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Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Greater Kansas City

Ordination Process Description

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Greater Kansas City is privileged to help people discern calls to ministry and prayerfully consider their roles in Christ's church. Individuals who are interested in pursuing such discernment should contact our Regional Minister and President, who will schedule a meeting to provide an overview of the process and answer questions.

The process of discernment for ordained ministry involves guided participation in the congregational, regional, and wider manifestations of the church, supervised practical experience, shared personal reflections on the nature of professional ministry, and assessment of preparation in the activities of ministry essential for ordained clergy. It includes several in-person meetings with our Commission on Ordination and Standing, a variety of educational coursework, and a number of submitted papers. This process of discernment generally lasts for 3-4 years, but is individually tailored to the needs of each candidate.

Candidates in the process of discernment are expected to be actively participating in the life of a congregation throughout their time of discernment. They must gain an understanding of the history and practices of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). In addition, they are strongly encouraged to share experiences with people serving in ministry in the regional church.

While the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Greater Kansas City provides a great deal of support and staff for the discernment process, there are financial costs for candidates in the completion of some of the requirements, beyond time and travel.

Not every person who participates in the discernment process will become an ordained minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Sometimes, people come to recognize that God is inviting them to participate in ministry in different ways than becoming an ordained minister. Occasionally, the Commission determines that a candidate is not sufficiently prepared for the professional demands and responsibilities of ordained ministry in the tradition of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

The discernment process is a time of nurturing and prayer that should help identify and develop spiritual gifts, passions for service, and a better understanding of the structure and activities of the church. If you wish to begin this process of discernment, or if you have questions about it, please contact our Regional Minister, Rev. Bill Rose- Heim.

Items for Submission to the Commission on Ordination and Standing During Discernment Process

During the discernment process, each candidate submits a variety of materials to the Commission on Ordination and Standing to demonstrate self-reflection, lessons from practical experience, and conceptions of ordained ministry. These materials help the Commission engage in deeper conversations

during in-person meetings. As such, materials are required to be submitted before specific meetings with the Commission.

All requested items must be sent by email to oands@kcdisciples.org. These items must be received by the 15th of the month *preceding* the meeting or the meeting will be rescheduled for a later date. All submitted items need to be accompanied with a note in the email indicating what requirement each meets, including the specific identification number.

Unless otherwise noted, all papers should be 1500-2000 words long, should be submitted as Word document files (.doc or .docx), and should include the candidate's name and the identification number in the document footer.

For the Initial Meeting with the Commission on Ordination and Standing, candidates must submit the following items (specific identification numbers appear in the brackets):

- **Application for Candidacy [OS10]:** With this application, a person officially declares his or her intention to enter a process of discernment with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Greater Kansas City. It asks for contact and biographical information, previous educational and ministry experience, vocational interests, and the congregation in which the candidate is currently active. This application requires the approval of the board chair, moderator, or equivalent leader in the congregation.
- **Disclosure and Release Form, including Permission for Background Check [OS11]:** This form provides a personal disclosure of a candidate's legal history and allows the regional church to obtain an initial background check for candidates. Candidates are required to pay for this background check, which costs \$12. This money can be submitted by check to the Regional Church by mailing it to 9401 Johnson Drive, Merriam, KS 66203.
- **Spiritual Gift Inventory [OS21]:** Candidates will be provided by the Regional Office with spiritual gifts inventory to fill out and submit online. This inventory is used to identify passions and skills that might be applicable in ordained ministry. Results of this spiritual gifts inventory will be shared with the candidate.
- **Paper on Personal History [OS40]:** This paper provides candidates with an opportunity to share information about the shape of their lives and their important relationships. In this paper, candidates are asked to consider and address the following question:
 - How has your past informed and impacted where you are now? Please consider life events, relationships, social location, cultural contexts, family system, and your spiritual and religious heritage.
- **Paper on Call to Ministry [OS41]:** This paper provides candidates the opportunity to explain in some detail their call to ordained ministry. Every person's call to ministry is unique, so candidates are free to approach this issue in the manner that best fits their understanding of their call. In organizing thoughts for this paper, it may be helpful to consider the following questions:
 - Why do you want to meet with the Commission on Ordination and Standing?
 - How did you arrive at this point?
 - What spiritual gifts and strengths do you think you bring?
 - What are your spiritual growing edges?
 - What can you offer to help us to understand the experience of your call to ministry?
- **Copy of Most Recent Post-secondary Education Transcript [OS12-1]:** Candidates need to share a .pdf copy of their most recent college, seminary, or other graduate education. It does not

need to be a certified or official transcript, but it does need to show coursework completed and credits/grades earned.

For each subsequent meeting with Commission, candidates must submit the following items. (The specific itemization numbers appear in the brackets. Note: each item should be identified by both an item number *and* an interview number. So, a written report from the congregational Ordination Council for the 3rd meeting with a candidate should be labeled OS2-3.):

- **Written Report from Congregational Ordination Council** [OS2-x]: Each person who is accepted as a candidate in the discernment process is expected to form an ordination council in the Disciples congregation in which he or she is active. This Ordination Council should email a report to the Regional Office before the candidate meets with the Commission on Ordination and Standing, detailing how many times they have met and summarizing the topics discussed.
 - Our Regional Staff will provide you with a detailed written description about the formation of a congregational ordination council.
 - A representative of the Ordination and Standing Commission will meet with the congregational Ordination Council at its first or second meeting to offer information about the discernment process and provide support in establishing a nurturing Ordination Council.
- **Personal Report on 16 Activities of Ministry Learning** [OS22-x]: The General Commission on Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has created a document about the nature of ministry, entitled *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry*. This document identifies 16 Activities of Ministry (on pages 19-21) that encompass a range of skills and abilities that are important, and often essential, in ministerial practice. This personal report, prepared by the candidate, has three sections.
 - In section 1, a candidate will list activities, experiences, reading, and other learning since the previous meeting with the Commission for each of the 16 Activities of Ministry.
 - In section 2, a candidate will briefly describe which of the 16 Activities of Ministry they feel are growing edges in which they would benefit from additional learning and experience and how they plan to address them.
 - In section 3, a candidate will identify five of the 16 Activities of Ministry which are personal strengths and/or passions and write 1-2 paragraphs for each activity explaining why it is a ministerial strength and/or passion.
- **Updated Transcripts from Post-secondary or Seminary Program** (if applicable) [OS12-x]

During the discernment process, the Commission will also require:

- **Spiritual Gift Inventories (3)**, [OS21a, OS21b, OS21c]: The candidate will identify a supervisor, a peer, and a person served by the candidate in a ministry setting who agree to fill out the Spiritual Gift Inventory [OS21 above], offering their impressions of the candidate's spiritual gifts. Upon request, the candidate will provide Regional Office the names and email addresses of these people, who will be provided with access to the online inventory forms. While these people will submit the items directly to the Regional Office, these inventories will be shared with the candidates.
- **Psychological Evaluation** [OS23]: Candidates will meet with a recommended professional who will administer instruments to collect information about personality, vocational interests, biography and relationship, self-image and other attributes and will meet with the candidate to discuss this information. The two-fold purpose of this evaluation is to provide an opportunity for a candidate to gain self-awareness and to ensure that the candidate is likely to cope with the demands of ministry in a healthy way.

- Candidates need to secure the funding for this professional evaluation and submit it to the regional office. (Typically, the cost is shared in three equal parts between the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Greater Kansas City, the candidate, and the sponsoring congregation.)
- After funding is received, Regional Staff will share list of recommended providers. It is the candidate’s responsibility to arrange the evaluation sessions.
- After the evaluation sessions, the provider will submit a confidential report to the Regional Minister, who provides the Commission on Ordination and Standing with a simple report of whether significant impediments to healthy ministry are identified or not.
- **Two Sermons** [Items OS31 and OS32]: Candidates will submit a link to a public or unlisted YouTube video of a sermon delivered, along with any manuscript or supporting notes, for each requested sermon. By submitting this link, the candidate grants permission to members of the Commission of Ordination and Standing to view these videos.
- **Paper Describing Field Experience 1** [Item OS33]: Candidates are expected to have supervised practical ministry experience during the discernment process in at least two locations. An internship or ministry position in a congregation, chaplaincy, Clinical Pastoral Education, and other fieldwork may fulfill this requirement. Part-time positions need to last for at least an academic year or longer to meet this requirement. At the end of each experience, candidates must submit a paper describing their field experience, especially addressing the following issues:
 - Describe the nature of your field work – responsibilities, tasks, location, dates of service, etc.
 - What new learning have you experienced that you have not experienced in any other context?
- **Report from Field Experience 1 Supervisor** [Item OS34]: Candidates will ensure that supervisors from their field experience context will submit a report of at least 2-3 pages describing supervised ministry activities with the candidate, observed strengths and weaknesses for ministry, general effectiveness, spiritual growth, and other issues that relate to the candidate’s preparation and gifts for ordained ministry.
- **Paper Describing Field Experience 2** [Item OS35]: The Commission on Ordination & Standing strongly recommends 1.0 units of Clinical Pastoral Education to meet this requirement, though other contexts of ministry will be accepted. Part-time positions need to last for at least an academic year or longer to meet this requirement. At the end of each experience, candidates must submit a paper describing their field experience, especially addressing the following issues:
 - Describe the nature of your field work – responsibilities, tasks, location, dates of service, etc.
 - What new learning have you experienced that you have not experienced in any other context?
- **Report from Field Experience 2 Supervisor** [Item OS36]: Candidates will ensure that supervisors from their field experience context will submit a report of at least 2-3 pages describing supervised ministry activities with the candidate, observed strengths and weaknesses for ministry, general effectiveness, spiritual growth, and other issues that relate to the candidate’s preparation and gifts for ordained ministry.
- **Paper on Emerging Concept of Ministry** [Item OS42]: Candidates are asked to prepare a paper during their discernment process that explores how they conceive of their ministry in the future and reflects on their preparation for such ministry. This paper should be at least 5-6 pages in length. In order to complete this paper, candidates will need to be familiar with the document, *Theological Foundations and Policy and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*. This paper should address the following questions:
 - How has your learning and experience in the 16 Activities of Ministry prepared you for this ministry?
 - What challenges do you imagine for your ministry? What hopes and outcomes do you imagine for your ministry?

- How does scripture inform your conception of ministry?
- What is your image of God and how does this shape your conception of ministry?
- How has your understanding of ministry been shaped by other ministers and church leaders?
- Please choose a section of *Theological Foundations and Policy and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* and reflect on the following questions:
 - Why do you suppose that this particular section attracted your attention as someone considering ordained ministry?
 - What questions for clarification occurred to you?
 - What, in your opinion, is the value of having guidelines for the order of ministry in a denomination where congregations can act autonomously? What are the challenges of such guidelines?
- **Paper on Disciples History and Polity** [Item OS50]: Candidates are expected to demonstrate understanding and awareness of the history of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the theology and practice shaping its organization and polity. This learning may be gained from a credited or non-credited seminary course or independent study facilitated by a professor or ordained Disciples minister. Candidates will submit a paper that includes:
 - A description of the class or study that meets this requirement, including the names of the teacher or facilitator and a list of books and resources consulted
 - 3-5 distinguishing marks/unique things of importance of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) that can be traced from the founding to the present context
 - A consideration of this question: What in your study has affirmed and/or challenged your decision to become an ordained Disciples minister?
- **Boundaries Training Study/Workshop and Report** [Item OS51]: Ordained clergy are expected to develop and maintain healthy relational boundaries in their professional calling as ministers. Candidates for ordination must participate in a workshop, class, or clergy peer group that focuses on clergy boundary issues and then submit a paper addressing the following issues:
 - A description of the learning activity that meets this requirement, including names of facilitators, teachers, or peers, dates and locations of workshop or group meetings, and a list of books and resources consulted
 - How do you think that the aspect of healthy clergy boundaries studied will impact your ministry? How will it enhance your ministry? How will it limit your ministry?
 - What situation have you experienced or can you imagine in which these clergy boundaries might interfere with desired pastoral outcomes?
- **Pro-reconciliation/Anti-racism Study/Workshop and Report** [Item OS52]: Since 2001, one of the main mission priorities of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has been to actively address the divisions that divide God's people, including systemic racism. Ordained clergy are expected to gain awareness of these issues and work in their ministry to counteract them in faithful and loving ways. Candidates for ordination must participate in a workshop, class, or clergy peer group that focuses on pro-reconciliation/anti-racism issues and then submit a paper addressing the following issues:
 - A description of the learning activity that meets this requirement, including names of facilitators, teachers, or peers, dates and locations of workshop or group meetings, and a list of books and resources consulted
 - What are 1-2 of the most significant issues of systemic racism and other divisions that impact Christian congregations and the church universal today?
 - What situation have you experienced or can you imagine where pro-reconciliation has had noticeable positive effects in the life of the church?

- **Attendance at Regional or General Disciples Gathering and Report** [Item OS53]: Candidates are expected to explore our covenantal relationships in the regional and general manifestations of the church. As part of this, candidates are required to attend at least one gathering, such as Regional Assembly, General Assembly, National Convocation, Obra Hispana, NAPAD Convocation, or Black Minister's Retreat. (The regional church does not offer funding to cover the costs of attendance. Some scholarships are available for these events, through a variety of sources. The regional minister can direct candidates toward possible financial resources.) In addition, candidates must submit a paper addressing the following issues:
 - A description of the gathering that meets this requirement, including the dates and location of event
 - What speaker, worship, or session was most memorable? How is it important for the church (locally, regionally, or generally)?
 - What aspect of the event would you highlight for people in your congregation who did not attend? How would you do that?

For final meeting with the Commission on Ordination and Standing:

- **Final Report from Congregational Ordination Council** [Item OS2-f]: In addition to sharing a report listing the number of meetings and summarizing the items discussed, this final report should include a recommendation from the congregational ordination council explaining why they feel the candidate should be ordained.
- **Paper on Christian Faith, Church, and Ordained Ministry** [Item OS43]: Candidates are asked to prepare a final paper that provides a synthesis of the entire discernment process, incorporating learning from field experiences, education, Disciples history/polity, and 16 activities of ministry. It should provide a description of the church and the minister's role within it. The paper should be at least 6 pages in length and address these specific questions:
 - What aspects of Christian faith in the church and in the wider culture most need to be highlighted and nurtured at this time?
 - How is the church empowered and/or challenged to meet this need?
 - What will be your role in the church as an ordained minister?
 - In light of this understanding of Christian faith, church, and ministry, how has your discernment process (including your education, your practical experience, and your growth in the 16 Activities of Ministry) affected your call to ministry?
- **Signed Copy of the Ministerial Code of Ethics** [Item OS60]: Ordained ministers promise to abide by the Ministerial Code of Ethics, available online here. Candidates will submit a signed copy of the Ministerial Code of Ethics, acknowledging that they have read it and covenant to live and serve according to its guidelines.
- **Modified Version of the Ministerial Profile** [Item OS61]: Ordained ministers with standing may prepare an online profile to be considered by congregations and other ministries seeking to call ministers. In order to become familiar with this system, candidates are expected to complete a modified fillable .pdf version of the profile, which includes biographical information, education and ministry experience, proficiency in the 16 areas of ministry practice and a description of spiritual and leadership gifts.

Subsequent to Final Interview

- **Ordination Service And Guidelines for Ordination**