

1 NO. 0922

2
3 (OPERATIONAL BUSINESS ITEM)

4
5 **Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria**
6 **for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**

7
8
9 WHEREAS, the contexts in which the church finds itself call for fresh attention to the
10 theological foundations and the practical protocols for the ordering of ministry; and

11
12 WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) does not presently have a formal
13 denominational statement that seeks to state the theological foundations for our
14 ordering of ministry, as understood in light of our history and polity; and

15
16 WHEREAS, our ability to be clear about our understandings of the Christian Church
17 (Disciples of Christ) foundations for the ordering of ministry is crucial for conversations
18 with our ecumenical partners in the Body of Christ; and

19
20 WHEREAS, the present Licensed constituents of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
21 through the *Nazareth Consensus* have responsibly explored with the larger church the
22 manner in which Licensed ministers

- 23 a) might be provided a track whereby those with adequate preparation could
24 seek Ordination; and
25 b) might be afforded more mobility for circulation in Search and Call; and
26 c) might be designated by a more Biblical nomenclature; and
27 d) might be valued as partners within the whole order of ministry; and

28
29 WHEREAS, a few Regions are already utilizing processes that allow for Ordination
30 without a full *Association of Theological Schools* (A.T.S.) accredited seminary
31 preparation; and

32
33 WHEREAS, a policy and procedure for ministerial credentialing is necessary to address
34 exceptional life situations, including the diverse needs of clergy in the many new church
35 starts we are celebrating in the life of this Communion; and

36
37 WHEREAS, the proposed policy:

- 38 ~ provides a theological foundation for the ordering of ministry that is specific to
39 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ);
40 ~ affords a necessary statement that will serve us well in our ecumenical
41 conversation with other Communion in the Body of Christ;
42 ~ responds in an appropriate manner to the *Nazareth Consensus* by:
43 a) designating non-Ordained clergy with the more Biblical nomenclature of
44 *Commissioned* rather than *Licensed*;

- 45 b) creating an Apprentice Track of preparation leading to Ordination
46 without a Master of Divinity degree;
47 c) affording mobility through Search and Call for Commissioned Ministers
48 who complete the Apprentice Track and are Ordained; and
49 d) strengthening the recognition of those who serve the church faithfully
50 with this preparation; and
51 ~ recognizes and expands upon those procedures instituted by Regions with
52 alternative paths to Ordination based upon the exceptional life situations,
53 communities, ministry settings, and cultural and ethnic contexts of their ministry
54 candidates;

56 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church
57 (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana, July 29 to August 2, 2009, adopt
58 the document, *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of*
59 *Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*, replacing the 1971 *Policies and*
60 *Criteria For The Order of Ministry* document, which was last revised by the General
61 Assembly in 2003; and

62
63 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the church utilizes the next biennium, August 2009 to
64 August 2011 for a period of implementation. This ordering of ministry will become
65 effective August 1, 2011; and

66
67 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Commission on Ministry convene a task
68 force to develop a template for an Apprentice Track program addressing the
69 competencies in section II. C. 2 of the document; and

70
71 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that General Commission on Ministry will collaboratively work
72 with Regions to:

- 73 • develop their own Apprentice Track (AT) program or one in collaboration with
74 Regional Fellowships [cf. section II.C.3., footnote 12 of the document],
75 theological institutions or ecumenical partners;
- 76 • share their program design with other regions for networking, feedback and
77 sharing best practices;
- 78 • determine how work done in previous Licensed ministry continuing education
79 applies to the Apprentice Track;
- 80 • review the status of each current Licensed minister to determine which category
81 of Commissioned Minister is most appropriate; and
- 82 • revise as necessary any Regional policies to facilitate this transition; and

83
84 FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that the present nomenclature be used for clergy until this
85 policy takes effect on August 1, 2011.

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The General Board recommends that the General Assembly
ADOPT Business Item No. 0922. (Debate time: 24 minutes)

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Proposed Amendments

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

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Preface

This document, *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry, 2009*, becomes the policy document for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada once the General Assembly adopts the document. It will replace the current document, *Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry, 2003* on August 1, 2011.

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

Time Frame

2008		
	Fall	GCOM circulates Draft 9.5 to General Ministries Presidents, Commissions/Committees on Ministry through Regional Ministers, Council on Theological Education and the Standing Committee on Renewal and Structural Reform for comment by January 30, 2009.
2009		
	February	GCOM considers changes, modifications to Draft 9.5 and prepares Draft 10 to present to the General Board.
	April	General Board reviews and takes action on Draft 10.
	July	General Assembly considers resolution.
2009-2011		Period of Implementation
2011		
	August 1	This ordering of ministry takes effect.

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EFFECTIVE AUGUST 2011

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

107
108 PREFACE

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

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

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

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

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

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

143
144 The ministry of God’s people (the *laos* – the Greek term used in the New Testament for
145 “people,” which is the source of our English words “laity, laywomen, laymen”), taken as
146 a whole and in its diverse individual expressions, is to manifest and so continue the
147 saving ministry of Jesus Christ. This ministry includes all who join together in witness to
148 God’s justice and reconciliation through worship, daily work, sharing the Gospel,
149 pastoral care, relief of human suffering, engagement in the struggle for peace and
150 justice, and realization of the unity of the Church Universal. It is within this context of a
151 shared ministry of the people of God that Commissioned ministry and Ordained ministry
152 is to be understood.

153
154 Within the ministry of the whole people of God there is, and has been since the early
155 church, representative ministry called by God and set apart by the Church for distinctive
156 functions. The Commissioned and the Ordained are both of the *laos*, but in recognizing
157 God’s call to particular individuals, the Church designates persons “to re-present to the
158 Church its own identity and calling in Jesus Christ” (*The Nature of the Church, A Word to*
159 *the Church on Ministry*). Authority and blessing to perform this ministry are celebrated
160 in Ordination and Commissioning.

161 162 **B. Historical Survey of Disciples Ministry**

163
164 Alexander Campbell and Barton Warren Stone relied on the Bible, especially the New
165 Testament, as the only rule of faith and practice. This premise shaped their
166 understandings of ministry in its many expressions.

167
168 Campbell’s attitudes on ministry progressed as the movement grew and the changing
169 circumstances of the church demanded new approaches to and appropriations of
170 leadership. Conversely, Stone’s attitudes on ministry remained relatively consistent.

¹ The “priesthood of all believers” refers to the persons who have entered into a covenanted relationship through confession and baptism. It ought not be confused with the role of congregational elders in the administration of the Lord’s Supper. Although in 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.

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

175

176

Alexander Campbell

177

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

185

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

188

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

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193 In *The Christian System* he outlined:

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205

The standing and immutable ministry of the Christian community is composed of Bishops [Elders],² Deacons, and Evangelists. Of each of these there is but one order, though possessing great diversities of gifts. There have been bishops, deacons, and evangelists, with both ordinary and extraordinary gifts. (CS, 82-3)
Campbell argued from Ephesians 4.12, "the work of ministry [is] for the edifying of the body of Christ." Bishops, deacons and evangelists each had a distinctive role or function on behalf of the Body: *Bishops* engaged in ministries of oversight; *Deacons* in ministries of service; and, *Evangelists* in ministries of proclamation.

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

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

³ In an 1835 edition of the *Millennial Harbinger*, Campbell wrote: "The jurisdiction of such bishops [elders] is always circumscribed by the congregation which ordained them. A single church is the largest dioceses (sic) known in the New Testament. Neither does his election and ordination give him a perpetual office. Should he leave the church, which under the direction of the Holy Spirit, created him, and become a member of another church, he enters it as a private member, and so continues until that church elect and ordain him, should they call for his services. The bishops [elders] and deacons of the

206

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

210

211

Barton Warren Stone

212

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

219

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

225

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

238

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

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)

245

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

252

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

257

258

Later Views

259

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

266

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

285

286

Origins of Licensed Ministry

287

288 The 1939 Richmond report commended three criteria for Ordination:

- 289 1. Good moral character and personal fitness for ministry
290 2. A full college course, and if possible, graduate training in religion
291 3. Experience in Christian work which shows real leadership, vision, pastoral
292 qualities, and preaching ability
293 Persons who fulfilled points 1 and 3 but not point 2 were accorded Licenses - a new
294 category of ministry created from the Ordination report.
295

296 Licensed ministry, as we conceive it today, is fairly recent in Disciples history. Barton
297 Stone was Licensed by the Orange Presbytery of North Carolina as a missionary to the
298 lower North Carolina area. Alexander Campbell was Licensed to preach at the Brush Run
299 Meeting House in 1811. During the Stone-Campbell era, "licensing to preach" was a trial
300 period prior to Ordination to see if the candidate had the disposition for ministry and
301 the qualities for preaching the true gospel without any mixture of human philosophy,
302 deceit, or rudiments of the world (*cf Last Will and Testament*).
303

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

313 Emerging Practice at the Turn of the Millennium

314

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

324 **C. Ministry in the Congregation**

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

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

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

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

346
347 The role of elders and deacons is most evident in the ways these ministries represent
348 the congregation in their communities of faith and in the larger community. For
349 example, elders and deacons are seen visiting persons in hospitals, nursing homes, or
350 with the home-centered. They may also lead congregations in ministries of outreach and
351 social justice.

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

356 357 **D. Order of Ministry**

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

361
362 In its ordering of ministry, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) recognizes a
363 Commissioned ministry and an Ordained ministry. The church expects the women and
364 men it Commissions and Ordains to demonstrate educational qualifications and
365 competencies in several areas of personal integrity and pastoral practice, as well as a
366 clear call to and passion for ministry. The church is called to provide significant
367 Congregational and Regional support for those seeking to serve in ministry, whether
368 Ordained or Commissioned.

369
370 The church gives grateful acknowledgment to God who in every age grants to women
371 and men the spiritual gifts necessary for such ministry. In making decisions about whom
372 to Commission or Ordain, the church looks to candidates for:

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

- 374 ❖ the God-given gifts and graces,
375 ❖ the personal characteristics and aptitudes, and
376 ❖ the preparation and promise (e.g., education, skills, etc.) that they have for
377 effective ministry.

378 By these criteria the church discerns whom it will Commission and/or Ordain.⁴

379

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

386

387 1. Commissioned Ministry

388

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

395

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

404

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

410

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

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

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

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

419
420
421
422

2. Ordained Ministry

a. The meaning of Ordination

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

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

435
436
437
438
439

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

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

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

452

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

491 apostolic. While we serve with the vision of universality, the Church lives
492 with the pain of a divided ministry. Nevertheless, all ministers are called to
493 point out the community of Jesus Christ, to work to bring new expressions of
494 the one universal Church into being, and to search for forms of unity which
495 the divided churches cannot yet express.⁶

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

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

505
506 In 1985, the Commission on Theology commended to the whole Church a single
507 order of Ordained ministry which would include three offices.⁷

508
509 This pattern of ministerial leadership corresponds to the three aspects of the
510 church's life identified as fundamental.⁸

- 511
- 512 ❖ the ministry of service to church and world (the *diaconate* or deacons),
513 where the active witness and mission of the church as servant is advanced;
 - 514 ❖ the ministry of proclamation by Word and Sacrament (the *presbyterate*, or
515 pastors), where preaching, teaching, and the sacraments/ordinances (Table
516 and Baptism) of the church are lifted up; and,
 - 517 ❖ the ministry of oversight (the *episcopate*, or bishops), where oversight of the
518 community's life occurs.

519
520 Thus, within a single order of Ordained ministry, there can be three distinct
521 offices that are at the same time mutually supportive and interrelated. The

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

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

⁸ 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.

522 recognition of these offices does not carry with it any implications of hierarchical
523 structure. The three-fold Ordained ministry, taken as a whole, thus re-presents
524 the fundamental characteristics of ministry shared by all baptized believers. (*A*
525 *Word to the Church on Ministry*, pp. 3- 4.)
526

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

531 **d. The act of Ordination**

532 A long and early Christian tradition places Ordination in the context of worship
533 and especially of the Lord's Supper. Such a place for the service of Ordination
534 preserves the understanding of Ordination as an act of the whole community.
535 The act of Ordination by the laying on of hands of those appointed to do so is at
536 one and the same time the invocation of the Holy Spirit, a sacramental sign, and
537 an acknowledgment of gifts and commitment.⁹
538

539 In the act of Ordination, the Church Ordains in confidence that God, being
540 faithful to the promise in Christ, enters sacramentally into historical forms of
541 human relationship, and draws upon those relationships for God's purpose.
542 Ordination is thus a sign performed in faith that the spiritual relationship
543 signified is present in, with, and through the words spoken, the gestures made
544 and the forms employed.¹⁰
545

546 Finally, Ordination is an acknowledgment by the Church of the gifts of the Spirit
547 in the one Ordained, and a commitment by both the Church and the Ordinand to
548 the new relationship. By receiving the new minister in the act of Ordination, the
549 Church acknowledges the minister's gifts and commits itself to be open to these
550 gifts. Likewise those Ordained offer their gifts to the Church and commit
551 themselves to the burden and opportunity of new authority and responsibility;
552 at the same time, they enter into a collegial relationship with all ministers.¹¹
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⁹ Adapted from *BEM*, Ministry para. 41.

¹⁰ Adapted from *BEM*, Ministry para. 43.

¹¹ Adapted from *BEM*, Ministry para. 44.

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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.

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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.

4. Candidacy for Commissioning

- 640 a. *Definition:* Candidacy is that period of time in which the individual who has
641 received a call to serve a particular ministry is in preparation with the Region
642 for Commissioning.
643
- 644 b. Candidacy begins when a person who has received a call from a recognized
645 congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or a recognized
646 non-congregational ministry applies to the Region for Commissioning.
647
- 648 c. *Steps for Candidacy.* The candidate shall:
649
- 650 1. be a member of a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation;
 - 651 2. have a letter of recommendation from the congregation of which the
652 applicant is a member;
 - 653 3. complete the *Ministerial Profile*; and
 - 654 4. meet with the Regional Commission on Ministry.
655
- 656 d. The Region shall assess the spiritual, emotional, moral, intellectual, and
657 educational capacities of the applicant for the practice of ministry. This
658 assessment will be accomplished through such avenues as personal
659 interviews, letters of reference, background checks, psychological and
660 vocational testing, consultation with congregations, and as appropriate,
661 coordination between Regions in reciprocal relationships, and
662 communications with educational institutions.
663
- 664 e. Upon approval, the Region brings the candidate under care and Commissions
665 her/him for a particular ministry.
666
- 667 5. *Regional Responsibilities:* Specifically assigned to Regions are the responsibilities
668 to:
- 669 a. establish procedures to evaluate applicants for Commissioned minister,
670 which must include the *Ministerial Profile* and a current denominational
671 criminal background check;
 - 672 b. consult with the appropriate National Pastor/Leader of Racial Ethnic
673 communities whenever considering a person of color;
 - 674 c. bring applicants “under care”;
 - 675 d. provide for their nurture;
 - 676 e. provide opportunities for building collegiality with other ministers;
 - 677 f. make available appropriate programs of study (such as readings, experiential
678 learning, intensive weekend seminars, guided reflection on ministerial
679 practice with a mentor-companion, and distance learning, etc.) in
680 preparation for ministry;
 - 681 g. authorize the designation of an applicant as a Commissioned Minister;
 - 682 h. offer resources and presence of the Regional Minister or the Regional
683 Minister’s designee for services of Commissioning;

- 684 i. oversee formation processes for candidates for Ordination;
685 j. encourage lifelong learning through continuing education opportunities
686 including training in healthy boundaries and anti-racism; and
687 k. establish additional requirements as desired.
688

689 C. The Ordained Ministry

- 690
691 1. *Description.* By Ordination the church recognizes the work of the Holy Spirit in
692 calling particular persons to creative and imaginative servanthood in Christ;
693 accepts their ministry in and for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and for
694 the whole body of Christ; covenants to undergird the ministry; and grants
695 authority to perform that ministry as a representative of the church. Ordained
696 ministers are baptized members of a Disciples congregation.
697

698 In accepting Ordination, the minister covenants to obey God by caring for the
699 church, offering gifts of mind, body and spirit to that service, agreeing to fulfill
700 the functions of a minister, and adhering to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics* of the
701 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
702

703 Ordained Minister Standing authorizes one to perform ministry on behalf of the
704 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Ordination may or may not meet all the
705 legal requirements for the performance of marriages.
706

707 Historically called a ministry of word and sacrament, among others, this ministry
708 may include pastors, educators, ecumenical leaders, recognized
709 congregationally-based or non-congregationally-based community ministers,
710 chaplains, pastoral counselors, and ministers who serve in the General and
711 Regional church.
712

- 713 2. *Educational Requirements.* There are two educational tracks in preparation for
714 Ordination: an apprentice track (AT) and a seminary track (ST).
715

716 ❖ Those in the apprentice track will demonstrate competency in the 16 areas
717 of ministerial practice by completing a program of study of at least 250
718 contact hours approved by the Region in which they are under care.
719

720 ❖ Those in the seminary track will demonstrate competency in the 16 areas of
721 ministerial practice by securing a Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent
722 from a theological school accredited by the Association of Theological
723 Schools in the United States and Canada or its equivalent.
724

725 Candidates for Ordination are expected to follow the seminary track, unless, in
726 consultation with their Region, the Regional Ministry Commission determines
727 that their economic, linguistic, vocational, or familial circumstances make the

728 apprentice track more appropriate. Regardless of the educational track chosen,
729 the church expects the women and men it ordains to demonstrate competency
730 in the following areas of ministerial practice, listed alphabetically:
731
732 **Biblical Knowledge:** Be rooted and grounded in scripture and able to
733 interpret and apply the scriptures in ways that are appropriate to original
734 and contemporary contexts.
735
736 **Church Administration and Planning:** Be able to practice the principles of
737 good administration, planning and implementing short- and long-range goals
738 to enhance Congregational life in collaboration with teams and committees.
739
740 **Communication:** Be an effective communicator and be able to facilitate
741 effective communication within and on behalf of the church.
742
743 **Cross Cultural and Anti-Racism Experience:** Be sensitive to the different
744 manifestations of racism and prejudice in the culture and be committed to
745 confronting and overcoming them.
746
747 **Ecumenism:** Exhibit a commitment to working with other Christians and
748 denominations and with other faiths in programs of common witness and
749 service, and to articulating the vision of the ecumenical and global church as
750 a starting place for mission.
751
752 **Education and Leader Development:** Know the foundations of Christian
753 education and the principles of leader development. Show competency in
754 teaching children, youth, and adults, including lay leaders and staff.
755
756 **Ethics:** Be able to help parishioners think critically about the relationship of
757 their faith to issues of justice, ethics and morality
758
759 **Evangelism:** Be able to motivate Congregational members to share their faith
760 through word and action.
761
762 **Mission of the Church in the World:** Be able to understand and articulate the
763 centrality of the call to mission given by Jesus Christ and the prophets. Be
764 able to empower congregations to engage in mission from our doorsteps to
765 the ends of the earth.
766
767 **Pastoral Care:** Be able to engage other persons with empathy and assess
768 situations and relationships with the compassion of Christ, with sensitivity to
769 culture and context. Be able to convey the healing power of God to those
770 who suffer.
771

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

775
776 **Spiritual Development:** Establish and maintain spiritual disciplines that lead
777 to personal growth and help others develop a rich spiritual life.

778
779 **Stewardship:** Be able to develop and encourage healthy stewards who
780 recognize and share generously God's abundant gifts for all creation.

781
782 **Theology:** Be able to articulate a coherent view of God's nature and activity
783 in relation to the Christian tradition, to critically engage human situations
784 from a perspective of faith, and to help persons recognize theological issues
785 in their daily lives.

786
787 **Understanding of Heritage:** Have knowledge of and appreciation for the
788 history and thought of Christianity and of the history, structure, practices,
789 and ethos of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

790
791 **Worship:** Know the purpose and elements of Christian worship. Have the
792 ability to plan and lead meaningful worship by working with the worship
793 team, musicians, and Congregational members.

794
795 3. Regional Responsibilities:
796 Regions are strongly encouraged to offer an apprentice track (AT) program on
797 their own or in collaboration with Regional Fellowships,¹² theological
798 institutions, or ecumenical partners. Those offering an AT program will submit
799 their curriculum to the General Commission on Ministry for evaluation.

800
801 Specifically assigned to Regions are the responsibilities to:
802 a. establish procedures to evaluate applicants for Ordination;
803 b. evaluate the educational experience of candidates for an AT program which
804 would include a high school diploma or its equivalent and some post
805 secondary educational experience;

¹² 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).

- 806 c. consult with the appropriate National Pastor/Leader of Racial Ethnic
807 communities whenever considering a racial/ethnic applicant;
808 d. bring applicants “under care” (See II.D.3.);
809 e. provide for their nurture;
810 f. be in relationship with the sponsoring congregation and the candidate’s
811 educational setting;
812 g. authorize and supervise the act of Ordination; and
813 h. facilitate continuing education including training in healthy boundaries and
814 anti-racism .

815 **D. Candidacy for Ordination**

- 816
817 1. *Definition:* Candidacy is that period of time in which the individual is under the
818 care of a Regional Commission on Ministry and involved in a specified program
819 of study and formation in preparation for Ordination.
820
821 2. *Application for Candidacy.* Application for candidacy is entered into when a man
822 or woman declares the intention to seek Ordination through the Christian
823 Church (Disciples of Christ), and their congregation affirms that intention.
824
825 3. *The Criteria for Candidacy.* The applicant shall be a baptized member of a
826 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation and shall make application for
827 candidacy to the Region of the candidate's membership or to the Region where
828 she or he is a student. In special circumstances and subject to agreement
829 between appropriate Regional Ministers and/or Regional Commissions on
830 Ministry, persons may apply for candidacy in another Region. The applicant shall
831 have a letter of recommendation from a recognized congregation of the
832 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the candidate’s Region of membership.
833
834 Upon receipt of the application, the Region will begin the process of assessing
835 (through avenues such as personal interviews, letters of reference, background
836 checks, psychological testing, consultation with congregations, coordination of
837 Regions in reciprocal relationships, and communications with educational
838 institutions), the spiritual, emotional, moral, intellectual, and educational
839 capacities of the applicant for the practice of ministry. Upon approval of the
840 application, the Region shall admit the applicant to candidacy. Once accepted as
841 a candidate, the individual comes under the care and direction of the Regional
842 Commission or Committee on Ministry (or that process which serves to function
843 as a Commission on Ministry regardless of the name assigned Regionally).
844
845 4. *The Procedures During Candidacy.* The candidate shall seek Ordination through a
846 discernment process established by the Region. That preparation may include
847 authorization as a Commissioned Minister (Seeking Ordination). The candidate

848 may complete the educational requirements for either track without serving as a
849 Commissioned Minister.

850
851 Separate from candidacy, Commissioned Minister status authorizes one to
852 perform ministry on behalf of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The
853 granting of candidacy may or may not meet all legal requirements for the
854 performance of marriages.

855
856 5. *Preparation for Ordination.* A candidate for Ordination is to prepare himself or
857 herself spiritually, intellectually, emotionally and physically for her/his ministry.
858 The following areas support and enhance the performance of an applicant's
859 chosen ministry:

860
861 a. Participation in the life and work of a congregation of Christians;

862
863 b. Breadth of theological study so that the candidate shows an
864 understanding of the Christian faith, the Bible, the church universal,
865 the history and polity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and
866 the formation and function of Christian mission;

867
868 c. Professional and ecclesiological study plus supervised experience in
869 the work of ministry, exhibiting competencies in that form of ministry
870 in which the candidate hopes to serve;

871
872 d. Formation of responsible relations with and concern for the church,
873 both as communities of faith and as institution;

874
875 e. Growth in personal character, Christian insight, spiritual formation,
876 wellness and disciplined commitment to ministry;

877
878 f. Formation of and adherence to ethical principles to guide
879 professional relationships and personal conduct as outlined in the
880 *Ministerial Code of Ethics of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*.

881
882 6. *Conclusion of Candidacy.* Completion of a prescribed program of study
883 (apprentice track) or the receipt of a Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent
884 from an institution of higher education accredited by the Association of
885 Theological Schools (seminary track) does not guarantee Ordination.

886
887 Candidacy is concluded by Ordination, voluntary withdrawal by the candidate, or
888 decision of the Region to terminate candidacy. Completion of candidacy within
889 seven years is recommended, but may be extended at the discretion of the
890 Region.

891

892 **E. The Act of Ordination**

893

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

898

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

902

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

906

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

908

909 4. Representatives of the recommending congregation or congregations, the
910 Regional church, the ecumenical church and, where possible, the General church
911 shall participate in the service.

912

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

915

916 **F. Ministerial Standing**

917

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

922

923 a. Standing affirms that the Commissioned or Ordained minister is currently
924 engaged in the practice of ministry, whether on an occasional, part-time or
925 full-time basis, with continuous accountability maintained with a
926 congregation, related organization or institution, Region, or General
927 Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Such ministers are
928 listed in the *Year Book and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of
929 Christ)* and may call upon the church for services and support such as
930 pastoral care, ecclesiastical endorsement, and scholarship aid. In addition
931 they have voting privileges in the General Assembly of the Christian Church
932 (Disciples of Christ).

933

934 b. Ordained ministers with Standing have access to Search and Call.
935 Candidates for Ordination may be granted access to Search and Call at the

- 936 discretion of the Regional Minister of the Region where they are under care
937 or the Region of their educational setting.
938
- 939 c. Responsibility for certification of Standing of ministers and for annual
940 review of that Standing within the Order of Ministry is lodged with the
941 Region where the minister is currently engaged in the practice of ministry.
942 Nothing in the Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry is intended to
943 preclude a Region from developing additional appropriate statements or
944 procedures pertaining to Standing within that Region as long as such
945 statements are consistent with the Order of Ministry.
946
- 947 d. For those engaged in non-Regional ministries responsibility for certification
948 of Standing and for annual review of that Standing within the Order of
949 Ministry is lodged with the General Commission on Ministry. For purposes
950 of this document, non-Regional ministries are defined as all ministries
951 outside the United States and Canada, those ministries engaged by and
952 accountable to one of the General Ministries of the church, ministries of
953 the ecumenical church and with interfaith organizations whose
954 responsibilities extend beyond one Region, whether in North America or
955 abroad, and fulltime military, VA and Federal Correctional chaplaincies. All
956 other ministries are hereby defined as Regional as determined by the
957 primary ministry site. The General Commission on Ministry has a
958 credentialing function but is not an Ordaining body; that is the province of
959 Regions in cooperation with congregations. In covenant with the Regions,
960 the General Commission on Ministry will notify Regions about persons who
961 reside in their Region and hold Standing with the General Commission on
962 Ministry.
963
- 964 e. Since Regional Ministers “serve as a sign of the ministry of the church in
965 sacrament and service” and lead Regions in promoting “the concept of
966 whole church, and have a primary role in advocating and supporting the
967 denomination’s mission and vision” (*Marks of a Faithful Regional Church*,
968 August, 2006), the responsibility for certification of Standing is jointly
969 lodged with the Region where the Regional Minister serves and with the
970 General Commission on Ministry. Annually, the Regional Minister will
971 complete Standing forms required by both the Region and the General
972 Commission on Ministry.
973
- 974 2. *Certification of Standing of those Commissioned and Ordained by the Christian*
975 *Church (Disciples of Christ)*
976
- 977 a. By virtue of Commissioning or Ordination according to the Order of
978 Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the minister becomes
979 eligible for Standing.

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- b. Standing for ministers in active service continues so long as the minister does and reports the following:
 - i. Performs faithfully the duties of a minister as authorized by Commissioning or Ordination, either in an occupation recognized by the church as ministerial in purpose or in a service recognized by the church as ministerial in purpose.
 - ii. Participates regularly in programs of study, growth, and renewal.
 - iii. Maintains relations with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) including participating membership in a recognized congregation in the community of residence or active ministry where feasible.
 - iv. Adheres to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*.
 - v. Continues to meet the personal qualifications for admission to the Order of Ministry. (II.A.2.)
 - vi. Seeks annual certification as requested by the Region where the ministry site is located or by the General Commission on Ministry, as appropriate. (See II.F.1.c.)
- c. Standing may be continued at the discretion of the Region or the General Commission on Ministry in cases of disability or other special hardships affecting ministerial service, so long as other criteria for Standing are met.
- d. The Region or the General Commission on Ministry will provide means by which the Standing of all ministers in its care will be reviewed annually. Consultation with the appropriate National Pastor/Leader of Racial Ethnic communities is encouraged regarding the Standing of persons of color.
- e. When an Ordained Minister moves from a ministry position in one Region to a ministry position in another Region, Standing in the Order of Ministry is retained. Commissioned Ministers who move to another Region must contact that Regional Minister to establish Standing in the new ministry position. Responsibility for review and subsequent certification is assigned to the Region in which the minister functions or to the General Commission on Ministry. The minister shall notify both the former and new Regional Ministers upon relocation.

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- f. When an Ordained Minister who is not actively seeking relocation moves from a ministry position in one Region to another Region and is no longer engaged in ministry, ministerial Standing will be provisionally retained for up to one year, except in the case of retirement, until review and subsequent certification is granted by the Region into which the minister has moved. The Ordained Minister is required to initiate contact with both the former and new Regional Ministers regarding his or her status.
3. *Certification of Standing of Retired Ministers, Commissioned or Ordained by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*
- a. Upon retirement, Commissioned Ministers retain Standing if they continue serving in an approved ministry site. Standing of inactive retired Commissioned Ministers may be granted at the discretion of the Region.
 - b. Ordained Ministers with Standing retain this Standing at the time of retirement.
 - i. A retired minister who intends to continue practice of ministry, whether on an occasional, part-time or full time basis must continue to seek annual certification of Standing as requested by the Region where the ministry site is located or by the General Commission on Ministry, as appropriate. (See II.F.1.c.)
 - ii. When Standing is granted, the active retired minister will be listed in the *Yearbook of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* as active retired. (aR)
 - iii. To be eligible for such Standing, the active retired minister
 - a) Performs faithfully the duties of a minister as authorized by Commissioning or Ordination, either in an occupation recognized by the church as ministerial in purpose or in a service recognized by the church as ministerial in purpose.
 - b) Participates regularly in programs of study, growth, and renewal.
 - c) Maintains relations with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) including participating membership in a recognized congregation in the community of residence or active ministry where feasible.
 - d) Continues to meet the personal qualifications for admission to the Order of Ministry (II.A.2) and to adhere to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics*

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- iv. Retired ministers who are no longer engaging in the practice of ministry on an occasional, part-time or full time basis may seek Standing as inactive retired ministers.
 - a) Retired ministers who are granted inactive status will continue to be listed in the *Yearbook of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* as inactive, retired ministers (iR).
 - b) Inactive retired ministers must continue to seek annual certification of Standing as requested by the Region where they reside.
 - c) To be eligible for such Standing, the inactive retired minister must continue to adhere to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics* and must hold participating membership in a recognized Disciples congregation in the community of residence where feasible.
 - v. If an inactive retired minister decides to once again take up the practice of ministry, that minister must once again seek status as an active retired minister. (See 3.c.i-iv)

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4. *Suspension or Termination of Ministerial Standing.*

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- a. Procedures leading to a review of Standing may be initiated by the minister, the Region, or the General Commission on Ministry when one or more of the following conditions are present:
 - i. The minister desires to be released from the practice of ministry, either temporarily or permanently.
 - ii. The minister requests transfer of credentials from the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to another denomination or non-Disciples congregation.
 - iii. The minister enters into a full-time occupation not recognized by the church as ministerial in purpose and/or no longer performs the functions of the office of a minister.
 - iv. The minister fails to respond to a request for annual certification from the Region or the General Commission on Ministry.
 - v. The minister no longer meets the personal qualifications for admission to the Order of Ministry (II.A.2.) or fails to adhere to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics*.
 - vi. The retired minister fails to adhere to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics*.

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- b. When the Region or the General Commission on Ministry takes the initiative in the review of Standing, the procedures shall include:
 - i. Written notice to the minister that Standing is to be reviewed with the possibility of suspension or termination.
 - ii. Consultation with the appropriate National Pastor/Leader of Racial Ethnic communities is encouraged regarding the termination of Standing of persons of color.
 - iii. A hearing by a committee appointed by the Region or the General Commission on Ministry.
- c. When the minister takes the initiative in the review, the procedures shall include:
 - i. Written notice to the Region or the General Commission on Ministry requesting that Standing be reviewed with the possibility of termination.
 - ii. A consultation with a committee appointed by the Region or the General Commission on Ministry.
- d. Standing may be granted to a minister whose Standing has been terminated or suspended by another Region or the General Commission on Ministry only upon the recommendation of the terminating or suspending body, whether that is a Region or the General Commission on Ministry.

5. *Surrender of Standing*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing provides ongoing ecclesiastical authorization to exercise the rights and responsibilities of Ordained ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

i. Once a United Church of Christ Ordained minister has demonstrated knowledge of and appreciation for the history, polity, and practices of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to the Regional Commission on

1195 Ministry where the minister resides, that Ordained Ministerial Partner
1196 may be granted access to the Search and Call process in the Christian
1197 Church (Disciples of Christ). Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in
1198 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is not given at this point in the
1199 process.
1200

1201 ii. A United Church of Christ Ordained Ministerial Partner who secures a
1202 call in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) applies for Ordained
1203 Ministerial Partner Standing to the Region in which the Ordained
1204 minister's calling body is located. Once granted, Ordained Ministerial
1205 Partner Standing is reviewed by the Region for certification annually.
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1207 iii. A United Church of Christ Ordained minister has Ordained Ministerial
1208 Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) only when
1209 serving a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) calling body.
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1211 iv. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial
1212 Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall
1213 maintain Ordained ministerial Standing in the United Church of Christ.
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1215 v. Ordained ministerial Standing shall be held in the association in which
1216 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) calling body is located.
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1218 vi. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial
1219 Partner Standing shall maintain relations with the Christian Church
1220 (Disciples of Christ) including (where feasible) holding associate
1221 membership in a recognized Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
1222 congregation in the community.
1223

1224 vii. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial
1225 Partner Standing in a Region has voting privileges in the General
1226 Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
1227

1228 viii. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial
1229 Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall relate
1230 to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for his/her primary support
1231 in Ordained ministry.
1232

1233 ix. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial
1234 Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall be
1235 accountable to the Region for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing
1236 and to the United Church of Christ for Ordained ministerial Standing.
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- 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.
 - 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).

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

1326 Responsibility for this process is lodged in the Region except in the case of
1327 Military Chaplains stationed overseas.

1328
1329 a. Provisional or temporary Standing of applicants may be granted upon the
1330 fulfillment of the following requirements:

1331
1332 i. Consultation with appropriate officials of the denomination or
1333 congregation from which the candidate transfers.

1334
1335 ii. Satisfactory investigation of personal and ministerial references and a
1336 criminal background check.

1337
1338 iii. Filing of appropriate forms with the Region to which the applicant is
1339 applying or with the General Commission on Ministry.

1340
1341 iv. Provisional or temporary Standing shall be reviewed annually by either
1342 the granting Region or the General Commission on Ministry.

1343
1344 b. Removal of the provisional or temporary conditions for Standing may be
1345 granted by the Region or the General Commission on Ministry upon
1346 fulfillment of the following requirements:

1347
1348 i. Membership in a recognized congregation of the Christian Church
1349 (Disciples of Christ).

1350
1351 ii. Demonstrated knowledge and appreciation for the history, polity, and
1352 practices of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

1353
1354 iii. Fulfillment of the prerequisites and preparation, including educational
1355 attainment, for the Order of Ministry.

1356
1357 iv. One year minimum service under the supervision or mentoring of a
1358 Disciples of Christ minister with Standing.

1359
1360 v. Manifesting the personal qualifications for the order of ministry as
1361 listed in item II.A.2.

1362
1363 vi. Commitment to adhere to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics of the Christian*
1364 *Church (Disciples of Christ)*.

1365

1366 H. Ministerial Search and Call

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1368 1. *The General Principles.* Ministerial Search and Call is the term applied to the
1369 process developed to facilitate the calling of Ordained ministers who hold

1370 Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). It provides a covenantal
1371 framework within which ministers and Congregations, Regions, and General
1372 Ministries of the church can serve to build up the whole church of Jesus Christ.
1373 The Order of Ministry identifies general principles for Search and Call. The Office
1374 of Search and Call (Disciples Home Missions) administers these procedures of the
1375 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

1376
1377 a. Freedom and responsibility are inherent in the tradition of the Christian
1378 Church (Disciples of Christ). Congregations, Regions, and General Ministries
1379 of the church are accorded full freedom to issue ministerial calls within their
1380 own established or constitutional provisions. Ministers, likewise, are
1381 accorded full freedom to accept or reject a call to any particular service. All,
1382 however, covenant to work within the Order of Ministry in the interest of
1383 assuring an orderly and responsible system of Search and Call.

1384
1385 b. The Church is best served when Regional Ministers and National
1386 Pastors/Leaders of Racial Ethnic communities work together covenantally in
1387 the Search and Call process. Primary responsibility for the Search and Call
1388 process is lodged with the Regions. Regions are encouraged to consult the
1389 National Pastors/Leaders. National Pastors/Leaders may offer their counsel
1390 to the Regional Minister in Search and Call with the understanding that the
1391 primary responsibility for Search and Call lies with the Region.

1392
1393 2. *Operating Principles.*

1394
1395 a. Ordained ministers with Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of
1396 Christ) will have complete and unhindered access to Search and Call of the
1397 church.

1398
1399 b. Ordained Ministerial Partners with Standing in the United Church of Christ
1400 will have complete and unhindered access to Search and Call of the church
1401 once they have been qualified by a Region to seek a call.

1402
1403 c. Congregations, Regions, institutions, and General Ministries of the church
1404 will be provided assistance from the Office of Search and Call.

1405
1406 d. Any *Ministerial Profile* in the Office of Search and Call will be open to the
1407 minister concerned except for confidential references for which a waiver
1408 has been signed.

1409
1410 e. Confidentiality, when assured to the persons completing the reference
1411 forms, will not be violated.

1412

- 1413 f. At the discretion of the Region of care candidates for Ordination may be
1414 granted authorized access to Search and Call.
1415
- 1416 g. All candidates for Ordination with authorized access to Search and Call and
1417 Ordained Ministers with Standing may be considered for any ministerial
1418 position.
1419
- 1420 h. All candidates for Ordination with authorized access to Search and Call and
1421 Ordained Ministers with Standing shall have access to information
1422 regarding available ministerial openings in the church.
1423
- 1424 i. Every congregation, Region, educational or related institution, and General
1425 Ministry will strive to be open to the ministry of all persons putting aside
1426 prejudice and considering candidates based on gifts and skills for ministry.
1427
- 1428 3. *Responsibilities*. It is expected that all parties using Search and Call will abide
1429 by the established procedures of the Office of Search and Call,.
1430
- 1431 a. Ministers. Commissioned and Ordained ministers with Standing in the
1432 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) have the responsibility to seek the
1433 advice and counsel of the Region and to avail themselves of the resources
1434 of the Office of Search and Call. They have the freedom to accept or reject
1435 any call offered to them, and to negotiate whatever terms of call or service
1436 seem appropriate. In all matters, ministers will function within the
1437 covenantal relationship of the whole church.
1438
- 1439 b. Congregations. Within the tradition of the Christian Church (Disciples of
1440 Christ) and according to *The Design*, congregations have the right and
1441 responsibility to seek and call their own leadership, to establish the terms
1442 of call, to undergird the ministry, and to effect terminations within their
1443 own procedures. In all matters, congregations will function within the
1444 covenantal relationship of the whole church and are encouraged to seek
1445 the advice and counsel of the Region/Area.
1446
- 1447 c. Regions. Regions bear the primary responsibility for providing advice and
1448 counsel to both congregations and ministers in Search and Call. Regions
1449 may delegate or share this responsibility with their areas, districts or other
1450 subdivisions. In all matters, Regions will function within the covenantal
1451 relationship of the whole church.
1452
- 1453 d. Disciples Home Missions. The Office of Search and Call at Disciples Home
1454 Missions is the primary locus of the ministerial records of the Christian
1455 Church (Disciples of Christ) related to Search and Call and is responsible for
1456 coordinating the Search and Call process of the church. In all matters,

1457 Disciples Home Missions will function within the covenantal relationship of
1458 the whole church.

1459
1460 e. General Ministries. In all matters, General Ministries will function within
1461 the covenantal relationship of the whole church.

1462

1463 I. Ministerial Code of Ethics

1464

1465 Believing that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God, and proclaiming him Lord and
1466 Savior of the world, I reaffirm my vows as a minister. Through dedication and discipline I
1467 will lead and serve with integrity. Relying on the grace of God, I commit myself to the
1468 following:

1469

1470 *Personal Conduct*

- 1471 • Witnessing to the ministry of Jesus Christ
- 1472 • Dedicating time, strength, vitality, and energy for effective ministry
- 1473 • Growing in faith, knowledge, and the practice of ministry through the spiritual
1474 disciplines, study, continuing education, and service
- 1475 • Living a life that honors my commitments to my family, including the need for
1476 privacy and time together
- 1477 • Taking time for physical and spiritual renewal, recreation, and vacation
- 1478 • Being a faithful steward of God's gifts to me by managing time, talents, and
1479 financial resources responsibly and generously
- 1480 • Accepting responsibility for all debts that I incur
- 1481 • Keeping physically and emotionally fit and refraining from substance abuse and
1482 other abusive behaviors
- 1483 • Using my position, power, and authority in non-exploitive ways
- 1484 • Maintaining high moral standards in my sexual behavior
- 1485 • Regarding all persons with equal respect and concern and undertaking to
1486 minister impartially

1487

1488 *Relationships to the Church which I Serve*

- 1489 • Nurturing and offering my gifts for ministry to the church
- 1490 • Calling forth and nurturing the gifts of others in the church and joining their gifts
1491 with mine for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ and the health of the church
- 1492 • Preaching and teaching the gospel without fear or favor and speaking the truth
1493 in love
- 1494 • Administering the sacraments/ordinances and services of the church with
1495 integrity and not for financial gain
- 1496 • Working cooperatively and collegially with those whom I serve in the particular
1497 ministry to which I have been called
- 1498 • Administering the corporate finances of the church with personal integrity

- 1499 • Refraining from accepting any gift which would compromise the church's
- 1500 ministry
- 1501 • Protecting confidences; covenanting to only tell those who need to know, what
- 1502 they need to know, when they need to know it
- 1503 • Acting to prevent and to report known or suspected cases of physical or sexual
- 1504 abuse or neglect
- 1505 • Encouraging and participating in the regular evaluation of my ministry and
- 1506 cooperating with the Region in the annual review of my ministerial Standing
- 1507 • Seeking the counsel of the Regional Minister should divisive tensions threaten
- 1508 my relationship with those I serve
- 1509

1510 *Relationships to Ministry Colleagues*

- 1511 • Engaging in covenantal relationships with colleagues which involve nurture,
- 1512 discipline, family support, vigorous dialogue, mutual teaching/learning, and
- 1513 spiritual formation
- 1514 • Supporting colleagues in ministry and their families while not exploiting their
- 1515 problems or crises
- 1516 • Performing pastoral services within another congregation or for a member of
- 1517 another congregation only at the request of that congregation's elders and
- 1518 current pastor
- 1519 • Supporting and at no time speaking maliciously of the ministry of my
- 1520 predecessors or another minister
- 1521 • Encouraging the ministry of my successor upon my retirement or other
- 1522 departure from a ministry position, without interfering or intruding and by
- 1523 making it clear to former parishioners that I am no longer their pastor, nor will I
- 1524 perform any pastoral services unless requested by the congregation's elders and
- 1525 current pastor
- 1526

1527 *Relationships to the Community and the Wider Church*

- 1528 • Participating responsibly in the life and work of my community, bearing
- 1529 prophetic witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and working towards a just and
- 1530 morally responsible society
- 1531 • Participating faithfully in the life and work of all expressions of the Christian
- 1532 Church (Disciples of Christ)
- 1533 • Seeking to know, understand, and respect the diversity of opinions and people
- 1534 within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- 1535 • Being a responsible representative of the one church of Jesus Christ and
- 1536 participating in activities which strengthen its ministry, witness, and mission
- 1537

1538 **J. Misconduct**

1539

1540 The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) understands ministerial misconduct to be

1541 activity which violates the covenantal character of the ministerial office as expressed in

1542 the Ministerial Code of Ethics. Investigation and adjudication of violations of the
1543 Ministerial Code of Ethics shall be the responsibility of the Region through the
1544 committee or Commission on Ministry or the General Commission on Ministry.

1545

1546 1. *Reporting*

1547

1548 Regions or the General Commission on Ministry will report formal actions and
1549 decisions to remove Standing for misconduct to the Office of Search and Call,
1550 Disciples Home Missions, and these actions will be communicated to all Regions.

1551

1552 2. *Suspension of Standing*

1553

1554 In extreme situations of alleged misconduct, ministerial Standing may be
1555 temporarily suspended by the Region or the General Commission on Ministry
1556 during the period of investigation and adjudication.

1557

1558 3. *Sexual Misconduct*

1559

1560 a. It is the responsibility of each Region to have specific definitions of sexual
1561 misconduct and procedures for receiving, investigating, and adjudicating
1562 sexual misconduct charges of ministers with Standing in the Region. Each
1563 Region will periodically and systematically review its definitions and
1564 procedures. It is the responsibility of the Region to communicate such
1565 definitions and procedures to ministers and congregations within the
1566 Region.

1567

1568 b. It is the responsibility of the General Commission on Ministry to have
1569 specific definitions of sexual misconduct and procedures for receiving,
1570 investigating, and adjudicating sexual misconduct charges of ministers
1571 engaged in non-Regional ministries. The General Commission on Ministry
1572 will periodically and systematically review its definitions and procedures. It
1573 is the responsibility of the General Commission on the Ministry to
1574 communicate such definitions and procedures to ministers, ministries, and
1575 other organizations in the General and ecumenical church.

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1577 **K. Right of Appeal**

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1579 The General Commission on Ministry understands that the Right to Appeal extends to
1580 persons who, at the time of their appeal, are subject to a decision with adverse effect
1581 regarding Ordination, Commissioning, transfer of credentials, and/or Standing. The
1582 General Commission on Ministry will not consider any appeal if legal proceedings are
1583 pending or in process.

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1585 **L. Amendment Process**

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

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

Basic Policy Approved Louisville General Assembly 1971
Section II on Candidacy approved Kansas City General Assembly 1977
Section V on Ministerial Standing amended Anaheim General Assembly 1981
Section VI on Ministerial Relocation amended Des Moines General Assembly 1985
Section VII on Amendment Process amended Louisville General Assembly 1987
Section V.C. on Recognition and Reconciliation of the Ordained Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ amended Pittsburgh General Assembly 1995
Section VIII on Sexual Misconduct amended Pittsburgh General Assembly 1995
New Theological Foundations and Revised Policies and Criteria approved Indianapolis General Assembly 2009

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

Distributed by
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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION ON

Theological Foundation and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

[For purposes of brevity throughout the following resource
the above title will be referred to as the “*Ordering Document.*”]

WHY HAS THIS PROPOSAL COME ABOUT? (SIX REASONS.)

- a. Because we lack, and are needful of, a denominational statement concerning the theological and historical underpinnings for the “ordering of ministry” - as we understand it - one that sets-forth our own “Disciples” understanding of how the order of ministry has evolved in our particular history and polity.
- b. Because “unity is our polar star,” clarity about our Disciples’ ordering of ministry, and the beliefs that undergird it, are important elements in ecumenical conversation with sister communions across the life of the Church.
- c. Because of the Licensed Minister’s appeal through the *Nazareth Consensus* we acknowledge that:
 - ~ they desire a means by which those adequately prepared might be ordained;
 - ~ they desire a means by which they might enjoy mobility in the circulating of their papers and references in the church’s “search and call” system;
 - ~ they desire to replace the secular term of “licensed” with a Biblical-based concept of “commissioned;” and
 - ~ they desire to be more highly valued as partners alongside ordained clergy within the whole order of ministry.
- d. Because some Regions already provide an alternative track to ordination, other than the requisite *Association of Theological School*-accredited M.Div. criterion for ordination which is fully recognized and accepted across the life of this denomination, there is a need for Disciples to have a common understanding about alternative ordination processes for which allowances are made, and to provide common standards for such.
- e. Because in the current milieu, we Disciples are facing many exceptional situations (e.g. the number of rural and urban congregations who can no longer afford full-time seminary-trained clergy; the number of licensed ministers who are going the second mile in their preparation/formation to provide quality leadership; the number of individuals who are by either linguistic, economic, vocational, or familial circumstances constrained from pulling-up roots and relocating for seminary - which includes a number of our effective new church pastors) we recognize the need to provide different pathways leading to ordination.
- f. Because of new questions needing address and new circumstances needing our attention in this unique historical moment for the church early in the 21st century, this is an opportune time to do so in a wholistic approach to the Disciples understanding about the Order of Ministry.

WHAT IS NEW IN THIS “ORDERING” DOCUMENT?

~ A statement of “theological foundations” about our ordering of ministry - one growing out of our Disciples history and polity. (The entirety of Section One)

[PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS IS NOT MEANT TO BE A COMPLETE THEOLOGICAL STATEMENT ON MINISTRY, BUT ONLY THE IDENTIFICATION OF THOSE PARTICULAR THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS WHICH INFORM OUR DISCIPLES PERSPECTIVE ABOUT THE “ORDERING OF MINISTRY.”]

- ~ Especially significant is our ability to identify the manner in which our threefold offices of ministry (serving, proclaiming, over-seeing) have a clear relationship to the three distinct offices of ministry in the New Testament (diaconate, presbyterate, and episcopate). (I.D.2.a & I.D.2.c.)
- ~ Updated language about personal qualifications for the Order of Ministry. (II.A.2.)
- ~ A change of language from the use of "Licensed" to "Commissioned." (I.D.1 & II.B.1.)
- ~ The description of and criteria for Commissioned Ministry. (II.B.2.)
- ~ Two categories of Commissioned Ministers - those seeking ordination, and those not seeking ordination. (II.B.3.)
- ~ Outline of the Candidacy process for Commissioned Ministers (for the candidate and for the Region) [II.B.4-5]
- ~ The processes and procedures for Ordination. (II.C.1.)
- ~ The delineation of the "Apprentice Track" [AT] and the "Seminary Track" [ST] as preparation for ordination. (II.C.2)
- ~ The educational requirements - competencies in 16 different areas of ministerial practice - are alphabetically listed for the ordination of candidates for ministry in both educational tracks - AT and ST. (The content of each of these areas will be fleshed out by a task force appointed by the General Commission on Ministry in consultation with General Minister and President) [II.C.2]
- ~ The itemization of Regional responsibilities in working with those seeking ordination. (II.C.3.)
- ~ A freshly reworked section on Candidacy for Ordination (including definition, application, criteria, procedures during candidacy and preparations for ordination) [II.D.]

1. In general, there is much more specificity throughout the "ordering document" to provide assistance to Regional Commissions on Ministry
2. Regions will have the option about whether to utilize the alternative pathway to ordination for Commissioned Ministers - the Apprentice Track. The policy assumes that most all will do so, but does not make it a mandatory requirement for every Region to do so. (II.C.3. uses "encourage" language.)

In the section on Standing (II.F.) there is more clarity about

- Protocol and clarification regarding jurisdictions for certifying Regional Standing (making clear which Regions have the responsibility under what circumstances); [II.F.1.c. and II.F.2.e & f]
- Clarifications regarding certification for Standing by the General Church; (II.F.1.d.)
- Good protocol in Regional and General communications with each other when working with a person of color (good two-way consultation between the Region and the National Pastor/Leader of Racial Ethnic communities); [II.F.2.d. also at lines 670, 803, 1006, 1114 and 1381]
- A new section pertaining only to retired ministry - particularly delineating the status and requirement for active retirements (serving in retirement) and inactive retirement (retired and no longer serving); [II.F.3.] and
- New wording that differentiates what happens when Standing is removed, surrendered or lapsed. (II.F.4-6)

Nothing has been altered in Section G on "Recognition and Reconciliation of Ordained Ministries" since that is language which has been mutually adopted by previous General Assemblies of our partner denominations - the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

The *Ministerial Code of Ethics* which once stood apart from the Ordering document, is now incorporated in Section I of the Ordering document.

DOES ORDAINING THE NON-SEMINARY TRAINED LEAD TO A LESS COMPETENT MINISTRY?

Some have opposed the ordination of licensed ministers believing that ordination has only/mostly to do with a level of education and skill development characterized by a certain period of time and work accomplished in a particular kind of educational setting. While that is certainly part of the criteria for ministry, it is clear that throughout the centuries persons with diverse levels of education in varied kinds of educational settings have been enormously effective in God's service as ordained clergy. Years and hours of preparation have not been the only criteria.

While the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will always place a premium on an informed and prepared clergy leadership, the times in which we find ourselves are clearly leading us to broaden our sense of where and how that formation for leadership can happen. In the "ordering document" there is a clear and preferential option for seminary trained leadership - wherever and however that is possible. Note the references in section II.C.2. lines 722-724.

In the historical life of the church there has always been the ordination of well-respected, broadly-authenticated and spiritually-effective persons who did not necessarily have seminary training as we know it today. The premise behind this "ordering document" is trust - faith that God can well-utilize both a SEMINARY approach and an APPRENTICE approach for ordination in this church today. A truly inclusive church must begin to live its way into ever more inclusive ways of calling forth and setting apart its ordained leadership. It is our sense that this church will actually be enlivened and blessed by providing these two tracks to ordination.

WHAT IS THE TIMELINE ENVISIONED FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS POLICY?

Prior to the General Assembly the General Board directed that the "ordering document," the resolution for its adoption, and the accompanying "Frequently Asked Questions" be circulated across the church for reading and study.

In July 2009 the General Assembly will provide a forum on this "ordering document" for discussion and clarification.

In July 2009 the General Assembly will vote on the adoption of this "ordering document."

If the resolution "to adopt" is affirmed:

- The church will embark on a period of time for the transitions necessary for its implementation.
- The date for implementation - the day on which the new policy becomes effective - is August 1, 2011.

During the period of transition:

- The General Commission on Ministry in consultation with the General Minister and President will immediately appoint a task group to flesh out the content expectations for the 16 areas of ministerial competency and to develop a template or model curriculum for Apprentice Track educational programs.
- The General Commission on Ministry will work with the General Church office of ministry to effect procedures to identify Ordination AT (Apprentice Track) and Ordination ST - (Seminary Track) designations on paperwork for Regions and congregations in the Search and Call process.
- Each Region will make intentional efforts to inform their ministry commission in regard to the implications of the new "ordering document" for their work and oversight of ministry.
- Regions will decide whether they (alone or in concert with other entities - II.C.3., footnote 12) will develop a Commissioned Minister Apprentice Track for Ordination. But all Regions will come under all of the other guidelines, prerequisites and implications of the "ordering document" on August 1, 2011.
- Regions will utilize the present nomenclature for clergy ("Licensed" instead of "Commissioned") until this policy takes effect on August 1, 2011.

- Regions developing an Apprentice Track will submit their specific program design to the *General Commission on Ministry* for evaluation and feedback.
- Regions (after the completed work of the GCOM's Task Force to develop a template for the Apprentice Track program addressing the 16 competency areas) will determine how work done in previous LICENSED MINISTRY CONTINUING EDUCATION applies to any of their present Licensed Ministers who either might be considered for grand-parenting in, or might be seeking the Apprentice Track for Ordination.
- Regions will then review the status of each current Licensed minister to determine which category of Commissioned Minister is most appropriate for their designation.
- The Region would revise as necessary any Regional policies to facilitate this transition.

HOW WILL THIS AFFECT THE CURRENT PRACTICE?

~ All Licensed Ministers will become Commissioned Ministers in August of 2011.

If they are serving with Standing, without intent of completing the required AT competencies, they will be designated ***Commissioned Ministers, not seeking ordination.***

If they are serving with Standing and working on accomplishing the Apprentice Track requirements they will be designated ***Commissioned Ministers, seeking ordination.***

If they are serving with Standing, and working toward the seminary requirements for ordination, they will be designated ***Commissioned Ministers, seeking ordination.***

~ Candidates for ordination will be designated as AT if they are working on accomplishing the Apprentice Track requirements of the Region, and ST if they are working toward a Master of Divinity degree at an ATS accredited seminary.

~ Ordained Clergy will be designated Ordained (AT) or Ordained (ST).

~ Search Committees will have the appropriate designations clearly indicated on the clergy's *Ministerial Profile*.

WHAT KIND OF PREPARATION HAS PRECEDED THIS RECOMMENDATION?

What you have before you is the composite outcome of six years of work. Literally thousands of man and woman hours of effort have culminated in the "ordering document" that is coming before you. This copy is Draft 11.1. Many drafts have preceded this one, none of which made their way to the General Board and then to the General Assembly. That should indicate something of the massive effort of research, study, writing, re-writing, prayer, deliberation and worshipful work that have gone into it.

In the last two meetings prior to the accomplishment of this final recommended draft, over 300 different pieces of feedback were received from laity, clergy (licensed and ordained), Regional ministry commissions, General church leadership and higher education bodies. Every single piece of feedback has been carefully considered, and for the most part incorporated into this final rewrite. Then your General Board gave it one last bit of careful scrutiny before sending forward to you, for the consideration of the General Assembly.

Still it is a living document which can, and likely will, be amended in future General Board and Assembly gatherings as new circumstances present the church in a changing time with new issues for consideration. But at the present time this comes to you as a gift - a labor incorporating the finest efforts of hundreds of people who love this church and care about its ministries.

Setting the stage for our work a special Theological Task Force compiled the data which is now reflected in Section One of the "Ordering Document." Those who served on this Task Group included: Robert Welsh, chair; Carolyn Higginbotham, Newell Williams, Toni Bynum, John Imbler, Tom Jewell, Joyce Knauff, Janice Legg, Rick Spleth, and Carmelo Alvarez. Then the overarching compilation of the "ordering document" was assigned to and developed by the entire *General Commission on Ministry* comprised of Ben Bohren, Chair, Susanne Blix, Dani Loving Cartwright, Elsie Ferrer, Lari R. Grubbs, Timothy M. James, Sandra Michael-Bowers, Howard M. Ratcliff, Donggook "John" Roh, Don Shelton, Richard O. Sparrow. Sharon Watkins and Howard Bowers are ex-officio. Additional members of the *General Commission on Ministry* include the drafting team who had the primary task of writing: Richard Guentert, chair, Carolyn Higginbotham, Joyce Knauff, and Sotello Long - plus the chair of the GCOM, Ben Bohren, who met throughout with the draft team, as well.