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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.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

46		
47		
48		
49	<b>I.</b>	<b>Theological Foundations For The Ordering of Ministry In The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)</b>
50		
51		
52	A.	The Ministry of the Whole People of God 4
53	B.	Historical Survey of Disciples Ministry 5
54	C.	Ministry in the Congregations 9
55	D.	Order of Ministry 10
56		1. Commissioned Ministry 11
57		2. Ordained Ministry 11
58		
59		
60	<b>II.</b>	<b>Policies and Criteria For The Ordering of Ministry</b>
61		
62	A.	Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) 16
63	B.	The Commissioned Ministry 16
64	C.	The Ordained Ministry 18
65	D.	Candidacy for Ordination 21
66	E.	The Act of Ordination 23
67	F.	Ministerial Standing 24
68	G.	Recognition and Reconciliation of Ordained Ministries 29
69	H.	Ministerial Search and Call 34
70	I.	Ministerial Code of Ethics 41
71	J.	Misconduct 43
72	K.	Right of Appeal 44
73	L.	Amendment Process 44
74		
75		

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

79  
80 PREFACE

81  
82 *Theological Foundations for the Ordering of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples*  
83 *of Christ)* functions interdependently with *Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of*  
84 *Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* to clarify evolving patterns of  
85 ministry as we seek to respond in faithful ways to ever changing contexts of service and  
86 witness. It is not a comprehensive theology of ministry nor does it attempt to offer the final  
87 word on Disciples’ understanding of ministry.

88  
89 **A. The Ministry of the Whole People of God**

90  
91 God calls all persons to receive the good news of the Gospel and accept their call to be  
92 God’s people. In a divided and unbelieving world, those who accept this good news are  
93 drawn into the fellowship (*koinonia*) of a new community, the church. In this body, the  
94 Holy Spirit unites those who follow Jesus Christ and sends them as witnesses into the world  
95 [ref: I Corinthians 12.12-13; Ephesians 4.4-5; Matthew 28:16-20]. The church’s mission is  
96 to proclaim and prefigure the justice and joy of the Realm of God. In order to fulfill this  
97 mission faithfully, the members of the Body of Christ are given ministries of witness,  
98 service and reconciliation.

99  
100 The ministry of Christ is entrusted to all the people of God. Through baptism they are called  
101 to servant ministry lived out in covenant community. Implicit in the confession of faith and  
102 the act of baptism is an acceptance of the vocation of the baptized—the special calling  
103 shared by all followers of Christ to witness to the sovereign love of God, the grace of Jesus  
104 Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit in all of life. The gifts (*charisms*) of the Holy  
105 Spirit are different and diverse, but in tremendous and simple ways they proclaim the  
106 mighty acts of God and mediate God’s loving and reconciling work to and in the world.  
107 Every baptized person is called to witness to Christ in whatever situation he or she lives—  
108 to express in their daily lives the ministry of Christ.

109  
110 In Christ the individual becomes a member of “a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people  
111 of God’s own possession” (1Peter 2:9). Thus it has been common to speak of the

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

115

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

124

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

132

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

134

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

138

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

---

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

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

146

147

### Alexander Campbell

148

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

156

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

159

1. Establish necessary offices for perpetuity and growth

160

2. Select the best qualified persons for those offices

161

3. Consecrate or set apart those persons for those offices

162

4. Give oneself completely to the work and continue growing so that everyone can see  
163 the growth.

164

In *The Christian System* he outlined:

165

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

169

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

173

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

177

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

<sup>3</sup> In an 1835 edition of the *Millennial Harbinger*, Campbell wrote: “The jurisdiction of such bishops [elders] is always circumscribed by the congregation which ordained them. A single church is the largest dioceses (sic) known in the New Testament. Neither does his election and ordination give him a perpetual office. Should he leave the church, which under the direction of the Holy Spirit, created him, and become a member of another church, he enters it as a private member, and so continues until that church elect and ordain him, should they call for his services. The bishops [elders] and deacons of the church in Philippi were the bishops [elders] and deacons of the church in Philippi and of no other church; and so of Ephesus, Antioch, Rome, and Jerusalem.”(MH, VIII:10/35, 503)

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

181

182

### Barton Warren Stone

183

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

190

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

196

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

209

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

216

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

223

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

228  
229  
230

### Later Views

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

237

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

256

257

### Origins of Licensed Ministry

258

259 The 1939 Richmond report commended three criteria for Ordination:

260

261

262

263

264

265

266

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268

269

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

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

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



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

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

### 283 Emerging Practice at the Turn of the Millennium

284

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

321  
322    It is, however, at the Table that the ministry of the congregation comes into view for the  
323    gathered community. The pastor and elders as they preside and pray and the deacons as  
324    they serve, re-present the whole ministry of the church.

#### 325 326    **D. Order of Ministry**

327  
328    “The church recognizes an order of ministry, set apart under God, to equip the whole people  
329    to fulfill their corporate ministry” (Paragraph 86, *Design of the Christian Church*).

330  
331    In its ordering of ministry, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) recognizes a  
332    Commissioned ministry and an Ordained ministry. The church expects the women and men  
333    it Commissions and Ordains to demonstrate educational qualifications and competencies  
334    in several areas of personal integrity and pastoral practice, as well as a clear call to and  
335    passion for ministry. The church is called to provide significant Congregational and  
336    Regional support for those seeking to serve in ministry, whether Ordained or  
337    Commissioned.

338  
339    The church gives grateful acknowledgment to God who in every age grants to women and  
340    men the spiritual gifts necessary for such ministry. In making decisions about whom to  
341    Commission or Ordain, the church looks to candidates for:

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

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

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

#### 355 356    **1. Commissioned Ministry**

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

357  
358 In the development of Disciples understanding of ministry, “Commissioned” ministry is  
359 replacing some forms of “Licensed” ministry. Men and women are authorized and  
360 Commissioned by their Regions to offer ministry in a particular place for a specified period  
361 of time. “The word ‘Commissioned’ means one who is appointed to a position entrusted  
362 with a task, or one who is authorized or sent on behalf of another for a task or proclamation”  
363 (*The Nazareth Consensus*, page 8, para.1).<sup>5</sup>

364  
365 The term “Commissioned” contains the word “mission,” which sets the stage for a  
366 spiritual expectation. Paul describes himself as one commissioned to preach the gospel as  
367 in Col. 1:25: “I became [the church’s] servant according to God’s *commission* that was  
368 given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known...” (NRSV). In II Corinthians  
369 Paul writes, “But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has *commissioned*  
370 *us*; ...” (II Cor. 1:21, RSV) and again, “For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God’s  
371 word; but as men [and women] of sincerity, as *commissioned* by God, in the sight of God  
372 we speak in Christ” (II Cor. 2:17, RSV).

373  
374 The word “Commissioned” has been used and continues to be used by the church for  
375 people appointed to various positions or sent forth to carry God’s message. Thus, the  
376 term has ecclesiastical connotations of being entrusted with the tasks of ministry. The use  
377 of the term “commission” or “commissioned” in English translations of Paul’s letters has  
378 further shaped our understanding of the concept in the contemporary setting.

379  
380 Commissioning is an acknowledgment by the Church of the gifts of the Spirit in the one  
381 commissioned, and a commitment by both the Church and the Commissioned to the new  
382 relationship. Those Commissioned offer their gifts to the Church and commit themselves  
383 to the burden and opportunity of new authority and responsibility. At the same time, they  
384 enter into a collegial relationship with all ministers. By receiving the Commissioned  
385 minister in the act of commissioning, the Church acknowledges the minister’s call and  
386 commits itself to be open to it. This liturgical service occurs in the context of  
387 Congregational worship in partnership with the Region.

## 388 389 **2. Ordained Ministry**

### 390 391 **a. The meaning of Ordination**

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

395 The act of Ordination by those who are appointed for this ministry attests the bond  
396 of the church with Jesus Christ and the apostolic witness, recalling that it is the  
397 risen Lord who is the true Ordainer and bestows the gift. In Ordaining, the church,

---

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

470  
471 In 1985, the Commission on Theology commended to the whole Church a single  
472 order of Ordained ministry which would include three offices.<sup>7</sup>  
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<sup>6</sup> Adapted from "Theological and Historical Foundations," Ordination Service and Guidelines for Ordination for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Division of Homeland Ministries and Council on Christian Unity, 1990, pp. 1-2.

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

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

476

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

484

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

491

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

#### 496 **d. The act of Ordination**

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

503

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

509

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

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

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

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

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

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## II. Policies and Criteria For The Ordering Of Ministry

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

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1. *The Order of Ministry*. The Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) comprises Commissioned Ministers and Ordained Ministers.
  2. *Personal Qualifications for the Order of Ministry*. The church expects to find within the women and men it receives into the order of ministry:
    - a. Faith in Jesus Christ, commitment to a life of Christian discipleship and nurturing spiritual practices;
    - b. A sense of call to the ministry affirmed by the church;
    - c. An understanding of pastoral identity;
    - d. Capacity to engage in theological reflection;
    - e. Strong moral character and personal integrity;
    - f. Commitment to spiritual, physical and emotional wellness sufficient for healthy ministry;
    - g. Care and compassion for all people with appropriate relational skills;
    - h. Responsible personal financial management;
    - i. Wise and generous stewardship in the use of God's gifts;
    - j. Skills and abilities necessary for the rigorous, pastoral tasks of ministry.

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### B. The Commissioned Ministry

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



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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.
- 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.

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- 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.

### C. The Ordained Ministry

- 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

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

661  
662 In accepting Ordination, the minister covenants to obey God by caring for the  
663 church, offering gifts of mind, body and spirit to that service, agreeing to fulfill the  
664 functions of a minister, and adhering to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics* of the  
665 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

666  
667 Ordained Minister Standing authorizes one to perform ministry on behalf of the  
668 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Ordination may or may not meet all the legal  
669 requirements for the performance of marriages.

670  
671 Historically called a ministry of word and sacrament, among others, this ministry  
672 may include pastors, educators, ecumenical leaders, recognized congregationally-  
673 based or non-congregationally-based community ministers, chaplains, pastoral  
674 counselors, and ministers who serve in the General and Regional church.

675  
676 2. *Educational Requirements.* There are two educational tracks in preparation for  
677 Ordination: an apprentice track (AT) and a seminary track (ST).

678  
679 ❖ Those in the apprentice track will demonstrate competency in the 16 areas of  
680 ministerial practice by completing a program of study of at least 250 contact  
681 hours approved by the Region in which they are under care.

682  
683 ❖ Those in the seminary track will demonstrate competency in the 16 areas of  
684 ministerial practice by securing a Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent  
685 from a theological school accredited by the Association of Theological Schools  
686 in the United States and Canada or its equivalent.

687  
688 Candidates for Ordination are encouraged to follow the seminary track, unless they  
689 determine, in consultation with their Region, that their economic, linguistic,  
690 vocational, or familial circumstances make the apprentice track more appropriate.  
691 Regardless of the educational track chosen, the church expects the women and men  
692 it Ordains to demonstrate competency in the following areas of ministerial practice,  
693 listed alphabetically:

694  
695 ***Biblical Knowledge:*** Be rooted and grounded in scripture and able to interpret  
696 and apply the scriptures in ways that are appropriate to original and  
697 contemporary contexts.

698  
699 ***Church Administration and Planning:*** Be able to practice the principles of  
700 good administration, planning and implementing short- and long-range goals to  
701 enhance Congregational life in collaboration with teams and committees.

702

703 **Communication:** Be an effective communicator and be able to facilitate  
704 effective communication within and on behalf of the church.  
705  
706 **Cross Cultural and Anti-Racism Experience:** Be sensitive to the different  
707 manifestations of racism and prejudice in the culture and be committed to  
708 confronting and overcoming them.  
709  
710 **Ecumenism:** Exhibit a commitment to working with other Christians and  
711 denominations and with other faiths in programs of common witness and  
712 service, and to articulating the vision of the ecumenical and global church as a  
713 starting place for mission.  
714  
715 **Education and Leader Development:** Know the foundations of Christian  
716 education and the principles of leader development. Show competency in  
717 teaching children, youth, and adults, including lay leaders and staff.  
718  
719 **Ethics:** Be able to help parishioners think critically about the relationship of  
720 their faith to issues of justice, ethics and morality  
721  
722 **Evangelism:** Be able to motivate Congregational members to share their faith  
723 through word and action.  
724  
725 **Mission of the Church in the World:** Be able to understand and articulate the  
726 centrality of the call to mission given by Jesus Christ and the prophets. Be able  
727 to empower congregations to engage in mission from our doorsteps to the ends  
728 of the earth.  
729  
730 **Pastoral Care:** Be able to engage other persons with empathy and assess  
731 situations and relationships with the compassion of Christ, with sensitivity to  
732 culture and context. Be able to convey the healing power of God to those who  
733 suffer.  
734  
735 **Proclamation of the Word:** Know the practice and theory of Christian  
736 preaching. Be able to proclaim the Word of God, share the Good News of Jesus  
737 Christ, and help Congregational members apply their faith to daily life.  
738  
739 **Spiritual Development:** Establish and maintain spiritual disciplines that lead to  
740 personal growth and help others develop a rich spiritual life.  
741  
742 **Stewardship:** Be able to develop and encourage healthy stewards who  
743 recognize and share generously God's abundant gifts for all creation.  
744  
745 **Theology:** Be able to articulate a coherent view of God's nature and activity in  
746 relation to the Christian tradition, to critically engage human situations from a  
747 perspective of faith, and to help persons recognize theological issues in their  
748 daily lives.

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

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

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

Specifically assigned to Regions are the responsibilities to:

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

#### **D. Candidacy for Ordination**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

819 5. *Preparation for Ordination.* A candidate for Ordination is to prepare himself or  
820 herself spiritually, intellectually, emotionally and physically for her/his ministry.  
821 The following areas support and enhance the performance of an applicant's chosen  
822 ministry:  
823

- 824 a. Participation in the life and work of a congregation of Christians;
- 825
- 826 b. Breadth of theological study so that the candidate shows an  
827 understanding of the Christian faith, the Bible, the church universal, the  
828 history and polity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and the  
829 formation and function of Christian mission;

- 830  
831 c. Professional and ecclesiological study plus supervised experience in the  
832 work of ministry, exhibiting competencies in that form of ministry in  
833 which the candidate hopes to serve;  
834  
835 d. Formation of responsible relations with and concern for the church, both  
836 as communities of faith and as institution;  
837  
838 e. Growth in personal character, Christian insight, spiritual formation,  
839 wellness and disciplined commitment to ministry;  
840  
841 f. Formation of and adherence to ethical principles to guide professional  
842 relationships and personal conduct as outlined in the *Ministerial Code*  
843 *of Ethics of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*.  
844  
845 6. *Conclusion of Candidacy*. Completion of a prescribed program of study  
846 (apprentice track) or the receipt of a Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent  
847 from an institution of higher education accredited by the Association of Theological  
848 Schools (seminary track) does not guarantee Ordination.  
849

850 Candidacy is concluded by Ordination, voluntary withdrawal by the candidate, or  
851 decision of the Region to terminate candidacy. Completion of candidacy within  
852 seven years is recommended, but may be extended at the discretion of the Region.  
853

#### 854 **E. The Act of Ordination**

855  
856 Ordination is a process of the Congregational and Regional Church on behalf of the whole  
857 church to commend to Christians everywhere individuals who meet the qualifications and  
858 have fulfilled the requirements established by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
859 for Ordination.  
860

- 861 1. The candidate shall be recommended for Ordination by a recognized congregation  
862 or congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), including the one in  
863 which membership is held.  
864  
865 2. The act of Ordination shall be under the authorization and guidance of the  
866 sponsoring congregation and the Region, with the Regional Minister, or the  
867 Regional Minister's designee, presiding.  
868  
869 3. The service ordinarily shall be held in a sponsoring congregation.  
870  
871 4. Representatives of the recommending congregation or congregations, the Regional  
872 church, the ecumenical church and, where possible, the General church shall  
873 participate in the service.  
874

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

877

878 **F. Ministerial Standing**

879

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

884

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

895

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

900

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

908

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



- 921 covenant with the Regions, the General Commission on Ministry will notify  
922 Regions about persons who reside in their Region and hold Standing with the  
923 General Commission on Ministry.  
924
- 925 e. Since Regional Ministers “serve as a sign of the ministry of the church in  
926 sacrament and service” and lead Regions in promoting “the concept of whole  
927 church, and have a primary role in advocating and supporting the  
928 denomination’s mission and vision” (*Marks of a Faithful Regional Church*,  
929 August, 2006), the responsibility for certification of Standing is jointly lodged  
930 with the Region where the Regional Minister serves and with the General  
931 Commission on Ministry. Annually, the Regional Minister will complete  
932 Standing forms required by both the Region and the General Commission on  
933 Ministry.  
934
- 935 2. *Certification of Standing of those Commissioned and Ordained by the Christian*  
936 *Church (Disciples of Christ)*  
937
- 938 a. By virtue of Commissioning or Ordination according to the Order of Ministry  
939 of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the minister becomes eligible  
940 for Standing.  
941
- 942 b. Standing for ministers in active service continues so long as the minister does  
943 and reports the following:  
944
- 945 i. Performs faithfully the duties of a minister as authorized by  
946 Commissioning or Ordination, either in an occupation recognized  
947 by the church as ministerial in purpose or in a service recognized by  
948 the church as ministerial in purpose.  
949
- 950 ii. Participates regularly in programs of study, growth, and renewal.  
951
- 952 iii. Maintains relations with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
953 including participating membership in a recognized congregation in  
954 the community of residence or active ministry where feasible.  
955
- 956 iv. Adheres to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics of the Christian Church*  
957 *(Disciples of Christ)*.  
958
- 959 v. Continues to meet the personal qualifications for admission to the  
960 Order of Ministry. (II.A.2.)  
961
- 962 vi. Seeks annual certification as requested by the Region where the  
963 ministry site is located or by the General Commission on Ministry,  
964 as appropriate. (See II.F.1.c.)  
965

- 966 c. Standing may be continued at the discretion of the Region or the General  
967 Commission on Ministry in cases of disability or other special hardships  
968 affecting ministerial service, so long as other criteria for Standing are met.  
969
- 970 d. The Region or the General Commission on Ministry will provide means by  
971 which the Standing of all ministers in its care will be reviewed annually.  
972 Consultation with the appropriate National Pastor/Leader of Racial Ethnic  
973 communities is encouraged regarding the Standing of persons of color.  
974
- 975 e. When an Ordained Minister moves from a ministry position in one Region to  
976 a ministry position in another Region, Standing in the Order of Ministry is  
977 retained. Commissioned Ministers who move to another Region must contact  
978 that Regional Minister to establish Standing in the new ministry position.  
979 Responsibility for review and subsequent certification is assigned to the  
980 Region in which the minister functions or to the General Commission on  
981 Ministry. The minister shall notify both the former and new Regional  
982 Ministers upon relocation.  
983
- 984 f. When an Ordained Minister who is not actively seeking relocation moves  
985 from a ministry position in one Region to another Region and is no longer  
986 engaged in ministry, ministerial Standing will be provisionally retained for up  
987 to one year, except in the case of retirement, until review and subsequent  
988 certification is granted by the Region into which the minister has moved. The  
989 Ordained Minister is required to initiate contact with both the former and new  
990 Regional Ministers regarding his or her status.  
991
- 992 3. *Certification of Standing of Retired Ministers, Commissioned or Ordained by the*  
993 *Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*  
994
- 995 a. Upon retirement, Commissioned Minister retain Standing if they continue serving  
996 in an approved ministry site. Standing of inactive retired Commissioned Ministers  
997 may be granted at the discretion of the Region.  
998
- 999 b. Ordained Ministers with Standing retain this Standing at the time of  
1000 retirement.  
1001
- 1002 i. A retired minister who intends to continue practice of ministry, whether on  
1003 an occasional, part-time or full time basis must continue to seek annual  
1004 certification of Standing as requested by the Region where the ministry site  
1005 is located or by the General Commission on Ministry, as appropriate. (See  
1006 II.F.1.c.)  
1007
- 1008 ii. When Standing is granted, the active retired minister will be listed in the  
1009 *Yearbook of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* as active retired. (R-  
1010 a)  
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- 1012 iii. To be eligible for such Standing, the active retired minister

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- 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)

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.

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- iii. The minister enters into a full-time occupation not recognized by the church as ministerial in purpose and/or no longer performs the functions of the office of a minister.
  - iv. The minister fails to respond to a request for annual certification from the Region or the General Commission on Ministry.
  - v. The minister no longer meets the personal qualifications for admission to the Order of Ministry (II.A.2.) or fails to adhere to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics*.
  - vi. The retired minister fails to adhere to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics*.
- b. When the Region or the General Commission on Ministry takes the initiative in the review of Standing, the procedures shall include:
- i. Written notice to the minister that Standing is to be reviewed with the possibility of suspension or termination.
  - ii. Consultation with the appropriate National Pastor/Leader of Racial Ethnic communities is encouraged regarding the termination of Standing of persons of color.
  - iii. A hearing by a committee appointed by the Region or the General Commission on Ministry.
- c. When the minister takes the initiative in the review, the procedures shall include:
- i. Written notice to the Region or the General Commission on Ministry requesting that Standing be reviewed with the possibility of termination.
  - ii. A consultation with a committee appointed by the Region or the General Commission on Ministry.
- d. Standing may be granted to a minister whose Standing has been terminated or suspended by another Region or the General Commission on Ministry only upon the recommendation of the terminating or suspending body, whether that is a Region or the General Commission on Ministry.

##### 1101 5. *Surrender of Standing*

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1103 When a minister surrenders Standing, Standing can be granted again only upon the  
1104 recommendation of the body to which Standing was surrendered, whether that is a  
1105 Region or the General Commission on Ministry. The Region or General

1106 Commission on Ministry shall address any outstanding allegations of misconduct  
1107 before reinstating Standing.

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1109 6. *Lapsed Standing*

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1111 When a minister's Standing has lapsed, Standing may only be granted after  
1112 consultation with the body where the Standing was previously held, whether the  
1113 Region or the General Commission on Ministry.

1114

1115 **G. Recognition and Reconciliation of Ordained Ministries**

1116

1117 1. *Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing with the United Church of Christ*

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

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

1127 The designations "Ordained Ministerial Partner" and "Ordained Ministerial  
1128 Partner Standing" manifest the corporate and individual nature of the recognition  
1129 and reconciliation of the Ordained ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of  
1130 Christ) and the United Church of Christ.

1131 a. Each member of the United Church of Christ who holds Ordained ministerial  
1132 Standing in the United Church of Christ is an Ordained Ministerial Partner of  
1133 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

1134 b. Each member of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who holds  
1135 Ordained ministerial Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is  
1136 an Ordained Ministerial Partner of the United Church of Christ.

1137 c. When a person no longer has Ordained ministerial Standing in either the  
1138 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or the United Church of Christ, that  
1139 person is no longer an Ordained Ministerial Partner and Ordained Ministerial  
1140 Partner Standing is nullified.

1141

1142 d. *United Church of Christ ministers with Ordained Ministerial Partner*  
1143 *Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*

1144

1145 Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing is recognition granted to an Ordained  
1146 minister with Standing in the United Church of Christ who has been called to  
1147 an Ordained ministry setting in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

1148 Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing provides ongoing ecclesiastical  
1149 authorization to exercise the rights and responsibilities of Ordained ministry in  
1150 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).  
1151  
1152 i. Once a United Church of Christ Ordained minister has demonstrated  
1153 knowledge of and appreciation for the history, polity, and practices of  
1154 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to the Regional Commission  
1155 on Ministry where the minister resides, that Ordained Ministerial Partner  
1156 may be granted access to the Search and Call process in the Christian  
1157 Church (Disciples of Christ). Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in  
1158 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is not given at this point in the  
1159 process.  
1160  
1161 ii. A United Church of Christ Ordained Ministerial Partner who secures a  
1162 call in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) applies for Ordained  
1163 Ministerial Partner Standing to the Region in which the Ordained  
1164 minister's calling body is located. Once granted, Ordained Ministerial  
1165 Partner Standing is reviewed by the Region for certification annually.  
1166  
1167 iii. A United Church of Christ Ordained minister has Ordained Ministerial  
1168 Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) only when  
1169 serving a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) calling body.  
1170  
1171 iv. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial  
1172 Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall  
1173 maintain Ordained ministerial Standing in the United Church of Christ.  
1174  
1175 v. Ordained ministerial Standing shall be held in the association in which  
1176 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) calling body is located.  
1177  
1178 vi. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial  
1179 Partner Standing shall maintain relations with the Christian Church  
1180 (Disciples of Christ) including (where feasible) holding associate  
1181 membership in a recognized Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
1182 congregation in the community.  
1183  
1184 vii. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial  
1185 Partner Standing in a Region has voting privileges in the General  
1186 Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).  
1187  
1188 viii. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial  
1189 Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall  
1190 relate to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for his/her primary  
1191 support in Ordained ministry.  
1192

- 1193 ix. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial  
 1194 Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall be  
 1195 accountable to the Region for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing and  
 1196 to the United Church of Christ for Ordained ministerial Standing.  
 1197
- 1198 x. When a disciplinary review is instituted in relation to the United Church  
 1199 of Christ minister holding Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the  
 1200 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the association of the United  
 1201 Church of Christ in which the United Church of Christ minister's  
 1202 Ordained ministerial Standing is maintained, shall be informed and  
 1203 invited to participate in the procedures.  
 1204
- 1205 xi. When a United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained  
 1206 Ministerial Partner Standing with the Christian Church (Disciples of  
 1207 Christ) accepts a call in another Region, he/she shall be subject to review  
 1208 and subsequent annual certification of Ordained Ministerial Partner  
 1209 Standing by the new Region.  
 1210
- 1211 Recognition of Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing may be granted by the  
 1212 General Commission on Ministry to an Ordained minister with Standing in the  
 1213 United Church of Christ who serves as a National Officer or in a joint ministry  
 1214 position for both churches.  
 1215
- 1216 e. *Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) ministers with Ordained Ministerial*  
 1217 *Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ.*  
 1218
- 1219 Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing is recognition granted to an Ordained  
 1220 minister with Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who has  
 1221 been called to an Ordained ministry setting in the United Church of Christ.  
 1222 Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing provides ongoing ecclesiastical  
 1223 authorization to exercise the rights and responsibilities of Ordained ministry in  
 1224 the United Church of Christ.  
 1225
- 1226 i. Once a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Ordained minister has  
 1227 demonstrated knowledge of and appreciation for the history, polity, and  
 1228 practices of the United Church of Christ to the Association Committee  
 1229 where the minister resides, that Ordained ministerial partner may be  
 1230 granted access to the Search and Call process in the United Church of  
 1231 Christ. Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of  
 1232 Christ is not given at this point in the process.  
 1233
- 1234 ii. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Ordained Ministerial Partner who  
 1235 secures a call in the United Church of Christ applies for Ordained  
 1236 Ministerial Partner Standing to the Association in which the Ordained  
 1237 minister's calling body is located. Once granted, Ordained Ministerial  
 1238 Partner Standing is reviewed by the Association annually.

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



1284 transfer of the Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing to the new  
1285 Association.  
1286  
1287 Recognition of Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing may be granted by the  
1288 appropriate United Church of Christ Association to an Ordained minister with  
1289 Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who serves as a General  
1290 Ministry Executive or in a joint ministry position for both churches.  
1291  
1292 2. *Persons Ordained in Other Churches.* Ministers Ordained by other denominations  
1293 or non-Disciples congregations may be considered for recognition of Ordination  
1294 and the granting of Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).  
1295 Provisional or temporary Standing may be granted to individuals applying for  
1296 recognition of Ordination by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).  
1297 Responsibility for this process is lodged in the Region except in the case of Military  
1298 Chaplains stationed overseas.  
1299  
1300 a. Provisional or temporary Standing of applicants may be granted upon the  
1301 fulfillment of the following requirements:  
1302  
1303 i. Consultation with appropriate officials of the denomination or congregation  
1304 from which the candidate transfers.  
1305  
1306 ii. Satisfactory investigation of personal and ministerial references and a  
1307 criminal background check.  
1308  
1309 iii. Filing of appropriate forms with the Region to which the applicant is  
1310 applying or with the General Commission on Ministry.  
1311  
1312 iv. Provisional or temporary Standing shall be reviewed annually by either the  
1313 granting Region or the General Commission on Ministry.  
1314  
1315 b. Removal of the provisional or temporary conditions for Standing may be  
1316 granted by the Region or the General Commission on Ministry upon fulfillment  
1317 of the following requirements:  
1318  
1319 i. Membership in a recognized congregation of the Christian Church  
1320 (Disciples of Christ).  
1321  
1322 ii. Demonstrated knowledge and appreciation for the history, polity, and  
1323 practices of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).  
1324  
1325 iii. Fulfillment of the prerequisites and preparation, including educational  
1326 attainment, for the Order of Ministry.  
1327  
1328 iv. One year minimum service under the supervision or mentoring of a  
1329 Disciples of Christ minister with Standing.

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- 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, covenant to work within the Order of Ministry in the interest of assuring an orderly and responsible system of Search and Call.
  - c. The Church is best served when Regional Ministers and National Pastors/Leaders of Racial Ethnic communities work together covenantally in the Search and Call process. Primary responsibility for the Search and Call process is lodged with the Regions. Regions are encouraged to consult the National Pastors/Leaders. National Pastors/Leaders may offer their counsel to the Regional Minister in Search and Call with the understanding that the primary responsibility for Search and Call lies with the Region.
2. *Operating Principles.*
  - a. Ordained ministers with Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will have complete and unhindered access to Search and Call of the church.

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

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- 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.
  - 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 of the search committee regarding that minister, shall be given to the Region for reasons of safekeeping and confidentiality. All records relating to other candidates in the search process shall be destroyed.
  - vi. The congregational search committee will stay in communication with candidates whom the search committee has contacted. The search committee will inform, in a timely manner, candidates who are no longer being considered for the position.
  - vii. The search committee will inform, in a timely manner, candidates who are no longer being considered for the position.
  - viii. The congregational search committee may talk with a number of candidates concurrently but will negotiate with only one at a time. A search committee and candidate are “in negotiation” when both agree that they will not discuss relocation with any other candidate or search committee until either party declares negotiations ended. It is

- 1509 the obligation of the search committee to be specific with the  
 1510 minister about its degree of interest.
- 1511 ix. Congregations will issue a Letter of Call providing copies of the call for  
 1512 the congregation, the minister, the Region, and the Office of Search  
 1513 and Call.
  - 1514 x. Congregations will reimburse the called candidate for the Criminal  
 1515 Background Check.
  - 1516 xi. Congregations will provide a fair salary (including housing allowance –  
 1517 parsonage provision) within the capabilities of the congregation, as  
 1518 well as adequate benefits (pension, health insurance, continuing  
 1519 education, vacation, sabbatical and Social Security offset).
  - 1520 xii. Congregations will provide for the reimbursement of church-related  
 1521 expenses to cover actual expenses of accomplishing ministry.  
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- 1524 c. Regions. Regions bear the primary responsibility for providing advice and  
 1525 counsel to both congregations and ministers in Search and Call. Regions will  
 1526 work collaboratively with General Racial Ethnic Ministries to address  
 1527 ministerial vacancies among their constituencies. Regions may delegate or  
 1528 share this responsibility with their areas, districts or other subdivisions. In all  
 1529 matters, Regions will function within the covenantal relationship of the whole  
 1530 church.  
 1531
- 1532 i. Each Region will provide advice and counsel to congregations either  
 1533 at the request of the congregation or at the initiation of the Region  
 1534 when it is known that new ministerial leadership is being or will be  
 1535 sought.
  - 1536 ii. Each Region will receive and review all ministerial search and call  
 1537 materials from the Office of Search and Call, giving special attention  
 1538 to those persons who have indicated an interest in their Region.
  - 1539 iii. Each Region will refer all ministers within the Region who wish to  
 1540 seek relocation to the Office of Search and Call for entry into Search  
 1541 and Call.
  - 1542 iv. Each Region will share with search committees Search and Call  
 1543 forms of a selection of candidates who appear to meet the  
 1544 requirements of the congregations and institutions with whom the  
 1545 Region is working.
  - 1546 v. Each Region will encourage congregations to give fair and equal  
 1547 consideration to candidates putting aside prejudice and considering  
 1548 candidates based on gifts and skills for ministry.
  - 1549 vi. Each Region will share with specific search committees Search and  
 1550 Call forms of any minister with Standing in the Christian Church  
 1551 (Disciples of Christ), or any Ordained Ministerial Partner qualified by

- 1552 a Region to seek a call, who requests consideration in that  
 1553 congregation.
- 1554 vii. Each Region will maintain a list of churches seeking ministerial  
 1555 leadership in the Region and make it available upon request to  
 1556 ministers with Standing.
- 1557 viii. If a Region is contacted by a search committee about a minister not  
 1558 actively seeking a call, the Region will inquire about that minister's  
 1559 interest. The minister has the right to know the name and location  
 1560 of the interested congregation. If said minister is interested, the  
 1561 Region will direct said minister to Search and Call.
- 1562 ix. Each Region will provide, upon request of ministers seeking a call, a  
 1563 list of congregations which have received their *Ministerial Profile*.
- 1564 x. Each Region will treat all Search and Call forms with strict  
 1565 confidentiality.
- 1566 xi. Each Region will communicate to the Office of Search and Call any  
 1567 formal actions and decisions to remove Standing for misconduct of  
 1568 a minister. The minister shall be informed and given a copy of the  
 1569 report which will also be placed in the minister's file. (See also J. 1.  
 1570 below.)
- 1571 xii. Each Region will refer all requests for assistance from congregations  
 1572 outside the Region to the appropriate Regional office.
- 1573 xiii. Each Region will regularly notify the Office of Search and Call of all  
 1574 relocations occurring within, to, or from the Region.
- 1575 xiv. Each Region will authorize access to Search and Call to  
 1576 a. candidates for ordination whose ordinations have been  
 1577 authorized in their Region and  
 1578 b. Ordained ministers from other denominations who have been  
 1579 given temporary recognition and who are in the process of  
 1580 transferring Standing to the Christian Church (Disciples of  
 1581 Christ).
- 1582 xv. Each Region will make information available about Regional staff  
 1583 vacancies through such channels as denominational websites,  
 1584 Regional publications, Disciples Home Missions, and other  
 1585 publications.
- 1586
- 1587 d. Disciples Home Missions. The Office of Search and Call at Disciples Home  
 1588 Missions is the primary locus of the ministerial records of the Christian  
 1589 Church (Disciples of Christ) related to Search and Call and is responsible for  
 1590 coordinating the Search and Call process of the church. In all matters,  
 1591 Disciples Home Missions will function within the covenantal relationship of  
 1592 the whole church.
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- 1594 i. The Office of Search and Call will maintain the permanent files of all  
 1595 ministers in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

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- 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.
  - x. The Office of Search and Call will refer all candidates for Ordination seeking student preaching/pastoral positions to the field education office of the appropriate institution or to the Region.
  - xi. The Office of Search and Call will share with Regions, and where appropriate, General Ministries, the record of any formal action by a Region's commission on the ministry or the General Commission on Ministry concerning the conduct of a minister who is entering Search and Call.
- e. Educational institutions. The undergraduate departments of religion and the theological educational institutions have unique responsibilities with respect to the search and call process of the church. Each relates to a limited number



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

- 1646  
1647  
1648 i. Educational institutions will relate to congregations served by  
1649 students in partnership with the Region in matters pertaining to the  
1650 employment of students during their pre-theological and theological  
1651 education.  
1652 ii. Educational institutions will refer requests from congregations for  
1653 search and call assistance that is outside the student field placement  
1654 process to the appropriate Region.  
1655 iii. Educational institutions will cooperate with Regions in orienting  
1656 students to the Search and Call process of the church.

1657  
1658 f. General Ministries. In all matters, General Ministries will function within the  
1659 covenantal relationship of the whole church.

- 1660  
1661 i. General Ministries will refer all requests for Search and Call assistance  
1662 to the Office of Search and Call and the appropriate Regional  
1663 Minister. They will refer requests for candidates' names to the  
1664 appropriate Region.  
1665 ii. General racial/ethnic ministries will work collaboratively with Regions  
1666 to address ministerial vacancies among their constituencies.

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1669 4. *Right of Review and Counsel.* The right to review and counsel is limited to  
1670 perceived violations of Search and Call and should be initiated with the  
1671 appropriate Region, institution or General Ministry. A request for review and  
1672 counsel beyond the Region shall be to the General Commission on Ministry.

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## 1675 **I. Ministerial Code of Ethics**

1676  
1677 Believing that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God, and proclaiming him Lord and  
1678 Savior of the world, I reaffirm my vows as a minister. Through dedication and discipline I  
1679 will lead and serve with integrity. Relying on the grace of God, I commit myself to the  
1680 following:

1681  
1682 *Personal Conduct*

- 1683 • Witnessing to the ministry of Jesus Christ

- 1684 • Dedicating time, strength, vitality, and energy for effective ministry
- 1685 • Growing in faith, knowledge, and the practice of ministry through the spiritual disciplines, study, continuing education, and service
- 1686 • Living a life that honors my commitments to my family, including the need for privacy and time together
- 1687 • Taking time for physical and spiritual renewal, recreation, and vacation
- 1688 • Being a faithful steward of God's gifts to me by managing time, talents, and financial resources responsibly and generously
- 1689 • Accepting responsibility for all debts that I incur
- 1690 • Keeping physically and emotionally fit and refraining from substance abuse and other abusive behaviors
- 1691 • Using my position, power, and authority in non-exploitive ways
- 1692 • Maintaining high moral standards in my sexual behavior
- 1693 • Regarding all persons with equal respect and concern and undertaking to minister impartially
- 1694
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1700 *Relationships to the Church which I Serve*

- 1701 • Nurturing and offering my gifts for ministry to the church
- 1702 • Calling forth and nurturing the gifts of others in the church and joining their gifts with mine for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ and the health of the church
- 1703 • Preaching and teaching the gospel without fear or favor and speaking the truth in love
- 1704 • Administering the sacraments/ordinances and services of the church with integrity and not for financial gain
- 1705 • Working cooperatively and collegially with those whom I serve in the particular ministry to which I have been called
- 1706 • Administering the corporate finances of the church with personal integrity
- 1707 • Refraining from accepting any gift which would compromise the church's ministry
- 1708 • Protecting confidences; covenanting to only tell those who need to know, what they need to know, when they need to know it
- 1709 • Acting to prevent and to report known or suspected cases of physical or sexual abuse or neglect
- 1710 • Encouraging and participating in the regular evaluation of my ministry and cooperating with the Region in the annual review of my ministerial Standing
- 1711 • Seeking the counsel of the Regional Minister and/or the Racial/Ethnic Executive Pastor as appropriate should divisive tensions threaten my relationship with those I serve
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1722 *Relationships to Ministry Colleagues*

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

- 1728 • Performing pastoral services within another congregation or for a member of
- 1729 another congregation only at the request of that congregation’s current pastor and
- 1730 elders
- 1731 • Supporting and at no time speaking maliciously of the ministry of my predecessors
- 1732 or another minister
- 1733 • Encouraging the ministry of my successor upon my retirement or other departure
- 1734 from a ministry position, without interfering or intruding and by making it clear to
- 1735 former parishioners that I am no longer their pastor nor will I perform any pastoral
- 1736 services unless requested by the congregation’s current pastor and elders
- 1737

1738 *Relationships to the Community and the Wider Church*

- 1739 • Participating responsibly in the life and work of my community, bearing prophetic
- 1740 witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and working towards a just and morally
- 1741 responsible society
- 1742 • Participating faithfully in the life and work of all expressions of the Christian
- 1743 Church (Disciples of Christ)
- 1744 • Seeking to know, understand, and respect the diversity of opinions and people
- 1745 within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- 1746 • Being a responsible representative of the one church of Jesus Christ and
- 1747 participating in activities which strengthen its unity, ministry, witness, and mission
- 1748

1749 **J. Misconduct**

1750

1751 The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) understands ministerial misconduct to be

1752 activity which violates the covenantal character of the ministerial office as expressed in the

1753 Ministerial Code of Ethics. Investigation and adjudication of violations of the Ministerial

1754 Code of Ethics shall be the responsibility of the Region through the committee or

1755 Commission on Ministry or the General Commission on Ministry.

1756

1757 1. *Reporting*

1758

1759 Regions or the General Commission on Ministry will report formal actions and

1760 decisions to remove Standing for misconduct to the Office of Search and Call,

1761 Disciples Home Missions, and these actions will be communicated to all Regions.

1762

1763 2. *Suspension of Standing*

1764

1765 In extreme situations of alleged misconduct, ministerial Standing may be

1766 temporarily suspended by the Region or the General Commission on Ministry

1767 during the period of investigation and adjudication.

1768

1769 3. *Sexual Misconduct*

- 1770
- 1771 a. It is the responsibility of each Region to have specific definitions of sexual
- 1772 misconduct and procedures for receiving, investigating, and adjudicating
- 1773 sexual misconduct charges of ministers with Standing in the Region. Each

1774 Region will periodically and systematically review its definitions and  
1775 procedures. It is the responsibility of the Region to communicate such  
1776 definitions and procedures to ministers and congregations within the Region.  
1777

1778 b. It is the responsibility of the General Commission on Ministry to have specific  
1779 definitions of sexual misconduct and procedures for receiving, investigating,  
1780 and adjudicating sexual misconduct charges of ministers engaged in non-  
1781 Regional ministries. The General Commission on Ministry will periodically  
1782 and systematically review its definitions and procedures. It is the  
1783 responsibility of the General Commission on the Ministry to communicate  
1784 such definitions and procedures to ministers, ministries, and other  
1785 organizations in the General and ecumenical church.  
1786

1787 **K. Right of Appeal**  
1788

1789 The General Commission on Ministry understands that the Right to Appeal extends to  
1790 persons who, at the time of their appeal, are subject to a decision with adverse effect  
1791 regarding Ordination, Commissioning, transfer of credentials, and/or Standing. The  
1792 General Commission on Ministry will not consider any appeal if legal proceedings are  
1793 pending or in process.  
1794

1795 **L. Amendment Process**  
1796

1797 The Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of  
1798 Christ) may be amended two ways:  
1799

1800 1. By a two-thirds vote of the voting members of the General Assembly present  
1801 and voting, providing such amendments shall have been regularly filed 180  
1802 days in advance of the meeting of the General Assembly and circulated among  
1803 the congregations and Regions 60 days in advance of the General Assembly.  
1804

1805 2. By a two-thirds vote of the members of the General Board of the Christian  
1806 Church (Disciples of Christ) present and voting, providing such amendments  
1807 shall have been mailed to the members of the General Board of the Christian  
1808 Church (Disciples of Christ) at least 30 days prior to the time of the vote.  
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1810  
1811 Basic Policy Approved Louisville General Assembly 1971

1812 Section II on Candidacy approved Kansas City General Assembly 1977

1813 Section V on Ministerial Standing amended Anaheim General Assembly 1981

1814 Section VI on Ministerial Relocation amended Des Moines General Assembly 1985

1815 Section VII on Amendment Process amended Louisville General Assembly 1987

1816 Section V.C. on Recognition and Reconciliation of the Ordained Ministries of the  
1817 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ amended

1818 Pittsburgh General Assembly 1995

1819 Section VIII on Sexual Misconduct amended Pittsburgh General Assembly 1995

1820 Theological Foundations and Revised Policies and Criteria approved Indianapolis  
1821 General Assembly 2009  
1822 Section II.H. on Ministerial Search and Call amended General Board 2009—————  
1823 —————  
1824 Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for The Ordering of Ministry, 2009, is  
1825 an operating document of the General Commission on Ministry, effective August 2011.  
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