

# THE GENERAL COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

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

In 2007-08 the following persons served on the General Commission at both the August 2007 meeting and the February 2008 meeting: Susanne Blix, laywoman, Zionsville, Indiana; Ben Bohren, Regional Minister, Northern California-Nevada; Lari Grubbs, Regional Minister, Capital Area; Timothy James, Associate General Minister and Administrator of the National Convocation; Joyce Knauff, licensed minister, Loudon, Tennessee; Sandra Michael-Bowers, Pension Fund representative; Howard Ratchiff, retired regional minister, North Ridgeville, Ohio; Donggook Roh, Congregational Pastor/CE Consultant; and Richard Sparrow, United Church of Christ representative.

Those ending their terms with the August 2007 meeting: Job Cobos, Associate Regional Minister, Arizona; Thomas Jewell, Regional Pastor, Oklahoma and GCOM chair; William Morrison, Jr., Regional Minister, Florida; Arnold Nelson, Jr., President, DHM representative; Richard Spleth, Regional Minister, Indiana; and Newell Williams, seminary representative, Ft. Worth, Texas.

New members welcomed at the February 2008 meeting: Dani Loving Cartwright, Regional Minister, Southwest; Elsie Ferrer, laywoman, Fishers, Indiana; Carolyn Higgonbotham, seminary representative, Indianapolis, Indiana; Sotello Long, Regional Minister, South Carolina; and Don Shelton, DHM representative.

Sharon Watkins, General Minister and President, serves as an ex-officio member. During 2007-08, Howard Bowers has been the Commission's administrative staff person.

The General Commission met in Indianapolis in both August, 2007 and February 2008. The Commission addressed a variety of issues surrounding ordained and licensed ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Working in three committee settings, 1) Search and Call, 2) Standards, 3) Support, members dealt with particular areas of ministry that impact the daily life of the church.

A major focus of GCOM over the last year has been continued work on a draft document, *The Order of Ministry*. Despite hours of work and immense input from across the denomination, GCOM continues to work on this document. We recognize its vital importance to the ministry of our church and appreciate your prayers for our careful and timely distribution for your consideration. At the request of Sharon Watkins and in cooperation with GCOM, a special task force has been appointed to move this document forward. Persons serving on this task force are Robert Welsh, chair; Richard Spleth, John Imbler, LaTaunya Bynum; Joyce Knauff, Janice Legg, and Carmelo Alvarez. A full report is expected at the August 2008 GCOM meeting.

Other major work of GCOM in the last year has focused on: boundary training for clergy in general ministries (*including a General Board motion*); a review of the general church policy on clergy sexual misconduct; the completion of "Beginning a Pastoral Ministry" document; clarifying issues relating to the search and call system including attention to the criminal background check and how it is working; adjustments to the general ministry standing form; the process for transfer of military chaplains into the Disciples of Christ; consultation with racial-ethnic constituencies; a guide for search committees in "Reading the Disclosure Form and Criminal Background Check;" plus at least two dozen other issues; this is a very hard working commission!

One of the ongoing responsibilities of the General Commission is the annual certification of Disciple ministers serving in the general expression of the church. For 2008, the Commission certified the ministerial standing of 130 Disciples clergy. For clarification GCOM certifies standing for: full-time military chaplains, full-time VA hospital chaplains, full-time federal correction institution chaplains; general ministry clergy; ecumenical ministries whose responsibilities extend beyond one region; and all ministries outside the US and Canada including missionaries and ecumenical ministries. GCOM is grateful for the presence and partnership with Steve Doan, DHM military chaplaincy endorsement officer who attended this portion of our meeting.

The challenges before GCOM in the next year are daunting, but the skills and commitment of the membership are strong and the cohesive work of this team and our spiritual foundation provide us all great joy and appreciation for this opportunity to serve.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rev. Ben Bohren, Chair