criminal Background Check.
  - xi. Congregations will provide a fair salary (including housing allowance – parsonage provision) within the capabilities of the congregation, as well as adequate benefits (pension, health insurance, continuing education, vacation, sabbatical and Social Security offset).

- 1507                   xii. Congregations will provide for the reimbursement of church-related  
1508                   expenses to cover actual expenses of accomplishing ministry.  
1509
- 1510                   c. Regions. Regions bear the primary responsibility for providing advice and  
1511                   counsel to both congregations and ministers in Search and Call. Regions will  
1512                   work collaboratively with General Racial Ethnic Ministries to address  
1513                   ministerial vacancies among their constituencies. Regions may delegate or  
1514                   share Search and Call responsibility with their areas, districts or other  
1515                   subdivisions. In all matters, Regions will function within the covenantal  
1516                   relationship of the whole church.
- 1517                   i. Each Region will provide advice and counsel to congregations either at  
1518                   the request of the congregation or at the initiation of the Region when  
1519                   it is known that new ministerial leadership is being or will be sought.
- 1520                   ii. Each Region will receive and review all ministerial search and call  
1521                   materials from the Office of Search and Call, giving special attention to  
1522                   those persons who have indicated an interest in their Region.
- 1523                   iii. Each Region will refer all ministers within the Region who wish to seek  
1524                   relocation to the Office of Search and Call for entry into Search and Call.
- 1525                   iv. Each Region will share with search committees Search and Call forms of  
1526                   a selection of candidates who appear to meet the requirements of the  
1527                   congregations and institutions with whom the Region is working.
- 1528                   v. Each Region will encourage congregations to give fair and equal  
1529                   consideration to candidates putting aside prejudice and considering  
1530                   candidates based on gifts and skills for ministry.
- 1531                   vi. Each Region will share with specific search committees Search and Call  
1532                   forms of any minister with Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of  
1533                   Christ), or any Ordained Ministerial Partner qualified by a Region to  
1534                   seek a call, who requests consideration in that congregation.
- 1535                   vii. Each Region will maintain a list of churches seeking ministerial  
1536                   leadership in the Region and make it available upon request to  
1537                   ministers with Standing.
- 1538                   viii. If a Region is contacted by a search committee about a minister not  
1539                   actively seeking a call, the Region will inquire about that minister's  
1540                   interest. The minister has the right to know the name and location of  
1541                   the interested congregation. If said minister is interested, the Region  
1542                   will direct said minister to Search and Call.
- 1543                   ix. Each Region will provide, upon request of ministers seeking a call, a list  
1544                   of congregations which have received their *Ministerial Profile*.
- 1545                   x. Each Region will treat all Search and Call forms with strict  
1546                   confidentiality.
- 1547                   xi. Each Region will communicate to the Office of Search and Call any  
1548                   formal actions and decisions to remove Standing for misconduct of a  
1549                   minister. The minister shall be informed and given a copy of the report  
1550                   which will also be placed in the minister's file. (See also J. 1. below.)

- 1551           xii. Each Region will refer all requests for assistance from congregations  
1552           outside the Region to the appropriate Regional office.
- 1553           xiii. Each Region will regularly notify the Office of Search and Call of all  
1554           relocations occurring within, to, or from the Region.
- 1555           xiv. Each Region will authorize access to Search and Call to  
1556           a. candidates for ordination whose ordinations have been authorized  
1557           in their Region and  
1558           b. ordained ministers from other denominations who have been given  
1559           temporary recognition and who are in the process of transferring  
1560           Standing to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- 1561           xv. Each Region will make information available about Regional staff  
1562           vacancies through such channels as denominational websites, Regional  
1563           publications, Disciples Home Missions, and other publications.
- 1564
- 1565           d. Disciples Home Missions. The Office of Search and Call at Disciples Home  
1566           Missions is the primary locus of the ministerial records of the Christian  
1567           Church (Disciples of Christ) related to Search and Call and is responsible for  
1568           coordinating the Search and Call process of the church. In all matters,  
1569           Disciples Home Missions will function within the covenantal relationship of  
1570           the whole church.
- 1571           i. The Office of Search and Call will maintain the permanent files of all  
1572           ministers in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- 1573           ii. The Office of Search and Call will maintain the Ministers Directory of  
1574           the Year Book and Directory reflecting the current listing of ministers  
1575           with Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) as reported by  
1576           the Regions and the General Commission on Ministry.
- 1577           iii. The Office of Search and Call will receive, process and make available  
1578           Search and Call materials of ministers with Standing in the Christian  
1579           Church (Disciples of Christ), Qualified Ordained Ministerial Partners,  
1580           and others authorized by Regions to Regions and General Ministries.  
1581           The Search and Call forms will be circulated as prepared and submitted  
1582           by the minister.
- 1583           iv. The Office of Search and Call will collect and release reference material  
1584           to Regions or General Ministries upon permission of the minister  
1585           applying for Search and Call assistance.
- 1586           v. The Office of Search and Call will protect the confidentiality of  
1587           references when confidentiality has been promised.
- 1588           vi. The Office of Search and Call will secure permission from any minister  
1589           not actively seeking a call before releasing references to Regions or  
1590           General Ministries. The minister has the right to know the name and  
1591           location of the interested congregation. Information in the permanent  
1592           file may be released without permission to Regional Ministers or to the  
1593           Chair of the General Commission on Ministry in regard to ethical and  
1594           conduct matters.

- 1595  
1596  
1597  
1598  
1599  
1600  
1601  
1602  
1603  
1604  
1605  
1606  
1607  
1608  
1609  
1610  
1611  
1612  
1613  
1614  
1615  
1616  
1617  
1618  
1619  
1620  
1621  
1622  
1623  
1624  
1625  
1626  
1627  
1628  
1629  
1630  
1631  
1632  
1633  
1634  
1635  
1636  
1637  
1638
- vii. The Office of Search and Call will secure, maintain, and release to Regions, and on request, to ministers with Standing, a list of staff vacancies in regions, general units of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and ecumenical organizations.
  - viii. The Office of Search and Call will make available education and informational materials regarding Search and Call to congregations, Regions, institutions and General Ministries.
  - ix. The Office of Search and Call will refer all requests from congregations for names of potential candidates to the appropriate Regions.
  - x. The Office of Search and Call will refer all candidates for Ordination seeking student preaching/pastoral positions to the field education office of the appropriate institution or to the Region.
  - xi. The Office of Search and Call will share with Regions, and where appropriate, General Ministries, the record of any formal action by a Region's commission on the ministry or the General Commission on Ministry concerning the conduct of a minister who is entering Search and Call.
- e. Educational institutions. The undergraduate departments of religion and the theological educational institutions have unique responsibilities with respect to the search and call process of the church. Each relates to a limited number of congregations in which pre-theological and theological students may be serving. The theological institutions have responsibility for relating their graduating students who are candidates for Standing as Ordained ministers in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to Search and Call. In Search and Call, educational institutions will function within the covenantal relationship of the whole church.
- i. Educational institutions will relate to congregations served by students in partnership with the Region in matters pertaining to the employment of students during their pre-theological and theological education.
  - ii. Educational institutions will refer requests from congregations for search and call assistance that is outside the student field placement process to the appropriate Region.
  - iii. Educational institutions will cooperate with Regions in orienting students to the Search and Call process of the church.
- f. General Ministries. In all matters, General Ministries will function within the covenantal relationship of the whole church.
- i. General Ministries will refer all requests for Search and Call assistance to the Office of Search and Call and the appropriate Regional Minister. They will refer requests for candidates' names to the appropriate Region.

1639                   ii. General racial/ethnic ministries will work collaboratively with Regions  
1640                   to address ministerial vacancies among their constituencies.

1641  
1642                   4. *Right of Review and Counsel.* The right to review and counsel is limited to  
1643                   perceived violations of Search and Call and should be initiated with the  
1644                   appropriate Region, institution or General Ministry. A request for review and  
1645                   counsel beyond the Region shall be to the General Commission on Ministry.

1646

## 1647 **I. Ministerial Code of Ethics**

1648

1649 Believing that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God, and proclaiming him Lord and  
1650 Savior of the world, I reaffirm my vows as a minister. Through dedication and discipline I  
1651 will lead and serve with integrity. Relying on the grace of God, I commit myself to the  
1652 following:

1653

### 1654 *Personal Conduct*

- 1655                   • Witnessing to the ministry of Jesus Christ
- 1656                   • Dedicating time, strength, vitality, and energy for effective ministry
- 1657                   • Growing in faith, knowledge, and the practice of ministry through the spiritual  
1658                   disciplines, study, continuing education, and service
- 1659                   • Living a life that honors my commitments to my family, including the need for  
1660                   privacy and time together
- 1661                   • Taking time for physical and spiritual renewal, recreation, and vacation
- 1662                   • Being a faithful steward of God’s gifts to me by managing time, talents, and  
1663                   financial resources responsibly and generously
- 1664                   • Accepting responsibility for all debts that I incur
- 1665                   • Keeping physically and emotionally fit and refraining from substance abuse and  
1666                   other abusive behaviors
- 1667                   • Using my position, power, and authority in non-exploitive ways
- 1668                   • Maintaining high moral standards in my sexual behavior
- 1669                   • Regarding all persons with equal respect and concern and undertaking to  
1670                   minister impartially

1671

### 1672 *Relationships to the Church which I Serve*

- 1673                   • Nurturing and offering my gifts for ministry to the church
- 1674                   • Calling forth and nurturing the gifts of others in the church and joining their gifts  
1675                   with mine for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ and the health of the church
- 1676                   • Preaching and teaching the gospel without fear or favor and speaking the truth  
1677                   in love
- 1678                   • Administering the sacraments/ordinances and services of the church with  
1679                   integrity and not for financial gain
- 1680                   • Working cooperatively and collegially with those whom I serve in the particular  
1681                   ministry to which I have been called

- 1682 • Administering the corporate finances of the church with personal integrity
- 1683 • Refraining from accepting any gift which would compromise the church's
- 1684 ministry
- 1685 • Protecting confidences; covenanting to only tell those who need to know, what
- 1686 they need to know, when they need to know it
- 1687 • Acting to prevent and to report known or suspected cases of physical or sexual
- 1688 abuse or neglect
- 1689 • Encouraging and participating in the regular evaluation of my ministry and
- 1690 cooperating with the Region in the annual review of my ministerial Standing
- 1691 • Seeking the counsel of the Regional Minister should divisive tensions threaten
- 1692 my relationship with those I serve
- 1693

1694 *Relationships to Ministry Colleagues*

- 1695 • Engaging in covenantal relationships with colleagues which involve nurture,
- 1696 discipline, family support, vigorous dialogue, mutual teaching/learning, and
- 1697 spiritual formation
- 1698 • Supporting colleagues in ministry and their families while not exploiting their
- 1699 problems or crises
- 1700 • Performing pastoral services within another congregation or for a member of
- 1701 another congregation only at the request of that congregation's elders and
- 1702 current pastor
- 1703 • Supporting and at no time speaking maliciously of the ministry of my
- 1704 predecessors or another minister
- 1705 • Encouraging the ministry of my successor upon my retirement or other
- 1706 departure from a ministry position, without interfering or intruding and by
- 1707 making it clear to former parishioners that I am no longer their pastor, nor will I
- 1708 perform any pastoral services unless requested by the congregation's elders and
- 1709 current pastor
- 1710

1711 *Relationships to the Community and the Wider Church*

- 1712 • Participating responsibly in the life and work of my community, bearing
- 1713 prophetic witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and working towards a just and
- 1714 morally responsible society
- 1715 • Participating faithfully in the life and work of all expressions of the Christian
- 1716 Church (Disciples of Christ)
- 1717 • Seeking to know, understand, and respect the diversity of opinions and people
- 1718 within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- 1719 • Being a responsible representative of the one church of Jesus Christ and
- 1720 participating in activities which strengthen its ministry, witness, and mission
- 1721

1722 **J. Misconduct**

1723

1724 The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) understands ministerial misconduct to be  
1725 activity which violates the covenantal character of the ministerial office as expressed in  
1726 the Ministerial Code of Ethics. Investigation and adjudication of violations of the  
1727 Ministerial Code of Ethics shall be the responsibility of the Region through the  
1728 committee or Commission on Ministry or the General Commission on Ministry.

1729

1730 1. *Reporting*

1731

1732 Regions or the General Commission on Ministry will report formal actions and  
1733 decisions to remove Standing for misconduct to the Office of Search and Call,  
1734 Disciples Home Missions, and these actions will be communicated to all Regions.

1735

1736 2. *Suspension of Standing*

1737

1738 In extreme situations of alleged misconduct, ministerial Standing may be  
1739 temporarily suspended by the Region or the General Commission on Ministry  
1740 during the period of investigation and adjudication.

1741

1742 3. *Sexual Misconduct*

1743

1744 a. It is the responsibility of each Region to have specific definitions of sexual  
1745 misconduct and procedures for receiving, investigating, and adjudicating  
1746 sexual misconduct charges of ministers with Standing in the Region. Each  
1747 Region will periodically and systematically review its definitions and  
1748 procedures. It is the responsibility of the Region to communicate such  
1749 definitions and procedures to ministers and congregations within the  
1750 Region.

1751

1752 b. It is the responsibility of the General Commission on Ministry to have  
1753 specific definitions of sexual misconduct and procedures for receiving,  
1754 investigating, and adjudicating sexual misconduct charges of ministers  
1755 engaged in non-Regional ministries. The General Commission on Ministry  
1756 will periodically and systematically review its definitions and procedures. It  
1757 is the responsibility of the General Commission on the Ministry to  
1758 communicate such definitions and procedures to ministers, ministries, and  
1759 other organizations in the General and ecumenical church.

1760

1761 **K. Right of Appeal**

1762

1763 The General Commission on Ministry understands that the Right to Appeal extends to  
1764 persons who, at the time of their appeal, are subject to a decision with adverse effect  
1765 regarding Ordination, Commissioning, transfer of credentials, and/or Standing. The

1766 General Commission on Ministry will not consider any appeal if legal proceedings are  
1767 pending or in process.

1768

1769 **L. Amendment Process**

1770

1771 The Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of  
1772 Christ) may be amended two ways:

1773

1774 1. By a two-thirds vote of the voting members of the General Assembly present  
1775 and voting, providing such amendments shall have been regularly filed 180  
1776 days in advance of the meeting of the General Assembly and circulated  
1777 among the congregations and Regions 60 days in advance of the General  
1778 Assembly.

1779

1780 2. By a two-thirds vote of the members of the General Board of the Christian  
1781 Church (Disciples of Christ) present and voting, providing such amendments  
1782 shall have been mailed to the members of the General Board of the Christian  
1783 Church (Disciples of Christ) at least 30 days prior to the time of the vote.

1784

1785

1786 Basic Policy Approved Louisville General Assembly 1971

1787 Section II on Candidacy approved Kansas City General Assembly 1977

1788 Section V on Ministerial Standing amended Anaheim General Assembly 1981

1789 Section VI on Ministerial Relocation amended Des Moines General Assembly 1985

1790 Section VII on Amendment Process amended Louisville General Assembly 1987

1791 Section V.C. on Recognition and Reconciliation of the Ordained Ministries of the

1792 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ amended

1793 Pittsburgh General Assembly 1995

1794 Section VIII on Sexual Misconduct amended Pittsburgh General Assembly 1995

1795 Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry approved

1796 Indianapolis General Assembly 2009

1797 Section II.H. on Ministerial Search and Call amended General Board 2009

1798

1799 Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for The Ordering of Ministry, 2009, is  
1800 an operating document of the General Commission on Ministry, effective August 2011.

1801

1802

1803 Distributed by

1804 Disciples Home Mission

1805 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada

1806 130 E. Washington Street, P.O. Box 1986, Indianapolis, Indiana 46206-1986

1807 Phone: 888/346-2631; Fax: 317/635-4426