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# 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*

Amendment 1.0 9/30/2009  
Amendment 2.0 5/8/2014

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39 This document, *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of*  
40 *Ministry, 2009*, became the policy document for the Christian Church (Disciples of  
41 Christ) in the United States and Canada once the General Assembly adopted the  
42 document. It replaced the document, *Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry,*  
43 *2003* on August 1, 2011.

44

45

## ***Preface***

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# I. Theological Foundations 77 for the Ordering of Ministry 78 in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

79

80 PREFACE

81

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

88

89 **A. The Ministry of the Whole People of God**

90

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

99

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

109

110 In Christ the individual becomes a member of “a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people  
111 of God’s own possession” (1Peter 2:9). Thus it has been common to speak of the

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

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

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

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

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

138  
139 Campbell’s attitudes on ministry progressed as the movement grew and the changing  
140 circumstances of the church demanded new approaches to and appropriations of leadership.  
141 Conversely, Stone’s attitudes on ministry remained relatively consistent. While he  
142 promoted freedom from ecclesiastical control, he retained a sense of order in ministry and  
143 structure. One notable point of agreement between the two is that both regarded ministry

---

<sup>1</sup> The “priesthood of all believers” refers to the persons who have entered into a covenanted relationship through confession and baptism. It ought not be confused with the role of congregational elders in the administration of the Lord’s Supper. Although in some circumstances anyone can administer the Sacraments/Ordinances of the Church, in Disciples practice it has usually been the duly appointed congregational leaders who administer baptism and the Lord’s Supper. This practice derives not from the “priesthood of all believers” but from early distinctions between the roles of elder and evangelist/preacher. The evangelist, called from outside the congregation, was restricted to ministries of preaching/teaching. The elder(s), called from within the congregation, bore responsibility for congregational governance, including the administration of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. The right and responsibility to preside at the Table is increasingly a role shared by Elders and ministers.

144 as servanthood even though the forms and functions of that ministry were expressed and  
145 authorized in different ways.

146

147 Alexander Campbell

148

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

156

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

159

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.

160 In *The Christian System* he outlined:

161

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

166

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

171

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

175

---

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

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

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

181

182 Barton Warren Stone

183

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

190

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

196

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

209

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

216

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

223

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

228

229 Later Views

230

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

237

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

256

257 Origins of Licensed Ministry

258

259 The 1939 Richmond report commended three criteria for Ordination:

- 260 1. Good moral character and personal fitness for ministry
- 261 2. A full college course, and if possible, graduate training in religion
- 262 3. Experience in Christian work which shows real leadership, vision, pastoral  
263 qualities, and preaching ability

264 Persons who fulfilled points 1 and 3 but not point 2 were accorded Licenses - a new  
265 category of ministry created from the Ordination report.

266

267 Licensed ministry, as we conceive it today, is fairly recent in Disciples history. Barton  
268 Stone was Licensed by the Orange Presbytery of North Carolina as a missionary to the  
269 lower North Carolina area. Alexander Campbell was Licensed to preach at the Brush Run

270 Meeting House in 1811. During the Stone-Campbell era, “licensing to preach” was a trial  
271 period prior to Ordination to see if the candidate had the disposition for ministry and the  
272 qualities for preaching the true gospel without any mixture of human philosophy, deceit,  
273 or rudiments of the world (*cf Last Will and Testament*).

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

282  
283 Emerging Practice at the Turn of the Millennium  
284  
285 Toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the trend toward higher educational standards for  
286 Ordained ministry reached its peak and patterns of preparation began to diversify. Some  
287 Regions determined that a single model of ministerial formation was too restrictive to  
288 serve faithfully the changing contexts of ministry. A few began to utilize criteria that  
289 allowed for the Ordination of ministers without a Master of Divinity degree from an  
290 *Association of Theological Schools* (ATS) accredited seminary. The emergence of these  
291 *de facto* alternate educational tracks led to calls for a review of expectations with an eye  
292 toward developing a new consensus on educational standards for Ordained ministry.

293  
**294 C. Ministry in the Congregation**

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

299  
300 The offices of elder and deacon are ordered by the congregations, through election  
301 and recognition with appropriate ceremony, for the performance of certain  
302 functions of ministry appropriate to the offices.

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

310 b. a person elected deacon is authorized to serve in the congregation which  
311 elects her or him for periods of time which it specifies by assisting in the  
312 ministration of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, in the conduct of worship,  
313 and in the pastoral care and spiritual leadership of the congregation. The

314 diaconate is a voluntary ministry (paragraph 87, *The Design of the Christian*  
315 *Church*).

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

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

#### **D. Order of Ministry**

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

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

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

- ❖ the personal, inward call from God, which leads persons to seek such ministry,
- ❖ the God-given gifts and graces,
- ❖ the personal characteristics and aptitudes, and
- ❖ the preparation and promise (e.g., education, skills, etc.) that they have for effective ministry.

343 By these criteria the church discerns whom it will Commission and/or Ordain.<sup>4</sup>  
344

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

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

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

357  
358 In the development of Disciples understanding of ministry, “Commissioned” ministry is  
359 replacing some forms of “Licensed” ministry. Men and women are authorized and  
360 Commissioned by their Regions to offer ministry in a particular place for a specified period  
361 of time. “The word ‘Commissioned’ means one who is appointed to a position entrusted  
362 with a task, or one who is authorized or sent on behalf of another for a task or proclamation”  
363 (*The Nazareth Consensus*, page 8, para.1).<sup>5</sup>  
364  
365 The term “Commissioned” contains the word “mission,” which sets the stage for a  
366 spiritual expectation. Paul describes himself as one commissioned to preach the gospel as  
367 in Col. 1:25: “I became [the church’s] servant according to God’s *commission* that was  
368 given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known...” (NRSV). In II Corinthians  
369 Paul writes, “But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has *commissioned*  
370 *us*; ...” (II Cor. 1:21, RSV) and again, “For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God’s  
371 word; but as men [and women] of sincerity, as *commissioned* by God, in the sight of God  
372 we speak in Christ” (II Cor. 2:17, RSV).  
373  
374 The word “Commissioned” has been used and continues to be used by the church for  
375 people appointed to various positions or sent forth to carry God’s message. Thus, the  
376 term has ecclesiastical connotations of being entrusted with the tasks of ministry. The use  
377 of the term “commission” or “commissioned” in English translations of Paul’s letters has  
378 further shaped our understanding of the concept in the contemporary setting.  
379  
380 Commissioning is an acknowledgment by the Church of the gifts of the Spirit in the one  
381 commissioned, and a commitment by both the Church and the Commissioned to the new  
382 relationship. Those Commissioned offer their gifts to the Church and commit themselves  
383 to the burden and opportunity of new authority and responsibility. At the same time, they  
384 enter into a collegial relationship with all ministers. By receiving the Commissioned  
385 minister in the act of commissioning, the Church acknowledges the minister’s call and  
386 commits itself to be open to it. This liturgical service occurs in the context of  
387 Congregational worship in partnership with the Region.  
388  
389 **2. Ordained Ministry**  
390  
391 **a. The meaning of Ordination**  
392 In Ordination — through prayers invoking the Holy Spirit and the laying on of  
393 hands — the Church confirms in women and men the call of God, acknowledges  
394 their gifts and graces, and authorizes this ministry in and for the Church.  
395 The act of Ordination by those who are appointed for this ministry attests the bond  
396 of the church with Jesus Christ and the apostolic witness, recalling that it is the  
397 risen Lord who is the true Ordainer and bestows the gift. In Ordaining, the church,

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

398 under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, provides for the faithful proclamation of  
399 the Gospel and humble service in the name of Christ. The laying on of hands is the  
400 sign of the gift of the Spirit, rendering visible the fact that the ministry was  
401 instituted in the revelation accomplished in Christ, and reminding the church to  
402 look to him as the source of its commission. ("Ministry," *Baptism Eucharist and*  
403 *Ministry*, WCC, para. 40.)

404  
405 Disciples understand the meaning of Ordination as an action of God and the  
406 community during which the Ordained are strengthened by the Spirit for their task  
407 and are upheld by the acknowledgment and prayers of the congregation.

408  
409 Ordination sets one apart for leadership in the life and witness of the church. While  
410 the Ordained ministry cannot be reduced to any mere listing of tasks, it may be  
411 identified by leadership with regard to three fundamental aspects of the church's  
412 life and witness:

- 413 (1) acting in servant obedience to God's commandment of love in self-sacrifice on  
414 behalf of others and in a servant life in the world;
- 415 (2) proclaiming the gospel in faithfulness to Jesus Christ by word (teaching and  
416 preaching), by sacrament (Baptism and the Lord's Supper), and by deed  
417 (mission and service);
- 418 (3) overseeing the life of the community in its worship, education, witness,  
419 mission, fellowship, and pastoral nurture through the leading of the Holy Spirit.

420  
421 In selecting men and women for Ordination, the church thus seeks to insure that its  
422 ministry of service, proclamation, and oversight shall be constantly upheld by its  
423 members.

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

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

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

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

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

451 4) *Universal Ministry*: Most appropriately, Ordination is a *rite of the Church*  
452 *Universal*. While Ordination is normally done by a particular denomination,  
453 and Standing is limited to a particular communion, the intention is that no one  
454 is ever Ordained into a particular denomination or tradition, certainly not into  
455 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Those Ordained are representative  
456 ministers of the Church Universal: one, holy, catholic and apostolic. While we  
457 serve with the vision of universality, the Church lives with the pain of a divided  
458 ministry. Nevertheless, all ministers are called to point out the community of  
459 Jesus Christ, to work to bring new expressions of the one universal Church into  
460 being, and to search for forms of unity which the divided churches cannot yet  
461 express.<sup>6</sup>

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

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

469 470 In 1985, the Commission on Theology commended to the whole Church a single  
471 order of Ordained ministry which would include three offices.<sup>7</sup>  
472

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

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

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

476

477 ♦ the *ministry of service* to church and world (the *diaconate* or deacons), where  
478 the active witness and mission of the church as servant is advanced;

479 ♦ the *ministry of proclamation* by Word and Sacrament (the *presbyterate*, or  
480 pastors), where preaching, teaching, and the sacraments/ordinances (Table and  
481 Baptism) of the church are lifted up; and,

482 ♦ the *ministry of oversight* (the *episcopate*, or bishops), where oversight of the  
483 community's life occurs.

484

485 Thus, within a single order of Ordained ministry, there can be three distinct offices  
486 that are at the same time mutually supportive and interrelated. The recognition of  
487 these offices does not carry with it any implications of hierarchical structure. The  
488 three-fold Ordained ministry, taken as a whole, thus re-presents the fundamental  
489 characteristics of ministry shared by all baptized believers. (*A Word to the Church*  
490 *on Ministry*, pp. 3-4.)

491

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

496 **d. The act of Ordination**

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

503

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

509

510 Finally, Ordination is an acknowledgment by the Church of the gifts of the Spirit  
511 in the one Ordained, and a commitment by both the Church and the Ordinand to the  
512 new relationship. By receiving the new minister in the act of Ordination, the Church  
513 acknowledges the minister's gifts and commits itself to be open to these gifts.

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

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

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

514 Likewise those Ordained offer their gifts to the Church and commit themselves to  
515 the burden and opportunity of new authority and responsibility; at the same time,  
516 they enter into a collegial relationship with all ministers.<sup>11</sup>

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

## 520                   **II. Policies and Criteria** 521                   **For The Ordering Of Ministry**

### 522                   **A. Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**

523                   1. *The Order of Ministry.* The Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) comprises Commissioned Ministers and Ordained Ministers.

524                   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:

525                   a. Faith in Jesus Christ, commitment to a life of Christian discipleship and nurturing spiritual practices;

526                   b. A sense of call to the ministry affirmed by the church;

527                   c. An understanding of pastoral identity;

528                   d. Capacity to engage in theological reflection;

529                   e. Strong moral character and personal integrity;

530                   f. Commitment to spiritual, physical and emotional wellness sufficient for healthy ministry;

531                   g. Care and compassion for all people with appropriate relational skills;

532                   h. Responsible personal financial management;

533                   i. Wise and generous stewardship in the use of God's gifts;

534                   j. Skills and abilities necessary for the rigorous, pastoral tasks of ministry.

### 535                   **B. The Commissioned Ministry**

536                   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.

537                   2. Common criteria of Commissioned ministry:

565 In order to be Commissioned ministers persons must:

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

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

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

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

### 588 3. Categories of Commissioned Ministry:

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

### 601 4. Candidacy for Commissioning

- 604 a. *Definition:* Candidacy is that period of time in which the individual who has  
605 received a call to serve a particular ministry is in preparation with the Region  
606 for Commissioning.
- 608 b. Candidacy begins when a person who has received a call from a recognized 609  
610 congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or a recognized non-  
congregational ministry applies to the Region for Commissioning.

611

612     c. *Steps for Candidacy*. The candidate shall:

613

614         1. be a member of a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation;

615         2. have a letter of recommendation from the congregation of which the

616                 applicant is a member;

617         3. complete the *Ministerial Profile*; and

618         4. meet with the Regional Commission on Ministry.

619

620     d. The Region shall assess the spiritual, emotional, moral, intellectual, and educational capacities of the applicant for the practice of ministry. This assessment will be accomplished through such avenues as personal interviews, letters of reference, background checks, psychological and vocational testing, consultation with congregations, and as appropriate, coordination between Regions in reciprocal relationships, and communications with educational institutions.

621

622

623     e. Upon approval, the Region brings the candidate under care and Commissions

624                 her/him for a particular ministry.

625

626

627     5. **Regional Responsibilities:** Specifically assigned to Regions are the responsibilities

628                 to:

629         a. establish procedures to evaluate applicants for Commissioned minister, which

630                 must include the *Ministerial Profile* and a current denominational criminal

631                 background check;

632         b. consult with the appropriate National Pastor/Leader of Racial Ethnic

633                 communities whenever considering a person of color;

634         c. bring applicants “under care”;

635         d. provide for their nurture;

636         e. provide opportunities for building collegiality with other ministers;

637         f. make available appropriate programs of study (such as readings, experiential

638                 learning, intensive weekend seminars, guided reflection on ministerial practice

639                 with a mentor-companion, and distance learning, etc.) in preparation for

640                 ministry;

641         g. authorize the designation of an applicant as a Commissioned Minister;

642         h. offer resources and presence of the Regional Minister or the Regional

643                 Minister’s designee for services of Commissioning;

644         i. oversee formation processes for candidates for Ordination;

645         j. encourage lifelong learning through continuing education opportunities

646                 including training in healthy boundaries and anti-racism; and

647         k. establish additional requirements as desired.

648

649

650

651

652

## 653     **C. The Ordained Ministry**

654

655     1. *Description.* By Ordination the church recognizes the work of the Holy Spirit in calling particular persons to creative and imaginative servanthood in Christ; accepts their ministry in and for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and for the whole

656

657

658 body of Christ; covenants to undergird the ministry; and grants authority to perform  
659 that ministry as a representative of the church. Ordained ministers are baptized 660  
members of a Disciples congregation.

661

662 In accepting Ordination, the minister covenants to obey God by caring for the 663  
church, offering gifts of mind, body and spirit to that service, agreeing to fulfill the  
664 functions of a minister, and adhering to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics* of the 665  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

666

667 Ordained Minister Standing authorizes one to perform ministry on behalf of the 668  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Ordination may or may not meet all the legal  
669 requirements for the performance of marriages.

670

671 Historically called a ministry of word and sacrament, among others, this ministry  
672 may include pastors, educators, ecumenical leaders, recognized congregationally-  
673 based or non-congregationally-based community ministers, chaplains, pastoral 674  
counselors, and ministers who serve in the General and Regional church.

675

676 2. *Educational Requirements.* There are two educational tracks in preparation for 677  
Ordination: an apprentice track (AT) and a seminary track (ST).

678

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

682

683 ❖ Those in the seminary track will demonstrate competency in the 16 areas of 684  
ministerial practice by securing a Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent  
685 from a theological school accredited by the Association of Theological Schools  
686 in the United States and Canada or its equivalent.

687

688 Candidates for Ordination are encouraged to follow the seminary track, unless they  
689 determine, in consultation with their Region, that their economic, linguistic, 690  
vocational, or familial circumstances make the apprentice track more appropriate.  
691 Regardless of the educational track chosen, the church expects the women and men  
692 it Ordains to demonstrate competency in the following areas of ministerial practice,  
693 listed alphabetically:

694

695 **Biblical Knowledge:** Be rooted and grounded in scripture and able to interpret  
696 and apply the scriptures in ways that are appropriate to original and 697  
contemporary contexts.

698

699 **Church Administration and Planning:** Be able to practice the principles of 700  
good administration, planning and implementing short- and long-range goals to  
701 enhance Congregational life in collaboration with teams and committees.

702

703      **Communication:** Be an effective communicator and be able to facilitate 704 effective communication within and on behalf of the church.

705

706      **Cross Cultural and Anti-Racism Experience:** Be sensitive to the different 707 manifestations of racism and prejudice in the culture and be committed to 708 confronting and overcoming them.

709

710      **Ecumenism:** Exhibit a commitment to working with other Christians and 711 denominations and with other faiths in programs of common witness and 712 service, and to articulating the vision of the ecumenical and global church as a 713 starting place for mission.

714

715      **Education and Leader Development:** Know the foundations of Christian 716 education and the principles of leader development. Show competency in 717 teaching children, youth, and adults, including lay leaders and staff.

718

719      **Ethics:** Be able to help parishioners think critically about the relationship of 720 their faith to issues of justice, ethics and morality

721

722      **Evangelism:** Be able to motivate Congregational members to share their faith 723 through word and action.

724

725      **Mission of the Church in the World:** Be able to understand and articulate the 726 centrality of the call to mission given by Jesus Christ and the prophets. Be able 727 to empower congregations to engage in mission from our doorsteps to the ends 728 of the earth.

729

730      **Pastoral Care:** Be able to engage other persons with empathy and assess 731 situations and relationships with the compassion of Christ, with sensitivity to 732 culture and context. Be able to convey the healing power of God to those who 733 suffer.

734

735      **Proclamation of the Word:** Know the practice and theory of Christian 736 preaching. Be able to proclaim the Word of God, share the Good News of Jesus 737 Christ, and help Congregational members apply their faith to daily life.

738

739      **Spiritual Development:** Establish and maintain spiritual disciplines that lead to 740 personal growth and help others develop a rich spiritual life.

741

742      **Stewardship:** Be able to develop and encourage healthy stewards who 743 recognize and share generously God's abundant gifts for all creation.

744

745      **Theology:** Be able to articulate a coherent view of God's nature and activity in 746 relation to the Christian tradition, to critically engage human situations from a 747 perspective of faith, and to help persons recognize theological issues in their 748 daily lives.

749  
750       ***Understanding of Heritage:*** Have knowledge of and appreciation for the 751  
751 history and thought of Christianity and of the history, structure, practices, and  
752 ethos of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).  
753  
754       ***Worship:*** Know the purpose and elements of Christian worship. Have the 755  
755 ability to plan and lead meaningful worship by working with the worship team,  
756 musicians, and Congregational members.  
757  
758       3. Regional Responsibilities:  
759       Regions are strongly encouraged to offer an apprentice track (AT) program on their  
760 own or in collaboration with Regional Fellowships,<sup>12</sup> theological institutions, or  
761 ecumenical partners. Those offering an AT program will submit their curriculum  
762 to the General Commission on Ministry for evaluation.  
763  
764       Specifically assigned to Regions are the responsibilities to:  
765       a. establish procedures to evaluate applicants for Ordination;  
766       b. evaluate the educational experience of candidates for an AT program which 767  
767           would include a high school diploma or its equivalent and some post secondary  
768           educational experience;  
769       c. consult with the appropriate National Pastor/Leader of Racial Ethnic  
770           communities whenever considering a racial/ethnic applicant;  
771       d. bring applicants “under care” (See II.D.3.);  
772       e. provide for their nurture;  
773       f. be in relationship with the sponsoring congregation and the candidate’s  
774           educational setting;  
775       g. authorize and supervise the act of Ordination; and  
776       h. facilitate continuing education including training in healthy boundaries and  
777           anti-racism.

778       **D. Candidacy for Ordination**

779  
780       1. *Definition:* Candidacy is that period of time in which the individual is under the 781  
781 care of a Regional Commission on Ministry and involved in a specified program of  
782           study and formation in preparation for Ordination.  
783

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

784       2. *Application for Candidacy.* Application for candidacy is entered into when a man  
785       or woman declares the intention to seek Ordination through the Christian Church  
786       (Disciples of Christ), and their congregation affirms that intention.  
787

788       3. *The Criteria for Candidacy.* The applicant shall be a baptized member of a Christian  
789       Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation and shall make application for candidacy  
790       to the Region of the candidate's membership or to the Region where she or he is a  
791       student. In special circumstances and subject to agreement between appropriate  
792       Regional Ministers and/or Regional Commissions on Ministry, persons may apply  
793       for candidacy in another Region. The applicant shall have a letter of  
794       recommendation from a recognized congregation of the Christian Church  
795       (Disciples of Christ) in the candidate's Region of membership.  
796

797       Upon receipt of the application, the Region will begin the process of assessing  
798       (through avenues such as personal interviews, letters of reference, background  
799       checks, psychological testing, consultation with congregations, coordination of  
800       Regions in reciprocal relationships, and communications with educational  
801       institutions), the spiritual, emotional, moral, intellectual, and educational capacities  
802       of the applicant for the practice of ministry. Upon approval of the application, the  
803       Region shall admit the applicant to candidacy. Once accepted as a candidate, the  
804       individual comes under the care and direction of the Regional Commission or  
805       Committee on Ministry (or that process which serves to function as a Commission  
806       on Ministry regardless of the name assigned Regionally).  
807

808       4. *The Procedures During Candidacy.* The candidate shall seek Ordination through a  
809       discernment process established by the Region. That preparation may include  
810       authorization as a Commissioned Minister (Seeking Ordination). The candidate  
811       may complete the educational requirements for either track without serving as a  
812       Commissioned Minister.  
813

814       Separate from candidacy, Commissioned Minister status authorizes one to perform  
815       ministry on behalf of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The granting of  
816       candidacy may or may not meet all legal requirements for the performance of  
817       marriages.  
818

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

823           a. Participation in the life and work of a congregation of Christians;  
824

825           b. Breadth of theological study so that the candidate shows an  
826           understanding of the Christian faith, the Bible, the church universal, the  
827           history and polity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and the  
828           formation and function of Christian mission;

829

- c. Professional and ecclesiological study plus supervised experience in the work of ministry, exhibiting competencies in that form of ministry in which the candidate hopes to serve;
- d. Formation of responsible relations with and concern for the church, both as communities of faith and as institution;
- e. Growth in personal character, Christian insight, spiritual formation, wellness and disciplined commitment to ministry;
- f. Formation of and adherence to ethical principles to guide professional relationships and personal conduct as outlined in the *Ministerial Code of Ethics of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*.

6. *Conclusion of Candidacy.* Completion of a prescribed program of study 846 (apprentice track) or the receipt of a Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent 847 from an institution of higher education accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (seminary track) does not guarantee Ordination.

Candidacy is concluded by Ordination, voluntary withdrawal by the candidate, or decision of the Region to terminate candidacy. Completion of candidacy within 852 seven years is recommended, but may be extended at the discretion of the Region.

## **The Act of Ordination**

ation is a process of the Congregational and Regional Church on behalf of the whole 853 to commend to Christians everywhere individuals who meet the qualifications and 854 held the requirements established by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) 859 for 1.

- 1. The candidate shall be recommended for Ordination by a recognized congregation or congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), including the one in which membership is held.
- 2. The act of Ordination shall be under the authorization and guidance of the 866 sponsoring congregation and the Region, with the Regional Minister, or the 867 Regional Minister's designee, presiding.

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

877

## 878        **F. Ministerial Standing**

880        1. *Definition.* Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is credentialing  
881        for ministry within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), a call to 882  
882        accountability to the church, and collegiality with other ministers both 883  
883        denominationally and ecumenically.

884

885        a. Standing affirms that the Commissioned or Ordained minister is currently 886  
886        engaged in the practice of ministry, whether on an occasional, part-time or  
887        full-time basis, with continuous accountability maintained with a 888  
888        congregation, related organization or institution, Region, or General Ministry  
889        of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Such ministers are listed in the  
890        *Year Book and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* and  
891        may call upon the church for services and support such as pastoral care, 892  
892        ecclesiastical endorsement, and scholarship aid. In addition they have voting  
893        privileges in the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of 894  
894        Christ).

895

896        b. Ordained ministers with Standing have access to Search and Call. Candidates  
897        for Ordination may be granted access to Search and Call at the discretion of  
898        the Regional Minister of the Region where they are under care or the Region  
899        of their educational setting.

900

901        c. Responsibility for certification of Standing of ministers and for annual review  
902        of that Standing within the Order of Ministry is lodged with the Region where  
903        the minister is currently engaged in the practice of ministry. Nothing in the  
904        Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry is intended to preclude a 905  
905        Region from developing additional appropriate statements or procedures 906  
906        pertaining to Standing within that Region as long as such statements are 907  
907        consistent with the Order of Ministry.

908

909        d. For those engaged in non-Regional ministries responsibility for certification  
910        of Standing and for annual review of that Standing within the Order of 911  
911        Ministry is lodged with the General Commission on Ministry. For purposes  
912        of this document, non-Regional ministries are defined as all ministries outside  
913        the United States and Canada, those ministries engaged by and accountable  
914        to one of the General Ministries of the church, ministries of the ecumenical  
915        church and with interfaith organizations whose responsibilities extend beyond  
916        one Region, whether in North America or abroad, and fulltime military, VA  
917        and Federal Correctional chaplaincies. All other ministries are hereby defined  
918        as Regional as determined by the primary ministry site. The General 919  
919        Commission on Ministry has a credentialing function but is not an Ordaining  
920        body; that is the province of Regions in cooperation with congregations. In

921 covenant with the Regions, the General Commission on Ministry will notify  
922 Regions about persons who reside in their Region and hold Standing with the  
923 General Commission on Ministry.

924  
925 e. Since Regional Ministers “serve as a sign of the ministry of the church in 926  
926 sacrament and service” and lead Regions in promoting “the concept of whole  
927 church, and have a primary role in advocating and supporting the 928  
928 denomination’s mission and vision” (*Marks of a Faithful Regional Church*,  
929 August, 2006), the responsibility for certification of Standing is jointly lodged  
930 with the Region where the Regional Minister serves and with the General 931  
931 Commission on Ministry. Annually, the Regional Minister will complete 932  
932 Standing forms required by both the Region and the General Commission on  
933 Ministry.

934  
935 2. *Certification of Standing of those Commissioned and Ordained by the Christian*  
936 *Church (Disciples of Christ)*

937  
938 a. By virtue of Commissioning or Ordination according to the Order of Ministry  
939 of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the minister becomes eligible  
940 for Standing.

941  
942 b. Standing for ministers in active service continues so long as the minister does  
943 and reports the following:

944  
945 i. Performs faithfully the duties of a minister as authorized by  
946 Commissioning or Ordination, either in an occupation recognized  
947 by the church as ministerial in purpose or in a service recognized by  
948 the church as ministerial in purpose.

949  
950 ii. Participates regularly in programs of study, growth, and renewal.

951  
952 iii. Maintains relations with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
953 including participating membership in a recognized congregation in  
954 the community of residence or active ministry where feasible.

955  
956 iv. Adheres to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics of the Christian Church*  
957 *(Disciples of Christ)*.

958  
959 v. Continues to meet the personal qualifications for admission to the  
960 Order of Ministry. (II.A.2.)

961  
962 vi. Seeks annual certification as requested by the Region where the  
963 ministry site is located or by the General Commission on Ministry,  
964 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.
- 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.

*Certification of Standing of Retired Ministers, Commissioned or Ordained by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*

- Upon retirement, Commissioned Minister 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.
- 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. (R-a)
  - iii. To be eligible for such Standing, the active retired minister

1013  
1014 a) Performs faithfully the duties of a minister as authorized by  
1015 Commissioning or Ordination, either in an occupation recognized by  
1016 the church as ministerial in purpose or in a service recognized by the  
1017 church as ministerial in purpose.  
1018  
1019 b) Participates regularly in programs of study, growth, and renewal.  
1020  
1021 c) Maintains relations with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
1022 including participating membership in a recognized congregation in the  
1023 community of residence or active ministry where feasible.  
1024  
1025 d) Continues to meet the personal qualifications for admission to the Order  
1026 of Ministry (II.A.2) and to adhere to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics*  
1027  
1028 iv. Retired ministers who are no longer engaging in the practice of ministry on  
1029 an occasional, part-time or full time basis may seek Standing as inactive  
1030 retired ministers.  
1031  
1032 a) Retired ministers who are granted inactive status will continue to be  
1033 listed in the *Yearbook of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* as  
1034 inactive, retired ministers (R-i).  
1035  
1036 b) Inactive retired ministers must continue to seek annual certification of  
1037 Standing as requested by the Region where they reside.  
1038  
1039 c) To be eligible for such Standing, the inactive retired minister must  
1040 continue to adhere to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics* and must hold  
1041 participating membership in a recognized Disciples congregation in the  
1042 community of residence where feasible.  
1043  
1044 v. If an inactive retired minister decides to once again take up the practice of  
1045 ministry, that minister must once again seek status as an active retired  
1046 minister. (See 3.c.i-iv)

1047  
1048 4. *Suspension or Termination of Ministerial Standing.*

1049  
1050 a. Procedures leading to a review of Standing may be initiated by the minister,  
1051 the Region, or the General Commission on Ministry when one or more of the  
1052 following conditions are present:  
1053  
1054 i. The minister desires to be released from the practice of ministry, either  
1055 temporarily or permanently.  
1056  
1057 ii. The minister requests transfer of credentials from the Christian Church  
1058 (Disciples of Christ) to another denomination or non-Disciples  
1059 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*.

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

1106       Commission on Ministry shall address any outstanding allegations of misconduct  
1107       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**

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

1118 The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ  
1119 recognize the Ordained ministries of the other church to be efficacious ministries  
1120 of grace within that church and these ministries to be valid and full ministries of  
1121 the one Church of Jesus Christ.  
1122

1123 The Ordained ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the  
1124 United Church of Christ are reconciled. An Ordained minister with Ordained  
1125 ministerial Standing in one church may function, whenever invited, and as  
1126 established procedures permit, as an Ordained minister of the other.

1127 The designations "Ordained Ministerial Partner" and "Ordained Ministerial  
1128 Partner Standing" manifest the corporate and individual nature of the recognition  
1129 and reconciliation of the Ordained ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of  
1130 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 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 Ministry where the minister resides, that Ordained Ministerial Partner may be granted access to the Search and Call process in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is not given at this point in the process.
- ii. A United Church of Christ Ordained Ministerial Partner who secures a call in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) applies for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing to the Region in which the Ordained minister's calling body is located. Once granted, Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing is reviewed by the Region for certification annually.
- iii. A United Church of Christ Ordained minister has Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) only when serving a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) calling body.
- iv. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall maintain Ordained ministerial Standing in the United Church of Christ.
- v. Ordained ministerial Standing shall be held in the association in which the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) calling body is located.
- vi. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing shall maintain relations with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) including (where feasible) holding associate membership in a recognized Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation in the community.
- vii. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in a Region has voting privileges in the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- viii. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall relate to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for his/her primary support in Ordained ministry.

1193 ix. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial  
1194 Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall be  
1195 accountable to the Region for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing and  
1196 to the United Church of Christ for Ordained ministerial Standing.

1197 x. When a disciplinary review is instituted in relation to the United Church  
1198 of Christ minister holding Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the  
1199 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the association of the United  
1200 Church of Christ in which the United Church of Christ minister's  
1201 Ordained ministerial Standing is maintained, shall be informed and  
1202 invited to participate in the procedures.  
1203

1204 xi. When a United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained  
1205 Ministerial Partner Standing with the Christian Church (Disciples of  
1206 Christ) accepts a call in another Region, he/she shall be subject to review  
1207 and subsequent annual certification of Ordained Ministerial Partner  
1208 Standing by the new Region.  
1209

1210 Recognition of Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing may be granted by the  
1211 General Commission on Ministry to an Ordained minister with Standing in the  
1212 United Church of Christ who serves as a National Officer or in a joint ministry  
1213 position for both churches.  
1214

1215 e. *Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) ministers with Ordained Ministerial  
1216 Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ.*

1217 Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing is recognition granted to an Ordained  
1218 minister with Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who has  
1219 been called to an Ordained ministry setting in the United Church of Christ.  
1220 Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing provides ongoing ecclesiastical  
1221 authorization to exercise the rights and responsibilities of Ordained ministry in  
1222 the United Church of Christ.  
1223

1224 i. Once a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Ordained minister has  
1225 demonstrated knowledge of and appreciation for the history, polity, and  
1226 practices of the United Church of Christ to the Association Committee  
1227 where the minister resides, that Ordained ministerial partner may be  
1228 granted access to the Search and Call process in the United Church of  
1229 Christ. Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of  
1230 Christ is not given at this point in the process.  
1231

1232 ii. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Ordained Ministerial Partner who  
1233 secures a call in the United Church of Christ applies for Ordained  
1234 Ministerial Partner Standing to the Association in which the Ordained  
1235 minister's calling body is located. Once granted, Ordained Ministerial  
1236 Partner Standing is reviewed by the Association annually.  
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- iii. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Ordained minister has Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ only when serving a United Church of Christ calling body.
- iv. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ shall maintain Ordained ministerial Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- v. Ordained ministerial Standing shall be held in the Region in which the United Church of Christ calling body is located.
- vi. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing shall maintain relations with the United Church of Christ including (where feasible) holding associate membership in a recognized United Church of Christ congregation in the community.
- vii. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in an Association has voting privileges in the Association and Conference and is eligible for election as a delegate to General Synod or election as a member of any Covenanted Ministry Board in the United Church of Christ.
- viii. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ shall relate to the United Church of Christ for his/her primary support in Ordained ministry.
- ix. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ shall be accountable to the Association for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing and to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for Ordained ministerial Standing.
- x. When a disciplinary review is instituted in relation to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister holding Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ, the Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in which the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister's Ordained ministerial Standing is maintained, shall be informed and invited to participate in the procedures.
- xi. When a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing with the United Church of Christ accepts a call in another Association, he/she shall be subject to review and

1284 transfer of the Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing to the new  
1285 Association.

1286 Recognition of Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing may be granted by the  
1287 appropriate United Church of Christ Association to an Ordained minister with  
1288 Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who serves as a General  
1289 Ministry Executive or in a joint ministry position for both churches.

1290

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

1298

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

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

1303 ii. Satisfactory investigation of personal and ministerial references and a  
1304 criminal background check.

1305 iii. Filing of appropriate forms with the Region to which the applicant is  
1306 applying or with the General Commission on Ministry.

1307 iv. Provisional or temporary Standing shall be reviewed annually by either the  
1308 granting Region or the General Commission on Ministry.

1309 b. Removal of the provisional or temporary conditions for Standing may be  
1310 granted by the Region or the General Commission on Ministry upon fulfillment  
1311 of the following requirements:

1312 i. Membership in a recognized congregation of the Christian Church  
1313 (Disciples of Christ).

1314 ii. Demonstrated knowledge and appreciation for the history, polity, and  
1315 practices of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

1316 iii. Fulfillment of the prerequisites and preparation, including educational  
1317 attainment, for the Order of Ministry.

1318 iv. One year minimum service under the supervision or mentoring of a  
1319 Disciples of Christ minister with Standing.

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1331 v. Manifesting the personal qualifications for the order of ministry as listed  
1332 in item II.A.2.

1333  
1334 vi. Commitment to adhere to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics of the Christian*  
1335 *Church (Disciples of Christ)*.

## **H. Ministerial Search and Call**

1340  
1341 1. *The General Principles.* Ministerial Search and Call is the term applied to the  
1342 process developed to facilitate the calling of ministers who hold Standing in the  
1343 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

1344  
1345 a. The covenantal relationship among ministers, Congregations, Regions, and  
1346 General Ministries of the church serves to build up the whole church of Jesus  
1347 Christ. This document identifies general principles for ministerial Search and  
1348 Call. The Office of Search and Call (Disciples Home Missions) administers  
1349 these procedures of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

1350  
1351 b. Freedom and responsibility are inherent in the tradition of the Christian Church  
1352 (Disciples of Christ). Congregations, Regions, and General Ministries of the  
1353 church are accorded full freedom to issue ministerial calls within their own  
1354 established or constitutional provisions. Ministers, likewise, are accorded full  
1355 freedom to accept or reject a call to any particular service. All, however,  
1356 covenant to work within the Order of Ministry in the interest of assuring an  
1357 orderly and responsible system of Search and Call.

1358  
1359 c. The Church is best served when Regional Ministers and National  
1360 Pastors/Leaders of Racial Ethnic communities work together covenantally in  
1361 the Search and Call process. Primary responsibility for the Search and Call  
1362 process is lodged with the Regions. Regions are encouraged to consult the  
1363 National Pastors/Leaders. National Pastors/Leaders may offer their counsel to  
1364 the Regional Minister in Search and Call with the understanding that the  
1365 primary responsibility for Search and Call lies with the Region.

1366  
1367 2 *Operating Principles.*

1368  
1369 a. Ordained ministers with Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of  
1370 Christ) will have complete and unhindered access to Search and Call of the  
1371 church.

- b. Commissioned ministers with Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will have access to Search and Call. Circulation of their Search and Call forms is normally limited to the Region for which their ministry is commissioned.
- c. At the discretion of the Region of care candidates for Ordination may be granted authorized access to Search and Call.
- d. Ordained Ministerial Partners with Standing in the United Church of Christ will have complete and unhindered access to Search and Call of the church once they have been qualified by a Region to seek a call.
- e. Congregations, Regions, institutions, and General Ministries of the church will be provided assistance from the Office of Search and Call.
- f. Any Search and Call forms in the Office of Search and Call will be open to the minister concerned except for confidential references for which a waiver has been signed.
- g. Confidentiality, when assured to the persons completing the reference forms, will not be violated.
- h. All candidates for Ordination with authorized access to Search and Call and Ordained Ministers with Standing may be considered for any ministerial position.
  - i. All candidates for Ordination with authorized access to Search and Call and Ordained Ministers with Standing shall have access to information regarding available ministerial openings in the church.
  - j. Every congregation, Region, educational or related institution, and General Ministry will strive to be open to the ministry of all persons putting aside prejudice and considering candidates based on gifts and skills for ministry.

*Responsibilities.* It is expected that all parties using Search and Call will abide by the established procedures of the Office of Search and Call.

- a. Ministers. Commissioned and Ordained ministers with Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) have the responsibility to seek the advice and counsel of the Region within which they hold Standing and to avail themselves of the resources of the Office of Search and Call. They have the freedom to accept or reject any call offered to them, and to negotiate whatever terms of call or service seem appropriate. In all matters, ministers will function within the covenantal relationship of the whole church.

1420 i. Ministers will provide information for a permanent file to the Office  
1421 of Search and Call upon entry into the ministry of the Christian  
1422 Church (Disciples of Christ) and maintain current data in that file.

1423 ii. For purposes of Search and Call, the minister will update the  
1424 *Ministerial Profile* and complete reference requests, the *Ministerial*  
1425 *Disclosure Form* and criminal background check. The Search and Call  
1426 forms will be circulated as prepared and submitted by the minister.

1427 iii. Ordained ministers seeking a call shall utilize the process provided  
1428 by the Office of Search and Call.

1429 iv. Commissioned ministers (seeking ordination and not seeking  
1430 ordination) who desire to relocate shall request the assistance of  
1431 the appropriate Regional or Area Ministers.

1432 v. Ministers will be as specific and honest as possible about any  
1433 limiting factors in relocation, such as geographical preferences and  
1434 salary requirements.

1435 vi. Ministers will instruct the Office of Search and Call to send  
1436 reference forms to the persons whom they have identified as  
1437 references. It is the responsibility of the minister to ensure that these  
1438 persons complete and submit the reference forms. Once received,  
1439 references will be held and submit the reference forms. Once  
1440 received, references will be held in confidence from the minister if a  
1441 waiver has been signed by the minister.

1442 vii. Ministers will negotiate with only one congregation at a time. A  
1443 search committee and candidate are “in negotiation” when both  
1444 agree that they will not discuss relocation with any other search  
1445 committee or candidate until either party declares negotiations  
1446 ended. It is the obligation of ministers to be specific with  
1447 congregations about their degree of interest.

1448 viii. Ministers will stay in communication with search committees who  
1449 have indicated interest, especially informing a congregation  
1450 **immediately** when a decision has been made not to consider  
1451 accepting a call to that particular congregation.

1452 ix. Ministers will contact the appropriate Region if they wish to be a  
1453 candidate for a specific congregation in that Region and request that  
1454 their name be submitted to the search committee.

1455 x. Ministers will not initiate Search and Call by contacting a  
1456 congregation directly.

1457 xi. Ministers will advise the Region, if contacted directly by a  
1458 congregation, should mutual interest in exploring a possible call be  
1459 determined.

1460 xii. Ministers will advise the Region where currently located, the Region  
1461 where moving, the Office of Search and Call, and the Pension Fund,  
1462 as soon as a call has been accepted.

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1465 b. Congregations. Within the tradition of the Christian Church (Disciples of  
1466 Christ) and according to *The Design*, congregations have the right and  
1467 responsibility to seek and call their own leadership, to establish the terms of  
1468 call, to undergird the ministry, and to effect terminations within their own  
1469 procedures. In all matters, congregations will function within the covenantal  
1470 relationship of the whole church and are encouraged to seek the advice and  
1471 counsel of the Region/Area.

1472

1473 i. Congregations will advise Regions of impending vacancies and work  
1474 within Regional procedures to receive advice and counsel in seeking  
1475 ministerial leadership.

1476 ii. Congregations will have freedom to consider any minister with  
1477 standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or any Ordained  
1478 Ministerial Partner who has been qualified by a Region to seek a call.  
1479 The congregation should inform the Region and request biographical  
1480 and reference material on all ministers it wishes to consider.

1481 iii. Congregations will keep the Region informed of all names being  
1482 considered, including persons who apply directly to the congregation  
1483 and persons whose names are suggested by members of the  
1484 congregation.

1485 iv. Congregations will be fair and open in the consideration of all  
1486 candidates putting aside prejudice and considering candidates based  
1487 on gifts and skills for ministry.

1488 v. The congregational search committee will treat with confidentiality all  
1489 information including personal biographical information and  
1490 reference material, taking care to ensure that the information does  
1491 not go beyond the search committee. When the call has been issued  
1492 and accepted, all records relating to the minister called to serve,  
1493 including any minutes of the search committee regarding that  
1494 minister, shall be given to the Region for reasons of safekeeping and  
1495 confidentiality. All records relating to other candidates in the search  
1496 process shall be destroyed.

1497 vi. The congregational search committee will stay in communication with  
1498 candidates whom the search committee has contacted. The search  
1499 committee will inform, in a timely manner, candidates who are no  
1500 longer being considered for the position.

1501 vii. The search committee will inform, in a timely manner, candidates  
1502 who are no longer being considered for the position.

1503 viii. The congregational search committee may talk with a number of  
1504 candidates concurrently but will negotiate with only one at a time. A  
1505 search committee and candidate are "in negotiation" when both  
1506 agree that they will not discuss relocation with any other candidate or  
1507 search committee until either party declares negotiations ended. It is

1508

- the obligation of the search committee to be specific with the minister about its degree of interest.
- ix. Congregations will issue a Letter of Call providing copies of the call for the congregation, the minister, the Region, and the Office of Search and Call.
- x. Congregations will reimburse the called candidate for the Criminal Background Check.
- xi. Congregations will provide a fair salary (including housing allowance–parsonage provision) within the capabilities of the congregation, as well as adequate benefits (pension, health insurance, continuing education, vacation, sabbatical and Social Security offset).
- xii. Congregations will provide for the reimbursement of church-related expenses to cover actual expenses of accomplishing ministry.

c. Regions. Regions bear the primary responsibility for providing advice and counsel to both congregations and ministers in Search and Call. Regions will work collaboratively with General Racial Ethnic Ministries to address ministerial vacancies among their constituencies. Regions may delegate or share this responsibility with their areas, districts or other subdivisions. In all matters, Regions will function within the covenantal relationship of the whole church.

- i. Each Region will provide advice and counsel to congregations either at the request of the congregation or at the initiation of the Region when it is known that new ministerial leadership is being or will be sought.
- ii. Each Region will receive and review all ministerial search and call materials from the Office of Search and Call, giving special attention to those persons who have indicated an interest in their Region.
- iii. Each Region will refer all ministers within the Region who wish to seek relocation to the Office of Search and Call for entry into Search and Call.
- iv. Each Region will share with search committees Search and Call forms of a selection of candidates who appear to meet the requirements of the congregations and institutions with whom the Region is working.
- v. Each Region will encourage congregations to give fair and equal consideration to candidates putting aside prejudice and considering candidates based on gifts and skills for ministry.
- vi. Each Region will share with specific search committees Search and Call forms of any minister with Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), or any Ordained Ministerial Partner qualified by

1552 a Region to seek a call, who requests consideration in that congregation.

1553

1554 vii. Each Region will maintain a list of churches seeking ministerial leadership in the Region and make it available upon request to ministers with Standing.

1555

1556 viii. If a Region is contacted by a search committee about a minister not actively seeking a call, the Region will inquire about that minister's interest. The minister has the right to know the name and location of the interested congregation. If said minister is interested, the Region will direct said minister to Search and Call.

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1562 ix. Each Region will provide, upon request of ministers seeking a call, a list of congregations which have received their *Ministerial Profile*.

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1564 x. Each Region will treat all Search and Call forms with strict confidentiality.

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1566 xi. Each Region will communicate to the Office of Search and Call any formal actions and decisions to remove Standing for misconduct of a minister. The minister shall be informed and given a copy of the report which will also be placed in the minister's file. (See also J. 1. below.)

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1571 xii. Each Region will refer all requests for assistance from congregations outside the Region to the appropriate Regional office.

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1574 xiii. Each Region will regularly notify the Office of Search and Call of all relocations occurring within, to, or from the Region.

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1577 xiv. Each Region will authorize access to Search and Call to

1578 a. candidates for ordination whose ordinations have been authorized in their Region and

1579 b. Ordained ministers from other denominations who have been given temporary recognition and who are in the process of transferring Standing to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

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1582 xv. Each Region will make information available about Regional staff vacancies through such channels as denominational websites, Regional publications, Disciples Home Missions, and other publications.

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1586 d. Disciples Home Missions. The Office of Search and Call at Disciples Home Missions is the primary locus of the ministerial records of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) related to Search and Call and is responsible for coordinating the Search and Call process of the church. In all matters, Disciples Home Missions will function within the covenantal relationship of the whole church.

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1594 i. The Office of Search and Call will maintain the permanent files of all ministers in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

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1596 ii. The Office of Search and Call will maintain the Ministers Directory of  
1597 the Year Book and Directory reflecting the current listing of ministers  
1598 with Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) as reported  
1599 by the Regions and the General Commission on Ministry.

1600 iii. The Office of Search and Call will receive, process and make available  
1601 Search and Call materials of ministers with Standing in the Christian  
1602 Church (Disciples of Christ), Qualified Ordained Ministerial Partners,  
1603 and others authorized by Regions to Regions and General Ministries.  
1604 The Search and Call forms will be circulated as prepared and  
1605 submitted by the minister.

1606 iv. The Office of Search and Call will collect and release reference  
1607 material to Regions or General Ministries upon permission of the  
1608 minister applying for Search and Call assistance.

1609 v. The Office of Search and Call will protect the confidentiality of  
1610 references when confidentiality has been promised.

1611 vi. The Office of Search and Call will secure permission from any minister  
1612 not actively seeking a call before releasing references to Regions or  
1613 General Ministries. The minister has the right to know the name and  
1614 location of the interested congregation. Information in the  
1615 permanent file may be released without permission to Regional  
1616 Ministers or to the Chair of the General Commission on Ministry in  
1617 regard to ethical and conduct matters.

1618 vii. The Office of Search and Call will secure, maintain, and release to  
1619 Regions, and on request, to ministers with Standing, a list of staff  
1620 vacancies in regions, general units of the Christian Church (Disciples  
1621 of Christ) and ecumenical organizations.

1622 viii. The Office of Search and Call will make available education and  
1623 informational materials regarding Search and Call to congregations,  
1624 Regions, institutions and General Ministries.

1625 ix. The Office of Search and Call will refer all requests from  
1626 congregations for names of potential candidates to the appropriate  
1627 Regions.

1628 x. The Office of Search and Call will refer all candidates for Ordination  
1629 seeking student preaching/pastoral positions to the field education  
1630 office of the appropriate institution or to the Region.

1631 xi. The Office of Search and Call will share with Regions, and where  
1632 appropriate, General Ministries, the record of any formal action by a  
1633 Region's commission on the ministry or the General Commission on  
1634 Ministry concerning the conduct of a minister who is entering Search  
1635 and Call.

1636 e. Educational institutions. The undergraduate departments of religion and the  
1637 theological educational institutions have unique responsibilities with respect  
1638 to the search and call process of the church. Each relates to a limited number  
1639

1640 of congregations in which pre-theological and theological students may be  
1641 serving. The theological institutions have responsibility for relating their  
1642 graduating students who are candidates for Standing as Ordained ministers  
1643 in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to Search and Call. In Search and  
1644 Call, educational institutions will function within the covenantal relationship  
1645 of the whole church.

1646

1647

1648 i. Educational institutions will relate to congregations served by  
1649 students in partnership with the Region in matters pertaining to the  
1650 employment of students during their pre-theological and theological  
1651 education.

1652 ii. Educational institutions will refer requests from congregations for  
1653 search and call assistance that is outside the student field placement  
1654 process to the appropriate Region.

1655 iii. Educational institutions will cooperate with Regions in orienting  
1656 students to the Search and Call process of the church.

1657

1658 f. General Ministries. In all matters, General Ministries will function within the  
1659 covenantal relationship of the whole church.

1660

1661 i. General Ministries will refer all requests for Search and Call assistance  
1662 to the Office of Search and Call and the appropriate Regional  
1663 Minister. They will refer requests for candidates' names to the  
1664 appropriate Region.

1665 ii. General racial/ethnic ministries will work collaboratively with Regions  
1666 to address ministerial vacancies among their constituencies.

1667

1668 4. *Right of Review and Counsel.* The right to review and counsel is limited to  
1669 perceived violations of Search and Call and should be initiated with the  
1670 appropriate Region, institution or General Ministry. A request for review and  
1671 counsel beyond the Region shall be to the General Commission on Ministry.  
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1673

1674 **I. Ministerial Code of Ethics**

1675 Believing that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God, and proclaiming him Lord and  
1676 Savior of the world, I reaffirm my vows as a minister. Through dedication and discipline I  
1677 will lead and serve with integrity. Relying on the grace of God, I commit myself to the  
1678 following:

1679

1680 **Personal Conduct**

1681

1682 • Witnessing to the ministry of Jesus Christ

1683

- 1684     • Dedicating time, strength, vitality, and energy for effective ministry
- 1685     • Growing in faith, knowledge, and the practice of ministry through the spiritual disciplines, study, continuing education, and service
- 1686     • Living a life that honors my commitments to my family, including the need for privacy and time together
- 1687     • Taking time for physical and spiritual renewal, recreation, and vacation
- 1688     • Being a faithful steward of God's gifts to me by managing time, talents, and financial resources responsibly and generously
- 1689     • Accepting responsibility for all debts that I incur
- 1690     • Keeping physically and emotionally fit and refraining from substance abuse and other abusive behaviors
- 1691     • Using my position, power, and authority in non-exploitive ways
- 1692     • Maintaining high moral standards in my sexual behavior
- 1693     • Regarding all persons with equal respect and concern and undertaking to minister impartially
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- 1696
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- 1699

*Relationships to the Church which I Serve*

- 1700     • Nurturing and offering my gifts for ministry to the church
- 1701     • Calling forth and nurturing the gifts of others in the church and joining their gifts with mine for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ and the health of the church
- 1702     • Preaching and teaching the gospel without fear or favor and speaking the truth in love
- 1703     • Administering the sacraments/ordinances and services of the church with integrity and not for financial gain
- 1704     • Working cooperatively and collegially with those whom I serve in the particular ministry to which I have been called
- 1705     • Administering the corporate finances of the church with personal integrity
- 1706     • Refraining from accepting any gift which would compromise the church's ministry
- 1707     • Protecting confidences; covenanting to only tell those who need to know, what they need to know, when they need to know it
- 1708     • Acting to prevent and to report known or suspected cases of physical or sexual abuse or neglect
- 1709     • Encouraging and participating in the regular evaluation of my ministry and cooperating with the Region in the annual review of my ministerial Standing
- 1710     • Seeking the counsel of the Regional Minister and/or the Racial/Ethnic Executive Pastor as appropriate should divisive tensions threaten my relationship with those I serve
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*Relationships to Ministry Colleagues*

- 1722     • Engaging in covenantal relationships with colleagues which involve nurture, discipline, family support, vigorous dialogue, mutual teaching/learning, and spiritual formation
- 1723     • Supporting colleagues in ministry and their families while not exploiting their problems or crises
- 1724
- 1725
- 1726
- 1727

- Performing pastoral services within another congregation or for a member of another congregation only at the request of that congregation's current pastor and elders
- Supporting and at no time speaking maliciously of the ministry of my predecessors or another minister
- Encouraging the ministry of my successor upon my retirement or other departure from a ministry position, without interfering or intruding and by making it clear to former parishioners that I am no longer their pastor nor will I perform any pastoral services unless requested by the congregation's current pastor and elders

1737 *Relationships to the Community and the Wider Church*

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

1748 **J. Misconduct**

1750 The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) understands ministerial misconduct to be activity which violates the covenantal character of the ministerial office as expressed in the Ministerial Code of Ethics. Investigation and adjudication of violations of the Ministerial Code of Ethics shall be the responsibility of the Region through the committee or Commission on Ministry or the General Commission on Ministry.

1756 1. *Reporting*

1759 Regions or the General Commission on Ministry will report formal actions and decisions to remove Standing for misconduct to the Office of Search and Call, Disciples Home Missions, and these actions will be communicated to all Regions.

1762 2. *Suspension of Standing*

1764 In extreme situations of alleged misconduct, ministerial Standing may be 1765 temporarily suspended by the Region or the General Commission on Ministry 1766 during the period of investigation and adjudication.

1768 3. *Sexual Misconduct*

- a. It is the responsibility of each Region to have specific definitions of sexual misconduct and procedures for receiving, investigating, and adjudicating sexual misconduct charges of ministers with Standing in the Region. Each

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

## **K. Right of Appeal**

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

## L. Amendment Process

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

1820 Theological Foundations and Revised Policies and Criteria approved Indianapolis  
1821 General Assembly 2009  
1822 Section II.H. on Ministerial Search and Call amended General Board 2009

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1823  
1824 Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for The Ordering of Ministry, 2009, is  
1825 an operating document of the General Commission on Ministry, effective August 2011.  
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