

COMMISSION ON MINISTRY ORDERING OF MINISTRY MANUAL

Introduction

In "The Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)," the church recognizes an *Order of Ministry*, set apart or ordained, under God. The Design authorizes the General Assembly to approve general policies and criteria for the Order of Ministry and assigns Regions responsibility for the Order of Ministry.

This document describes how the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in North Carolina (referred to in this document as "the Region") seeks to respond to its responsibility for the Order of Ministry through its Commission on Ministry. This document includes: 1) basic assumptions about the ordering of ministry; 2) structures to support the ordering of ministry; and 3) basic policies and procedures to maintain the ordering of ministry.

This document is in compliance with "Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)."

The appendix contains policies and procedures, which expand or elaborate on those found in the basic document, as well as additional supportive procedures, guidelines and forms to facilitate the work of the Commission on Ministry in providing a comprehensive support system. Items in the appendix may be changed from time to time by the Commission on Ministry. These changes will be reported to the Regional Board. Items in the basic document may be changed by the Regional Board.

This document replaces the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in North Carolina Commission on Ministry Policy Statement of 1998.

Purpose

The purpose of the Commission is to oversee and implement the policies of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in North Carolina regarding the offices of ministry, including overseeing the preparation of individuals for the vocation of ministry, nurturing those serving in ministry and maintaining the ministerial standing of ministers serving in the Region of North Carolina.

Organization

Composition

The Commission on Ministry shall be composed of twelve (12) members, with three (3) members elected each year by the Regional Assembly for a term of four (4) years. The

2

Commission shall have six (6) lay members and six (6) ordained members, with awareness of the various constituency groups that should be represented in the membership. The Regional Minister shall serve as ex officio without vote. Individuals under care of the Commission shall not serve as members.

Officers

The Commission shall have the following officers: chairperson, vice chairperson and secretary. The officers shall be elected to a two-year term of office, subject to succession once. The officers (with the exception of the chairperson of the Commission who is appointed by the Moderator and Regional Minister, subject to approval by the Executive Committee) shall be elected by the Commission.

Duties of Officers

The *chairperson* shall preside over regular and called meetings of the Commission, shall serve on the Regional Board and prepare written reports for the Board for each Board meeting and for the Regional Assembly and shall, in consultation with the Regional Ministry Staff, prepare agenda for the Commission meetings.

The *vice chairperson* shall preside over regular and called meetings of the Commission in the absence of the Chairperson and shall perform other duties as may be assigned from time to time by mutual consent.

The *secretary* shall take minutes of regular and called meetings of the Commission and submit them to the Chair for distribution to the Commission.

Policies and Procedures for Maintaining the Order of Ministry

Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

The Order of Ministry

The Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) comprises commissioned ministers and ordained ministers.

Personal Qualifications for the Order of Ministry

The following qualities are expected of persons seeking to be candidates for the Order of Ministry:

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

3

2. A sense of call to the ministry affirmed by the church;
3. An understanding of ministerial identity;
4. Capacity to engage in theological reflection;
5. Strong moral character and personal integrity;
6. Commitment to spiritual, physical and emotional wellness sufficient for healthy ministry;
7. Care and compassion for all people with appropriate relational skills;
8. Responsible personal financial management;
9. Wise and generous stewardship in the use of God's gifts; and
10. Gifts and graces necessary for the rigorous tasks of ministry.

The Commissioned Ministry

Description

Commissioned ministry provides the church opportunity for creativity and imagination in acknowledging the fresh work of the Holy Spirit. These ministries may include: ministers, evangelists, Christian educators, ministers of music, youth ministers, parish nurses, chaplains, bi-vocational ministers, recognized community ministers (congregation-based or non-congregation-based) or others, where Regional nurture and authorization are deemed appropriate. Persons are commissioned by a Region for ministry in a specific context. Change of ministry context requires Regional recommissioning.

Application for Commissioned Ministry

Persons may apply for commissioned ministry status through the Commission on Ministry. Applicants shall meet the following criteria:

1. Demonstrate a definite and informed decision, in response to God, to serve in the Order of Ministry;
2. Be a baptized member of a Disciples congregation in the N.C. Region and serving in a congregationally, Regionally or generally recognized call;

4

3. Be recommended for commissioning by a recognized congregation or congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) including the one in which membership is held;
4. Submit to the Commission a current Search & Call background check, suggested to be reimbursed by the Disciples-recognized calling body;
5. Submit to the Commission a completed application form including references; and
6. Meet with the Commission on Ministry for a review of the application and a personal interview.

Regional Response

Assessment: The Commission on Ministry shall assess the spiritual, emotional, 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, consultations with prior denominations and congregations, and, as appropriate, coordination between regions in reciprocal relationships, and communications with educational institutions.

The Commission on Ministry may make one of the following decisions:

1. Recommend the person be commissioned and granted standing;
2. Recommend the person be taken under care either with or without privilege of call;
3. Recommend the person not be taken under care, but continue the application and assessment process, asking the applicant for more information and additional interview time; or
4. Recommend the application not be approved when, in the judgment of the Commission on Ministry, it appears the person cannot, in the foreseeable future, fulfill the requirements for commissioned ministry.

Approval: Upon approval, the Region brings the candidate under care and commissions her/him for a particular ministry. Once approval is granted, the candidate should complete the Ministerial Profile, optimally while the background check is still current. In addition, a mentor relationship may be required.

5

Periodic Review: All commissioned ministers shall engage in periodic review of their ministry. Ordinarily this shall be done annually. The Commission on Ministry shall ordinarily conduct the review. The review will entail both written reports and a personal interview. Persons failing to engage in a periodic review may lose their commission and standing.

Educational Requirements

Persons entering commissioned ministry are expected to engage in educational preparation and participate in continuing education programs to develop competence in the 16 Areas of Ministerial Practice identified as components of ministerial preparation. It is the responsibility of the Commissioned minister to seek these out, keep records and report to the Commission on the Ministry.

The Ordained Ministry

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 body of Christ; covenants to undergird the ministry; and grants authority to perform that ministry as a representative of the church.

Educational Requirements

There are two educational tracks in preparation for ordination: an apprentice track (AT) and a seminary track (ST).

Apprentice track: Those in the apprentice track will demonstrate competency in the 16 Areas of Ministerial Practice by completing a certificate program of study of at least 250 contact hours from a Commission approved certificate program.

Seminary track: Those in the seminary track will demonstrate competency in the 16 Areas of Ministerial Practice by securing a Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent from a theological school accredited by the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada or its equivalent.

Candidates for ordination are encouraged to follow the seminary track, unless they determine, in consultation with the Commission on the Ministry, that their economic, linguistic, vocational or familial circumstances make the apprentice track more appropriate. Regardless of the educational track chosen, the church expects the women and men it ordains to demonstrate competency in the following 16 Areas of Ministerial Practice, listed alphabetically:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ethics: Be able to help congregants think critically about the relationship of their faith to issues of justice, ethics and morality.

Evangelism: Be able to motivate congregational members to share their faith through word and action.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Worship: Know the purpose and elements of Christian worship. Have the ability to plan and lead meaningful worship by working with the worship team, musicians and congregational members.

Application for Candidacy

Persons apply to become candidates for the ordained ministry through the Commission on the Ministry. Applicants shall meet the following criteria:

1. Demonstrate a definite and informed decision, in response to God, to serve in the Order of Ministry;
2. Be a baptized member of a Disciples congregation;
3. Be recommended for candidacy by a recognized congregation or congregations of the Christian church (Disciples of Christ) including the one in which membership is held;
4. Hold a high school diploma or its equivalent and some post secondary educational experience;
5. Submit a complete application including references to the Commission on the Ministry; and

8

6. Meet with the Commission on the Ministry for an interview and review of the person's application for candidacy.

Regional Response

The Commission on Ministry shall assess the spiritual, emotional, intellectual and educational capacities of the applicant for the potential practice of ministry. This assessment will be accomplished through such avenues as personal interviews, letters of reference, background checks, psychological and vocational testing, consultations with prior denominations and, as appropriate, coordination between regions in reciprocal relationships, and communications with educational institutions. The Commission on Ministry may make one of the following decisions:

1. Approve the application and recommend the person be taken under care;
2. Approve the application and recommend the person be taken under care, but indicate certain reservations and matters of concern that need continuing attention;
3. Continue the application process and ask the applicant for more information and additional interview time; or
4. Disapprove the application when it appears that, in the Commission's judgment, the person cannot, in the foreseeable future, fill the requirements for ordination.

Candidacy

When a person has been taken under care by the Commission, the person shall begin a process of candidacy for ordained ministry. The candidacy process shall include, but is not limited to, the following: personal interviews, written reports from the seminary and field education experience, transcripts of academic records, a paper on the candidate's understanding of the polity of the Christian church (Disciples of Christ) and documents explaining the candidate's concept of ministry and theological beliefs. The candidacy period will be at least three years. In rare circumstances, the Commission may approve a shorter period.

Approval for Ordination

Approval for ordination includes but is not limited to the following steps:

1. Successful completion of the educational requirements of either the seminary or the apprentice track;

2. Successful completion of a history and polity paper followed by discussion with the Commission on the Ministry. If the candidate's M.Div. program or its equivalent does not include a Disciples history and polity class, the Commission may require this class in addition to the degree earned;
3. Successful completion of a statement of understanding of the vocation of Christian ministry, a statement of understanding of ordination and a copy of a sermon delivered, followed by discussion (the ordination interview) with the Commission on the Ministry;
4. Agreement to adhere to the Ministerial Code of Ethics of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ);
5. Receipt of a letter from a recognized Disciples of Christ congregation in the N.C. Region indicating willingness to sponsor the ordination; and
6. Completion of the Ministerial Profile including a current Search & Call background check.

Ministerial Standing

Definition

Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in North Carolina affirms that an ordained or commissioned minister is presently engaged in the practice of ministry, full or part time, with continuous accountability with a congregation, church-related organization, related institution, Regional unit of the church or another denomination that has granted concurrent standing.

Privileges

Persons having standing with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in North Carolina are entitled to the following:

1. Listing in the Year Book and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ);
2. Voting privileges at the Regional Assembly and General Assembly;
3. For ordained ministers, access to the relocation services of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); and
4. Ecclesiastical endorsement.

10

Initial Standing

Persons are admitted to standing in the Order of Ministry:

1. When the Commission commissions, or
2. Following ordination or recognition of ordination.

Admission to Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing

The ordained ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ are reconciled. Each ordained minister of the United Church of Christ (UCC) who holds ordained ministerial standing in the UCC is an Ordained Ministry Partner of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Ordained Ministerial Partner standing is recognition granted to an ordained minister with standing in the UCC who has been called to an ordained ministry setting in the DOC.

1. United Church of Christ candidates for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing will meet with the Regional Minister or the Regional Ministry Staff for an initial interview to talk about process and questions about the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
2. UCC candidates will provide a current criminal background check and a letter of commendation and endorsement from either the UCC Conference or Association minister.
3. The candidate will be invited to meet with the Commission on Ministry where he/she will be expected to demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of the history and polity of the Disciples, preferably through successful completion of a history and polity course.
4. The Commission on Ministry shall take one of the following actions:
 - Approve the application and recommend the person be granted access to denominational relocation services (Search and Call);
 - Approve the application, and if a call from a recognized Disciples body has already been extended, grant standing;
 - Continue the application process and ask the person for more information and additional interview time; or

-Disapprove the application when it appears that, in the Commission's judgment, the person cannot, in the foreseeable future, fill the requirements for Ordained Ministerial Partnership Standing.

5. Once a candidate has been approved by the Commission on Ministry and granted access to Search and Call, it is the candidate's responsibility to notify the Region that a call from a recognized Disciples calling body in the Region of North Carolina has been received and accepted so that standing can be granted.

Admission to Standing from Denominations other than the UCC

Admission to ordained ministerial standing from another denomination is granted on a temporary or permanent basis.

1. *Temporary standing* may be granted by the Commission on the Ministry following a review process that shall include, but not be limited to:

-Evidence of ordination,

-A completed application including references,

-Successful completion of a denominational criminal background check and

-A personal interview with the Commission on the Ministry. Following this interview the Commission on Ministry shall take one of the following actions:

--Approve the application and recommend the person be granted temporary standing for a minimum of one year;

--Continue the application process and ask the person for more information and additional interview time; or

--Disapprove the application when it appears that, in the Commission's judgment, the person cannot, in the foreseeable future, fill the requirements for ordained ministerial standing.

2. *Permanent standing* may be granted by the Commission on the Ministry following completion of the requirements for temporary standing and these additional criteria:

-Membership in a recognized congregation of the Disciples of Christ;

- Completion of the Ministerial Profile within 120 days of being granted temporary standing;
- Review of the person's personal and professional qualifications to serve in the Order of Ministry and the person's knowledge of the polity, practices and history of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ);
- The candidate will be invited to meet with the Commission on Ministry where he/she will be expected to demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of the history and polity of the Disciples, preferably through successful completion of a history and polity course.
- Fulfillment of all the educational requirements of Disciples ordination;
- One year of minimum service in a Disciples-recognized calling body under the mentorship of a Disciples minister with standing; and
- Commitment to the Disciples Ministerial Code of Ethics and adherence to the personal qualifications of the Order of Ministry.

Admission to Concurrent Standing

Concurrent standing is the recognition and endorsement of a person ordained, commissioned or licensed by another church who is currently serving as a commissioned or ordained minister in the life of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in North Carolina, but who retains standing in the church in which she or he was ordained or licensed.

1. Candidate shall meet with the Commission on the Ministry for a thorough review and consideration of his or her request.
2. Candidate shall submit evidence that he or she has been ordained, commissioned or licensed by another church and continues in good standing.
3. Candidate shall submit evidence that he or she is currently serving as a minister in a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation or in a church-related organization in which the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is a partner.
4. Candidate shall provide a statement of why he or she seeks concurrent standing and shall further demonstrate knowledge of the polity, practices and history of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

5. Candidate may be required to complete a Ministerial Profile including a criminal background check.
6. Persons granted concurrent standing by the Commission shall be subject to periodic review by the Commission.
7. Persons holding concurrent standing shall have the same privileges and responsibilities as other ordained or commissioned ministers with standing.

Maintenance of Standing

To maintain standing, a minister ordinarily continues to meet the qualifications for ministry, fulfills the requirements of the ministerial functions of the office of ordained or commissioned ministry, has a covenantal relationship with an expression of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or has a similar covenantal relationship with concurrent standing in another denomination, and maintains membership in a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation.

1. All ministers with standing in the Region of North Carolina are required to complete an approved workshop on clergy sexual misconduct (also called a Boundaries Education workshop, and formerly called Sexual Misconduct) every five years.
2. All ordained and commissioned ministers are expected to participate in spiritual disciplines and continuing education programs in order to be renewed and empowered for ministry.
3. Active retired ordained and commissioned ministers retain standing. Retired ministers who are no longer engaging in the practice of ministry on an occasional, part-time or full-time basis may seek standing as inactive retired ministers.
4. All ministers holding standing in the Region of North Carolina shall be subject to an annual review in order to ascertain that they continue to meet the criteria for standing in the Order of Ministry.

Suspension or Termination of Ministerial Standing

Procedures leading to a review of Standing may be initiated by the minister, the Region or the General Commission on Ministry when one or more of the following conditions are present:

1. The minister desires to be released from the practice of ministry, either temporarily or permanently.
2. The minister requests transfer of credentials from the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to another denomination or non-Disciples congregation.
3. 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.
4. The minister fails to respond to a request for annual certification from the Region or the General Commission on Ministry.
5. 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*.
6. The retired minister fails to adhere to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics*.

Procedures To Terminate Standing

1. *Initiative by the minister* When a minister seeks to terminate his/her standing, the person shall send a written notice to the Region indicating the reasons he/she desires to terminate standing.
2. *Initiative by the Region* When the Region takes initiative for a review of a person's standing toward the possibility of the termination because of allegations of failure to meet the standards of ministry as outlined in the qualifications for ordination or commissioning, the following shall occur:
 - The Region shall send a written notice to the person stating the reason for the review.
 - The person shall be invited to have an interview with the Regional Commission on the Ministry or its representatives.
 - The Commission shall receive an action report, and the person shall be advised in writing of the Commission's decision.
 - The Regional Minister shall send notification of removal of standing to relevant parties.

The Regional Ministry Staff shall oversee termination of standing; (e.g. the expiration of a commissioned for ministry or the move to another region.)

3. *Appeal procedures* A person may appeal the N.C. Commission on Ministry's decision to terminate standing to the General Commission on Ministry as outlined in the Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of the Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

APPENDIX I

Christian Church in North Carolina
(Disciples of Christ)

Regional Policy Regarding Charges of Inappropriate Sexual Conduct in Ministerial Relationships

PREAMBLE

Because God created people, the human body is the temple in which the Holy Spirit dwells. Human sexuality is a part of that Divine creation and so is to be treated with respect. It is part of the loving commitment between two people and their accountability to God.

Human sexuality can become the basis for oppression and injustice – violating the trust of other people and the intention of God's loving order. The set apart ministry has the responsibility to care for those it serves and to prevent using that role to the detriment of anyone. When sexual misconduct by a minister happens, there is sin against God, Christ is betrayed, the victim is injured and the local congregation and the whole body of Christ are wounded deeply. Healing requires extended care. Because God is loving and compassionate and combines justice with grace, the church is called to act with patient, equitable love in righting a wrong. Protecting the victim, the perpetrator and the body of Christ should reflect the Lord's way of handling injustice and pain.

The following procedures shall be followed by the Commission on Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in North Carolina to bring about healing and harmony when there is sexual misconduct by the set apart ministry in the church.

DEALING WITH MINISTERIAL SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Part One: Definitions

Definition of sexual misconduct

Ministerial sexual misconduct happens when a minister (ordained or otherwise licensed or commissioned) uses persons – congregants, non-congregants or staff of either gender or any age – for personal sexual gratification. Sexual misconduct encompasses a range of behavior used to obtain sexual gratification against another's will or at the expense of another. Sexual misconduct includes sexual harassment, sexual assault and any conduct of a sexual nature (including intimate partner violence and stalking) that is

without consent, or has the effect of threatening or intimidating the person against whom such conduct is directed. Misconduct also occurs when a minister responds to advances from parishioners and others.

Much sexual misconduct includes non-consensual sexual contact, but this is not a necessary component. For example, threatening speech that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to constitute sexual harassment will constitute sexual misconduct. Making photographs, video or other visual or auditory recordings or broadcasts of a sexual nature of another person without consent constitutes sexual misconduct, even if the activity documented was consensual. Similarly, sharing such recordings or other sexually harassing electronic communications without consent is a form of sexual misconduct. Men, women and children are protected from sexual misconduct, and sexual misconduct is prohibited regardless of the sex of the harasser.

Definition of sexual harassment

Sexual harassment consists of non-consensual sexual advances, requests for sexual favors or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature on the church property or off. Sexual harassment may be found in a single episode, as well as in persistent behavior. Men, women and children are protected from sexual harassment, and sexual harassment is prohibited regardless of the sex of the harasser.

Definition of sexual assault

Sexual assault is any kind of non-consensual sexual contact, including rape, groping and any other non-consensual sexual touching.

Definition of sexual consent

Sexual activity requires consent, which is defined as positive, unambiguous and voluntary agreement to engage in specific sexual activity throughout a sexual encounter. Consent cannot be inferred from the absence of a "no"; a clear "yes," verbal or otherwise, is necessary. Consent to some sexual acts does not constitute consent to others, nor does past consent to a given act constitute present or future consent. Consent must be ongoing throughout a sexual encounter and can be revoked at any time. Consent cannot be obtained by threat, coercion or force. Agreement under such circumstances does not constitute consent. Consent cannot be obtained from someone who is asleep or otherwise mentally or physically incapacitated, whether due to alcohol, drugs or some other condition. A person is mentally or physically incapacitated when that person lacks the ability to make or act on considered decisions to engage in sexual activity. Engaging in sexual activity with a person whom you know – or reasonably should know – to be incapacitated constitutes sexual misconduct.

Consent can only be accurately gauged through direct communication about the decision to engage in sexual activity. Presumptions based upon contextual factors (such

as clothing, alcohol consumption or dancing) are unwarranted and should not be considered as evidence for consent. Although consent does not need to be verbal, verbal communication is the most reliable form of asking for and gauging consent. Talking with sexual partners about desires and limits may seem awkward but serves as the basis for positive sexual experiences shaped by mutual willingness and respect.

Sexual consent can never be obtained from a minor.

Definition of intimate partner violence

Intimate partner violence (IPV) occurs when a current or former intimate partner uses or threatens physical or sexual violence. IPV also may take the form of a pattern of behavior that seeks to establish power and control by causing fear of physical or sexual violence. Stalking may also constitute IPV.

Definition of stalking

Stalking is repeated or obsessive unwanted attention directed toward an individual or group that is likely to cause alarm, fear or substantial emotional distress. Stalking may take many forms, including following, lying in wait, monitoring and pursuing contact. Stalking may occur in person or through a medium of communication, such as letters, e-mail, text messages or telephone calls. In some circumstances, two instances of such behavior may be sufficient to constitute stalking.

Definition of victim/accuser

The victim is the object of sexual misconduct and in most cases will be the accuser. However, in some cases, a non-victim accuser can present allegations of misconduct with or without the victim's knowledge. When a child is the victim, an adult non-victim accuser is required. For this policy, "accuser/victim" indicates that the accuser and the victim are the same person.

Definition of non-victim accuser

A person other than the victim, such as a parent, guardian or other advocate for a person who has been the alleged victim of sexual misconduct, may be an accuser. In the case of a child, his or her minority status requires that the non-victim accuser must be the minor's legal guardian. If there is a question about guardianship, the non-victim accuser must document that he/she holds legal guardianship. If a minor accuser is the minister's child, a secondary adult advocate will be acceptable.

Part Two: Participants in the Process

Sexual misconduct contact (SMC)

The Regional Minister of the Christian Church in North Carolina (Disciples of Christ) is designated the sexual misconduct contact (SMC) to whom reports of alleged sexual misconduct by clergy should be made. The SMC will provide support for the accuser/victim or non-victim accuser as he/she decides how to resolve the situation and will exhibit appropriate and professional concern for the protection of the rights of the alleged accused. The SMC will not serve as a substitute for legal counsel for any person. Within thirty (30) days, the SMC will present the allegation(s) to the chair of the Commission on Ministry. The SMC is not granted permission to dismiss any accusation of sexual misconduct on his/her authority alone. That authority remains with the Commission on Ministry.

Accuser/Victims and families

The SMC is to assume in all cases that the accuser/victim and his/her family are experiencing pain, whether or not the allegations and accusations are deemed to be truthful, and must endeavor to make appropriate spiritual care available. The SMC shall be aware that a non-victim accuser may also have some of the same spiritual care needs as a victim.

Congregations

If a case of sexual misconduct becomes a matter of public knowledge, the SMC, with the permission of the alleged victim and in consultation with the chair of the Commission on Ministry, will inform the appropriate members of the church congregation regarding the status of the case. Otherwise, a case of sexual conduct will be processed with strict confidentiality.

The accused

The SMC shall be mindful that any accused is to be presumed innocent until an investigation shows otherwise, and appropriate consideration should be shown to the accused. The accused may only be approached by the SMC and only after the accuser/victim grants permission. When there is suspicion of child abuse, suspected abuse must be reported to secular authorities, with or without accuser/victim approval.

Legal counsel

Legal counsel shall represent the interests of the Christian Church in North Carolina (Disciples of Christ) in all allegations of ministerial sexual misconduct. The request for counsel may be waived by the Commission on Ministry. Counsel for the Christian Church in North Carolina (Disciples of Christ) shall not represent the interests of the accuser/victim, who may seek advice from independent counsel. The accused, as well, may secure the services of a legal advocate.

Part Three: Response Procedures

Response to reports of sexual misconduct

Any person with a complaint or report of sexual misconduct or a question involving this policy may reach the sexual misconduct contact at the Christian Church in North Carolina (Disciples of Christ), by mail at PO Box 1568, Wilson, NC 27894 or in person at 509 Lee St. NW, Wilson, NC 27893, 252.291.4047. The SMC is not granted permission to dismiss any accusation of sexual misconduct on his/her authority alone. As noted previously, that authority remains with the Commission on Ministry. Anonymous reports will be documented and investigated as deemed appropriate by the Regional ministerial staff.

Confidentiality

Because information or rumors relating to such accusations may affect the integrity and reputation of the accuser, the accused, the victim, the congregation and the denomination, reports of sexual misconduct and all related documentation, whether written or audio recorded/video taped or in any electronic format shall be confidential. The accused shall not have access to the evidence accumulated during the investigation.

Notification to the Commission on Ministry

The SMC shall notify the chair of the Commission on Ministry immediately, but within 30 days, upon receiving an allegation or complaint. Only then may the SMC begin a mandatory review and approach the alleged victim/accuser or non-victim accuser and the accused. All information gathered during the review, except information that must be reported under secular law, shall be treated as confidential.

Duties of the SMC

The task of the SMC is to provide a safe place for the alleged victim/accuser or non-victim accuser to describe what has happened and to present options available to him/her within this policy. The decision for future action rests with the alleged victim/accuser or non-victim accuser. Should the alleged victim/accuser or non-victim accuser choose not to pursue the allegation within the denomination, any documentation provided by the victim/accuser or non-victim accuser shall be returned. The SMC shall record in a permanent file pertinent notes about the allegation and a statement that the victim/accuser or non-victim accuser has withdrawn the allegation and that particular review has ended.

Voluntary leave for clergy

For the protection of those involved, the SMC may recommend to the calling body a voluntary leave for clergy who may be the subject of an accusation.

Investigating the allegation

The SMC shall first ask the victim/accuser or non-victim accuser if the matter can be resolved by direct contact, through supervised intervention provided by the denomination, with the accused. If direct contact cannot accomplish an informal resolution or if the SMC, in consultation with the chair of the Commission on Ministry, determines the allegations are too profound for informal resolution, the SMC will institute formal proceedings according to the guidelines of this policy.

Formal proceedings shall begin when the chair of the Commission on Ministry notifies the Commission on Ministry that an allegation has been received. To ensure confidentiality, notification may be delivered at a regular Commission meeting (if time allows), by registered letter or by telephone. Notification may not be delivered through e-mail, text or other non-secure conveyance. The chair shall appoint two members of the Commission to join the chair and the Regional Minister as a Response Team to investigate the complaint. The two appointments shall create gender balance on the Response Team.

Before the review begins, the SMC shall receive from the victim/accuser signed and dated authorization for release of information to the Commission on Ministry and to legal counsel, if necessary. The authorization shall represent the victim's agreement to proceed with formal accusations. Authorization also permits the SMC and the Response Team to draft specific written allegations that will be directed to the accused. When secular law requires the release of information, no authorization is necessary.

Only the chair of the Commission on Ministry and the SMC may approach the victim/accuser or the non-victim accuser. Only the chair of the Commission on Ministry and the SMC may approach the accused. When an exhaustive review of the allegation is complete, the chair, on behalf of the Response Team, will present findings to the Commission on Ministry along with a recommendation from the Response Team on disposition of the case. (See Appropriate Actions below.) Upon supporting votes from $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Commission, the disposition will be approved.

If the accuser is not the victim, the SMC will direct the accuser to inform the alleged victim, who shall have reached the majority age of 18, about the options provided by this policy. Before the review begins, the SMC shall receive from the victim a signed and dated authorization for release of information to the Commission on Ministry and to legal counsel, if necessary. The authorization shall represent the victim's agreement to proceed with formal accusations. Authorization also permits the SMC and the Response Team to draft specific written allegations that will be directed to the accused.

If the victim is a minor, who has not reached 18 years of age, the accuser must be the minor's legal guardian. The legal guardian must sign and date an authorization for release of information to the Commission on Ministry and to legal counsel, if necessary. If there is a question about guardianship, the non-victim accuser must document that he/she holds legal guardianship. The authorization shall represent the legal guardian's agreement to proceed with formal accusations. Authorization also permits the SMC and the Response Team to draft specific written allegations that will be directed to the accused.

Appropriate actions

Upon completion of a thorough review, the Response Team shall make determinations and recommend actions to the Commission on Ministry appropriate to resolve the matter. The actions may include, but are not limited to, the following: a formal reprimand with defined expectations for changes in behavior; a recommendation or a requirement for psychological or psychiatric assessment, counseling and/or treatment; a recommendation for probationary standing with the terms of probation clearly defined; a recommendation for dismissal and removal of standing; or a finding that sexual misconduct did not occur. The Commission may determine that more than one action is applicable. Upon supporting votes from $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Commission, the action(s) will be approved.

Admission of guilt by the accused will not excuse or exonerate inappropriate behavior. Upon such admission, the Commission on Ministry shall take action(s) appropriate for the misconduct.

If at any point in the investigation the accused offers his/her resignation, the Commission on Ministry may accept the resignation and end the process or reject the resignation and move for dismissal and removal of standing.

Protection for accuser/victims and non-victim accusers employed by the denomination

If the accuser/victim or non-victim accuser is employed by the Regional Office of the denomination, that person will not be adversely affected in terms and conditions of employment or otherwise discriminated against or discharged. If the accuser/victim or non-victim accuser is employed by a congregation, the congregation is encouraged to adopt a similar policy.

Appeal process

If the victim/accuser, the non-victim accuser or the accused is not satisfied with the disposition of the allegation, he/she has the right to appeal for audience before the General Commission on Ministry as a whole. The subject of such an appeal is limited solely to whether the procedures of this policy were followed. The matter will not be

reconsidered on its merits and the decision of the General Commission on Ministry will be the final resolution of the matter.

Written Records

If the Victim/Accuser or an authorized non-victim accuser chooses to proceed, an adult accuser/victim or non-victim accuser shall write a detailed description of the alleged sexual misconduct. The adult victim/accuser or non-victim accuser shall sign and date in the presence of a notary the description and attach any supporting documentation. The Response Team shall maintain a written summary of the proceedings. Any records produced by the investigation will be confidential. Such records should be kept in a locked space and shall be stored, after consultation with legal counsel, when the case has reached its conclusion. These records may include names, dates of contact, supporting documents, recommendations and personal notes. The accused shall not have access to the evidence accumulated during the investigation.

Reporting Child Sexual Abuse

The SMC must be familiar with state law regarding child sexual abuse. If the SMC suspects that child sexual abuse has occurred, the SMC will help the non-victim accuser (the child's legal guardian) understand and comply with state laws regarding incidents of actual or suspected child abuse and the reporting of such incidents. The SMC will advise the non-victim accuser to seek legal advice with regard to bringing criminal charges. The SMC is subject to and will comply with all secular law regarding the reporting of actual or suspected child abuse, elder sexual abuse or rape.

Compliance with Secular Authorities

The SMC and the Commission on Ministry shall cooperate with secular authorities in their investigations of child sexual abuse or other criminal misconduct. Church proceedings shall not interfere with a criminal investigation by civil authorities. Church proceedings may have to be suspended until secular investigations are completed.

Policy Implementation

The SMC will take appropriate steps to inform the Region's congregations (members, clergy, staff and volunteers) of the standards of clergy conduct and the procedure for reporting allegations of sexual misconduct by clergy.

Prescreening Applicants

The Commission on Ministry shall include specific questions related to sexual misconduct during the interview process of under care.