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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
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Preface

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

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

80
81 PREFACE

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

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

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

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

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

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

116

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

125

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

133

134 **B. Historical Survey of Disciples Ministry**

135

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

139

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

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

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

147

148 Alexander Campbell

149

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

157

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

160

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.

161

162

163

164

165 In *The Christian System* he outlined:

166

167

168

169

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

170

171

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173

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

174

175

176

177

178

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

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

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

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

182

183

Barton Warren Stone

184

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

191

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

197

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

210

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

217

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

224

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

229

230

Later Views

231

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

238

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

257

258

Origins of Licensed Ministry

259

260 The 1939 Richmond report commended three criteria for Ordination:

261

1. Good moral character and personal fitness for ministry

262

2. A full college course, and if possible, graduate training in religion

263

3. Experience in Christian work which shows real leadership, vision, pastoral
264 qualities, and preaching ability

265

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

267

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

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

275

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

283

284

Emerging Practice at the Turn of the Millennium

285

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

294

C. Ministry in the Congregation

295

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

300

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

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

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

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

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

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

326 327 **D. Order of Ministry**

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

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

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

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

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

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

356
357

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

358 **1. Commissioned Ministry**

359

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

366

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

375

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

381

382 Commissioning is an acknowledgment by the Church of the gifts of the Spirit in the one
383 commissioned, and a commitment by both the Church and the Commissioned to the new
384 relationship. Those Commissioned offer their gifts to the Church and commit themselves
385 to the burden and opportunity of new authority and responsibility. At the same time, they
386 enter into a collegial relationship with all ministers. By receiving the Commissioned
387 minister in the act of commissioning, the Church acknowledges the minister’s call and
388 commits itself to be open to it. This liturgical service occurs in the context of
389 Congregational worship in partnership with the Region.

390

391 **2. Ordained Ministry**

392

393 **a. The meaning of Ordination**

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

397 The act of Ordination by those who are appointed for this ministry attests the bond
398 of the church with Jesus Christ and the apostolic witness, recalling that it is the

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

399 risen Lord who is the true Ordainer and bestows the gift. In Ordaining, the church,
400 under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, provides for the faithful proclamation of
401 the Gospel and humble service in the name of Christ. The laying on of hands is the
402 sign of the gift of the Spirit, rendering visible the fact that the ministry was
403 instituted in the revelation accomplished in Christ, and reminding the church to
404 look to him as the source of its commission. ("Ministry," *Baptism Eucharist and*
405 *Ministry*, WCC, para. 40.)
406

407 Disciples understand the meaning of Ordination as an action of God and the
408 community during which the Ordained are strengthened by the Spirit for their task
409 and are upheld by the acknowledgment and prayers of the congregation.
410

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

- 415 (1) acting in servant obedience to God's commandment of love in self-sacrifice on
416 behalf of others and in a servant life in the world;
- 417 (2) proclaiming the gospel in faithfulness to Jesus Christ by word (teaching and
418 preaching), by sacrament (Baptism and the Lord's Supper), and by deed
419 (mission and service);
- 420 (3) overseeing the life of the community in its worship, education, witness,
421 mission, fellowship, and pastoral nurture through the leading of the Holy Spirit.
422

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

472
473 In 1985, the Commission on Theology commended to the whole Church a single
474 order of Ordained ministry which would include three offices.⁷
475

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

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

476 This pattern of ministerial leadership corresponds to the three aspects of the
477 church's life identified as fundamental.⁸

- 478
- 479 ❖ the *ministry of service* to church and world (the *diaconate* or deacons), where
480 the active witness and mission of the church as servant is advanced;
 - 481 ❖ the *ministry of proclamation* by Word and Sacrament (the *presbyterate*, or
482 pastors), where preaching, teaching, and the sacraments/ordinances (Table and
483 Baptism) of the church are lifted up; and,
 - 484 ❖ the *ministry of oversight* (the *episcopate*, or bishops), where oversight of the
485 community's life occurs.
- 486

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

493

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

498 **d. The act of Ordination**

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

505

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

511

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

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

⁹ Adapted from *BEM*, Ministry para. 41.

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

516 Likewise those Ordained offer their gifts to the Church and commit themselves to
517 the burden and opportunity of new authority and responsibility; at the same time,
518 they enter into a collegial relationship with all ministers.¹¹
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¹¹ Adapted from *BEM*, Ministry para. 44.

522

II. Policies and Criteria

For The Ordering Of Ministry

523

524

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

526

- 527 1. *The Order of Ministry*. The Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of
- 528 Christ) comprises Commissioned Ministers and Ordained Ministers.
- 529
- 530 2. *Personal Qualifications for the Order of Ministry*. The church expects to find
- 531 within the women and men it receives into the order of ministry:
- 532
- 533 a. Faith in Jesus Christ, commitment to a life of Christian discipleship and
- 534 nurturing spiritual practices;
- 535
- 536 b. A sense of call to the ministry affirmed by the church;
- 537
- 538 c. An understanding of pastoral identity;
- 539
- 540 d. Capacity to engage in theological reflection;
- 541
- 542 e. Strong moral character and personal integrity;
- 543
- 544 f. Commitment to spiritual, physical and emotional wellness sufficient for healthy
- 545 ministry;
- 546
- 547 g. Care and compassion for all people with appropriate relational skills;
- 548
- 549 h. Responsible personal financial management;
- 550
- 551 i. Wise and generous stewardship in the use of God's gifts;
- 552
- 553 j. Skills and abilities necessary for the rigorous, pastoral tasks of ministry.
- 554

555 **B. The Commissioned Ministry**

556

- 557 1. Description: Commissioned ministry provides the Church opportunity for
- 558 creativity and imagination in acknowledging the fresh work of the Holy Spirit.
- 559 These ministries may include: pastors, evangelists, Christian educators, ministers
- 560 of music, youth ministers, parish nurses, chaplains, bi-vocational ministers,
- 561 recognized congregationally-based or non-congregationally-based community
- 562 ministers, or others, where Regional nurture and authorization are deemed
- 563 appropriate.
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2. Common criteria of Commissioned ministry:

In order to be Commissioned ministers persons must:

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

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

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

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

3. Categories of Commissioned Ministry:

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

4. Candidacy for Commissioning

- a. *Definition:* Candidacy is that period of time in which the individual who has received a call to serve a particular ministry is in preparation with the Region for Commissioning.

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- b. Candidacy begins when a person who has received a call from a recognized congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or a recognized non-congregational ministry applies to the Region for Commissioning.
 - c. *Steps for Candidacy*. The candidate shall:
 - 1. be a member of a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation;
 - 2. have a letter of recommendation from the congregation of which the applicant is a member;
 - 3. complete the *Ministerial Profile*; and
 - 4. meet with the Regional Commission on Ministry.
 - 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.
 - e. Upon approval, the Region brings the candidate under care and Commissions her/him for a particular ministry.
5. Regional Responsibilities: Specifically assigned to Regions are the responsibilities to:
- a. establish procedures to evaluate applicants for Commissioned minister, which must include the *Ministerial Profile* and a current denominational criminal background check;
 - b. consult with the appropriate National Pastor/Leader of Racial Ethnic communities whenever considering a person of color;
 - c. bring applicants “under care”;
 - d. provide for their nurture;
 - e. provide opportunities for building collegiality with other ministers;
 - f. make available appropriate programs of study (such as readings, experiential learning, intensive weekend seminars, guided reflection on ministerial practice with a mentor-companion, and distance learning, etc.) in preparation for ministry;
 - g. authorize the designation of an applicant as a Commissioned Minister;
 - h. offer resources and presence of the Regional Minister or the Regional Minister’s designee for services of Commissioning;
 - i. oversee formation processes for candidates for Ordination;
 - j. encourage lifelong learning through continuing education opportunities including training in healthy boundaries and anti-racism; and
 - k. establish additional requirements as desired.

658 **C. The Ordained Ministry**

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

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

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

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

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

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

704 ***Church Administration and Planning:*** Be able to practice the principles of
705 good administration, planning and implementing short- and long-range goals to
706 enhance Congregational life in collaboration with teams and committees.
707

708 ***Communication:*** Be an effective communicator and be able to facilitate
709 effective communication within and on behalf of the church.
710

711 ***Cross Cultural and Anti-Racism Experience:*** Be sensitive to the different
712 manifestations of racism and prejudice in the culture and be committed to
713 confronting and overcoming them.
714

715 ***Ecumenism:*** Exhibit a commitment to working with other Christians and
716 denominations and with other faiths in programs of common witness and
717 service, and to articulating the vision of the ecumenical and global church as a
718 starting place for mission.
719

720 ***Education and Leader Development:*** Know the foundations of Christian
721 education and the principles of leader development. Show competency in
722 teaching children, youth, and adults, including lay leaders and staff.
723

724 ***Ethics:*** Be able to help parishioners think critically about the relationship of
725 their faith to issues of justice, ethics and morality
726

727 ***Evangelism:*** Be able to motivate Congregational members to share their faith
728 through word and action.
729

730 ***Mission of the Church in the World:*** Be able to understand and articulate the
731 centrality of the call to mission given by Jesus Christ and the prophets. Be able
732 to empower congregations to engage in mission from our doorsteps to the ends
733 of the earth.
734

735 ***Pastoral Care:*** Be able to engage other persons with empathy and assess
736 situations and relationships with the compassion of Christ, with sensitivity to
737 culture and context. Be able to convey the healing power of God to those who
738 suffer.
739

740 ***Proclamation of the Word:*** Know the practice and theory of Christian
741 preaching. Be able to proclaim the Word of God, share the Good News of Jesus
742 Christ, and help Congregational members apply their faith to daily life.
743

744 ***Spiritual Development:*** Establish and maintain spiritual disciplines that lead to
745 personal growth and help others develop a rich spiritual life.
746

747 ***Stewardship:*** Be able to develop and encourage healthy stewards who
748 recognize and share generously God's abundant gifts for all creation.
749

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

754
755 **Understanding of Heritage:** Have knowledge of and appreciation for the
756 history and thought of Christianity and of the history, structure, practices, and
757 ethos of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

758
759 **Worship:** Know the purpose and elements of Christian worship. Have the
760 ability to plan and lead meaningful worship by working with the worship team,
761 musicians, and Congregational members.

762
763 3. Regional Responsibilities:
764 Regions are strongly encouraged to offer an apprentice track (AT) program on their
765 own or in collaboration with Regional Fellowships,¹² theological institutions, or
766 ecumenical partners. Those offering an AT program will submit their curriculum
767 to the General Commission on Ministry for evaluation.

768
769 Specifically assigned to Regions are the responsibilities to:
770 a. establish procedures to evaluate applicants for Ordination;
771 b. evaluate the educational experience of candidates for an AT program which
772 would include a high school diploma or its equivalent and some post secondary
773 educational experience;
774 c. consult with the appropriate National Pastor/Leader of Racial Ethnic
775 communities whenever considering a racial/ethnic applicant;
776 d. bring applicants “under care” (See II.D.3.);
777 e. provide for their nurture;
778 f. be in relationship with the sponsoring congregation and the candidate’s
779 educational setting;
780 g. authorize and supervise the act of Ordination; and
781 h. facilitate continuing education including training in healthy boundaries and
782 anti-racism.

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

783

784 **D. Candidacy for Ordination**

785

786 1. *Definition:* Candidacy is that period of time in which the individual is under the
787 care of a Regional Commission on Ministry and involved in a specified program of
788 study and formation in preparation for Ordination.

789

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

793

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

802

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

813

814 4. *The Procedures During Candidacy.* The candidate shall seek Ordination through a
815 discernment process established by the Region. That preparation may include
816 authorization as a Commissioned Minister (Seeking Ordination). The candidate
817 may complete the educational requirements for either track without serving as a
818 Commissioned Minister.

819

820 Separate from candidacy, Commissioned Minister status authorizes one to perform
821 ministry on behalf of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The granting of
822 candidacy may or may not meet all legal requirements for the performance of
823 marriages.

824

825 5. *Preparation for Ordination.* A candidate for Ordination is to prepare himself or
826 herself spiritually, intellectually, emotionally and physically for her/his ministry.

827 The following areas support and enhance the performance of an applicant's chosen
828 ministry:

- 829
- 830 a. Participation in the life and work of a congregation of Christians;
 - 831
 - 832 b. Breadth of theological study so that the candidate shows an
833 understanding of the Christian faith, the Bible, the church universal, the
834 history and polity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and the
835 formation and function of Christian mission;
 - 836
 - 837 c. Professional and ecclesiological study plus supervised experience in the
838 work of ministry, exhibiting competencies in that form of ministry in
839 which the candidate hopes to serve;
 - 840
 - 841 d. Formation of responsible relations with and concern for the church, both
842 as communities of faith and as institution;
 - 843
 - 844 e. Growth in personal character, Christian insight, spiritual formation,
845 wellness and disciplined commitment to ministry;
 - 846
 - 847 f. Formation of and adherence to ethical principles to guide professional
848 relationships and personal conduct as outlined in the *Ministerial Code*
849 *of Ethics of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*.

850

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

855

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

859

860 **E. The Act of Ordination**

861

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

- 866
- 867 1. The candidate shall be recommended for Ordination by a recognized congregation
868 or congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), including the one in
869 which membership is held.

870

- 871 2. The act of Ordination shall be under the authorization and guidance of the
872 sponsoring congregation and the Region, with the Regional Minister, or the
873 Regional Minister's designee, presiding.
874
875 3. The service ordinarily shall be held in a sponsoring congregation.
876
877 4. Representatives of the recommending congregation or congregations, the Regional
878 church, the ecumenical church and, where possible, the General church shall
879 participate in the service.
880
881 5. After the Ministerial Code of Ethics is signed, the signed Ordination document shall
882 be issued by the Region.
883

884 **F. Ministerial Standing**

- 885
886 1. *Definition.* Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is credentialing
887 for ministry within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), a call to
888 accountability to the church, and collegiality with other ministers both
889 denominationally and ecumenically.
890
891 a. Standing affirms that the Commissioned or Ordained minister is currently
892 engaged in the practice of ministry, whether on an occasional, part-time or
893 full-time basis, with continuous accountability maintained with a
894 congregation, related organization or institution, Region, or General Ministry
895 of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Such ministers are listed in the
896 *Year Book and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* and
897 may call upon the church for services and support such as pastoral care,
898 ecclesiastical endorsement, and scholarship aid. In addition they have voting
899 privileges in the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of
900 Christ).
901
902 b. Ordained ministers with Standing have access to Search and Call. Candidates
903 for Ordination may be granted access to Search and Call at the discretion of
904 the Regional Minister of the Region where they are under care or the Region
905 of their educational setting.
906
907 c. Responsibility for certification of Standing of ministers and for annual review
908 of that Standing within the Order of Ministry is lodged with the Region where
909 the minister is currently engaged in the practice of ministry. Nothing in the
910 Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry is intended to preclude a
911 Region from developing additional appropriate statements or procedures
912 pertaining to Standing within that Region as long as such statements are
913 consistent with the Order of Ministry.
914
915 d. For those engaged in non-Regional ministries responsibility for certification
916 of Standing and for annual review of that Standing within the Order of

917 Ministry is lodged with the General Commission on Ministry. For purposes
918 of this document, non-Regional ministries are defined as all ministries outside
919 the United States and Canada, those ministries engaged by and accountable
920 to one of the General Ministries of the church, ministries of the ecumenical
921 church and with interfaith organizations whose responsibilities extend beyond
922 one Region, whether in North America or abroad, and fulltime military, VA
923 and Federal Correctional chaplaincies. All other ministries are hereby defined
924 as Regional as determined by the primary ministry site. The General
925 Commission on Ministry has a credentialing function but is not an Ordaining
926 body; that is the province of Regions in cooperation with congregations. In
927 covenant with the Regions, the General Commission on Ministry will notify
928 Regions about persons who reside in their Region and hold Standing with the
929 General Commission on Ministry.

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

940

941 2. *Certification of Standing of those Commissioned and Ordained by the Christian*
942 *Church (Disciples of Christ)*

- 943
- 944 a. By virtue of Commissioning or Ordination according to the Order of Ministry
945 of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the minister becomes eligible
946 for Standing.
- 947
- 948 b. Standing for ministers in active service continues so long as the minister does
949 and reports the following:
- 950
- 951 i. Performs faithfully the duties of a minister as authorized by
952 Commissioning or Ordination, either in an occupation recognized
953 by the church as ministerial in purpose or in a service recognized by
954 the church as ministerial in purpose.
- 955
- 956 ii. Participates regularly in programs of study, growth, and renewal.
- 957
- 958 iii. Maintains relations with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
959 including participating membership in a recognized congregation in
960 the community of residence or active ministry where feasible.
- 961

- 962 iv. Adheres to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics of the Christian Church*
963 (Disiples of Christ).
964
965 v. Continues to meet the personal qualifications for admission to the
966 Order of Ministry. (II.A.2.)
967
968 vi. Seeks annual certification as requested by the Region where the
969 ministry site is located or by the General Commission on Ministry,
970 as appropriate. (See II.F.1.c.)
971
972 c. Standing may be continued at the discretion of the Region or the General
973 Commission on Ministry in cases of disability or other special hardships
974 affecting ministerial service, so long as other criteria for Standing are met.
975
976 d. The Region or the General Commission on Ministry will provide means by
977 which the Standing of all ministers in its care will be reviewed annually.
978 Consultation with the appropriate National Pastor/Leader of Racial Ethnic
979 communities is encouraged regarding the Standing of persons of color.
980
981 e. When an Ordained Minister moves from a ministry position in one Region to
982 a ministry position in another Region, Standing in the Order of Ministry is
983 retained. Commissioned Ministers who move to another Region must contact
984 that Regional Minister to establish Standing in the new ministry position.
985 Responsibility for review and subsequent certification is assigned to the
986 Region in which the minister functions or to the General Commission on
987 Ministry. The minister shall notify both the former and new Regional
988 Ministers upon relocation.
989
990 f. When an Ordained Minister who is not actively seeking relocation moves
991 from a ministry position in one Region to another Region and is no longer
992 engaged in ministry, ministerial Standing will be provisionally retained for up
993 to one year, except in the case of retirement, until review and subsequent
994 certification is granted by the Region into which the minister has moved. The
995 Ordained Minister is required to initiate contact with both the former and new
996 Regional Ministers regarding his or her status.
997
998 3. *Certification of Standing of Retired Ministers, Commissioned or Ordained by the*
999 *Christian Church (Disiples of Christ)*
1000
1001 a. Upon retirement, Commissioned Minister retain Standing if they continue serving
1002 in an approved ministry site. Standing of inactive retired Commissioned Ministers
1003 may be granted at the discretion of the Region.
1004
1005 b. Ordained Ministers with Standing retain this Standing at the time of
1006 retirement.
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- 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
 - a) Performs faithfully the duties of a minister as authorized by Commissioning or Ordination, either in an occupation recognized by the church as ministerial in purpose or in a service recognized by the church as ministerial in purpose.
 - b) Participates regularly in programs of study, growth, and renewal.
 - c) Maintains relations with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) including participating membership in a recognized congregation in the community of residence or active ministry where feasible.
 - d) Continues to meet the personal qualifications for admission to the Order of Ministry (II.A.2) and to adhere to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics*
 - iv. Retired ministers who are no longer engaging in the practice of ministry on an occasional, part-time or full time basis may seek Standing as inactive retired ministers.
 - a) Retired ministers who are granted inactive status will continue to be listed in the *Yearbook of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* as inactive, retired ministers (R-i).
 - b) Inactive retired ministers must continue to seek annual certification of Standing as requested by the Region where they reside.
 - c) To be eligible for such Standing, the inactive retired minister must continue to adhere to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics* and must hold participating membership in a recognized Disciples congregation in the community of residence where feasible.
 - v. If an inactive retired minister decides to once again take up the practice of ministry, that minister must once again seek status as an active retired minister. (See 3.c.i-iv)

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

1101 ii. A consultation with a committee appointed by the Region or the General
1102 Commission on Ministry.

1103
1104 d. Standing may be granted to a minister whose Standing has been terminated
1105 or suspended by another Region or the General Commission on Ministry only
1106 upon the recommendation of the terminating or suspending body, whether
1107 that is a Region or the General Commission on Ministry.

1108
1109 5. *Surrender of Standing*

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1111 When a minister surrenders Standing, Standing can be granted again only upon the
1112 recommendation of the body to which Standing was surrendered, whether that is a
1113 Region or the General Commission on Ministry. The Region or General
1114 Commission on Ministry shall address any outstanding allegations of misconduct
1115 before reinstating Standing.

1116
1117 6. *Lapsed Standing*

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1119 When a minister's Standing has lapsed, Standing may only be granted after
1120 consultation with the body where the Standing was previously held, whether the
1121 Region or the General Commission on Ministry.

1122
1123 **G. Recognition and Reconciliation of Ordained Ministries**

1124
1125 1. *Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing with the United Church of Christ*

1126
1127 The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ
1128 recognize the Ordained ministries of the other church to be efficacious ministries
1129 of grace within that church and these ministries to be valid and full ministries of
1130 the one Church of Jesus Christ.

1131 The Ordained ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the
1132 United Church of Christ are reconciled. An Ordained minister with Ordained
1133 ministerial Standing in one church may function, whenever invited, and as
1134 established procedures permit, as an Ordained minister of the other.

1135 The designations "Ordained Ministerial Partner" and "Ordained Ministerial
1136 Partner Standing" manifest the corporate and individual nature of the recognition

1137 and reconciliation of the Ordained ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of
1138 Christ) and the United Church of Christ.

1139 a. Each member of the United Church of Christ who holds Ordained ministerial
1140 Standing in the United Church of Christ is an Ordained Ministerial Partner of
1141 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

1142 b. Each member of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who holds
1143 Ordained ministerial Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is
1144 an Ordained Ministerial Partner of the United Church of Christ.

1145 c. When a person no longer has Ordained ministerial Standing in either the
1146 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or the United Church of Christ, that
1147 person is no longer an Ordained Ministerial Partner and Ordained Ministerial
1148 Partner Standing is nullified.

1149 d. *United Church of Christ ministers with Ordained Ministerial Partner*
1150 *Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*

1151 Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing is recognition granted to an Ordained
1152 minister with Standing in the United Church of Christ who has been called to
1153 an Ordained ministry setting in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
1154 Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing provides ongoing ecclesiastical
1155 authorization to exercise the rights and responsibilities of Ordained ministry in
1156 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
1157

1158
1159
1160 i. Once a United Church of Christ Ordained minister has demonstrated
1161 knowledge of and appreciation for the history, polity, and practices of
1162 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to the Regional Commission
1163 on Ministry where the minister resides, that Ordained Ministerial Partner
1164 may be granted access to the Search and Call process in the Christian
1165 Church (Disciples of Christ). Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in
1166 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is not given at this point in the
1167 process.
1168

1169 ii. A United Church of Christ Ordained Ministerial Partner who secures a
1170 call in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) applies for Ordained
1171 Ministerial Partner Standing to the Region in which the Ordained
1172 minister's calling body is located. Once granted, Ordained Ministerial
1173 Partner Standing is reviewed by the Region for certification annually.
1174

1175 iii. A United Church of Christ Ordained minister has Ordained Ministerial
1176 Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) only when
1177 serving a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) calling body.
1178

- 1179 iv. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial
1180 Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall
1181 maintain Ordained ministerial Standing in the United Church of Christ.
1182
- 1183 v. Ordained ministerial Standing shall be held in the association in which
1184 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) calling body is located.
1185
- 1186 vi. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial
1187 Partner Standing shall maintain relations with the Christian Church
1188 (Disciples of Christ) including (where feasible) holding associate
1189 membership in a recognized Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
1190 congregation in the community.
1191
- 1192 vii. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial
1193 Partner Standing in a Region has voting privileges in the General
1194 Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
1195
- 1196 viii. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial
1197 Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall
1198 relate to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for his/her primary
1199 support in Ordained ministry.
1200
- 1201 ix. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial
1202 Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall be
1203 accountable to the Region for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing and
1204 to the United Church of Christ for Ordained ministerial Standing.
1205
- 1206 x. When a disciplinary review is instituted in relation to the United Church
1207 of Christ minister holding Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the
1208 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the association of the United
1209 Church of Christ in which the United Church of Christ minister's
1210 Ordained ministerial Standing is maintained, shall be informed and
1211 invited to participate in the procedures.
1212
- 1213 xi. When a United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained
1214 Ministerial Partner Standing with the Christian Church (Disciples of
1215 Christ) accepts a call in another Region, he/she shall be subject to review
1216 and subsequent annual certification of Ordained Ministerial Partner
1217 Standing by the new Region.
1218

1219 Recognition of Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing may be granted by the
1220 General Commission on Ministry to an Ordained minister with Standing in the
1221 United Church of Christ who serves as a National Officer or in a joint ministry
1222 position for both churches.
1223

1224 e. *Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) ministers with Ordained Ministerial*
1225 *Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ.*

1226
1227 Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing is recognition granted to an Ordained
1228 minister with Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who has
1229 been called to an Ordained ministry setting in the United Church of Christ.
1230 Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing provides ongoing ecclesiastical
1231 authorization to exercise the rights and responsibilities of Ordained ministry in
1232 the United Church of Christ.

- 1233
- 1234 i. Once a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Ordained minister has
1235 demonstrated knowledge of and appreciation for the history, polity, and
1236 practices of the United Church of Christ to the Association Committee
1237 where the minister resides, that Ordained ministerial partner may be
1238 granted access to the Search and Call process in the United Church of
1239 Christ. Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of
1240 Christ is not given at this point in the process.
 - 1241
 - 1242 ii. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Ordained Ministerial Partner who
1243 secures a call in the United Church of Christ applies for Ordained
1244 Ministerial Partner Standing to the Association in which the Ordained
1245 minister's calling body is located. Once granted, Ordained Ministerial
1246 Partner Standing is reviewed by the Association annually.
 - 1247
 - 1248 iii. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Ordained minister has Ordained
1249 Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ only when
1250 serving a United Church of Christ calling body.
 - 1251
 - 1252 iv. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who holds Ordained
1253 Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ shall maintain
1254 Ordained ministerial Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of
1255 Christ).
 - 1256
 - 1257 v. Ordained ministerial Standing shall be held in the Region in which the
1258 United Church of Christ calling body is located.
 - 1259
 - 1260 vi. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who holds Ordained
1261 Ministerial Partner Standing shall maintain relations with the United
1262 Church of Christ including (where feasible) holding associate membership
1263 in a recognized United Church of Christ congregation in the community.
 - 1264
 - 1265 vii. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who holds Ordained
1266 Ministerial Partner Standing in an Association has voting privileges in the
1267 Association and Conference and is eligible for election as a delegate to
1268 General Synod or election as a member of any Covenanted Ministry Board
1269 in the United Church of Christ.

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- viii. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ shall relate to the United Church of Christ for his/her primary support in Ordained ministry.
- ix. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ shall be accountable to the Association for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing and to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for Ordained ministerial Standing.
- x. When a disciplinary review is instituted in relation to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister holding Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ, the Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in which the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister's Ordained ministerial Standing is maintained, shall be informed and invited to participate in the procedures.
- xi. When a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing with the United Church of Christ accepts a call in another Association, he/she shall be subject to review and transfer of the Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing to the new Association.

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

2. *Persons Ordained in Other Churches.* Ministers Ordained by other denominations or non-Disciples congregations may be considered for recognition of Ordination and the granting of Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Provisional or temporary Standing may be granted to individuals applying for recognition of Ordination by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Responsibility for this process is lodged in the Region except in the case of Military Chaplains stationed overseas.
- a. Provisional or temporary Standing of applicants may be granted upon the fulfillment of the following requirements:
 - i. Consultation with appropriate officials of the denomination or congregation from which the candidate transfers.
 - ii. Satisfactory investigation of personal and ministerial references and a criminal background check.

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- iii. Filing of appropriate forms with the Region to which the applicant is applying or with the General Commission on Ministry.
- iv. Provisional or temporary Standing shall be reviewed annually by either the granting Region or the General Commission on Ministry.
- b. Removal of the provisional or temporary conditions for Standing may be granted by the Region or the General Commission on Ministry upon fulfillment of the following requirements:
 - i. Membership in a recognized congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
 - ii. Demonstrated knowledge and appreciation for the history, polity, and practices of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
 - iii. Fulfillment of the prerequisites and preparation, including educational attainment, for the Order of Ministry.
 - iv. One year minimum service under the supervision or mentoring of a Disciples of Christ minister with Standing.
 - v. Manifesting the personal qualifications for the order of ministry as listed in item II.A.2.
 - vi. Commitment to adhere to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*.

H. Ministerial Search and Call

1. *The General Principles.* Ministerial Search and Call is the term applied to the process developed to facilitate the calling of ministers who hold Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
 - a. The covenantal relationship among ministers, Congregations, Regions, and General Ministries of the church serves to build up the whole church of Jesus Christ. This document identifies general principles for ministerial Search and Call. The Office of Search and Call (Disciples Home Missions) administers these procedures of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
 - b. Freedom and responsibility are inherent in the tradition of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Congregations, Regions, and General Ministries of the church are accorded full freedom to issue ministerial calls within their own established or constitutional provisions. Ministers, likewise, are accorded full freedom to accept or reject a call to any particular service. All, however,

1362 covenant to work within the Order of Ministry in the interest of assuring an
1363 orderly and responsible system of Search and Call.

1364
1365 c. The Church is best served when Regional Ministers and National
1366 Pastors/Leaders of Racial Ethnic communities work together covenantally in
1367 the Search and Call process. Primary responsibility for the Search and Call
1368 process is lodged with the Regions. Regions are encouraged to consult the
1369 National Pastors/Leaders. National Pastors/Leaders may offer their counsel to
1370 the Regional Minister in Search and Call with the understanding that the
1371 primary responsibility for Search and Call lies with the Region.

1372
1373 2. *Operating Principles.*

1374
1375 a. Ordained ministers with Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of
1376 Christ) will have complete and unhindered access to Search and Call of the
1377 church.

1378
1379 b. Commissioned ministers with Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of
1380 Christ) will have access to Search and Call. Circulation of their Search and
1381 Call forms is normally limited to the Region for which their ministry is
1382 commissioned.

1383
1384 c. At the discretion of the Region of care candidates for Ordination may be
1385 granted authorized access to Search and Call.

1386
1387 d. Ordained Ministerial Partners with Standing in the United Church of Christ
1388 will have complete and unhindered access to Search and Call of the church
1389 once they have been qualified by a Region to seek a call.

1390
1391 e. Congregations, Regions, institutions, and General Ministries of the church
1392 will be provided assistance from the Office of Search and Call.

1393
1394 f. Any Search and Call forms in the Office of Search and Call will be open to
1395 the minister concerned except for confidential references for which a waiver
1396 has been signed.

1397
1398 g. Confidentiality, when assured to the persons completing the reference forms,
1399 will not be violated.

1400
1401 h. All candidates for Ordination with authorized access to Search and Call and
1402 Ordained Ministers with Standing may be considered for any ministerial
1403 position.

1404
1405 i. All candidates for Ordination with authorized access to Search and Call and
1406 Ordained Ministers with Standing shall have access to information regarding
1407 available ministerial openings in the church.

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- 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.
- 3. *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.
 - i. Ministers will provide information for a permanent file to the Office of Search and Call upon entry into the ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and maintain current data in that file.
 - ii. For purposes of Search and Call, the minister will update the *Ministerial Profile* and complete reference requests, the *Ministerial Disclosure Form* and criminal background check. The Search and Call forms will be circulated as prepared and submitted by the minister.
 - iii. Ordained ministers seeking a call shall utilize the process provided by the Office of Search and Call.
 - iv. Commissioned ministers (seeking ordination and not seeking ordination) who desire to relocate shall request the assistance of the appropriate Regional or Area Ministers.
 - v. Ministers will be as specific and honest as possible about any limiting factors in relocation, such as geographical preferences and salary requirements.
 - vi. Ministers will instruct the Office of Search and Call to send reference forms to the persons whom they have identified as references. It is the responsibility of the minister to ensure that these persons complete and submit the reference forms. Once received, references will be held and submit the reference forms. Once received, references will be held in confidence from the minister if a waiver has been signed by the minister.
 - vii. Ministers will negotiate with only one congregation at a time. A search committee and candidate are “in negotiation” when both agree that they will not discuss relocation with any other search committee or candidate until either party declares negotiations ended. It is the obligation of ministers to be specific with congregations about their degree of interest.

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- viii. Ministers will stay in communication with search committees who have indicated interest, especially informing a congregation **immediately** when a decision has been made not to consider accepting a call to that particular congregation.
 - ix. Ministers will contact the appropriate Region if they wish to be a candidate for a specific congregation in that Region and request that their name be submitted to the search committee.
 - x. Ministers will not initiate Search and Call by contacting a congregation directly.
 - xi. Ministers will advise the Region, if contacted directly by a congregation, should mutual interest in exploring a possible call be determined.
 - xii. Ministers will advise the Region where currently located, the Region where moving, the Office of Search and Call, and the Pension Fund, as soon as a call has been accepted.
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- b. Congregations. Within the tradition of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and according to *The Design*, congregations have the right and responsibility to seek and call their own leadership, to establish the terms of call, to undergird the ministry, and to effect terminations within their own procedures. In all matters, congregations will function within the covenantal relationship of the whole church and are encouraged to seek the advice and counsel of the Region/Area.
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- i. Congregations will advise Regions of impending vacancies and work within Regional procedures to receive advice and counsel in seeking ministerial leadership.
 - ii. Congregations will have freedom to consider any minister with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or any Ordained Ministerial Partner who has been qualified by a Region to seek a call. The congregation should inform the Region and request biographical and reference material on all ministers it wishes to consider.
 - iii. Congregations will keep the Region informed of all names being considered, including persons who apply directly to the congregation and persons whose names are suggested by members of the congregation.
 - iv. Congregations will be fair and open in the consideration of all candidates putting aside prejudice and considering candidates based on gifts and skills for ministry.
 - v. The congregational search committee will treat with confidentiality all information including personal biographical information and reference material, taking care to ensure that the information does not go beyond the search committee. When the call has been issued and accepted, all records relating to the minister called to serve, including any minutes

1499 of the search committee regarding that minister, shall be given to the
1500 Region for reasons of safekeeping and confidentiality. All records
1501 relating to other candidates in the search process shall be destroyed.
1502 vi. The congregational search committee will stay in communication with
1503 candidates whom the search committee has contacted. The search
1504 committee will inform, in a timely manner, candidates who are no
1505 longer being considered for the position.
1506 vii. The search committee will inform, in a timely manner, candidates who
1507 are no longer being considered for the position.
1508 viii. The congregational search committee may talk with a number of
1509 candidates concurrently but will negotiate with only one at a time. A
1510 search committee and candidate are “in negotiation” when both agree
1511 that they will not discuss relocation with any other candidate or search
1512 committee until either party declares negotiations ended. It is the
1513 obligation of the search committee to be specific with the minister
1514 about its degree of interest.
1515 ix. Congregations will issue a Letter of Call providing copies of the call
1516 for the congregation, the minister, the Region, and the Office of Search
1517 and Call.
1518 x. Congregations will reimburse the called candidate for the Criminal
1519 Background Check.
1520 xi. Congregations will provide a fair salary (including housing allowance
1521 – parsonage provision) within the capabilities of the congregation, as
1522 well as adequate benefits (pension, health insurance, continuing
1523 education, vacation, sabbatical and Social Security offset).
1524 xii. Congregations will provide for the reimbursement of church-related
1525 expenses to cover actual expenses of accomplishing ministry.
1526
1527
1528 c. Regions. Regions bear the primary responsibility for providing advice and
1529 counsel to both congregations and ministers in Search and Call. Regions will
1530 work collaboratively with General Racial Ethnic Ministries to address
1531 ministerial vacancies among their constituencies. Regions may delegate or
1532 share this responsibility with their areas, districts or other subdivisions. In all
1533 matters, Regions will function within the covenantal relationship of the whole
1534 church.
1535
1536 i. Each Region will provide advice and counsel to congregations either
1537 at the request of the congregation or at the initiation of the Region
1538 when it is known that new ministerial leadership is being or will be
1539 sought.
1540 ii. Each Region will receive and review all ministerial search and call
1541 materials from the Office of Search and Call, giving special attention
1542 to those persons who have indicated an interest in their Region.

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- 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 a Region to seek a call, who requests consideration in that congregation.
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - ix. Each Region will provide, upon request of ministers seeking a call, a list of congregations which have received their *Ministerial Profile*.
 - x. Each Region will treat all Search and Call forms with strict confidentiality.
 - 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.)
 - xii. Each Region will refer all requests for assistance from congregations outside the Region to the appropriate Regional office.
 - xiii. Each Region will regularly notify the Office of Search and Call of all relocations occurring within, to, or from the Region.
 - xiv. Each Region will authorize access to Search and Call to
 - a. candidates for ordination whose ordinations have been authorized in their Region and
 - 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).
 - xv. Each Region will make information available about Regional staff vacancies through such channels as denominational websites,

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Regional publications, Disciples Home Missions, and other publications.

- 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.
 - i. The Office of Search and Call will maintain the permanent files of all ministers in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
 - ii. The Office of Search and Call will maintain the Ministers Directory of the Year Book and Directory reflecting the current listing of ministers with Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) as reported by the Regions and the General Commission on Ministry.
 - iii. The Office of Search and Call will receive, process and make available Search and Call materials of ministers with Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Qualified Ordained Ministerial Partners, and others authorized by Regions to Regions and General Ministries. The Search and Call forms will be circulated as prepared and submitted by the minister.
 - iv. The Office of Search and Call will collect and release reference material to Regions or General Ministries upon permission of the minister applying for Search and Call assistance.
 - v. The Office of Search and Call will protect the confidentiality of references when confidentiality has been promised.
 - vi. The Office of Search and Call will secure permission from any minister not actively seeking a call before releasing references to Regions or General Ministries. The minister has the right to know the name and location of the interested congregation. Information in the permanent file may be released without permission to Regional Ministers or to the Chair of the General Commission on Ministry in regard to ethical and conduct matters.
 - vii. The Office of Search and Call will secure, maintain, and release to Regions, and on request, to ministers with Standing, a list of staff vacancies in regions, general units of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and ecumenical organizations.
 - viii. The Office of Search and Call will make available education and informational materials regarding Search and Call to congregations, Regions, institutions and General Ministries.
 - ix. The Office of Search and Call will refer all requests from congregations for names of potential candidates to the appropriate Regions.

- 1632 x. The Office of Search and Call will refer all candidates for Ordination
1633 seeking student preaching/pastoral positions to the field education
1634 office of the appropriate institution or to the Region.
1635 xi. The Office of Search and Call will share with Regions, and where
1636 appropriate, General Ministries, the record of any formal action by a
1637 Region's commission on the ministry or the General Commission on
1638 Ministry concerning the conduct of a minister who is entering Search
1639 and Call.
1640
1641 e. Educational institutions. The undergraduate departments of religion and the
1642 theological educational institutions have unique responsibilities with respect
1643 to the search and call process of the church. Each relates to a limited number
1644 of congregations in which pre-theological and theological students may be
1645 serving. The theological institutions have responsibility for relating their
1646 graduating students who are candidates for Standing as Ordained ministers in
1647 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to Search and Call. In Search and
1648 Call, educational institutions will function within the covenantal relationship
1649 of the whole church.
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1651
1652 i. Educational institutions will relate to congregations served by students
1653 in partnership with the Region in matters pertaining to the employment
1654 of students during their pre-theological and theological education.
1655 ii. Educational institutions will refer requests from congregations for
1656 search and call assistance that is outside the student field placement
1657 process to the appropriate Region.
1658 iii. Educational institutions will cooperate with Regions in orienting
1659 students to the Search and Call process of the church.
1660
1661 f. General Ministries. In all matters, General Ministries will function within the
1662 covenantal relationship of the whole church.
1663
1664 i. General Ministries will refer all requests for Search and Call assistance
1665 to the Office of Search and Call and the appropriate Regional Minister.
1666 They will refer requests for candidates' names to the appropriate
1667 Region.
1668 ii. General racial/ethnic ministries will work collaboratively with Regions
1669 to address ministerial vacancies among their constituencies.
1670
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1672 4. *Right of Review and Counsel.* The right to review and counsel is limited to
1673 perceived violations of Search and Call and should be initiated with the
1674 appropriate Region, institution or General Ministry. A request for review and
1675 counsel beyond the Region shall be to the General Commission on Ministry.
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1678 **I. Ministerial Code of Ethics**

1679

1680 Believing that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God, and proclaiming him Lord and
1681 Savior of the world, I reaffirm my vows as a minister. Through dedication and discipline I
1682 will lead and serve with integrity. Relying on the grace of God, I commit myself to the
1683 following:

1684

1685 *Personal Conduct*

- 1686 • Witnessing to the ministry of Jesus Christ
- 1687 • Dedicating time, strength, vitality, and energy for effective ministry
- 1688 • Growing in faith, knowledge, and the practice of ministry through the spiritual
1689 disciplines, study, continuing education, and service
- 1690 • Living a life that honors my commitments to my family, including the need for
1691 privacy and time together
- 1692 • Taking time for physical and spiritual renewal, recreation, and vacation
- 1693 • Being a faithful steward of God's gifts to me by managing time, talents, and
1694 financial resources responsibly and generously
- 1695 • Accepting responsibility for all debts that I incur
- 1696 • Keeping physically and emotionally fit and refraining from substance abuse and
1697 other abusive behaviors
- 1698 • Using my position, power, and authority in non-exploitive ways
- 1699 • Maintaining high moral standards in my sexual behavior
- 1700 • Regarding all persons with equal respect and concern and undertaking to minister
1701 impartially
- 1702 • Employing social media with integrity and grace within the context of personal,
1703 congregational, collegial, wider church and community relationships

1704

1705 *Relationships to the Church which I Serve*

- 1706 • Nurturing and offering my gifts for ministry to the church
- 1707 • Calling forth and nurturing the gifts of others in the church and joining their gifts
1708 with mine for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ and the health of the church
- 1709 • Preaching and teaching the gospel without fear or favor and speaking the truth in
1710 love
- 1711 • Administering the sacraments/ordinances and services of the church with integrity
1712 and not for financial gain
- 1713 • Working cooperatively and collegially with those whom I serve in the particular
1714 ministry to which I have been called
- 1715 • Administering the corporate finances of the church with personal integrity
- 1716 • Refraining from accepting any gift which would compromise the church's ministry
- 1717 • Protecting confidences; covenanting to only tell those who need to know, what they
1718 need to know, when they need to know it
- 1719 • Acting to prevent and to report known or suspected cases of physical or sexual
1720 abuse or neglect
- 1721 • Encouraging and participating in the regular evaluation of my ministry and
1722 cooperating with the Region in the annual review of my ministerial Standing

- 1723 • Seeking the counsel of the Regional Minister and/or the Racial/Ethnic Executive
1724 Pastor as appropriate should divisive tensions threaten my relationship with those I
1725 serve
1726

1727 *Relationships to Ministry Colleagues*

- 1728 • Engaging in covenantal relationships with colleagues which involve nurture,
1729 discipline, family support, vigorous dialogue, mutual teaching/learning, and
1730 spiritual formation
1731 • Supporting colleagues in ministry and their families while not exploiting their
1732 problems or crises
1733 • Performing pastoral services within another congregation or for a member of
1734 another congregation only at the request of that congregation's current pastor and
1735 elders
1736 • Supporting and at no time speaking maliciously of the ministry of my predecessors
1737 or another minister
1738 • Encouraging the ministry of my successor upon my retirement or other departure
1739 from a ministry position, without interfering or intruding and by making it clear to
1740 former parishioners that I am no longer their pastor nor will I perform any pastoral
1741 services unless requested by the congregation's current pastor and elders
1742

1743 *Relationships to the Community and the Wider Church*

- 1744 • Participating responsibly in the life and work of my community, bearing prophetic
1745 witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and working towards a just and morally
1746 responsible society
1747 • Participating faithfully in the life and work of all expressions of the Christian
1748 Church (Disciples of Christ)
1749 • Seeking to know, understand, and respect the diversity of opinions and people
1750 within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
1751 • Being a responsible representative of the one church of Jesus Christ and
1752 participating in activities which strengthen its unity, ministry, witness, and mission
1753

1754 **J. Misconduct**
1755

1756 The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) understands ministerial misconduct to be
1757 activity which violates the covenantal character of the ministerial office as expressed in the
1758 Ministerial Code of Ethics. Investigation and adjudication of violations of the Ministerial
1759 Code of Ethics shall be the responsibility of the Region through the committee or
1760 Commission on Ministry or the General Commission on Ministry.
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1762 1. *Reporting*
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1764 Regions or the General Commission on Ministry will report formal actions and
1765 decisions to remove Standing for misconduct to the Office of Search and Call,
1766 Disciples Home Missions, and these actions will be communicated to all Regions.
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1768 2. *Suspension of Standing*

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

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 Region will periodically and systematically review its definitions and procedures. It is the responsibility of the Region to communicate such definitions and procedures to ministers and congregations within the Region.
- 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.

- 1815 _____
1816 Basic Policy Approved Louisville General Assembly 1971
1817 Section II on Candidacy approved Kansas City General Assembly 1977
1818 Section V on Ministerial Standing amended Anaheim General Assembly 1981
1819 Section VI on Ministerial Relocation amended Des Moines General Assembly 1985
1820 Section VII on Amendment Process amended Louisville General Assembly 1987
1821 Section V.C. on Recognition and Reconciliation of the Ordained Ministries of the
1822 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ amended
1823 Pittsburgh General Assembly 1995
1824 Section VIII on Sexual Misconduct amended Pittsburgh General Assembly 1995
1825 Theological Foundations and Revised Policies and Criteria approved Indianapolis
1826 General Assembly 2009
1827 Section II.H. on Ministerial Search and Call amended General Board 2009 _____
1828 _____
1829 Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for The Ordering of Ministry, 2009, is
1830 an operating document of the General Commission on Ministry, effective August 2011.
1831
1832
1833
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