

THE GENERAL COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

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The General Commission on Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is composed of up to sixteen members appointed by the General Minister and President in consultation with various constituency groups. In odd numbered years, the General Minister and President may present a slate of members to the General Board for confirmation.

In 2008-09 the following persons served on the General Commission at both the August 2008 meeting and the February 2009 meeting: Susanne Blix, laywoman, Zionsville, Indiana; Ben Bohren, Regional Minister, Northern California-Nevada; Dani Loving Cartwright, Regional Minister, Southwest; Elsie Ferrer, laywoman, Fishers, Indiana; Lari Grubbs, Regional Minister, Capital Area; Richard Guentert, Regional Minister, Upper Midwest; Carolyn Higginbotham, seminary representative, Indianapolis, Indiana; Timothy James, Associate General Minister and Administrator of the National Convocation; Joyce Knauff, licensed minister, Loudon, Tennessee; Sotello Long, Regional Minister, South Carolina; Sandra Michael-Bowers, Pension Fund representative; Howard Ratcliff, retired regional minister, North Ridgeville, Ohio; Donggook Roh, Congregational Pastor/CE Consultant; and Richard Sparrow, United Church of Christ representative.

Don Shelton, DHM representative, attended the August 2008 meeting and we welcomed Ron Degges, new DMH President to our February 2009 meeting. Richard Guentert also retired from the Upper Midwest Region and was appointed as an at-large member. In attending the February 2009 meeting, Lari Grubbs completed 6 years of service. Sharon Watkins will be appointing two new regional ministers before the August 2009 meeting. Our General Minister and President, serves as an ex-officio member. During 2008-09, Howard Bowers has been the Commission's administrative staff person.

The General Commission met in Indianapolis in both August, 2008 and February 2009. The Commission addressed a variety of issues surrounding ordained and licensed ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Working in three committee settings, 1) Search and Call, 2) Standards, 3) Support, members dealt with particular areas of ministry that impact the daily life of the church.

A major focus of GCOM over the last year has been continued work on a draft document, *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the The Ordering of Ministry*. In both the August 2008 and the February 2009 meeting, the Standards Committee spent about 25 hours (times 5) reviewing close to 300 comments and suggestions concerning this document. The full GCOM also provided review for each draft and in plenary session on February 25, 2009, gave unanimous approval to Draft 10.1! This has been a six year effort and deep appreciation goes to all those who have worked so diligently and faithfully to bring this document to General Board with hopes of approval for presentation to the Indianapolis General Assembly.

Other major work of GCOM in the last year has focused on: reviewing mandatory boundary training for clergy in general ministries; clarifying issues relating to the search and call system including special attention to the challenges in some states of "name matching;" completing the process in response to a formal "Appeal" for loss of Standing; making adjustments to the general ministry standing form; reviewing the GCOM Policies and Procedures for Responding to Clergy Sexual Misconduct of Persons Engaged in Non-Regional Ministries; ongoing consultation with racial-ethnic constituencies; continuing work on a Clergy Self-Care document; re-negotiating our contract with Oxford Management Company for background checks; plus at least two dozen other issues; this is a very hard working commission!

One of the ongoing responsibilities of the General Commission is the annual certification of Disciple ministers serving in the general expression of the church. For 2009, the Commission certified the ministerial standing of 138 Disciples clergy. For clarification GCOM certifies standing for: full-time military chaplains, full-time VA hospital chaplains, full-time federal correction institution chaplains; general ministry clergy; ecumenical ministries whose responsibilities extend beyond one region; and all ministries outside the US and Canada including missionaries and ecumenical ministries. This process of certification includes individual reading of all standing forms, followed by prayer, and specific contact with those persons who indicated special concerns or celebrations of ministry. There is huge celebration for the strong skills and commitment of GCOM; for the cohesive work of this team and the spiritual foundation which provides such great joy and appreciation for the opportunity to serve.